NPS Form 10-900-b (Rev. 01/2009) OMB No. 1024-0018 (Expires 5/31/2012)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items

X New Submission _____ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Ranches, Farms, and Homesteads in Wyoming, 1860-1960

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Ranching, Farming, and Homesteading in Wyoming, 1860-1960

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Michael Cassity, Historian

organization Michael Cassity Historical Research and Photography date October 13, 2010

street & number 304 W. Albuquerque telephone 918 451-8378

city or town Broken Arrow state Oklahoma zip code 74011

e-mail mjcassity@gmail.com

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.
(_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature and title of certifying official | Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

Page Numbers

E. Statement of Historic Contexts E, 3-343
(if more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

1. Background: Visions of the Future, 1820s to 1870s
2. Different Visions: The Rise of Ranching in Territorial Wyoming, 1868-1886
3. A War for Agriculture and Society in Wyoming, 1885-1892
4. From Cattle Kingdom to Homesteader Haven, 1890-1910
5. The Seeds of Modern Times: Agriculture in the early Twentieth Century, 1900-1920
6. Social and Economic Upheaval in Agriculture in the 1920s
7. The Transformative Power of Economic Crisis and War, 1929-1945
8. Wyoming Agriculture at Mid-Century, 1945-1960

F. Associated Property Types F, 344-414
(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

G. Geographical Data G, 415

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods H, 415-420
(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

I. Major Bibliographical References I, 421-450
(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

RANCHES, FARMS, AND HOMESTEADS IN WYOMING 1860-1960

Summary

Wyoming has been from even before its organization as a territory (1868) a place where ranching, farming, and homesteading defined not only a system of agricultural production but distinctive patterns of the organization of life. This historic context study examines the broad contours of farming, ranching, and homesteading in Wyoming for a period of around a century. Special attention is given the competing uses to which land is put, the different orientations and purposes that Wyoming's citizens have held as they developed their farms and ranches, the technology of agricultural production, the role of powerful economic, social, and political forces in shaping the choices available to Wyoming's rural population, and throughout the challenge presented by patterns of modernization.

These patterns are not just abstractions; they are, instead, the patterns and forces helping us understand the lives people led and the resources they left on the ground. The critical point in this historical context study is that historical significance derives from our effort to connect any given feature to a larger system, both conceptually and physically. To be old is not enough. To exist is not enough. The historical significance must be precise and demonstrable. This historic context indicates the patterns to which the resources can be connected and thereby better understood.

The fundamental pattern defining Wyoming's life on the land has been one in which people, first, moved onto the farms, ranches, and homesteads of the state, a process that continued well into the twentieth century and that included people and forces that were often at odds with each other, and represented different ethnicities, classes, and both genders—variables that shaped the built environment they constructed on the ground. The second aspect of the overarching pattern is that in which those same people left the land, and the resources they had placed there. Although people have moved in and moved out throughout the history of the state, this shift from in-migration to out-migration came noticeably in the 1930s when the number of farms and ranches in the state reached its peak and then began a pronounced decline.

The themes identified and explored, and to which individual properties can be associated in important ways, include the following:

Commercialization (Market System) of Agriculture

Conservation

Crop Production

Dairy Farming

Diversified Agriculture

Dry farming

Economic / Market Forces of Depression, War, Banking System

Ethnicity

Gender and Women and Homesteading, Farming, and Ranching

Homesteading

In-Migration

Industrialization of Agriculture

Irrigation

Land Policy

Midwest (Enclosed) System of Cattle Raising

Migrant Labor

Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Life (including specialization, consolidation, centralization of decision-making, and other features)

Monoculture Agriculture

Open Range (Texas System) Cattle Raising

Out-Migration

Race Relations and Homesteading (and Agriculture)

Settlement

Subsistence and Self-Sufficient Agriculture

Technology

Wool Growing

Wyoming is a large state that encompasses a wide variety of cultural and physical features and agriculture, both as a system of production and as a way of life, is a vast and complex set of relationships. The following historic context statement examines the evolution of patterns associated with ranching, farming, and homesteading in Wyoming.

1 BACKGROUND: VISIONS OF THE FUTURE, 1820S TO 1870S

i. Prelude: Charting and Changing the Landscape

When the first homesteaders and ranchers settled in Wyoming, they were inheritors of history as much as they were shapers of history. They did not enter into a virgin land so much as pick up where others before them had left off—in two senses. First, they displaced the people who had been living on the Great Plains and who were sometimes gradually, and sometimes dramatically, being forced from their hunting grounds and their own homes and onto smaller parcels. Second, the homesteaders and ranchers brought their own histories with them and shaped the land according to their vision of the future, which itself derived from the cultural, social, and economic assumptions and structures that they carried alongside their physical belongings.

The course that brought the land and its inhabitants to this particular point in time was not a straight line, was not automatic, was not inevitable, and was throughout marked as much by irony and unintended consequences as by the direct and purposeful unfolding of plans and objectives. In fact, before the ranchers and homesteaders ever took up residence, or even allowed the mountains and plains of Wyoming to figure in their dreams of the future, several earlier waves of activity by white people both began to take the land from Native American inhabitants and also forged the political, economic, social, and cultural infrastructure that made white settlement possible and that shaped its contours.

As it happened, there were two primary, and conflicting, visions that white people carried into the area that became Wyoming in the nineteenth century. Often expressed in terms of wilderness, the land of Wyoming was viewed on the one hand as a place where dreams of eastern expansion and development could be realized and the institutions and relationships of "civilization" transplanted and, on the other hand, as a place where people might find refuge from exactly the kind of development that was taking place in the East. These opposing visions, and the inherent tension between them, would mark Wyoming's initial settlement, would be at war on and off in the twentieth century, and would even define the debate over what kind of state Wyoming would be as it entered the twenty-first century.

At its beginning, the fur trade represented precisely this admixture of motives with the organizers of the fur trade companies calculating the profits to be made from the harvest of the natural bounty of the land on the one hand, and, on the other, the trappers, the storied "wild and reckless breed of men," notably less thrifty and disciplined and actuarial in their outlook. Some of the key figures of the fur trade clearly fit into the category of entrepreneurs and organizers, people who, in historian William Goetzmann's words, "regarded the wilderness as simply a stage in the civilizing process—a place to be settled and developed in the future."[1] To those people, the fur trade was a trade, a business proposition, nothing more and nothing less. Many, however, in distinct contrast (and even conflict) to those entrepreneurial sorts and to that outlook, cheerfully shed the habits, values, and goals of the "civilization" they left behind. Osborne Russell, for example, who criss-crossed Wyoming from the valley of the North Platte to the Tetons and Yellowstone, and from the banks of Powder River in the northeast to the valley of Green River in the southwest, boasted of the "hardships of a hunters life" and spoke with contempt of the world he left behind, proud that mountaineers, as he called the trappers, "have not the misfortune to get any of the luxuries from the civilized world but once a year and then in such small quantities that they last but a few days."[2] He spoke with scorn not only for the farmers who tilled the soil but also for the very crops and livestock that they raised, claiming "the rude and untaught savage feasts on better beef and Mutton than the most learned and experienced Agriculturists now," and since the meat of bison, "which are reared upon the food supplied them by Nature," was vastly superior to that of domesticated cattle "fed on cultivated grasses and grains." As for Russell, he cast his lot with the "savages," at least in diet and occupation and outlook.[3]

Osborne Russell was but one of the more articulate (spelling eccentricities aside) of a group of people not known for sophistication in communication or for leaving documents for posterity but he spoke for many in the brigades of mountaineers who fled the institutions and expectations of settled life by their choice of livelihood. Yet those same individuals, as they worked their ways up virtually every single drainage in the area that would become Wyoming, shared broadly through stories and reports and correspondence what they saw, where they went, and how they lived so that the life of the trapper became a fixture of literature and lore, with varying degrees of authenticity and accuracy. In the process, they added enormously to the knowledge of Wyoming and the West as their tales and accounts were circulated in the halls of power and the popular press of the East. In one of those unintended consequences of history, by this simple act of what was often termed "opening up the West," they also brought to a close its wildness and uncharted character. That was one irony of their two decades or so of

---

[1] William Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966), 107-108.
[2] Osborne Russell, *Journal of a Trapper*, ed. by Aubrey L. Haines (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955; 1965), 73, 58-59.
[3] Russell, *Journal of a Trapper*, 139. Russell also, however, ultimately reversed, or shifted, course in his thinking. After the beaver trapping faded and emigrants began wending their way through the country he had helped explore, he acquired religion, saw what he considered the error of his ways, and moved to civilization to settle down. Even at that, however, he moved to Oregon with the emigrants rather than back to their, and his, point of origin.

activity in the fur trade.

Another irony was that they were, ultimately, a part of an organized system of trade and that system meant, first, the existence of markets, trade routes, and communication corridors stretching from the valleys in the mountains where they trapped the beaver, down the rivers, especially Sweetwater and North Platte, and reaching to St. Louis and points east and even connecting with the Atlantic / European mercantile network. When London's tastes shifted, the reverberations were felt along the Green River. But more importantly, and more concretely, that system of trade actually brought the institutions of commerce into the inland area, and the fur trade, from 1825 to 1840, sponsored caravans of trade goods to the annual rendezvous along the Green River and elsewhere.

This commerce was less significant for its immediate impact on the trading patterns of the mountaineers and the Native Americans in Wyoming than for its long-term implications. If a caravan of trade goods could cross Wyoming, then other people besides the intrepid denizens of the wilderness could do the same. The redoubtable Jedediah Smith, David Jackson, and William Sublette wrote the Secretary of War in 1830 "to show the facility of crossing the continent to the Great Falls of the Columbia with wagons, the ease of supporting any number of men by driving cattle to supply them where there was no buffalo, ..."[4] Not only could *people* cross Wyoming; so could *cattle*, and, in fact, the cattle could live there and sustain the people. A new insight into the potential of the land began to take hold. In 1832 Benjamin Bonneville did exactly as Smith and the others had forecast and started a process that began to unfold with both people and livestock moving across Wyoming; Bonneville took wagons across the continental divide at South Pass. The isolation and the remoteness of Wyoming would never be the same after those wagons traversed the pass, for now a road existed, faint though it was, and others would follow that road in the future with designs far different than sustaining mountaineers in paradise. Thus the unintended consequence: the flourishing and, by some accounts, romantic and attractive life of the mountain men contributed to the forces that would soon make that paradise a target for the "civilization" that they disdained.

Of course, the pre-eminent agents of that civilization were the farmers and stock-growers that represented the bulk of the population of the United States in the nineteenth century. Those people, however, as they scanned their horizons for new lands, looked beyond the Wyoming landscape to the fertile and gentle terrain of the West Coast, and especially to the fabulous potential of the Willamette Valley of Oregon Territory. Between 1842, when the first avowed emigrant train passed through Wyoming until the eve of the Civil War in 1860, probably a half-million homesteaders, religious refugees, and gold-seekers traveled through Wyoming, pausing only as necessity dictated, but in the process leaving their own marks on the land that would shape future development.

The legacy of the Oregon – California – Mormon trails in the history of Wyoming has customarily been reduced to the ruts on the ground that can still be seen and the names scrawled on rocks that can also be

[4] Dale L. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953), 348.

identified. T. A. Larson, late dean of Wyoming historians, articulated this view best when he noted, "The travelers spent less than thirty days in Wyoming and left little besides ruts, names and dates on trailside cliffs, a few place names, and some graves. Indeed, exfoliation removed the early names from Independence Rock a long time ago. Like the mountain men, the emigrants left no significant imprint on modern Wyoming."[5] From a perspective that considers more than the material remnants of the emigrant experience, however, the imprint on Wyoming can be seen as substantially greater. If the trails are regarded as not just ruts on the ground, but as physical manifestations of the human activities that left them, they hint at the larger changes underway. The trails were transportation corridors that included not just the people traveling on them but also the business establishments that grew up along side those ruts, the military posts that were placed on the trail to protect traffic and patrol the roadway. The corridors included the transportation and communications institutions (from wagons carrying freight and mail and passengers to the Pony Express to the telegraph) that both reflected and stimulated activity on the road. Moreover, this growth led to interaction between travelers and between travelers and inhabitants that reverberated far and wide. Viewed as more than ruts on the ground, it is possible to see the emergence of a complex infrastructure, a support system for the trails, and a very real spillover of powerful forces into the surrounding area.

Put another way, once the powerful forces of change had been unleashed by the emigration across Wyoming, the area would never be the same as it had been. The changes included the emergence of a boom and bust economic cycle and related business structure. And with that business activity, a military presence formed to protect emigrants but which also antagonized Native Americans and further complicated the picture. In addition, the fascinating and vast topography of the area became systematically explored and its features extensively communicated and widely recognized. Put together, these developments meant that the isolation and remoteness that once had characterized the region faded palpably under the gaze and influence of the men, women, and children, the freighters, the stage-coach travelers, the soldiers and explorers, the adventurers and homesteaders and refugees who walked and rode the trails, all under the watchful eye of the American nation.

This developmental force tied both directly and indirectly to the inauguration of settlement and livestock raising in Wyoming. The potential for grazing livestock in the area was evident from an early point. John C. Frémont, after his expedition that carried him through South Pass in 1842, advised the government to make a show of force along the road, with posts at various locations, especially at Fort Laramie (then a private trading post). As a necessity of the forts, he noted, "the country, which supports immense herds of buffalo, is admirably adapted to grazing; and herds of cattle might be maintained by the posts, ..." Moreover, at other points he observed that emigrants—already—were traveling the road, and "they had a considerable number of cattle, and were transporting their household furniture in

[5] T. A. Larson, *History of Wyoming*, Second Edition, Revised (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 10.

large, heavy wagons."[6] In fact, the emigrants did take with them livestock, the seed stock for their prospective herds in Oregon or California, or their own entire herds, with probably as many cattle and horses as emigrants if one includes the oxen that pulled the wagons. And those herds occasioned substantial trading along the road as emigrants would exchange tired livestock for fresh at the various trading posts; the livestock that had been traded away would subsequently be grazed, rested, and later traded yet again to other emigrants in need of fresh stock. As a consequence, the herds that Fremont anticipated emerged not only at Fort Laramie, but also at a multitude of other places along the road.

Indicative of the growing trade in livestock was the effort of ex-mountaineer Jim Bridger and his partner Louis Vasquez. After establishing their trading post at Fort Bridger, where they engaged in a substantial trade with emigrants, in 1849 the two camped near South Pass and "did a flourishing business selling or exchanging draft and riding animals, and hawking dressed animal skins." One report indicated that they were going to trail their animals east to Fort Laramie to sell to emigrants and gold seekers, but they had sold all their animals at South Pass and sent back to Fort Bridger for more than a hundred head more.[7] In 1850 one report noted that at Fort Bridger, "they have hundreds of very fine cattle and horses . . . ."[8] By the 1850s, when possession of Fort Bridger had been transferred to Mormon colonists, an actual flourishing agricultural community had emerged in that area, including the nearby Fort Supply, as part of a corridor of planned communities stretching eastward from Salt Lake. The reports of cultivation of grain as well as livestock were substantial, and there may even have been irrigation that early. On the other hand, all signs of that agricultural development, their fields, and the crops from them, were burned by the colonists when they withdrew from the area to keep the advancing U.S. Army from using their goods in 1857.[9]

While there was both a continual stream of livestock moving along the Oregon – California – Mormon Trail and a brisk trade in those animals along the road, enough so that the thoroughfare was teeming with the current of cattle and horses on the hoof and that the grasses on either side of the roadway became closely cropped for a wide distance, causing later travelers to have to travel farther and farther from the main path just to find feed for their animals, there was yet another dimension to the livestock associations with the trails. There were, in fact, cattle drives along the emigrant trail. The pre-eminent authority on the trails, John D. Unruh, observes that

> Historians have been far too parochial in dwelling so exclusively on the drama, color, and significance of the "long drives" on the Chisholm and Western cattle trails from Texas to

---

[6] John C. Fremont, *A Report of an Exploration of the Country Lying between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains on the Line of the Kansas and Great Platte Rivers* (Washington, D.C.: Printed by order of the United States Senate, 1843), entry for July 22, 1842, p. 48.
[7] John D. Unruh, Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi west, 1840-1860* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 261.
[8] John Wood, quoted in Fred R. Gowans and Eugene E. Campbell, *Fort Bridger: Island in the Wilderness* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 79.
[9] Gowans and Campbell, *Fort Bridger: Island in the Wilderness*, 85-86, 99-101.

> the Kansas railheads. Although such western communities as Salt Lake City, Oregon City, Sacramento, or Yreka are no match for Abilene, Wichita, or Dodge City in American folklore, they likewise functioned as the termini of much earlier, much more dangerous, and equally significant overland trail drives. Oregon – California Trail "cowboys" trailed virtually everything imaginable westward—cattle, sheep, horses, mules, goats, and even turkeys. Many of the drovers wintered in Utah or Nevada, but many also completed the long drive in one traveling season. And the quantities of livestock trailed westward along the South Pass overland route in the peak years of the early 1850s almost rivaled the numbers of Longhorns trailed northward from Texas nearly a decade and a half later, when the legendary Chisholm Trail first came into use.[10]

There were no turnstiles or loading ramps for counting animals along the trails, so any estimate of numbers of livestock is bound to imprecision. Nonetheless, it is clear that the herds that followed the road were sizable. Cattle herds were usually, according to Unruh's reading of the journals and log books, somewhere between five hundred and two thousand animals each. Sheep herds were larger, with as many as ten thousand in a flock being driven. This meant that in some years, especially during the 1850s, enormous numbers of livestock ranged through Wyoming on their way west, with, for example, around three hundred thousand animals being driven in 1853 alone. Unruh's estimate of how many head of livestock trailed through Wyoming—probably a half million cattle and a similar number of sheep—is conservative, probably even low, although it is fair to say that he is counting only those driven in large stock drives, not the personal herds taken by emigrants, a factor which could easily multiply that total.[11]

If there were a half million emigrants traveling the Oregon – California – Mormon Trails in the 1840s and 1850s, there were doubtless several times (or more) that number of cattle and sheep, not to mention horses, making the same journey—a point that was not lost on those others who followed the reports and who considered the possibility of grazing livestock in the area that would become Wyoming.
The Oregon – California Trail is best understood, not as a meager trail through the wilderness whereby lonely emigrants eked their way west, but as a major, sometimes crowded, thoroughfare on which travel, commerce, freighting, stock-driving, and communications activities and institutions for the West were channeled. Nor was it a single set of ruts on the ground. As traffic on the road expanded, it gave birth to alternate routes, branches, spin-offs, and cut-offs, especially west of South Pass where the "trail" fanned out into a virtual honeycomb of roads, each one with a claim to superiority over the others, each with its advocates and detractors, and each taking on a life of its own and adding to the complexity of the emigrant experience on the ground and in history.

It should be no surprise that the trails did not just die; rather, virtually every one of them transformed and moved and took on a new life, even if sometimes that life took shape miles away. And when a particular route finally ceased to be traveled at all, it was usually because it had given birth to its own

---

[10] Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 391-392.
[11] Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 395.

replacement. In a significant way, when the first wagons pulled by oxen trod their paths and left behind a set of ruts, those emigrants were making their way not only to the west coast, but were leaving a trail, both literal and metaphorical, that ultimately brought homesteaders and ranchers to Wyoming.

In the distant future, the pathways associated with the Oregon – California Trail would serve as highways and ranch and farm roads, but, like any other road, they evolved over time and they often spawned yet more and more activity, much of it branching out from the main trunk. That expansion was evident immediately. A series of explorers between 1849 and 1859 used the roadway as their path to new areas to be reconnoitered, mapped, and described for the benefit of the nation east of the Mississippi. In the 1840s Frémont, the Pathfinder himself, had returned to the area for more exploration and after that the army's Corps of Topographical Engineers spread out to gather information, to assess the prospects for settlement, to find travel corridors, and to prepare reports detailing the results of their investigations. In 1849 Captain Howard Stansbury led an expedition through Wyoming that ultimately took him well south of South Pass on his way to Salt Lake. In 1857 Lieutenant Gouverneur Kemble Warren ventured north of Fort Laramie into Montana, skirting the edges of the Powder River Basin while Captain William F. Raynolds went directly through northeastern Wyoming two years later. Moreover, H. E. Maynadier left the Raynolds expedition and took a group directly through the Big Horn Basin. The importance and relevance of this exploratory effort were both clear and William Goetzmann has spelled it out: "waiting in the wings as the all-important silent partners, were the settlers who would take full possession of the Continent as a result of these labors in western exploration."[12] A transformation was taking place.

This was not because of claims made by the explorers on the land, although those were there, and not because of marks left by the explorers as they crossed the wide expanses and scouted Wyoming's horizons, and those marks were there too. Instead, this transformation was taking place because they were adding to the nation's storehouse of knowledge not just about the roads but about the country that the trails passed through and then about the vast areas north and south of the trails. They were transforming the map of Wyoming from a *tabula rasa* to a definable, inviting, and increasingly charted place to be settled by white people. And by virtue of the information they gathered, the pressure for expansion, and for settlement, swelled, thus feeding the vectors of growth in a seemingly endless spiral where information generated interest and interest generated information, and where both interest and information generated more traffic, that added force to the changes.

Activity in the following decade escalated the significance of the trails and pushed the transformation that was taking place. The prime agent of that growth and transformation was the quest for a better route west and, importantly, to other places in the West. The primary alternative to the Oregon –

---

[12] William H. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 426. Lieutenant G. K. Warren, of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, had the great misfortune—or very good fortune, depending on the beholder—to be named Gouvernor. However the name served him in his lifetime, it has caused confusion for readers who have followed his tracks over the years.

California Trail became the Overland Trail across southern Wyoming. Traffic along the road through central Wyoming had increased, the military presence had expanded, tensions with the native inhabitants had consequently grown worse, and the commercial operation of freighters moved traffic to the south. In 1862 Ben Holladay's Overland Stage Lines secured the contract to carry the mail to the West Coast (and also deliver it to Denver) and the company followed a road well south of the Oregon Trail, which now became a significant alternative. Traffic continued along the main Oregon Trail, though, but when the telegraph was moved south in 1867, and the army abandoned Fort Caspar, the offspring Overland Trail to the south replaced the parent path, and a similar course of development—economic, social, military—took place along its route.

Likewise to the north. Despite the assurance offered by the U.S. government to the Indians in the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851, that the territory north of the North Platte River and east of the Big Horn Mountains would be the domain of the Sioux, the discovery of gold in western Montana proved to be a magnet that pulled white adventurers and prospectors and traders exactly through that area. In 1863 when John Bozeman and John Jacobs investigated a possible route to the gold fields that they might use to guide emigrants to Montana, they did nothing to promote the agricultural settlement and use of the land in Wyoming. Their destination was Virginia City, their clients were miners and merchants, not farmers, and their only use for this land was to go through it as quickly as possible. Yet, in so doing, they unleashed forces that would ultimately lead to the establishment of a road through the area, contested though it was, the location of military outposts along it, the migration of white people through the region, and ultimately the dispossession of the Native American inhabitants who had been using the country, thus making possible the white settlement of the area. In 1864 Jim Bridger similarly developed a road from the Oregon – California trail heading to the Montana gold mines, this one going through the Big Horn Basin. Both of these roads were short lived, and the Bozeman Trail, with its string of military posts in territory promised to the Sioux, was especially provocative and led to war. But once a road went through an area, more traffic would come no matter if the road was protected and promoted or if it was abandoned. Each of these roads would become a route for driving cattle into or through Wyoming and for settlers to follow on their way to their hoped-for homes.

The proper view of these trails and exploratory routes is not as ephemeral lines on a map that disappeared as soon as their travelers passed by. Instead, it is more instructive to regard them as the first rivulet of a flow of water into an area; even after the first rainfall has dried, the next one will follow the course etched by the first and then more and more so that the path of a river becomes set. Examples of this can be seen all over Wyoming, but especially in the corridor through which traveled the Overland Stage Line—the Overland Trail. The Overland Trail swelled especially as a commercial route, with increasing numbers of freight wagons traveling it instead of the emigrant road to the north. In 1867 that importance heightened and the road took on new life as the telegraph line was moved from the Oregon – California Trail to the Overland Trail. And the military soon followed with new posts along its path. But just as the Overland Trail took up where the Oregon – California Trail left off, the Overland Trail itself fed the forces that led to its own replacement. The Union Pacific Railroad chose as its main course the general route through southern Wyoming, not the central route through South Pass, and by 1867 construction of the rails had reached Wyoming and soon followed in some instances very close to the

Overland Trail. Plus, the railroad, from the very beginning, had started the process of building towns along its line. As T. A. Larson observed, "The Union Pacific brought a dozen towns to Wyoming where there had been none before."[13] Historically it was common for towns to emerge to serve the needs of farmers in an area, or perhaps a military post or mine, but Wyoming in the late 1860s presented a curious picture, even an anomaly, as towns along the southern part of the area that would become Wyoming took root and functioned before homesteaders and ranchers arrived to settle the areas around them.

ii. The Jeffersonian Vision, Land Law, and Democracy

At the same time that forces were at work to transform the land in the area that would become Wyoming, another set of changes were at work in the nation that would soon give shape and direction to the transformation underway. The trails, roads, and rails in Wyoming converged with a larger complex of forces at the beginning of the 1860s that signaled the contours of change. In fact, the framework of organized social order was being developed in the East and was about to be applied to the West. Of singular importance was the formulation of the method of disposing of the public domain, of transferring ownership of public land to private individuals. The distribution of the public domain and the transfer of its ownership and use to private individuals and companies has long formed one of the critical problems of American history, for this process has contributed to not just the growth of the nation but also the particular patterns of economic, social, and political activity that make up much of the history of the West. The complexity and nuances of the issue at one time attracted the attention of historians in a flourishing cottage industry of the profession, although significant questions still remain unanswered and fundamental information ungathered.

The first element in considering the disposal of the public domain was that it be transferred to individuals for their ownership. Much of the European heritage of land use (and thereby practiced also in some of the colonies) derived from the clustering in villages of people who would work the surrounding countryside, often as a commons. As individual land grants increased, however, an alternative system came into dominance, one in which farmers (and it was a nation of farmers) were dispersed, living on their own parcels of land. The two components—dispersion and fee-simple ownership—of land distribution, as well as their social implications, were institutionalized in the Land Ordinance of 1785 which established the fundamental survey grid of townships, six miles on each side, divided into thirty-six sections, the sections then to be subdivided into halves, quarters, and more, and this grid would then be applied to the land regardless of topographical features. This system both provided the seeds of individually owned pieces of land when the new nation distributed its domain and

[13] Larson, *History of Wyoming*, 41.

also carried a built-in tendency for the homes on those lands to be dispersed, some would say isolated, sometimes a mile or more apart.

The second element involves the process by which the land was actually distributed. The land laws of the nation in the nineteenth century are customarily reduced to items on a checklist or cells in a table, as if the various pieces of legislation were created, and best understood as, variants on a constant theme; as such they presumably can fittingly be memorized according to year and provision and that is all. Actually, however, these pieces of legislation reflect a simmering and sometimes explosive issue in American history, and together their evolution reflects a set of shifting priorities and perceptions. The key issue had to do with how the public domain of the United States should best be distributed and also with the social and economic goals of that distribution—that is, just how the land would promote or impede the establishment and exercise of social democracy in the nation. Some advocates, then and since, argued for the government to sell chunks of public land to private individuals, all the better if they would speculate in it and profit from it as they, in turn, sold it piece-by-piece to actual settlers. This course of action had the advantage of raising money for the public treasury, although not nearly the amount that the speculators would reap from their sales of public land to the public.
It was that latter point that "land reformers," including the original land reformer, Thomas Jefferson himself, found objectionable. They were appalled at the prospect of the American people having to pay a premium price to gain access to land that belonged to the entire nation, while a privileged elite raked off the profit in the transaction without expending any actual labor as a productive force on the land. The fact of the matter was, however, that that was exactly the system that was operating in the early years of the republic.

Thus the movement for "land reform." The approach of the land reformers was economic, political, social, and philosophical and these people saw a different system of land distribution as essential to the operation—and preservation—of democracy itself. Jefferson set the course of this movement and the movement pressed forward with his goals and arguments throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. With his considered reverence for agriculture as the most productive calling and farmers as the most virtuous part of society, and his regard for "those who labor in the earth" as even "the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people," and also as the philosopher of democracy, Jefferson sought at almost all cost to provide a system where individuals would be able to be free and independent producers, and a critical element of that freedom was ownership of their own land, or conversely, not being beholden to others for access to land. Jefferson famously articulated the convergence of agrarianism and democracy when he wrote, "the small land holders are the most precious part of a state."[14] Or, as one of his modern interpreters has summed up the Jeffersonian vision, "I take the

[14] See Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 20-22; and Garrett W. Sheldon, *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 72-77. Although addressing the issue of freehold democracy less directly, the discussion of the framework for settlement of the public domain and the "release of energy" in James Willard Hurst, *Law and the Conditions of Freedom in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967) is indispensable.

Jeffersonian Dream to mean Jefferson's affection for and desire to establish and preserve an agriculture of free-holders—full-owner operators, debt-free, unrestricted by contractual obligations to anyone—all in all, pretty much the monarchs of all they survey."[15] His idea was not that recipients of these parcels of the public domain would become rich on their own property, but that they would be able to survive, to subsist in freedom, and to prosper morally and politically, if not always financially. Jefferson's own proposal was to grant every adult in the nation fifty acres if they did not already own that much, and in that way to provide for the economic conditions of freedom, or as it was often termed, "freehold democracy."

The theoretical implications of this vision were perhaps clearer in the nineteenth century when they were being hotly debated than in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century when they have been widely forgotten, or just viewed as archaic and impractical. The central tenet, though, is one which continues to surface directly or indirectly and involves the extent to which individuals have land or other resources on which they may make a living. Political theorist C. B. Macpherson has most closely developed this notion in a model of what he calls "simple market society," whereby people do have land or other resources for getting by; in the alternate version, a full possessive market society, where people do not have that access to land, their resource is their own labor which they can sell in the marketplace. The critical difference is that without the land that Jefferson imagined as the basis of independence and freedom and democracy, people become dependent upon market forces for their own survival.[16] At that point it is clear that the discussion of land policy is no longer just a matter of memorizing the dates and provisions of specific laws to apply to test questions or survey forms; it is a matter of what kind of society emerges and what kind of lives people live.

Nor is this just an abstract discussion of principles and policy. Wyoming's origins go directly to this debate since, generally speaking, the portion of Wyoming east of the continental divide was included in the land that Jefferson acquired to promote his vision of democracy; as he said of that land in the west, the United States possessed "a chosen country, with room enough for our descendants to the thousandth and thousandth generation."[17] When Jefferson acquired that portion of Wyoming (and the rest of that huge acquisition) in the Louisiana Purchase, he was attempting to address the economic conditions of freedom and seeking to guarantee the future of the republic.

The Jeffersonian vision prevailed at first, with the enactment of legislation in 1800 allowing for the sale of the public domain on generous terms and allowing easy credit for the purchasers. Often forgotten, this legislation was so fundamental that Roy Robbins, historian of U.S. land policy, called it "one of the

---

[15] John M. Brewster, "The Relevance of the Jeffersonian Dream Today," in Howard W. Ottoson, ed., *Land Use Policy and Problems in the United States* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 86.
[16] C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 51-61.
[17] Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, Seventh Edition (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), 187.

most important measures in the history of the public domain."[18] This legislation, essentially a modification of 1796 laws, also allowed additional sales of land to take place near those lands, a feature which favored the actual settler instead of the speculator.[19] As it turned out, however, speculators managed to dominate the sales of lands offered, were able to monopolize vast tracts, and were able to exclude, by holding onto the land and awaiting its development, all but those able to pay the highest prices—excluding generally the American public. So the demand for reform continued. There were, however, those very much opposed to reform and this included not just the speculators but also the representatives of the slave South, who opposed western expansion in general (because of the threat more non-slave states would present to their key economic and social institution) and wished to complicate and foreclose any expansionist effort. Even with that opposition, however, a new law, the Land Act of 1820 attempted to open up the settlement process and move closer to the Jeffersonian vision. Hopefully, its proponents believed, the new law would loosen the requirements for settlement by eliminating the credit provision (which had been dominated by the speculators) and by reducing the price of land to be sold to $1.25 per acre. It also made land available in smaller portions, sometimes as small as eighty acres, to make it more accessible to more people.[20]

One other issue begged for attention and resolution too, and that one concerned the people who settled on land that was part of the public domain, but not yet offered for sale or otherwise opened to settlement. Strictly speaking, they were in violation of the law, but at the same time it was hard to deny the fundamental legitimacy of their actions. In truth, their crime was a technicality, not a crime of malice. Yet those people were summarily rounded up and booted off the land they had improved, out of houses they had built, and forced to give up crops they had planted. Meanwhile, speculators who hoarded vast tracts of land and held on to them, the notorious "speculators' deserts" where settlement could not take place until prices had reached a level high enough to generate a huge profit, those speculators were rewarded the longer they retained the land by the higher price that people would have to pay. From that situation came the Preemption Act of 1841. With this law, the squatters on the public domain were given a measure of legitimacy and a path of recourse in that a mechanism was established whereby they would be able to file for land they had already settled and improved. There were restrictions on this and claimants could not own a half section land total elsewhere, nor could they preempt more than once, nor could they preempt land just to sell it; one twist in the law was especially onerous for women since women could only preempt land if they had been widowed or were considered to be the head of the family, a restriction that largely left the application of the act to the males of the species. After meeting all the conditions of preemption, the individual could purchase the land for

---

[18] Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1936* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 18.

[19] The best discussion, and most detailed as well, of this legislation and subsequent acts too, is that of Paul Wallace Gates in *History of Public Land Law Development* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), 126-127.

[20] Paul Wallace Gates, "Land Policy," in Howard R. Lamar, ed., *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers), 639.

usually $1.25 per acre.[21]

This 1841 law was truly a major milestone in the development of the Jeffersonian vision in land laws. Historian Paul Gates notes the important shift when he writes, "it was the intention of Congress that settlers on the unsurveyed portions of the public lands would never again have to worry about the legality of moving upon land before it had been offered at auction, and that land office officials, no matter how strongly they were influenced by the revenue concept of the earlier days, should not have to face the unpleasant task of curbing intrusions on surveyed lands."[22] Similarly, historian Roy Robbins accurately observes that the new law expressed the notion that settlement of the land was important, more important than raising revenue through sales. The law, he says, indicated (1) that "Congress intended that the domain should not fall into the hands of those who already had enough land," (2) that the settlement should be undertaken by small farmers, and thus by the greatest number of Americans, and (3) that settlers should be allowed sufficient time to accumulate the funds necessary to purchase the land from the government. It was, as he says, "a victory of pioneer America over the more established eastern order of society."[23] This law also, it should be noted, proved to be one of the most important and most used pieces of legislation for the settlement of Wyoming.

As important as the 1841 preemption law was, and milestone though it represented, it still did not completely fulfill the Jeffersonian vision. It certainly encouraged settlers and prospective settlers to move onto land, and it also encouraged them to press for a more lenient land policy; talk increased of free homesteads. Yet this had its counterproductive side too. The pressure for easier land laws and for settlement of the West, and the coincidental growing migration to the West Coast beginning the year after this law was enacted, generated fears in the industrializing Northeast and the slave South—both of which saw in western expansion dire consequences for their systems of social order and economy. In a curious way, the growing sentiment for liberalizing the land laws contributed to sectional tension between North and South in the 1840s and 1850s.

It should be no surprise, then, that when the next major land policy was enacted, it was in 1862 and only after the South had seceded and was no longer present in Congress to block the legislation. The Homestead Act represented Abraham Lincoln's endorsement of the Jeffersonian dream of small farmers owning their own land with the encouragement, endorsement, and aid of the nation, and that was only natural since Lincoln was the second presidential nominee of a party built on the principles of Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men. This measure promised 160 acres of land to any person who would settle on it and develop it for five years, and now with no cost except for some nominal processing charges. For others, those who chose not to settle and develop—speculators, timber companies, and others—the land was still for sale. This seemed to be the culmination of the Jeffersonian prospect, yet it really did not

---

[21] Everett Dick, *The Sod-House Frontier, 1854-1890: A Social History of the Northern Plains from the Creation of Kansas & Nebraska to the Admission of the Dakotas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press: 1937, 1954), 20, 36.
[22] Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development*, 239.
[23] Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage*, 91.

deter speculation in land, and the amount available for homesteading actually paled in contrast to the amount being made available to the railroads as land grants at the same time. Nonetheless, it was now possible for an individual to claim 160 acres of surveyed lands under the provisions of the Homestead Act. And, as Paul Wallace Gates argued, "The Homestead Act breathed the spirit of the West, with its optimism, its courage, its generosity and its willingness to do hard work . . . ."[24] While settlers could exercise their rights under both the Homestead Act and the Preemption Act, thus securing 160 acres under each measure, they could not do so at the same time since residence on the claimed land was a requirement for each.

The Homestead Act actually represented both a culmination of earlier efforts which were designed to encourage and facilitate the settlement of the public domain by the unmoneyed citizens simply looking for a new start, and also a beginning of a new wave of laws moving in the direction of making it easier for people to file for claims as homesteaders on the nation's landed domain, the public's birthright. Eleven years later the Homestead Act was augmented by the Timber Culture Act and in 1877 by the Desert Land Act. The first of these measures sought "to encourage the growth of timber on the western prairies" and offered forty acres of land to the person who would plant and protect that amount of timber; it also rewarded homesteaders who cultivated one acre of trees on their land for two years by giving them their patents after they had been on their land for three years instead of five.[25] The intention of this law, aside from expanding the acreage an individual could claim, was to encourage the planting of trees on the Great Plains in the hope and expectation, then widespread, that this would increase rainfall; it was also calculated to increase the amount of wood available for fences and building materials. The second law, the Desert Land Act, permitted settlers to purchase tracts of up to 640 acres of land for a nominal amount, provided the land would be irrigated within three years of filing; title would be transferred when proof of irrigation was submitted within the three-year period.[26] In this law, the federal government launched the first of a series of efforts designed to encourage the practice of irrigation, tying irrigation to expanded land claims and settlement.

The package of laws together covered a variety of eventualities and certainly worked to open the lands of the West, including the vast portions in Wyoming, to settlement. Future actions would show that abuses would take place on the part of many different people and that the limits on landholdings were sometimes too small for commercial operation, and other shortcomings would be evident as well. That fact notwithstanding, though, probably the final judgment of these laws is that offered by their closest student and closest critic, Paul Wallace Gates. Gates concluded that, despite the defects in the legislation, "census figures show that actual farm makers in the new West were acquiring ownership of land, and it is clear that the Homestead Act was a major factor in achieving that objective." He also noted that the law "contributed more than anything else to making the area to which it applied a region

---

[24] Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development*, 394.
[25] Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage*, 218. Five years later the provision was amended so that only ten acres of trees were required instead of forty.
[26] Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage*, 219.

in which small owner-operated farms existed as well as large cattle ranches."[27] Certainly these laws offering prospective homesteaders the opportunity to acquire a portion of the public domain for their own use was crucial to the settlement of Wyoming and bringing the Jeffersonian vision closer to reality. Now, when people looked to the land of the setting sun and charted their futures, they not only had more information about the land in the area that, as of 1868, would be known as Wyoming, about the roads that went through that territory. Moreover, with the imposition of the land survey system of the United States on the land, and with the application of the legal apparatus allowing for the transfer of ownership of parcels of land in the public domain to individual settlers and families, Wyoming was no longer just a place to cross. It was a destination in its own right.

iii. A Minority of Agriculturists

Historians Charles and Mary Beard once wrote that the Civil War represented the Second American Revolution since it marked a dramatic shift in the purpose of the nation and in the structure of power, pressing away from domination by the plantation South and toward an increasingly commercial, industrial, and market-oriented social order. Just considering the laws passed in one year alone, 1862, Paul Gates declared, "In all the history of the West, there never was such a combination of measures in one year that was so productive of growth."[28] A vast array of laws marked the shift in direction and many of those laws, sooner or later, would help shape Wyoming. What is more, land laws, including not only the Homestead Act but other laws distributing the public domain, converged with forces on the ground to reshape the West and to launch even a new territory.

Aside from the Homestead Act of 1862, the most striking law dispersing the public domain came in the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 and its revision two years later. The same year that the Homestead Act was written into law Congress passed and President Lincoln signed the Pacific Railroad Act, a measure which chartered the Central Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads, the Central Pacific building eastward from the West Coast and the Union Pacific building westward from Omaha. The two lines would subsequently meet in Utah and make the linkage of rails official and complete. The law also provided the resources for the railroads to be built on the premise that private enterprise could not do it alone. In the midst of an expensive and draining war, Congress lacked funding sources to pay for the construction, so it granted the Union Pacific public land that it could either use or sell to raise money. In addition to the right of way for the tracks, the government granted to the two railroads ten sections of land for each mile of track (five on each side) but not the mineral rights to that land. It also gave loans, in the form of government-issued bonds, to the companies with the government as first mortgage holder. The loans ranged from $16,000 to $48,000 per mile of track depending how steep the terrain was, with a hundred

[27] Gates, "Land Policy," 639.
[28] Paul W. Gates, "Public Land Issues in the United States," *Western Historical Quarterly*, II (October 1971), 368.

fifty miles of the route in Wyoming being regarded as mountainous and thus qualifying for the highest rate and most of the rest designated as hilly and thus qualifying for the mid-scale rate of $32,000.

The 1862 Homestead Act and the Pacific Railroad Act the same year went hand-in-hand in promoting the settlement of the West, and were supplemented by additional 1862 legislation that planned to concentrate Indian nations onto smaller reservations so that those lands would also be available. In addition, Congress created a new Department of Agriculture in the executive branch to encourage and promote the calling of the tillers of the soil. Hand-in-hand with this, Congress also granted to states tracts of land for creating agricultural colleges. Wyoming was not singled out by Congress in these measures, and the area was not yet even a distinct political entity of any kind, and it is accurate to say that the entire West was the target, but as a central part of that target, Wyoming felt the impact and felt it quickly.

Two years after that flurry of legislation, Congress amended the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 with a new law, the Pacific Railroad Act of 1864. A key provision of this new law was the increase in the amount of land given to the railroads. Based on the 1850 precedent of the Illinois Central Railroad, which received the first land grant from the federal government, the system of transferring ownership was anything but intuitive. And that system was itself based on the technicalities of the township survey system in which each square mile (section) was assigned a consecutive number from one to thirty-six, starting at the northeast corner and ending at the southeast corner of the township. With that pattern of enumeration of sections, no two odd-numbered sections would be adjacent to each other and no two even-numbered sections would be side by side. By granting the odd numbered sections to the railroad, the railroad land and the public land would form a checkerboard in appearance.

Under the provisions of the 1862 law, the Union Pacific received the ten odd numbered sections along the right-of-way, creating, because of the checkerboard, a swath of land twenty miles wide, half belonging to the government and half belonging to the railroad. The 1864 amendment to the law, however, doubled the amount of land given the railroad so that it was now the *ten* odd sections *on each side* of the right-of-way, creating a vast checkerboard forty miles wide for the length of the railroad—and across the length of Wyoming. It also conveyed to the railroad the complete mineral rights for the lands granted, rights that had been withheld initially. The same law also authorized the two railroad companies to issue, on their own, additional stock, with the new, private, stock to have the first mortgage, thus placing the government bonds further down in priority of payment. The 1864 law also accelerated the schedule upon which the railroad could actually receive its subsidies—not having to wait for construction of each forty-mile length of track to be completed before receiving the money for that section. The new burst of laws clearly encouraged settlement of the West, and of Wyoming, but they placed more emphasis on commercial and transportation development than on settlement, and far more on commerce than on subsistence agriculture.

And when it came down to hard choices, homesteading trailed far behind in priority. Consider the other parts of the checkerboard land, those even-numbered sections that remained in the possession of the government. While the public land between the railroad sections would be attractive to potential

homesteaders, this land was subject to different, and special, stipulations. The land on the intervening sections would be available for sale by the government at twice the rate of Homestead Law lands (thus $2.50 per acre) and would be limited to eighty-acre parcels instead of the usual one hundred-sixty acres. Moreover, the government-reserved land could not be occupied until the railroads had received their full share of funds from lands. As historian Fred Shannon has noted of the larger pattern in the West, "This meant that for many years strips from forty to eighty miles wide (half on each side of the railroad) were closed to settlement, except for such lands as the railroads themselves held for sale at from four to ten dollars an acre, or more." In addition, to further encourage settlers to purchase land from the railroads, the government created a buffer of land beyond the checkerboard that could not be settled, and in Wyoming this apparently widened the strip of land to sixty miles along the Union Pacific.[29]

Settlers, perhaps understandably, did not immediately flock into Wyoming in the 1860s; indeed, immigration to the area was just a trickle, and when the railroad completed its construction and moved west into Utah, the population actually dropped. That temporary surge, however, had been sufficient to provide the basis for a separate territory, and for the government of Dakota Territory, of which Wyoming was a part, to petition Congress for that separation. As it happened, the primary opposition to the creation of Wyoming Territory came from James Ashley, chair of the House Committee on Territories. Ashley had previously advocated territorial status for Wyoming but concluded, after visiting the area, that the proposed territory had no agricultural potential. The land was too poor to support a population sufficient for a single congressional district and "not one acre in a thousand can be irrigated."[30] That pessimism notwithstanding, the territory was authorized in 1868 and officially organized in 1869. True to its railroad origins, the new territory was anything but a ranching and farming haven. Most of the population lived in the southern part of the new territory, and in fact those people lived very close to the railroad. And they did not live on farms and ranches. In 1870 Wyoming Territory had a population of 8,726 people, of whom 8,059 were over ten years of age (the age at which the census calculated that people were entering, or potentially entering, the work force). A total of 6,345 males and 300 females were actually pursuing an occupation in Wyoming. Most of those people were engaged in professional and personal services, with others in trade and transportation, and still others in manufacturing and mining (and, one suspects, mainly mining in that latter category). As for agricultural pursuits, a grand total of one hundred sixty-four men and one woman were "engaged in agriculture."[31] There was doubtless some under-reporting of farms and ranches in the remote parts of the new territory, but that they were so remote and so scattered underscores the small number that ventured into those areas.

T. A. Larson examined the manuscript census returns closely and was able to identify who some of these ranchers and farmers were, although the identity and residence of the solitary woman agriculturist

---

[29] Fred A. Shannon, *The Farmer's Last Frontier: Agriculture, 1860-1897* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1945), 65-66.
[30] Larson, *History of Wyoming*, 67-68.
[31] *Ninth Census – Volume I: The Statistics of the Population of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 4, 595, 670-671.

remains unknown. The number included forty-six "stock raisers" and twenty-three "stock herders" as well as thirty-four farmers and fifty-eight "agricultural laborers." Larson noted that the one hundred sixty-five people engaged in farming and ranching tended to be clustered in the southwest corner, and in the southeast corner, especially in Laramie and Albany Counties. In the southwest, William A. Carter was in the process of diversifying his business interests from trading and establishing a ranch in addition to a half dozen others close to Fort Bridger. Near Cheyenne, young John W. Iliff ranged his cattle in both Colorado and Wyoming, with Iliff living for a while in the new town of Cheyenne. Between these two clusters, four operations raised livestock near Rawlins and another dozen stretched from Bryan (west of Green River) to South Pass. As for the livestock, although just over eleven thousand cattle and six thousand four hundred sheep were on the farms of the territory, another twenty-five thousand were reported on the open range.[32] Whose livestock those open-range cattle were is not known; they could easily have belonged to one or two owners, like John Iliff, whose empire in northern Colorado and southeast Wyoming was vast. If the livestock on farms and ranches were spread around equally, which they doubtless were not, the forty-six ranches, or "stock raisers" would have each had two or three hundred head of cattle, not counting those "not on farms" and on the open range. These were, in the main, small operations.

For five or six years following the creation of Wyoming Territory, settlement increased, but at a gradual pace, with mostly small, family-based homesteads, and they continued to concentrate in the corridor adjacent to the Union Pacific with some significant exceptions. Until 1876 Cheyenne was the only land office in the territory, which meant that even settlers in the far western parts had to travel to Cheyenne to record their claims. And the vast majority of the early claims were under the Pre-emption Law since homesteads filed under later legislation could be filed only on surveyed land. And the survey of land in Wyoming did not begin until a year after territorial status had been achieved, at which point an official land district was designated and a register, a receiver, and a surveyor general were appointed. Those early claims thus used boundaries that did not conform to the land survey but were defined by the system of metes and bounds. Although subsequently converted to boundaries that conform to an aliquot of the township and section survey, original records will commonly use reference points such as streams and trees.[33]

The use of drainages as a referent point was more than a matter of recording convenience; those drainages actually shaped the pattern of settlement as homesteaders selected their sites, for water was critical to their operations whether they planned to raise crops or livestock, and most seemed to be interested in both. With the areas around Cheyenne and Fort Bridger attracting early settlers, additional

---

[32] T. A. Larson, "Ranching in Wyoming," in Judith Hancock Sandoval, *Historic Ranches of Wyoming* (Casper: Mountain States Lithographing Company, 1986), 3-6.

[33] The original survey plats, and the field notes generated by the surveyors, are available online at a site maintained by the Bureau of Land Management at http://www.wy.blm.gov/cadastral/surveydocs.php. In most instances, these field notes do not make reference to human habitation except for roads. They do, however, regularly comment on the terrain and vegetation often with observations about the grazing or cultivation potential.

settlement expanded along the drainages. In 1869 Justin Pomeroy journeyed up the Green River and built a cabin at the mouth of Fontenelle Creek; he subsequently returned to Kansas and brought his family back to his homestead. In 1872 John Smith went up the Green River and located his homestead a few miles up the same drainage where he could graze his five hundred sheep.[34] Others went onto the Laramie Plains which was nourished by the Laramie River and a series of lesser streams, and within a few years presented a picture, in the eyes of the territory's promoters, as a bucolic paradise: "The number of ranches on and along the Little Laramie River is something astonishing, and the owners thereof not only appear to be doing well but are waxing rich. Their herds roam about amid the wild grasses or loll lazily under the shade of the breeze-limbed cottonwood trees. A ranche in the mountains makes a very pretty picture, the willows to the right and left being of a rich green, while far behind rise the grand old mountain sides of blue, neutral tint, and violet."[35] By 1877 one L. Fillmore had established a cheese processing facility in Albany County.[36] Others settled along the North Platte, such as Frank Foot fifteen miles on the river above Fort Steele, who grew bountiful potatoes on six acres.[37]

Others cast their eyes on the northeast section of the state, the Powder River Basin, still firmly occupied and owned by the Sioux. In 1874 one newspaper reporter in Cheyenne quoted at length from the report from seventeen years before when Lieutenant Gouverneur Warren urged settlement of the area. Warren had concluded that the basin was mainly appropriate for grazing, but he also noted, "the country furnishes the means of raising sufficient quantities of grain and vegetables for the use of the inhabitants, and beautiful, healthy, and desirable locations for their homes. The remarkable freedom here from sickness is one of the attractive features of that region, and will, in this respect, go far to recompense the settler from the Mississippi valley for his loss in the small amount of products that can be taken from the soil. The great want of suitable building material which now so seriously retards the growth of the west will not be felt there."[38] Still others, migrating eastward from Utah and Idaho, trickled into the valleys along the borders with those territories. In the extreme western part of the territory, a salt works was established in the vicinity of future Auburn and a series of farms emerged in that area with a Mormon colony taking hold by the end of the decade.

As Wyoming Territory began to pull more and more settlers to its valleys and plains, again they seemed to be primarily small operations. Even the livestock raisers, except for a few moving up from Colorado, like John Iliff, had small herds and flocks. In 1875 the Cheyenne newspaper listed the fourteen largest

---

[34] "Stock Raising," hand-written manuscript located in "Livestock Industry—General" in the Wyoming Works Projects Administration Collection [also known as the Works Progress Administration Collection] in the Wyoming State Archives, subject file 328. Future references to material from this collection will be cited as WPA Collection. This particular brief manuscript focuses mainly on the area from the Green River and western part of the state. See also T. Hunter Salmon, "The Sheep Industry," in "Livestock Industry—General," WPA Collections, subject file 377,.
[35] "Life on the Little Laramie" Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, August 22, 1876
[36] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, September 8, 1877.
[37] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, August 17, 1877.
[38] "Settlements in Wyoming," Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, October 7, 1874

sheep operations from the Colorado border north to the Chugwater vicinity, and these included some of the most prominent livestock ranches in Wyoming—but they were small. The largest of these, that of M. E. Post on Pole Creek, had only eight thousand sheep. Others had significantly fewer, like the Durbin brothers on Horse Creek (2500), Sturgis and Lane on Horse Creek (3500), W. L. Kuykendall on Crow Creek (1000), Hay and Thomas on Lone Tree Creek (3000), Converse and Warren also on Lone Tree Creek (2500), L. R. Bresnahan on Crow Creek (800), and Searight and Company on Chugwater Creek, (2500). Of course, a great many others had far fewer sheep than these largest of the sheep ranchers. The point is that the farms and ranches were small and they were also diversified.

But this was about to change. Several events signaled the shift. One was the establishment a new land office in Evanston in 1876, thus facilitating expansion of homestead claims in that area. Another was the removal of the Sioux from their lands in the Powder River Basin, despite promises and assurances to the contrary and despite Indian victories over the army in the Sioux war of 1865-1867 and at the Little Bighorn in 1876. Another was a freakish 1876 spring storm in the Cheyenne area whereby the hail and freezing rain killed up to half of some flocks of newly shorn sheep, thus encouraging the grazing of cattle by some who had previously preferred raising sheep.[39]

By 1877, Wyoming's ranchers and farmers and stock raisers were still in the distinct minority of the territory's population and their livestock was still just a small part of the overall economy of the territory, but the numbers of livestock in the territory had increased substantially and the county assessments of that year reflected the growth—and also the distribution:

Wyoming Livestock, County Assessments, 1877[40]

	Sheep (and goats)	Cattle
Laramie	39,062	58,108
Albany	26,940	9,756
Carbon	1221	6883
Sweetwater	785	11,377
Uinta	271	3970

There were in Wyoming's five counties in 1877 a total of 68,279 sheep and 90,094 cattle. While there

[39] "Death Among the Flocks," Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, May 25, 1876.
[40] These figures are taken from the Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, July 24, 1877 and August 2, 1877.

were more cattle than sheep in the territory, the numbers of both were low and the cattle were only a little more numerous. In addition, the vast majority of all of these livestock were located in the southeast corner of the territory, but the herds were expanding to the north and west. Such was the pattern of stock raising in the young Wyoming Territory. A fundamental point needs to be made explicit: as of 1877 there were few cattle in Wyoming Territory. The herds were small, they were generally dispersed, and the land was but lightly grazed. Wyoming was not yet a cowboy country or even a cow country.

2 DIFFERENT VISIONS: THE RISE OF RANCHING IN TERRITORIAL WYOMING, 1868-1886

When Wyoming Territory was created in 1868 (and organized the following year), the vast landscape of the new territory was claimed and occupied, on the one hand, by a variety of Native American groups in the Wind River Valley and the Powder River Basin, and, on the other, by white people living in towns and cities along the Union Pacific Railroad in the southern part. There were signs that farmers and ranchers were starting to possess some of the land, but the new territory was anything but a bastion of ranching. For that matter, there were indications that sheep grazing would be as important as, or equal to, cattle ranching. Within a decade and a half, however, all that had changed. The Indian population had been removed or confined to smaller and smaller lands, almost every part of the state had been penetrated by small clusters of white people, and Wyoming had established itself as a pre-eminent hub of cattle ranching, with sheep a secondary pursuit. The territory had become crucial to the visions of transportation systems, and to the dreams of prospective livestock-raisers, cowboys, and, not least, investors from New York, London, Edinburgh, and beyond. In the process the Wyoming landscape was being transformed by the emergence of a system of ranching that lingers in the collective memory of the state and nation for its colorful characters, its vast horizons, and its tales of glory, and it does so even to the extent that this period overshadows much of the rest of the state's history, thereby distorting both this formative period of Wyoming agricultural history, this important phase of the range cattle industry, this crucial period in the establishment of the sheep industry in the territory, and subsequent Wyoming history as well.

The first two decades of Wyoming Territory are often remembered in terms of the flamboyant personalities who walked large on the Wyoming landscape, people who frequently appeared as a kind of royalty, even as cattle kings, in the annals of Wyoming and the West. But those figures and their outsized operations pale in significance when compared to the system that was emerging and of which they were a part. That new order was, in fact, not just a system of producing livestock, but an entire social system with distinctive priorities, practices, and flaws. That system encompassed the lives of people as well as cattle and sheep, provided a framework for settlement and development, and even gave the institutions of governance in the territory a distinctive social purpose, economic organization, and land use. And it left its own distinctive marks on the land.

The transformation that took place during the territorial years was not altogether as natural as sometimes it appears; it was not just a matter of where there was grass there would inevitably be ranching dynasties. The process in which this came about, in fact, owed much to external social factors operating in the nation in the Gilded Age. The forces at work in the reshaping of Wyoming Territory in a short period of time were more complex than a physical emigration westward of home-seekers filling a void. In these years the Wyoming landscape was being assayed not just in terms of the independent livelihood and freedom it could offer, and not just in terms of the Jeffersonian dream of independence that beckoned to many, but in terms of the profits it could be turned into with the least effort and expense by people who had no intention of living in Wyoming. Whether reckoned in terms of progress or predicament, the results of these forces went far in laying the foundation for the future.

i. Sheep and the Social Landscape of Territorial Wyoming

At its beginnings, agriculture in Wyoming Territory showed signs of remarkable diversity, profound decentralization, and amicable relationships between historical factors sometimes regarded as almost natural enemies. At that point, in fact, cattle and sheep were viewed generally as compatible and complementary livestock, both ranging only in small herds and flocks, both being raised on many (perhaps most) ranches, and each discussed in the same terms under the general rubric of "livestock." At the beginning of the 1870s, Dr. Silas Reed, the first Surveyor General of Wyoming Territory, examined the cattle and sheep industry and lumped the two animals together, observing that the experience with livestock proved "that it will subsist through the winter upon the summer-cured grasses as they stand on the ground without shelter or other care than for the herdsmen to guard them from separating and wandering off," and he concluded, "There is abundance of room for many times as much more."[41] When he did make a distinction, Reed noted that the herds of cattle were small and the flocks of sheep were large, and he quoted one news account as saying "On the Laramie Plains, and east of Laramie Mountain, Wyoming, are a great many small herds of from 100 to 500 beef and stock cattle, and large flocks of sheep . . . ."[42] Exactly how large those "large flocks" were he failed to reveal; all indications are that they were probably large only in comparison to the even smaller herds of cattle. Reed quoted Judge J. W. Kingman from Laramie, himself the owner of a large band of about a thousand sheep, to the effect that there were "quite a number of small lots, numbering two or three hundred each." A few others had a thousand head and two had the largest herds that he mentioned—ten or twelve thousand head.[43] Wyoming, at its beginning, was a territory not dominated by any particular kind of ranching or farming except for very broadly the widespread commonality of small, family-based units of production, and diversity itself. One particular point that bears examination is the prevalence and even

[41] Silas Reed, "Stock Raising on the Plains, 1870-1871," *Annals of Wyoming*, 17 (January 1945): 55. This article is a reprint of the report of Reed, who was Surveyor General of Wyoming Territory at the time that these numbers were gathered.
[42] Reed, "Stock Raising on the Plains, 1870-1871," 57.
[43] Reed, "Stock Raising on the Plains, 1870-1871," 59.

expansion of the sheep industry in territorial Wyoming. As the assessors' tallies indicated, and as contemporary observations confirmed, the sheep nearly equaled the cattle; the sheep-raising operations, although in their infancy, were healthy, growing, and every bit as much a factor in the territory as the cattle ranches.

As with the early cattle, the initial sheep flocks tended to concentrate in the southwest corner and the southeast corner of the territory with a trickle of numbers between and along the Union Pacific Railroad. In the southwest corner, Judge William Carter, who had been the post sutler and trader at Fort Bridger, had the largest flocks of sheep, although the number is not known. In the southeast corner, Thomas and George Durbin established their sheep operation near Cheyenne in 1869 or 1870, and they, along with Judge Kingman and the neighboring operations that he named, formed the nucleus of the sheep operation in that part of the territory.[44] And the Laramie Plains at an early point represented another concentration of the sheep industry. In 1877 the Cheyenne newspaper anointed the Laramie Plains as the most sheep-growing oriented part of the territory. "Several parties have flocks of 10,000, which have been but a few years in multiplying to that number. One man, with a pony and two shepherd dogs, are all that are needed to guard a flock."[45] Five years later the Laramie *Sentinel*, with some exaggeration, declared "the Laramie Plains are practically abandoned by cattle men, and given over to the sheep raisers. It has been done very quietly, peaceably, and good-naturedly."[46] Even allowing for the overstatement in this assessment, it was clear that the Laramie Plains was home to a lot of sheep. In December 1882 several estimates figured there were 200,000 sheep on the Laramie Plains, a figure that may not have been far off the mark. A local entrepreneur, S. H. Kennedy, in that year built a huge sheep dip operation in Laramie to serve those flocks and employed eighty men at the dip. In 1883 Kennedy said that he expected to dip half of the 200,000 sheep on the Laramie Plains.[47]

The sheep population was exploding and during the first part of the 1870s the Wyoming sheep operations expanded both in size and in territory where they grazed. An influx of sheep from three different directions fed the plains of Wyoming as founding flocks were brought to the territory from all points of the compass except the north. They came from the Midwest (or, as it was commonly referred to, the East), where sheep raising had its core and the sheep were carefully bred, especially the fine-wooled merinos. A large number, possibly even a greater number, came from the West Coast, where the flocks taken with settlers over the Oregon-California Trail had matured and now their progeny worked their way back along the same trail to Wyoming. Still more came from New Mexico, and those herds of coarse-wooled but strong sheep were driven along through Colorado to Wyoming. Significantly, the herders and a distinctive herding culture that spread throughout southern Wyoming came along with

---

[44] Edward N. Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," address to Wyoming Wool Growers' Association, Worland, Wyoming, August 2, 1940. A copy of this pamphlet is available in the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, Box 233, Folder 3, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie.
[45] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, March 31, 1877.
[46] Laramie *Sentinel*, September 10, 1882.
[47] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, December 21, 1882 and May 6, 1883.

those sheep from New Mexico; as if to further identify that cultural element, the sheep were generally known as Mexican and their actual breeds were seldom discussed in the historical record.

Wyoming proved an attractive place for those who aspired to raising sheep. The grass was good and plentiful, transportation facilities were developed, at least in the southern part of the territory, and the opportunities seemed ripe. But possibly the chief attraction was that the foraging in Wyoming was free. Miles and miles of public domain grew grass and sagebrush, and that feed seemed to be just waiting on flocks to consume it and grow fat and woolly. The free grass that the hungry herds depended on was available there, or so it seemed, for the taking, and it seemed at first to be almost limitless in its expanses. In addition, the terrain where that free grass was located was suited to sheep grazing. A key feature in the production of wool is the practice of transhumance—the seasonal migration of livestock, from the plains and deserts in the spring up into the mountains for the summer and then the movement back to the lower elevations in the autumn. By the end of the decade of the 1870s or early 1880s, even the Red Desert, which cattle operators looked upon with fear and disdain, had become established as a winter grazing ground for the herds of sheep. Indeed, the suitability of that terrain ultimately may have helped draw a line between sheep and cattle, a line that proved to be both topographic and cultural. In the 1870s, however, that line was blurred by the sparsity of people and animals alike.

The terrain and its publicly-owned resources were joined by economic forces and social institutions which also encouraged the expansion of the sheep industry. Sheep operations attracted people who were just beginning, people whose fortunes lay ahead of them rather in the past. It took very little money to start in the sheep business. Those who were well established, whose flocks were growing, often welcomed the newcomers with open arms and encouragement. Repeatedly the large operators provided young, aspiring newcomers their start by allowing them to run some of their sheep on shares. This practice, seemingly resembling sharecropping in the South, with its intractable conditions which amounted to a legal system of inescapable peonage, actually appears to have worked quite the opposite when people contracted to run sheep on shares. Colonel Edward N. Wentworth, whose 1948 history of the sheep industry in the United States (and especially its history in the West) was both a chronicle of development and a paean to it, noted that there were two fundamental forms of contract in use in Wyoming; both tended to be three year contracts. One provided the share contractor half the wool and half the increase of sheep at the end of the three years; the owner retained ownership of the original herd and the same number of animals was returned to him in addition to the other half of the increase in numbers. The second contract, evidently more common, provided for the owner to receive half the wool and all the wether lambs each fall; at the end of the three year contract, the ewe bands would be divided equally between the owner and share operator.[48] John Niland recalled the share system in a slightly different way, but reached the same general conclusion: "This [the share system] meant that he would herd sheep for another outfit and instead of taking all of his wages in cash he would take some of his wages in sheep. As a herder he easily could save money if he didn't have a family to support, as the

[48] Edward N. Wentworth, *America's Sheep Trails: History and Personalities* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State College Press, 1948), 345, and Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," 43-44.

company he worked for would furnish everything he needed, except for his clothes, bedroll and tobacco."[49]

This system proved to be a pointed and poignant social experiment, one that was widely noted for its success. Some of the leading figures in the sheep industry got their start this way. In 1873 Henry G. Hay and John B. Thomas contracted with the established company of Converse and Warren to run a thousand ewes (and some rams) on a share basis near Cheyenne. Before long the two sold the herd back to Warren; within a few years, they had started a grocery business in Cheyenne, were established as surveyors and contractors, then bankers and real estate speculators, and Henry Hay was elected state treasurer in 1894.[50] Dan Ralston, at age sixteen, started with a band of Woodruff sheep on and near the Wind River Reservation; Ralston subsequently became a prominent sheep operator and businessman.[51] A. M. and A. L. Brock operated on shares sheep that were owned by D. A. Kingsbury as they started some of the first sheep in the Powder River Basin in 1883, and the Brock family would ever loom large in Wyoming livestock.[52] To put it differently, and to include the vast number of people whose names are not explicitly associated with share contracts but who doubtless made use of them, the share contract system provided the basis for independence for a large number of sheep operators.

It is an irony that the basic terms of the share contract for sheep operators resembled the contract defining sharecropping in the South. Both provided for the contractor to receive a share of the fruits of working the owner's crops or livestock. In the South, though, that contract bound emancipated slaves ever more closely to the land instead of liberating them from it. In Wyoming, the contractors became successful herd owners and independent business people. The key to the difference is that in Wyoming, where the land was owned by the nation, and where the resources for making a living were thereby readily and freely available, the share contractors were actually freed from dependence on the owner. The public domain, the vast expanses owned by the nation at large, provided a powerful leverage for the independent operator.

The share contract system is important for another reason. Each time the owner contracted with another person to manage sheep on shares, the share operator was expected to move the flock away from the home flock and into other territory. There was thus an explicit and firm structure that assured the expansion of the sheep flocks of Wyoming Territory into progressively more distant lands, or, as Wentworth expressed it, "this clause resulted in continuous movement into new districts until all the range had become occupied."[53]

And, bit by bit, meadow by meadow, valley by valley, range by range, the sheep did expand across the

---

[49] John Niland, *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Lagumo Corp., 1994), 8.
[50] *Progressive Men of the State of Wyoming* (Chicago: A. W. Bowen & Co., 1903), 231-32.
[51] Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," 20.
[52] Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," 26.
[53] Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," 44.

territory. At first, it appeared that the expansion was territory-wide, although the Powder River Basin and the Big Horn Basin would find sheep becoming important at a later date than other areas. As early as 1870 a few sheep were being run by William Tweed on his Red Rock Ranch near future Lander, and this was despite the long haul he had for his wool which he took to Point of Rocks on the Union Pacific.[54] The number of sheep in that area remained small until later, although John D. Woodruff also established a substantial operation on the Wind River Reservation and in the upper reaches of the Big Horn Basin in the late 1870s. In the early 1870s a handful of flocks—of about 500 sheep—emerged along the upper Green River on Fontenelle Creek, operated by John "Sheep" Smith, Justin Pomeroy and his brothers, and some others.[55] Some sheep were ranging near Rock Springs and Archie Blair, who had been involved in the coal business there, about 1877 started running four or five bands of sheep, becoming one of the prominent operators. In 1875, Cokeville was settled and soon became a focus of sheep activity in that vicinity. By the early 1880s Rawlins, Rock Springs, and Laramie had emerged as regional centers of sheep operations and soon they would be followed by Casper, Lander, and Buffalo. Other communities would emerge as important sheep centers but the almost invariable circumstance was the location of the town on the railroad (or, more exactly, the extension of a railroad to a town) so that the wool could be shipped.

Indeed, the railroad proved crucial. The proximity of the railroad meant that the wool could be shipped easily. This, in turn, was driven by one of the chief distinguishing features separating the cattle industry from the sheep industry: the cattle could be driven for hundreds of miles to points on the railroad for shipping, but not so the wool, which had to be transported in huge, heavy bags by wagon with multiple teams of horses or mules to the railroad. (And these sheep were primarily grown for their wool; mutton would become an important consideration only later when transporting lambs became easier.) In this way, the route of the Union Pacific did not exactly define the location of the sheep operations, but it certainly influenced their location. In addition, sheep operators early on discovered that the country of the Red Desert, or of the Great Divide Basin, with its arid plains covered with sagebrush, was much more hospitable to sheep than it was to cattle. The result of both the good grazing and the convenient shipping was the significant expansion of the sheep industry into the areas near the Union Pacific in the southern part of the territory where the Union Pacific sometimes leased and sometimes sold land for grazing and where broad expanses of the public domain were available for free use. In 1882 the Cheyenne leader reported, "Wyoming sheep growing interest is on the increase, especially the southern portion where the range is not the best for cattle." About the same time, the Laramie *Boomerang* wrote, "The interest taken in the raising of sheep in Sweetwater County seems to be on the increase. We know of a large number of cattlemen who are either disposing of, or have sold their stock to make room for sheep on their ranges."[56]

---

[54] Robert H. Burns, "Wyoming's First Sheep Outfit," typed draft of article in Wyoming State Archives. Although Burns refers to this as "Wyoming's First Sheep Outfit," that claim, like so many other "firsts," must be shared with others, giving each credit for the "first" that each, in its own way, represented.
[55] Jonita Sommers, *Green River Drift: A History of the Upper Green River Cattle Association* (Pinedale, Wyoming: 1994), 1.
[56] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, August 3, 1882; Laramie *Boomerang*, September 17, 1882.

This turning from cattle to sheep was no doubt true in some sections where environment seemed to favor the woolly livestock, but probably in most parts there remained into the 1880s a certain stability between and mutual acceptance of both kinds of animal. The operations were diversified in the early years, meaning especially, as Wentworth summed it up, "Most of the early cattlemen ran flocks on the side and most of the early sheep men owned small herds of cattle." Conspicuous among these people, Wentworth noted, were ranchers like the Durbin brothers, Judge Kuykendall of Cheyenne, the Warren Livestock Company, Post and Corbett, E. W. Whitcomb, and Sargent and Homer—all of them raising both cattle and sheep.[57] Indeed, in 1873 when the Laramie County Stock Growers Association formed—it would become the Wyoming Stock Growers Association—it initially included both cattle and sheep operators. The range wars would result when owners had only one form of livestock and when other operators intruded on "their" grazing land. As of the 1870s and early 1880s, that point had not been reached. Wyoming livestock operations in those years remained generally diversified, amicable, and thoroughly mixed.

Those features extended to the people who were the sheep growers. In the 1870s the sheep operations were small, they were decentralized, and they were generally family operations, and family-sized operations. It was also an ethnically diverse part of the state's economy. Not only were many of the rising sheep operators new to the business, but some of them were also new to the United States, and still more retained enough of the old world cultures that they were often identified with their parents' country of origin. Edward Wentworth identified what he called "the Irish contingent," a group of people with strong Irish associations, many of whom found their patron in John Mahoney of Rawlins; Mahoney routinely, but selectively, started off young Irish immigrants by allowing them to work sheep on shares, and his partner, Pat Sullivan, would be especially important in developing the sheep operations in the area around Casper in the late 1880s. Again, the share contracts were vital to the system and Wentworth noted, "Much of Mahoney's increase depended on his ability to recognize merit in the partners who operated share flocks for him." Tim Kinney of Rock Springs, initially with the Union Pacific and then a cattle raiser, ultimately became one of the influential Irish sheep operators in the western part of the state.[58]

Similarly with the Scottish sheep operators. Robert Taylor seems to have been devoted about as much to producing Scottish sheep operators as he was to producing sheep and wool. Taylor arrived in Rock Springs in 1880 with two flocks of California sheep and, by employing family and fellow countrymen and starting them on shares, developed his own business and started that of others. Wentworth observes, "Most of the Scotch sheepmen in central Wyoming received their start with him, either on a partnership or share basis." During the 1880s he became one of the chief breeders of sheep in Wyoming. By the end of the 1880s Taylor had not only achieved his goal of producing a 100,000 pound wool clip but also his goal of developing a flock of 100,000 sheep.[59]

---

[57] Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," 24, 25, 38.
[58] Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," 24.
[59] Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," 22-23.

This pattern of ethnic sponsorship was not universal however. Sometimes it seemed that other ethnic groups were present, but were not only not encouraged to develop their own flocks, were not blessed with the opportunity of share contracts, and were locked into employment without the option of starting out on their own. The historical evidence on this issue is sparse and only tentative conclusions can be reached. Even so, the pattern is becoming clearer. The herds that came from New Mexico were a vital element to the Wyoming sheep business and "Mexican" or "New Mexican" sheep may even have made up the bulk of the early flocks, or at least a substantial fraction of them. And they did not drive themselves to Wyoming. Nor did the Irish or the Scottish or the English or others drive them to Wyoming. From the very beginning Hispanic herders played a major and significant role in the sheep operations of Wyoming, bringing with them the knowledge (and family traditions) of herding practices in the arid landscape of New Mexico and also leaving their mark (sometimes literally, in the form of iconic carvings in the bark of aspens) on the Wyoming landscape. Yet their names do not figure as prominently in the history of Wyoming sheep raising as the names of those who were permitted and encouraged to start their own herds on shares. Perhaps the closest any of them came to that visibility was the reference that Edward Wentworth made of the Cosgriff brothers who invested in sheep in Denver. The sheep that the Cosgriffs purchased, he says, "were sent up to the neighborhood of old Fort Steele under the care of their trusty Mexican foreman, Adriano Apadaca."[60] In many ways a form of agriculture open to all comers, it also had its limits, and those limits would increase in the future as the territory settled up.

The sheep industry in Wyoming was growing and changing, evolving from one system into another; as with any and every other part of Wyoming agriculture it was not frozen in time. By the 1880s some of the sheep operations had become large, some were specialized, and some, like the King Ranch north of Laramie, were focusing on developing purebred sheep. The share system would continue through the 1880s and even into the 1890s, but faded dramatically with the reduction in available grazing land. The sheep operations of the 1880s were already becoming much more business-like in their organization and this shaped their lives in subtle ways. Colonel Wentworth relates that Pat Sullivan "was a most unusual sheepman in that he attained success by managing his flocks from a distance instead of living with them." Increasingly, though, the sheep operators were living in town, not with their flocks, and they were also active in other businesses. Tim Kinney, as Annie Proulx relates, "got into store-keeping and banking in Rock Springs. He became a leading businessman of the day. Kinney was one of the original stockholders in the famous and still-powerful Rock Springs Grazing Association."[61] John and Thomas Cosgriff, after moving from Fort Steele to Rawlins in 1885, likewise developed their other business interests and ultimately owned twenty-seven banks as well as their own chain stores for supplying their

[60] Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," 16.
[61] Annie Proulx, "Red Desert Ranches," in Annie Proulx, ed., *Red Desert: History of a Place* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 322. This essay by Annie Proulx provides essential information about the various ranches that emerged in the Red Desert and should be among the first sources consulted in any investigation in that area.

herders.[62] In fact, more and more sheep operators would also be engaged in banking and merchandising as well as sheep, and the next generation of wool-growers would wear many hats. The future where the operations would become more centralized, more specialized, and more stratified—economically, culturally, and socially—lay ahead. At least one force contributing to that larger transformation of the sheep industry, and of the territory too, was becoming increasingly evident. One sign of the changes ahead appeared in a brief note in a Cheyenne newspaper in 1877: "large herds of cattle are moving this way from Texas."[63]

ii. The Cattle Bonanza

The raising of cattle as a focused, commercial operation in Wyoming had small, gradual beginnings. Dating back to the activities associated with emigrants traveling through the area and the commercial establishments that catered to their needs, and also the military posts that were placed along the trails to protect trail traffic, it was clear at an early point that the Wyoming environment was conducive to the growth of domestic cattle. Even so, the story has often been told that suggests that this was a sudden discovery on the part of people who had believed quite the contrary. The story has been told in many places and in many forms, with only the details varying. One variation went so:

> Early in December, 1864, a government trader with a wagon train of supplies drawn by oxen, was on its way to Camp Douglas, Utah, but on being overtaken on the Laramie Plains by an unusually severe snow storm, was compelled to go into winter quarters. He turned his cattle loose, having no place to protect or feed them, expecting they would perish by exposure and starvation. They remained about the camp and as the snow was blown away, they found abundant forage in the cured buffalo grass. When spring opened, instead of losing any cattle, he found them in better condition than when they were turned out to die.[64]

Whether told about Texas, Nebraska, Montana, the Dakotas, or Wyoming—all of which it has been—this oft-repeated story should not be confused with historical reality. That story, as ranching historian Edward Everett Dale wrote, "may be dismissed as a pleasing bit of fiction."[65] On the other hand, apocryphal though the tale may have been, one particular feature of the story is significant and revealing of the factual reality. The discovery of the nutritional value of Wyoming's native grasses was of more than casual importance since those grasses were abundant, were on land not yet claimed by settlers, and had proven their economic value. In 1885 Joseph Nimmo, Jr., the Chief of the Bureau of Statistics of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, issued a report on the range and ranch cattle business in the West and he specifically identified the grasses of the northern plains as valuable for their contribution to

---

[62] Nancy Weidel, National Register nomination of Walcott Shearing Shed, Carbon County, Wyoming, Section 7, page 13, August 6, 1997. I wish to thank Nancy Weidel for making this copy available to me.
[63] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, August 7, 1877.
[64] I. S. Bartlett, ed., *History of Wyoming*, Vol. I (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1918), 363.
[65] Edward Everett Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), 60.

livestock raising. While about fifty different varieties of nutritious grasses were located on the northern plains, Nimmo observed, "the 'bunch grass' (*Boutelona oligastachya*), is, however the most nutritious and sustaining and the most abundant of all. The gramma and buffalo grasses also abound." The key to their value, specific nutrients aside, Nimmo said, was that those grasses "derive moisture mainly from the melting snows of winter and from the rainfall of the spring months. During the summer months they are cured by the dryness of the air, thus retaining their nutritious qualities through the succeeding autumn, winter, and spring months."[66] What this all amounted to may be as simple as concluding that the native bison who had ranged on those prairies for centuries knew what they were doing, but to some observers, this fact held an economic significance that caused them to visualize castles in the air, or, more to the point, kingdoms on the prairies.

The new territory's leaders encouraged exactly that outlook too and there seemed to be a consensus among the economic and political elite of the territory that, the farmers who were successfully producing potatoes and small grains notwithstanding, the activity of greatest promise in Wyoming would be livestock raising. Early in the 1870s some of the territory's leaders took it upon themselves to promote ranching aggressively to the rest of the nation, and they were abetted in this by the Union Pacific Railroad. Dr. Hiram Latham, a surgeon for the Union Pacific, a prominent citizen of Cheyenne, and a tireless advocate and promoter of territorial designation for Wyoming, did not rest after the creation of the territory. In 1873 Latham raised three hundred dollars among Cheyenne business people "for the purpose of advertising Cheyenne as a cattle market for all drovers engaged in the Texas cattle trade, also to send circulars, etc., abroad to acquaint all parties interested with the facilities afforded by this city for the sale of cattle, and for their shipment east and west."[67]

Others did their part too. M. O. Healey of Cheyenne wrote Frederick Wells, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, to advise him of the wonderful opportunities for livestock raising in Wyoming, evidently hoping that Secretary Wells would further communicate this important information throughout the country. The terrain and the agreeable climate were perfectly suited for cattle and sheep, Healey pronounced. "Cattle and sheep not only live but thrive and get fat during the winters, needing neither shelter nor prepared fodder the year round; the whole cost being in paying men to herd them. Hence, stock-raising and sheep and wool growing, requiring comparatively small outlay, and yielding large profits, will be the leading business in this Territory for years to come."[68] The Cheyenne newspaper echoed Healey's pitch and noted, "The cattle trade of Wyoming is growing to be an important and profitable business. It may be said to be in its infancy yet, but each year growing more and more important."[69] The same year, the territorial Board of Immigration published and distributed a pamphlet encouraging investment in the business of raising cattle and argued that an investment of $35,000 would

---

[66] Joseph Nimmo, Jr., *Report in Regard to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885), 6.
[67] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, February 24, 1873
[68] Healey's letter was printed in the Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, July 1, 1874.
[69] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, September 25, 1874

yield a net profit of $80,000 within five years.[70]

This promotion of the range cattle industry of the new territory was but the beginning of a wave of speculative investment generally referred to as a bonanza, a prime opportunity for windfall profits of major proportions, with minimal risk, and with virtually no hindrance. Often translated as "blue sky" or "calm seas," the "bonanza" in the Wyoming cattle industry appeared to have only the endless skies and the sea-like prairies as its limit. There were two key features that gave the beef bonanza its allure and power. One was the vast, open prairies covered with native grasses, prairies that were generally unbroken by fences and property lines, prairies that had been grazed only by bison previously, and prairies that, in this new territory, were as of yet not the property of others. And that was the second feature. Those prairies, at least beyond the railroad corridor, were, in fact, a part of the vast public domain and thus potentially open for use by all comers without cost of purchase or rent, and thus also without the necessity of purchasing feed for the livestock. Considering the economics of livestock production, that free use of land made an otherwise expensive proposition extraordinarily cheap. This was the "comparatively small outlay" to which M. O. Healey referred, and this was also the source of the "large profits" that his calculations rendered.

And those profits were large indeed—at least by the usual arithmetic applied to the business in the abstract. The Cheyenne Daily Leader explained the system, and the prospects, with unrestrained enthusiasm: "in Wyoming," the editor noted, "a man may graze a thousand head and not own a foot of land." On that basis, the newspaper calculated that a prospective rancher could start with three hundred Texas steers and heifers and two Durham bulls, valued at a total of $4100. Even figuring the cost of "one herder" for those cattle, the profit gained in the first year from the natural increase of the cattle would be almost a hundred percent. Over a period of three years, the herd would reach a value of $13,475. After subtracting two thousand dollars for herding expenses over the three years, "you have a net profit of eleven thousand four hundred and seventy-two dollars, something over seventy-five percent, per annum interest on the money invested."[71]

As impressive as those numbers were, two years later the prospects seemed even more bountiful. The same newspaper acknowledged the widespread excitement and enthusiasm for ranching and reported, "huge stories are told about the profits of cattle and sheep raising, some of which, if I were to repeat them would set half the young men of Illinois crazy on the subject." So the editor proceeded to set the truth straight, but did so by confirming exactly those stories of easy and vast profits: "But winnowing the exaggeration from the mass of information I have picked up on the subject, and there is still left abundance of evidence that great fortunes have been made and are now being made at the business. It does not require much capital to begin with. Ten years of the business, it is claimed, with proper attention and common sense, will make anyone who engages in it rich. There are many men on the plains with their thousand head of cattle who began with a few dozen only four or five years ago. The non-productive animals were sold for slaughter, and the proceeds invested in others to increase the herd.

---

[70] Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 96.
[71] "The Profits of Stockraising," Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, April 15, 1875.

It cost nothing to keep them. The range is free. The cost of the herdsman's living is almost as unimportant. His herd is his savings bank and his increase is his interest, which goes on compounding from year to year, until the owner is a wealthy man before he knows it."[72]

This bullishness on the livestock market reached well beyond the Cheyenne newspaper and in fact the business was boosted nationally and even internationally. In 1881 James S. Brisbin published his wide-selling (and widely reprinted) book, The Beef Bonanza; or, How to Get Rich on the Plains. As Lewis Atherton noted in his important study of the cattle industry, Brisbin's book is more valuable for reflecting the economic frenzy than for stimulating it.[73] Certainly it reflected the acquisitive passions of the Gilded Age but it also demonstrated what seemed at the time to be a prudent, careful assessment of investment opportunities. Fundamentally, Brisbin helped people estimate how big a fortune they would make and how easy it would be to reap a harvest in cash—all by taking advantage of the free lunch awaiting their soon-to-be-purchased cattle.

Developing a matrix of factors that (1) showed how cattle production was not keeping pace with the population increase in the U.S., (2) included an assumption of an eighty percent reproduction rate for the cows, (3) used Durham bulls that could be purchased for trifling amounts, (4) included the assured reinvestment of money gained from selling worn-out breeding stock, and (5) built on seemingly infinite economies of scale, Brisbin developed several scenarios in which the capital invested easily doubled within four or five years, all the while paying dividends of eight or ten percent annually or even semi-annually. Often he assumed "modest" initial investments of seven or eight thousand dollars, but he preferred and advised much larger starting amounts, generally around twenty-five thousand dollars and up.[74] He also pressed on the reader the notion that the more money that was invested, the faster it would multiply, and so borrowing the money to invest, and thereby increasing the initial outlay, was assuredly no problem. In one instance, he drew a beguiling picture of easy money: "If $250,000 were invested in ten ranches and ranges, placing 2000 head on each range, by selling the beeves as fast as they mature, and all the cows as soon as they were too old to breed well, and investing the receipts in young cattle, at the end of five years there would be at least 45,000 head on the ten ranges, worth at least $18 per head, or $810,000."[75]

That increase was greater than could be made in investment in any other avenue of commerce, Brisbin maintained, and he imagined the formation of a cattle ranch corporation (or, joint-stock company as they were often termed then). "I have no doubt," he said, "but a company properly managed would declare an annual dividend of at least twenty-five percent. Such a company organized, with a president,

---

[72] "Stock Raising," Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, March 31, 1877.
[73] Lewis Atherton, *The Cattle Kings* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 25-26.
[74] For perspective on that initial "modest" investment, the herders and other hired hands employed by these operations would earn $25 to $40 per month, or roughly $300 to $500 per year, not exactly putting them in a position to invest in even the small ranches that Brisbin envisioned.
[75] James S. Brisbin, *The Beef Bonanza; or, How to Get Rich on the Plains* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1885), 45-55.

secretary, treasurer, and board of directors, and conducted on strictly business principles, would realize a far larger profit on the money invested than if put into mining, lumber, iron, manufacturing, or land companies. Nothing, I believe, would beat associated capital in the cattle trade, unless it would be banking, and stock-raising would probably fully compete with even banking as a means of profit on capital invested in large sums."[76] So it was that, with Brisbin's glowing picture of endless possibilities, the future on the prairies of Wyoming beckoned to all and any who could come up with money to invest—not in the Jeffersonian dream, but in the profits of the market.

As if Brisbin's argument itself were insufficient to provide the path to material wealth, the advertisers within that book gave detailed directions. In fact, one advertiser in Brisbin's book offered potential investors the path for such investments by encouraging them to put money into his own cattle corporation. David Sherwood, of Connecticut, modestly stated the prospectus for his company so: "The profits are enormous. There is no business like it in the world, and the whole secret of it is, it costs nothing to feed the cattle. They grow without eating your money. They literally raise themselves."[77]

James Brisbin was enthusiastic about the business potential of large-scale cattle ranching in Wyoming and he expressed the sentiments of many people who looked at the broad spaces and saw endless horizons and unending profits. And, from the perspective of later years, he clearly exaggerated the glorious future awaiting the investors. But Brisbin was not stupid and he was not a charlatan. To the contrary, Brisbin, an attorney and popular anti-slavery orator in the 1850s, had joined the Union Army at the outbreak of the Civil War, had risen to the rank of major general, and had then served at various posts in the West after the war. It was this western experience, in Montana especially, and traveling broadly, that he drew upon in this volume. Moreover, he talked with ranchers who were critical of the prevailing ranching system, and he reported their doubts about some practices even though he appears not to have shared them. He did believe, contrary to some others who were promoting cattle ranches, that sooner or later the ranchers would need to purchase, or lease, the land they used for range so that they would be able to have actual control of the land to cement their market share, and he also, and literally in the same sentence, maintained that the ranchers needed to control the markets in which they sold, especially by monopolizing government contracts and dominating eastern markets.[78]

Rather than someone trying to push, knowingly or not, a phony bill of goods, James Brisbin actually demonstrated a close knowledge of economics of the national marketplace; if anything, he was a promoter of an industrial form of organization as much as he was a promoter of ranching. And he thought big, suggesting that the small operators already in the valleys of Wyoming were taking up the land along the waterways so fast that "in a few years it will be difficult to find vacant range in Wyoming, Nebraska, or Montana suitable or capable of sustaining 5000 head of cattle." These small

---

[76] Brisbin, *The Beef Bonanza*, 56.
[77] This advertisement was evidently included in some editions of the original book, but not all; see the copy in the reprint edition, James S. Brisbin, *The Beef Bonanza: or, How to Get Rich on the Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959).
[78] Brisbin, *The Beef Bonanza*, 56-57.

operators, from his perspective, simply lacked the vision and financial acumen to make the most of the abundant resources of the country. And therein lies the key to understanding what was happening in the beef bonanza underway. General Brisbin was applying the values, the organization, and the calculus of industrial civilization in the East to the open ranges of Wyoming Territory. The beef bonanza is significant for several reasons, but one of them is that this was among the first of several efforts to transform Wyoming to meet the requirements and appetites of systems conceived and developed far away.

One immediate consequence of the growth in ranching was an increase in the demand for cattle to graze on the range and, to stock the range, cattle were being brought, more and more, onto the Wyoming landscape. Many of the earliest cattle in territorial Wyoming appear to have been a simple expansion of herds in Colorado that had been brought from Texas. Soon, however, the vast majority came directly from Texas to Wyoming. In 1872 the Creighton ranch, fifty miles northeast of Cheyenne, reportedly had been started with two thousand cattle driven from the King Ranch in Texas.[79] The King Ranch proved to be a major supplier to Wyoming. In 1876 what was called the Centennial Cattle Drive brought around two hundred thousand head from the King Ranch to Wyoming as of late July, with more to follow that season. The news account reporting on this cattle drive noted, "the great majority (2/3) are young cattle (one, two, and three year olds), not cattle destined for market this season."[80] (It was not unusual for cattle to be taken to market until at least four years old and often five, six, or even seven years old.) And those cattle were snapped up by ready buyers. A month after the King Ranch cattle arrived, John Iliff, who had advertised for twenty thousand head of Texas cattle to be delivered that season, faced the prospect that he may not be successful in claiming some of the vast number brought and would have to find alternate sources; a year before he had purchased 6,000 head.[81] A year later, 1877, the demand had increased again and the Cheyenne press reported, "the present active demand for Texas cattle from parties stocking their ranges or those engaged in cattle raising, promises to result in high prices for beef next fall, and also in an increased movement from Texas next year."[82]

People in Wyoming who had not previously considered raising cattle as their life calling were attracted to the booming business. Robert H. Homer had been involved in international trade but moved to Laramie in 1871 and ran a sheep operation. By 1878, however, he too was caught up in what he called

---

[79] "The Creighton Ranch," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 210.
[80] "Centennial Cattle Drive," Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, July 20, 1876.
[81] "Iliff the Cattle King," Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, August 21, 1876. At the time, Iliff, widely observed in 1875 to be the largest range cattle operator in both Colorado and Wyoming, was estimated by the same newspaper to have about 26,000 head of cattle and employed somewhere between a dozen and three dozen cowboys to manage the herd. When Iliff died two years later, he may have had as many as 50,000 head of cattle in his herds. See also, Agnes Wright Spring, "'A Genius for Handling Cattle': John W. Iliff," in Maurice Frink, W. Turrentine Jackson, and Agnes Wright Spring, *When Grass Was King: Contributions to the Western Range Cattle Industry* (Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado Press, 1956), 393.
[82] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, August 4, 1877.

the "great excitement" and wrote his father in Boston asking for a loan of $25,000 so he could get in on the beef bonanza. He had to act quickly and shrewdly, the young Homer wrote, because the country was becoming "full of buyers."[83]

iii. Stocking the Range

Those eager buyers turned their eyes south. The stories of the cattle drives north from Texas to the cow towns in Kansas from which they were shipped to market are the stuff of legend. They are also components of a huge migration. Historian and geographer Terry Jordan, who has studied this issue as closely as anyone, speaks not only to the larger context of this process but also to its global significance: "In all, over five million Texas cattle were reportedly driven north between 1866 and 1884, involving the largest short-term geographical shift of domestic herd animals in the history of the world."[84]

The cattle drives from Texas initially went *through* Wyoming without tarrying longer than necessary but subsequent drives made the territory an important destination. The first cattle drive to Wyoming demonstrated some of the dynamics at work. In 1866 Nelson Story made a small fortune through shrewd trading at the gold boomtown of Bannock City, in future Montana, invested the money in a thousand head of Texas cattle and hired a crew to help him take them to Montana. The herd followed the still new trail up the plains to Fort Laramie and from there to Fort Phil Kearny. Story encountered delays at the hands of both the Sioux, who resented his intrusion into their territory, and the army, which required him to delay travel until a larger traveling group could be put together; Story proceeded in defiance of both and took his herd of cattle toward Fort C. F. Smith in Montana and from there to points beyond in the Yellowstone River valley.[85]

---

[83] Maurice Frink, "When Grass Was King," in Frink, Jackson, and Spring, *When Grass Was King: Contributions to the Western Range Cattle Industry*, 28-29.

[84] Terry G. Jordan, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion, and Differentiation* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 222. Jordan seems to have taken his numbers from the standard contemporary account of the time, Joseph Nimmo's study of ranching compiled in 1885. Most accounts use those statistics too, although Edward Everett Dale interviewed a number of ranchers and other observers and reported, "The numbers given are but rough approximations and most drovers who took part in the movement of cattle northward during these years insist that they are far too low. Colonel Ike T. Pryor of San Antonio estimates that the average annual drive northward from Texas from 1870 to 1890 was half a million head." This average, if accurate, would double the tally to around ten million. Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 59-60.

[85] See the account of Byron Story, "The First Cattle up from Texas," *American Cattle Producer*, November 1938, 6-7, and Dee Brown, *The Fetterman Massacre* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984 [1962]), 134-138.

This cattle drive is often cited as the first entry of cattle into Wyoming, and for that the venture has been widely heralded, if not completely understood. Closer examination does not detract from the accomplishment, but it does suggest that the significance is more symbolic than actual. Of course, Story went through Wyoming, not into Wyoming. Plus, when he went through Wyoming he took his cattle, but this was the same thing that others had done previously on their way west. And there already were cattle in the area when Story trailed his own herd past them to Montana. Wyoming presented, if anything, not a destination and not a discovery for Nelson Story; it was mainly a frustrating delay in his plan. While many accounts attribute to Nelson Story the introduction of cattle into Wyoming, or into the Powder River Basin, the significance of that undertaking fades when considered in a larger context.

In fact, the trail drives of fact and legend had to wait for other developments far away before they took off and became a prominent force in Wyoming ranching history. After the Civil War, a number of Texas ranchers looked to markets in the Northeast for their herds of cattle, the idea being to transport them to the Corn Belt states of Iowa and Illinois where they would be fattened for secondary sale for slaughter and processing. In this they were abetted by the buyers in the North who themselves often journeyed to Texas to acquire herds to take back with them. The early years of this effort were not famous successes. The first year, 1866, according to cattle range industry historian Edward Everett Dale, "was disastrous in the extreme" and the following years were almost as painful.[86] The problems were several: a lack of experienced drovers; a path that led through wooded and otherwise difficult territory in eastern Texas, Indian Territory, eastern Kansas, and western Missouri; a fear, by residents where the trail passed, of Texas cattle as potential carriers of Texas Fever; and even armed resistance to the cattle drives. And this combination did little to mark the early experiments as desirable and the following years saw a preference even for taking the cattle by steamer up the Mississippi River. This too, had its drawbacks.

The solution seemed to come with the establishment of a shipping point in the village of Abilene in eastern Kansas in 1867 by cattle dealer Joseph G. McCoy. The key to this was that McCoy had chosen Abilene because it was near the western terminus of the southern branch of the Union Pacific Railway, soon to be known as the Kansas Pacific. If cattle were driven from Texas to McCoy's pens at Abilene, they would take a route west of the previous trails and thereby avoid much of the settled population and some of the difficult terrain that had been such a problem. The cattle could be driven to the railroad and then shipped to the corn belt much more easily and more economically and with fewer losses. This worked. And in this way the drives doubled in 1868 and reached greater proportions in 1869. The cattle drives were underway.

The commercial and physical environments in which the drives took place, however, were fluid and over time the changes altered the course of the cattle drives literally. By 1871 another railroad, the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe, had stretched farther west and farther south and now there were competing shipping points at Newton and Wichita, Kansas. Moreover, agricultural settlement—the bane of cattle drovers—increased and spread farther west in Kansas. Abilene was quickly abandoned as

[86] Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 50.

a shipping point, or at least as a destination for the cattle drives, in preference to the points west. Several more communities emerged but they were all replaced by Dodge City. Founded in 1872, this was "the greatest of all" cowtowns, and the route to Dodge City enabled the cattle drives to head up from Texas through more hospitable terrain, away from cultivated land, and toward a new and different potential market.

The route to Dodge City, as it turned out, served a double purpose. Mature, fat cattle could be sold to buyers in Dodge City who would ship them to Kansas City or Chicago for slaughter, sometimes with a hiatus where they would be fed and fattened, much as the process had been at the more eastern shipping points. But now there was an alternative. As E. E. Dale described, "as the years went by, the larger part of the cattle driven from Texas to Kansas were sold for the purpose of stocking the northern ranges. As the buffalo were killed and the Indians confined upon reservations the northern plains became increasingly attractive for ranching. It was soon found that not only would cattle live the year round upon the open ranges of Wyoming, Dakota, Montana and the other western territories, but that they grew larger and fatter there than did cattle in Texas."[87]

The Texas cattle that wound up in Wyoming usually followed one of two trails. One was the Goodnight – Loving Trail which went westward from Texas into New Mexico, south of the arid and foreboding Llano Estacado of the Texas panhandle and eastern New Mexico, beyond which the trail turned north toward Colorado. Charles Goodnight had first used a variation of this route in 1866, crossing what was known as "a cattleman's graveyard," but others subsequently followed it as well. While this was the source of many of John Iliff's steers, it also was the source for many other ranches that built up in New Mexico and Colorado and many of the cattle were used to stock the range at points well short of Wyoming, especially in the early years. By 1874 the Arkansas River valley in southern Colorado had been almost completely settled by cattle ranchers for a hundred miles east of Pueblo.[88] Soon, however, the destination of this trail gradually extended northward to Cheyenne, and after that to the Lusk area.

The other trail, the Western Trail, or even Great Western Trail, "the best known and longest used," according to Dale, had as its ultimate beginning point the area around Bandera, Texas, northwest of San Antonio. Of course, cattle at various places in northwest Texas were moved onto this trail that went north well east of the Texas panhandle. It crossed the Red River separating modern western Oklahoma from Texas at Doan's Crossing and proceeded north across what was at that time Indian Territory, and into Kansas. At Dodge City, the trail divided, with one branch, known as the Texas Trail, heading northwest across the corner of Colorado and entering Wyoming Territory below Pine Bluffs and then moving north, across the North Platte and through the Powder River Basin and into Montana. The other branch went north from Dodge City to Ogallala, Nebraska and from there to the Black Hills, with one branch going to the west of the Black Hills and another going to the east. The branch that went west of the Black Hills, of course, fed the Montana and Powder River cattle industry and even rejoined the Texas Trail.

---

[87] Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 58.
[88] Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*, 18-19; Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 86.

For all its prominence in the lore and literature and media treatments of the trail drive, surprisingly little research has been undertaken to document the journey and the best account of trail drive organization and activity comes from the pen of Edward Everett Dale. Dale did not actually make the trail drive, but his early life followed the trail from Texas into Oklahoma where he and his brother were cowboys, and they even briefly tried ranching (until their ranch failed) in the path of the Great Western Trail, and he subsequently put his experience to academic use, and also used his academic training to illuminate the trail, when he studied western history under Frederick Jackson Turner at Harvard. He then became one of the foremost authorities on the history of cattle ranching in the West.

By Dale's account, although he does not explicitly say such, the trail drive experience foreshadowed the system of ranching on the ranges to which the cattle were being taken. The guiding principle was to move the cattle gradually, allowing them even to put on weight on the journey. The size of the herds ranged widely and while records were not kept for the drives, one season in which Kansas employed trail inspectors showed that of the fifty-seven herds that crossed the Arkansas River, the smallest had seventy head and the largest had 3,300. Most herds, though, were between two and three thousand head with an average of 2,500. There were instances that went beyond these numbers other seasons and occasionally multiple herds would be combined; one such combined herd numbered over twenty-five thousand head. The usual herd of 2,500, however, required a dozen cowboys with four to six horses each, four mules, and a chuck wagon. The cattle would be started to move early in the morning, slowly, drifting and grazing, actually, until after about two hours they were strung out in a sinuous column about a mile long and fifty feet wide. Then the pace was quickened and the cattle moved until noon when the herd reached the point where the cook had gone ahead, near water preferably, and the herd was allowed to graze for a couple of hours. After the lunch break, the cattle again were moved, driving once again until they reached the point where the trail boss had designated for the cook to make camp for the evening.[89] At this rate, the cattle would travel about fifteen miles in a day and the whole trip would take between four and six months.[90] In important respects, the trail drive was a rehearsal for the roundups used in the range cattle industry in Wyoming.

It should also be noted that there was another source for cattle to stock Wyoming's ranges. Although the cattle driven to Wyoming from Oregon were but a fraction of the Texas numbers, some Wyoming ranches did procure their cattle in the Northwest. As early as 1876 two herds made the journey from Oregon and the following two years about a hundred thousand head traveled to Wyoming and Colorado each season, going to ranches like those of J. H. Douglas-Willan and Lionel Sartoris west of Laramie and in subsequent years to the Ell Seven (L7) Ranch of Henry and Will F. Swan in the Saratoga valley. Others were distributed around the territory, with some going to the ranches along the old Oregon Trail, like the Sun Ranch and the Searights' Goose Egg Ranch.[91] These Oregon cattle were not the

---

[89] Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 62-67.
[90] See the statement by E. V. Smalley in an appendix to Nimmo's report on the range cattle industry: Nimmo, *Report in Regard to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business of the United States*, 76.
[91] Agnes Wright Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers*

Longhorns that dominated the Texas herds, but Herefords, and were widely recognized as being of a superior breed.

And so the cattle and the system of herding them moved to Wyoming. This transplanting changed Wyoming dramatically and it did so within a very short period. Given that the cattle drives to the northern plains did not really take off until 1876 or 1877, the change is that much more dramatic. In 1870 Wyoming Territory had a total of 11,130 head of cattle on its farms and ranches, and the assessed valuation of domestic cattle in 1877 had jumped to nearly 76,000 animals. But by 1880 the census reported 278,073 domestic cattle in the territory.[92] Cattle ranching, open range cattle ranching, and, even more specifically, the Texas system of cattle ranching was taking hold in Wyoming.

With acknowledgment of the cluster of cattle ranches in southwest Wyoming, the major population of cattle in Wyoming initially concentrated in the southeast corner of the territory as cattle moved from Colorado, and also directly from Texas into that area. The ranches in the rolling plains of the area generally from Ogallala, Nebraska west to Pine Bluffs and then to Cheyenne, and on to the natural boundary formed by the Laramie Range, became some of the most well known, some of the biggest, and some of the earliest in the territory. Of course, John Iliff had established himself not only along the South Platte River in Colorado but in southeastern Wyoming too and had demonstrated the prime grazing land available there as well as the easy access to markets—the fundamental requirements of the business.

The ranches quickly took shape in the southeast corner. For example, in 1869, Joseph M. Carey, who had recently been appointed U.S. District Attorney for the territory, wrote his brother in Philadelphia with his plan to enter the cattle business; he told his brother that others were getting rich by borrowing money, investing it in cattle, and then sticking with the business for just a handful of years.[93] Thus was born the Carey and Brother Ranch. Carey's cattle trailed in from Texas in 1872 and he "turned the cattle loose on Crow Creek about fifteen miles above Cheyenne" where the ranch made its headquarters.[94] At some point in the early 1870s, James Harvey Pratt and his brother-in-law, Cornelius Ferris, formed a partnership, operated a freighting company and sold goods at Fort Randall in Nebraska, and soon moved to Wyoming where they established their ranch on the border near Scotts Bluff.[95] In 1875 the Pratt & Ferris partnership was listed as one of the major buyers of livestock in Laramie County. The Creighton ranch located about forty miles northeast of Cheyenne on Horse Creek in 1872; the Searight Brothers located their AL Ranch on the Chug near Chugwater; and Dudley and John Snyder occupied the Sybille, where Dudley Snyder actually sold cattle that John Snyder drove from Texas to larger ranches. Plus

---

Association (n.p.: Wyoming Stock Growers Association, 1942), 44-59.

[92] U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Report on the Productions of Agriculture as Returned in the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880),* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 5.

[93] Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*, 23.

[94] Agnes Wright Spring, "'A Genius for Handling Cattle': John W. Iliff," 393.

[95] http://www.wdc-ancestors.info/pages/PrattRanch.htm. The Pratt & Ferris Company was formed in 1879 when Pratt & Ferris incorporated and added Marshall Field and Levi Leiter to the ownership.

there were others scattered around, like Charles Wulfjen, Goodell & Sturgis, the Bosler Brothers Ranch, Hi Kelly's ranch, and Webb and Coffee—all in Laramie County.[96] As for shipping cattle out of Wyoming, between January 1, 1874 and September 1, 1875, 553 cars shipped from Cheyenne and 167 from Pine Bluffs, with the remainder distributed in small numbers among other points westwards. Following along virtually every stream and river, ranches dotted the southeast corner of the territory, the area south of the North Platte River and East of the Laramie Range. This was the hub of the Wyoming cattle business in the middle of the 1870s. The assessment of cattle in the territory in 1877 showed Albany County with 9,756, Carbon County with 6,883, Sweetwater with 11,377, Uinta with 3,970 and Laramie County leading the list with 58,106.[97]

These numbers were about to change dramatically as the available range began to multiply in acres and to expand across the territory. Several forces were at work. One was the removal of the Sioux from the Powder River Basin, and also the "extinction" of the legal title that they had to that land, thus making it possible for white people, physically and legally, to enter the area, stake claims, establish farms, ranches, and communities, and especially to turn loose their cattle. In his 1885 study of the range cattle industry, Joseph Nimmo noted this transformation, using the 1876 battle at the Little Big Horn as the turning point. With the systematic effort to remove the Indians to reservations, Nimmo observed, the spirit of resistance was broken and "in the course of a few years, hundreds of thousands of cattle, almost all of them driven from the State of Texas as yearlings and two-year-olds, were quietly grazing throughout the former haunts of the buffalo, and the cowboy, armed and equipped, a bold rider, and valiant in fight, became the dominating power throughout vast areas where but a few years before the Indian had bidden defiance to the advancement of the arts of civilization." This removal, Nimmo said, was justified because the country needed cheap beef: "it appears but just to settlers and to those who are pursuing legitimate and useful occupations upon the public lands, whereby the people of the country are better supplied with cheap beef, that the desire of the cattlemen for the better protection of their interests should be respected."[98] This was not the first time that the human costs of social change in the name of "progress" were dismissed by advocates of the new order, nor would it be the last.

Another force, however, saw not just the Indians removed from the areas where they previously held forth, but also the removal of the smaller ranchers by the bigger operators where they too had been dominant. The ranchers that had once been big were now being dwarfed by a second wave of the ranching frenzy. In 1876 the Searight brothers sold their AL ranch to Alexander Swan who was starting to amass property and cattle in the area around Chugwater. Apparently John and Henry Durbin, who had invested in a ranch near Cheyenne after selling their Deadwood gold interests to George Hearst, also sold their cattle to Swan. These ranchers who sold out, however, instead of abandoning the enterprise, used the proceeds from the sales to invest in new stock and moved into the interior of the territory, up

---

[96] The 1875 report of the Surveyor General for Wyoming, Silas Reed, in 1875, including a list of livestock importers in Laramie County, is included in Spring, "'A Genius for Handling Cattle': John W. Iliff," 398.
[97] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, July 24, 1877, August 2, 1877.
[98] Nimmo, *Report in Regard to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business of the United States*, 13-14.

the North Platte River, to start again in areas beyond the reach of the giants. As early Converse County rancher George Cross recalled, "In 1877 the great movement of cattle from the South commenced . . . ."[99] By "south" Cross meant the southern part of Wyoming. Other ranchers joined in that movement. The Searights, for example, established their Goose Egg Ranch at Bessemer Bend of the North Platte River west of abandoned Fort Caspar in that year. They quickly expanded their operation and in 1879 sent a group of cowboys, as one of them later recalled, to Oregon to trail back 14,000 head of cattle which were subsequently turned loose on the various drainages north of the North Platte, including as far north as the Salt Creek area. The cowboys then set about helping the stone masons build the impressive rock house of the Goose Egg Ranch on the north bank of the North Platte River exactly where the emigrant road, telegraph, and river crossing had not long before been the prominent activities.[100] The Carey brothers likewise moved up the North Platte in 1877, establishing the headquarters of the CY Ranch in the valley of Boxelder Creek and making a cow camp on the ruins of old Fort Caspar.[101] Tom Sun, who had settled far from anyone else on the Sweetwater River at Devils Gate in 1872, was starting to have company.

The expansion into new territory was underway. The Powder River Basin, in particular, attracted the burgeoning range cattle industry. In 1878 territorial governor John W. Hoyt reported the complete absence of livestock in the Powder River Basin. "What an Arcadia was here, waiting for and only needing the herdsman and his flocks to make it complete," the governor reported. "On my way back from there I was met by several little parties of adventurous pioneers exploring for good locations with the intention of taking in herds of cattle next spring. To say the least, such a region cannot long remain unoccupied."[102] A year later, the Cheyenne *Leader* served as witness to the procession into the Powder River country: "During the past few years a great exodus northward has been going on among the cattlemen. They have been steadily moving their immense herds northward, until now they have crossed the North Platte valley, and some of the more venturesome have reached the streams emptying into the Cheyenne river."[103] Pratt and Ferris led a contingent of other ranchers who moved into the Powder River Basin, establishing their ranch on Rawhide Creek while the stream of others with new cattle from Texas poured into the area. Shortly after the area opened, English brothers Moreton and Richard Frewen established their sprawling 76 Ranch on Powder River not far from modern Kaycee and Sussex.[104] And, as elsewhere, the land along the drainages attracted the ranchers for its access to water

---

[99] George H. Cross, "The First Cattle Ranches," *Quarterly Bulletin of the Wyoming Historical Department*, August 15, 1924. A typescript of this article can be found in the WPA Collections, subject file 1386.
[100] W. P. Ricketts, "Early Wyoming Days," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 366.
[101] Cross, "The First Cattle Ranches."
[102] Annual Report of the Governor of Wyoming Territory, 1878, as quoted in Jim Hicks, "Glowing Picture of Big Horns Detailed for Early Day Settlers," Buffalo *Bulletin*, August 21, 1958.
[103] Cheyenne *Leader*, January [?], 1879, quoted in Agnes Wright Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*, 41.
[104] A brief word about terminology for those unfamiliar with Wyoming history and topography: Powder River, the river, is always referred to exactly as that. Or, as Helena Huntington Smith bluntly warns her

for their herds. O. P. Hanna recalled that in the summer of 1880 fifteen thousand Texas cattle were introduced into the area right around the community of Big Horn.[105] The Cheyenne newspaper ticked off a long list of ranchers including Heck Reel, Carey, Swan, Phillips, McShane "and other notable dealers," who, it said, "have moved their vast herds to the newly opened cattle ranges of the north."[106] Two years after governor Hoyt failed to see any cattle in that area, he again visited the area and this time he reported that the same area was now home to "scarcely less than 75,000 head of cattle."[107] In 1882 the Deadwood *Times* was quoted by the Cheyenne press to the effect that Sturgis and Goodell were operating a vast ranch on the Cheyenne River, having moved north from their previous location in the southeast.[108] By 1884, Johnson County, organized in 1879, contained around 160,000 cattle. By 1884 the herds to the south, on the Laramie Plains, had grown dramatically and more than a hundred thousand cattle grazed Albany County.[109]

At various points along the railroad, ranchers in the western part of the state either used the railroad to bring in their herds or followed the Overland and Oregon Trails to then move into country that was more remote. Towns had emerged at various places, but an official U.S. Land Office was placed in Evanston only in 1876; thus any previous entries had to be made in Cheyenne. In 1877, the Cheyenne press reported, "Judge Carter has built some extensive stock shipping yards between Carter and Church Buttes on the Union Pacific railroad, and is likely to make that a prominent shipping point for stock driven from Montana, Idaho, Utah and the west. By shipping stock there, parties avoid the long drive through the Green River and Bitter Creek valleys, where there is no feed, and this alone will make it a desirable shipping point from the far west."[110]

Railroad shipping points were also located at both Green River and Bitter Creek (Rock Springs) and ranchers began to move northward in the Green River valley. In 1877, one source indicates that ranching had emerged in the area around New Fork and Boulder. In that year, the Denver *Post* reported much later, area ranchers first formed a trail herd at Boulder and drove their cattle to Rock Springs for shipment.[111] Charley Rathbun appears to have been operating a ranch on Fontenelle Creek in 1878 "on

---

readers: "Never under any circumstances are you to refer to it as 'the Powder,' or even as 'the Powder River.' The only people who didn't know this then and don't today are Army officers and highbrows." She continues in that vein for several paragraphs in Helena Huntington Smith, *The War on Powder River: The History of an Insurrection* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 1-2.

[105] O. P. Hanna "Northern Wyoming in the Early Days," typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 776.

[106] Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*, 41.

[107] Francis Henry Tanner, "The Disposal of the Public Domain in Johnson County, Wyoming, 1869-1890," M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1967, 59.

[108] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, April 4, 1882.

[109] See the enumeration of cattle included in the territorial governor's report in *Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1886*, vol. II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886), 1043

[110] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, July 31, 1877.

[111] "The Passing of the Trail Herd," Denver *Post*, October 29, 1938.

one of the first cattle ranches in this part of Wyoming."[112] In 1879, Daniel Budd and his partner Hugh McKay set up their 67 Ranch on North Piney with a thousand head of cattle and the next year Budd brought his family to stay. Others soon followed and ranching settlements emerged in the valley—just like in much of the rest of Wyoming Territory. Not far away, in the Three Bridges Community area, a short-lived colonization effort of Mormons emerged. In the 1880s, two settlers identified as Swan and Leiter had been sent out by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, and upon receiving a positive report from them on the cattle ranching prospects, the church called on them to manage the church's cattle herds and a Mormon settlement emerged nearby.[113]

From central Wyoming, some cattle ranchers expanded outward, populating the Sweetwater valley, the Wind River area outside the reservation and filtering into the Big Horn Basin too. This was the real beginning of the settlement of the Big Horn Basin. Although a settler named Woodruff made a claim on Owl Creek as early as 1871, the consensus appears that, as one rancher subsequently recalled, "In 1878 there was not a herd of cattle in the entire Big Horn Basin."[114] That changed within a year or two. When the cattle were first brought, evidently in numbers large enough to be considered actual herds rather than the almost certain small numbers of cattle on the small homesteads, they were brought from Oregon through the gap in the Owl Creek Mountains and began to take up the western side of the basin. Almost at the same time, however, cattle began to stream in from Texas and large ranches emerged in the basin. Charles Carter in 1879 brought somewhere between three and five thousand cattle from Oregon to the upper Stinking Water (Shoshone) River; Otto Franc purchased a herd in Montana and turned them loose on the upper Greybull River and started the Pitchfork Ranch in 1880; R. W. Torrey purchased the Woodruff place and started his Embar (M—) Ranch in 1881—and all of these were in the western part of the basin. In the eastern part, H. C. Lovell brought several herds of cattle in 1880 and 1882 and W. P. Noble brought his cattle to the area near Ten Sleep.[115] Charles Lindsay's study of the Big Horn Basin accurately reports, "the actual stocking of the Basin for the first period of its range industry . . . took place between 1879 and 1884. The strongest years were between 1880 and 1883. It was in this period that the most and the largest of the cattle outfits made their appearance."[116]

Even though the numbers are far from precise, by 1884 a rough picture of cattle ranching in Wyoming

---

[112] "The First Cattle Outfits in South Western Wyoming and the Big Piney," hand-written biography of Morris William Griggs, who worked on the Rathbun ranch, in WPA Collections, subject file 377.
[113] Josephine Jons, "The Ranches of Green River: North Piney," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1277. This small colony appears to be one of the more obscure endeavors of the LDS colonization efforts in Wyoming and was just a fading memory in the 1930s when Ms. Jons discussed it in her report, although she did note, "A few of the original settlers still live here and some of the places are operated by heirs of the first group."
[114] Harry Williams, "Early Ranches," typescript, November 7, 1940, WPA Collections.
[115] Williams, "Early Ranches;" Bob Edgar and Jack Turnell, *Brand of a Legend* [Pitchfork Ranch] (Greybull, Wyoming: Wolverine Gallery, 1978), 37-42.
[116] Charles Lindsay, "The Big Horn Basin," *University Studies of the University of Nebraska*, XXVIII-XXIX (1932): 98.

was starting to take shape and the distribution of cattle around the territory told much of the story. In the western part of the state, Uinta County, which extended north to Yellowstone National Park, had a mere 15,215 cattle, and Sweetwater County had even fewer: 9,134. Fremont County was a vast area that went to the Montana border and from Yellowstone Park to the Bighorn River (the western boundary of Johnson County) in the Big Horn Basin, and down to the north border of Sweetwater County. Thus, including the northern Green River valley and the west half of the Big Horn Basin, that county had a total of 64,228 head of cattle in 1884. Carbon County, which also included future Natrona County, proved home to 114,869 cattle. Albany County, a smaller county, included part of modern Converse County, and it had 102,448. Johnson County had the second highest number of any county: 160,481 head of cattle. But Laramie County, with 283,194 outpaced them all.[117] Especially revealing, the combination of Johnson, Laramie, and Albany counties held nearly 550,000 of the territory's 750,000 cattle. If the cattle ranches were ubiquitous and the cattle numerous in the eastern part of the state, they were scattered and fewer elsewhere.

iv. Wyoming and the Texas Ranching System

The system of ranching that emerged in Wyoming Territory in the 1870s and 1880s was exactly that: a system. The practice of ranching had its own logic and routines, and it developed physical features on the ground that supported the practices associated with it, so that taken together, it represented a coherent whole. Plus, the system was evolving so, like emigrant trails which were never static, frozen-in-time routes, the operation of the cattle industry shifted over time and left the signs of those changes on the ground. In fact, the system of ranching that prevailed in Wyoming Territory was the Texas system of ranching, and that system had its own distinct origins and development before it ever arrived on the prairies of Wyoming.

The raising of cattle took on particular and distinguishing elements as it evolved over several hundred years, migrating in an indirect and complex course from the Greater Antilles through the Carolinas and into the coastal areas of Texas. Along the way it also picked up distinctive cultural influences from the Tamaulipas area of Mexico and in Texas it became a full-fledged variant of its own—not at all the only system for raising livestock, not at all inevitable in its expansion, and not necessarily suited to other places and climates. Unlike the slow evolution of the system in the centuries previous to its development in Texas, the form of ranching that emerged in Wyoming in the 1880s can be traced directly and immediately to its incubation in the Texas lowlands with probably no change at all when it was transported more than a thousand miles to the northwest. Terry Jordan has identified not only the functional elements of the Texas system of ranching, but also their origins, which are important to

[117] County assessor reports printed in Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, August 1, 1884 and in the territorial governor's report in *Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1886*, vol. II, 1043.

understand; the Texas system of ranching encountered an environment very much at odds with that which produced the practices:

> The . . . Texas system of ranching clearly displayed the cultural inputs of both Carolina and Tamaulipas. From both sources came the essential trait of the Texas system: the subtropical practice of allowing cattle to care for themselves year-round in stationary pastures on the free range, without supplementary feeding or protection. Through such self-maintenance, the herds should not merely survive, but reach a grass-fattened maturity, ready for market. The humid subtropical prairies, canebrakes, and salt marshes of coastal Texas and Louisiana were even better suited to this careless system than had been the Andalusian marshes, yielding a still more profound neglect of the livestock.[118]

Much of the Texas system of ranching was simply a particular way of raising cattle, but there were aspects that it excluded that went beyond functional necessity. Although some of the system could be traced to Mexico, the culture surrounding the Texas system nurtured an abiding antipathy to many aspects of that culture, including an explicit rejection of the practice of raising sheep alongside cattle and even a prejudice against Mexicans themselves. It is something of a small wonder, given that hostility, that as much of the Mexico-based vocabulary and skill sets endured as well as they did in the migration to Wyoming. Among the contributions from Mexico that survived this cultural hegira were the horse skills and horse equipment that had emerged in Tamaulipas and the horse-related terminology; new words and concepts entered the ranching lexicon and ultimately the Western vocabulary: lariat, corral, remuda , cavvy, and others.[119]

The other stream of evolution feeding into the Texas system came from the Carolinas, and that stream has often been neglected in the analysis of ranching, but, again, Jordan identifies these components that ultimately go back to Jamaica but then migrated to the Carolinas, to Texas, and then to Wyoming:

- Vocabulary including dogie, pen, cowboy
- The use of "poor-white" herders
- "The custom of only two roundups, held in the spring and fall"
- The routine practice of calf castration
- The practice of bulldogging (animal wrestling)
- Absentee entrepreneurs investing in open-range cattle operations
- Production for beef, rather than just for hides and tallow
- Marketing by long overland drives "of grass-fattened cull steers"
- Brands based on block letters and numerals

Of course, the fundamental contribution of the Carolinas was the principle at the core of the whole

---

[118] Jordan, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers*, 210.
[119] Jordan, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers*, 210-211.

system, as Jordan says, "the pervasive neglect of livestock in Texas, including the practice of stationary pasturing, without any attempt to reserve special winter ranges."[120] And this "pervasive neglect" was, in fact, the defining feature of the range cattle industry of the northern plains and was the dominant practice in Wyoming Territory. Based on a land system where the public domain was undivided and unfenced, the cattle were simply "turned loose," in the language of the day, to roam and range where they would, unimpeded by fences, unseparated from the cattle of other ranches, unwatched by constant herders, unfed during the winters, and untended except at the semi-annual roundups. Senator John Kendrick, who had trailed and branded his share of cattle as a young man, recalled, "Under the original order, no provision whatsoever was made for any kind of cattle. They were simply branded and turned loose and left to take their chances and survive or perish according to the conditions, such as the amount of feed, the weather and the strength and vitality of the animal."[121]

In that system, the range that cattle would graze was crucial and in Wyoming the range was enormous. Barnett J. Swan, for example, recalled that his "range seemed to include all of Albany County and the greater part of Laramie county."[122] Moreover, both Albany and Laramie counties were substantially larger than after their partition in modern times, meaning that the Swan range was all the more incomprehensibly vast. The Goose Egg cattle of the Searights ranged from the Bridger Trail on the west, to Powder River on the North, Coal Creek on the east, and the North Platte River on the south.[123] Speaking of the Powder River Basin, M. de Ricqles, an early cattle operator, recalled, "it was steer country and thousands upon thousands of Texas, Arizona and New Mexico 2-year-old steers were turned loose there to run (out side) for two or more years and were marketed largely at Chicago as fat range cattle."[124] The truth was, there was no limit to how far the cattle might range. One person recalled that the 101 Ranch near Moorcroft had its cattle spread all over the basin, "and roundup crews frequently found their stock scattered as far as from Edgemont, South Dakota to Sheridan, Wyoming."[125]

The system of controlling these free-range cattle was based on the roundup, which, in turn, was based on a system of branding. And the control was negligible, and limited to (1) the spring calf-roundup where calves would be gathered, castrated, and branded, and (2) the fall beef-roundup where mature steers would be gathered to be shipped to market. Each ranch had its own brand, and often had multiple brands as a result of sales of livestock and property. Indeed, brands would not go away, since they remained on the livestock themselves even after the absorption of one ranch by another, and would

---

[120] Jordan, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers*, 213.
[121] John B. Kendrick, "Range Cattle Date back to Texas Trail," typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 399.
[122] Barnett J. Swan, "The Round-Up as I Remember It," typescript, 1941, WPA Collections, subject file 1156.
[123] "M. J. Gothberg, Pioneer Range Rider and Rancher," typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 755.
[124] Douglas *Budget*, February 6, 1936.
[125] Margaret Dillinger Bowden. *1916: Wyoming, Here We Come!* (Gillette, Wyoming: privately printed by James H. Bowden and Jessie Outka, 2002). 37.

continue to perpetuate themselves as branded cows produced calves that would soon carry the same brand. The result was a proliferation of brands on the range. In 1884, the Cheyenne press reported, "There are over 850 brands already on record in the County Clerk's office and applications are constantly being received."[126] While Laramie County was large, and while Laramie County accounted for a substantial portion of the cattle of the territory, it still was just one part of Wyoming. One study of cattle brands in Wyoming maintains, "There were 5,000 brands of one kind or another in Wyoming and the overlapping ranches from outside the Territory . . ."[127] Because of that profusion, the major brands, or at least those owned by members of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, would be listed in brand books that were of such a size that they could be carried in a hip pocket in the field for easy reference in sorting cattle.

Although the ranchers often used what they termed their "customary range," wherein they informally laid claim to the grass in an area, this was often undefined except in the most general terms and was also usually unfenced and unenforceable. As a result, the cattle would intermingle on the range and would only be separated at roundup time. These roundups, in contrast to virtually every other aspect of the range cattle business, were complex, carefully planned, and tightly organized operations. Organized and controlled by the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, the first roundups were conducted in 1874 and included mainly southeast Wyoming, which was divided into two roundup districts. The next year, Silas Reed, the Surveyor General for Wyoming, noted, "The system . . . has become so complete that almost every herd of stock in the country is driven in, identified by its brand, and returned to the owner's range—cattle are often found one hundred miles or more away. The losses from straying off are, under this system, reduced to almost nothing."[128] In 1878 the roundup system had expanded and, for the first time, included the area north of the North Platte River. By 1880 there were six roundup districts and by 1884 there were thirty-one districts, in each instance the district being defined by drainages and other natural features as well as references to individual ranches. By 1883 the official districts included the Big Horn Basin and by 1884 almost all of Wyoming Territory was included except Star Valley and Jackson Hole and a few scattered pockets.

The official roundup announcements designated a foreman for each district; that foreman, acting as a quasi-legal regulator, would make the decisions and settle the disputes, and, at the end, give permission for the various ranchers to take their cattle away. The district boundaries for each roundup were published in the local press along with the appointed date and place to start. The discipline, planning, and systematic thoroughness of the roundups can be gleaned from the official roundup announcement for a sampling of the roundup districts in 1884:[129]

> No. 5: Commencing at Fort Laramie, May 20th, working the country as heretofore

---

[126] Cheyenne *Democratic Leader*, June 11, 1884
[127] Roland Welch, "Cattle Brands," typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 397.
[128] Reed was quoted in Spring, "'A Genius for Handling Cattle': John W. Iliff," 398-399.
[129] The announcements were widely published and circulated. This list is taken from "Ready for the Roundup," Cheyenne *Sun*, April 10, 1884.

worked by No. 5, between the mountains and the Platte River on the south side, working up as far as Fort Fetterman, including LaPrele creek; thence working up the river, between the river and the first range, to and including Bates Hole; thence along the edge of the Laramie Plains, working Spring creek and the Little Medicine down as far as the Coe & Carter pens; thence through the Medicine Bow road, working upper Deer creek and upper Box Elder. Fall round-up to begin September 1st Jas. Shaw, foreman; Rufe Rhodes, assistant foreman.

No. 7: Laramie Plains round-up will meet at the lower bridge, near McGill's ranch on the Big Laramie river, June 1st. Proceed to work the country between the river and the Black Hills divide as far south as Red Buttes; from thence work in two divisions, No. 1 continuing as far south as Twin mountain, thence back to Diamond Peak, working the Boulder and intermediate Creeks up the source of the Big Laramie river. Div. No. 6 will proceed from Red Buttes across the Big Laramie, working up to Cummins City, Fox Creek and Centennial country behind Sheep mountain and between the Big and Little Laramie rivers; thence in their order, Mill creek, Seven Mile, Four Mile, Cooper and Rock creek, and the tributaries; thence back to Big Laramie, working down stream to Canyon, Duck creek and Laramie Fork country; thence through Antelope Basin on the North Laramie, working Sheep creek and Little Medicine into Shirley Basin; thence back by Freeze-Out mountains to the mouth of Medicine Bow creek; working up said stream to its source, including Hampton and Dana Meadows, head of Pass Creek and Elk Mountain, thence to Wagon Hound creek, finishing on Foot creek. Fall round-up to begin October 1st Rufe Rhodes, foreman; William Lannen, foreman of Division No. 1, from Red Buttes south.

No. 14: Commence at the mouth of Sand Creek, June 1st Work up Cheyenne river, Horsehead, Alum Springs, Cottonwood, Robber's Roost, Alkali and the Cheyenne river to the old AU7 ranch and down Beaver Creek. Fall round-up to commence October 15. Tom Trawcek, foreman, J. Howard Ford, assistant foreman.

No. 15: Commence May 15. Sage Creek, Old Woman Creek, up Lance creek to head; Harney creek, to beaver dams on Lightning Creek, fall round up to commence October 15.

No. 16: Begin work on May 10th at Matthews' ranch on the Belle Fourche; thence up the Belle Fourche to Pumpkin Buttes and down the Belle Fourche and tributaries to Devil's Tower, thence up Donkey Creek; thence to head of Little Powder; thence down Wild Cat to mouth of Horse Creek, working Little Powder and Horse Creek; thence work Cotton and down Little Powder, working its tributaries to its mouth. Fall round-up to begin October 1st. John Winterling foreman, Clinton Graham, assistant foreman.

No. 17: The Tongue River round-up will meet at Frank Owen's ranch on Smith Creek,

and will commence work on Monday, the 19th of May. It will work down the north side of Tongue river and all its tributaries on the north side to the mouth of Hanging Woman; thence up Hanging Woman to its head; thence down Badger creek to its mouth, including Deer creek; thence up the mountains, including Wolf, Soldier, Little and Big Goose creeks ; thence down Meade creek and Prairie Dog, thence up Dutch creek and its tributaries to the divide; thence move to Powder river, working from Montana line to north of Clear creek to form a junction with Crazy Woman roundup; thence both roundups will work Clear creek and Piney to their heads.
Fall roundup to commence on Oct. 1
H. G. Williams, foreman; Charles Carter, assistant foreman.

No. 18: The Powder River round-up will meet at the head of the North Fork of Powder River and will commence work on the 26th of May. It will work then down the north fork of Powder and up middle fork to Peter's and Alston's ranch; thence up Buffalo creek and through the pastures to Cedar mountain; then the round-up will wait at the head of south fork for two days for the wagon from round-up No. 6; thence down south fork of Powder river to its mouth; thence down Powder river to the mouth of Salt creek; thence up Salt creek to its head; thence to the head of Meadow creek, working it and passing to the head of Dry Fork of Powder river; thence down Dry Fork to its mouth; thence down Powder river to the mouth of Crazy Woman, working all tributaries of said streams. Fall round-up to begin October 5th. O. Morgareidge, Foreman; P. DuFran, assistant Foreman.

No. 20: Begin on May 1st, at head of Stinking Water, north side, working all the country on west side of South Fork thence down north side of river to Bridger crossing; thence crossing the river to mouth of Grey Bull; thence up Grey Bull on both sides to mouth of Meeteetse, when round-up shall divide, one branch working up Grey Bull and Meeteetse, the other portion of the round-up cross over to Sage Creek and working all country between Meeteetse and Stinking Water. That portion of country lying north of Stinking Water, and about Clark's Fork, Bennett creek and Pat O'Hara's is attached to the Stinking Water round-up as un-organized territory. Fall round-up to begin October 1st Peter McCulloch, foreman; John Gleaver, assistant foreman, and to be foreman of that branch of the round-up that works up Meeteetse and south side of Stinking Water.

No. 29: To meet April 20th, ten miles above mouth of LaBarge, on west side of Green River; thence work down Green River to Green River city; thence crossing Green River on the west side, working up Green River, working Slate creek and Fontenelle; thence crossing to Dry Piney, working aback to LaBarge; thence moving to Bryan, working west to Piedmont; thence working north to Ham's Fork working all country between Piedmont and Ham's Fork to divide between Muddy and Bridger creek, working up Ham's Fork to head of stream. Fall round-up to begin October 1st. J. D. Alford foreman.

The range being grazed by the cattle was huge and the size of the roundups was correspondingly large. M. J. Gothberg, who worked for the Searights, recalled,

> Before we reached Hat Creek there were about eight cattle companies' wagons. This round-up district is where we met with another general round-up, working down from the northeast of the state and consisting of about ten different cattle companies. This made eighteen different outfits, with over two hundred riders when they pulled into camp on the day set for them to meet.
>
> It was a great sight, as each separate outfit had its own herd of horses of from 120 to 150 head. They also trailed along those cattle that had strayed off of their range during the winter months and would be taken back from the spring round-ups. The combined round-up on a single forenoon drive would cover such a large territory that there would be about 6000 head of stock. These cattle would be bunched up separately and not allowed to mix with those from the separate stream valleys. The bunch would range from four to eight hundred according to the way they came in. Each separate outfit would have its turn to get out its stock from these separate bunches. Then the balance would be turned loose on the range again. Within the next day or two, the two round-ups split up. A group of several wagons which I was with went west and rounded up to the head of Salt creek. Different outfits would drop out from time to time as they would get off their range[;] then they would send one man along to gather up what stray cattle belonging to them that they would find off their range and take them back.[130]

Another participant, Oscar Flagg, recalled the roundup of 1883 in which he and others gathered on Crazy Woman Creek. He said that the roundup consisted of fourteen hundred head of horses, four hundred men and twenty-seven wagons. "For two miles along the river the wagons were camped, in order to afford room for the different bunches of horses to graze without becoming mixed."[131] The roundup was a virtual community—or, to be more precise, as many as thirty-one communities—on the move, working their way up and down the drainages of Wyoming. Rather than a permanent, central location, the roundup camps would be constantly in motion, starting high in the drainages and working their way down, so evidence of these big roundups could be scattered over a broad area.

There was some variation on the roundup by virtue of the fact that one rancher in the southwest part of the state applied an organizational system to the process that appears to have been adapted either from the sheep industry or from the Midwest system of producing cattle, at least for the fall roundup, and perhaps also for the spring event. In the late 1870s Judge William Carter, by all accounts the most

---

[130] "M. J. Gothberg, Pioneer Range Rider and Rancher."

[131] Flagg, "A Review of the Cattle Business in Johnson County, Wyoming since 1882 and the Causes that Led to the Recent Invasion," 2. This document is a typescript of a series of articles that originally appeared in the Buffalo *Bulletin* in 1892, and is found in the J. Elmer Brock Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

prominent entrepreneur, sheep raiser, and cattle rancher in that part of the state, built what was called a "herd house" eight miles south of Fort Bridger on Smith's Fork. The herd house included a house, constructed of lumber from Carter's own sawmills and even had split shingles; it contained a bunking area for the cowboys, a bedroom for the cook, and a large kitchen and store room. Instead of open-range roundups, the herds were gathered in the corrals at the herd house in the autumn and then driven through the chutes: "Each animal was put through the chute and its owner identified it according to the brand. If the cows claimed a small calf, it was branded in the chute, with the same brand of its mother. To eliminate counting one animal twice, the bushy part of each tail was cut off while in the chute. Each rancher counted his own cattle and kept account of the number. In this manner all the ranchers had their cattle branded, counted, and separated in one procedure."[132] This arrangement added an element of industrial organization to cattle ranching that seems not to have spread beyond the southwest part of the state, although Carter did subsequently build another such herd house thirty miles south of Fort Bridger on Henry's Fork.

As large as the roundups were, as many people as were working the range, the range was still vast and the herds huge, so the spring roundup could easily take two or three months. And the roundup was the hub of the practice of ranching in an enterprise that was based on the neglect and lack of attention to the cattle the rest of the time. In fact, the roundup stands out in striking contrast to the rest of the business of raising cattle because it was about the only part that was carefully organized, monitored, and attended. The other parts of ranching were left to luck, were calculated by guesswork, and depended on optimal assumptions. That casual approach even extended to the account books and ledgers of the operations. As fundamental an element as knowing how many cattle a rancher owned and grazed was highly indefinite. This was, in a way, understandable since the livestock were highly mobile and in these large numbers were not able to be gathered in a single location and counted seasonally. Moreover, those same livestock reproduced and added to their numbers, but they also died or strayed, or were sold, stolen, or consumed. Like the population of a major metropolis, the actual census changed by the hour or minute. Maintaining a careful tally of the numbers of cattle, given the size of the herds, was probably an impossible task anyway. On the open range, perhaps the only way to obtain an accurate tally was to re-brand all the livestock, itself a daunting task, and even that would stay accurate for only a short time.

Yet everywhere those numbers abound. The census took count of the livestock, although the accuracy of those counts should not be assumed with great confidence; ordinarily the census takers would simply ask the people they interviewed how many head of cattle they owned. The method is, in itself, eminently fair; the answers, however, were subject to season, knowledge, mood, and motivation—each of which could vary dramatically. The numbers gathered by assessors were perhaps no more reliable, given the built-in tendency of the owner to be careful not to overstate the amount of property to be taxed. In his study of *The Longhorns*, J. Frank Dobie even suggested that this vagueness about the numbers of head of cattle in herds was almost institutionalized, a part of the job description of the owner; perhaps it was even another integral element of the Texas system of cattle ranching: "The cowman was constitutionally conservative. One that did not, in rendering livestock for taxes, give

[132] Bill Casto, "The Herd House," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1352.

himself the benefit of the doubt was as rare as a white cow with a black face. The average cowman had two sets of figures: one 'for taxable purposes,' and one for the privacy of his head. A stranger with any sense of propriety would no more ask a ranchman how many cattle he owned than he would ask an outlaw how many men he had killed or what his name was before he came to Texas. . . . Some cowmen lived with many cattle in unorganized counties where no official interrogator ever came. Never were there such people for keeping their own business to themselves, and they lived such independent, uncomplicated lives that there was no necessity for putting down their assets in black and white."[133]

Yet often, at least in Wyoming, and at least among the largest of the ranchers, they did put the figures down in black and white, and the more fundamental problem was that these livestock business operators, while knowing the uncertainties of the counts, acted as if those numbers were accurate. The critical device was what was called "book count." They would keep track of their herds in their ledgers (or in their heads), making periodic adjustments to allow for deaths, births, and other losses and gains, using additions and subtractions that seemed right given the severity of the winter or the lushness of the grass. And the numbers looked precise. But they were far from reflecting the reality on the range. At best they were guesses, and at worst they were intentionally deceptive.

This numerical fuzziness had important implications and it opened a crack of vulnerability into the system that exposed all involved—livestock, ranchers, investors, cowboys, and others—to potential calamity. The fissures, at least in retrospect, are clear. An accurate knowledge of the number of cattle in the herds was important in keeping the livestock within the carrying capacity of the range and at any time when herds were transferred from one owner to another. As Maurice Frink wrote in his study of the range cattle industry of the 1880s, "Early methods of enumeration were varied and loose. The actual numbers of cattle on the range were often far different from the figures on ranch records. Nevertheless, many large-scale transactions were made on the basis of book count or range delivery, without an accurate check. This was one of the pitfalls into which many an overly-eager investor fell."[134]

And this was the dominant practice. W. E. Guthrie recalled that the practice of relying on book count was "a well established custom" when he arrived in Wyoming in 1878. In retrospect, Guthrie observed, "That business men should so far lose sight of ordinary business methods as to buy and sell cattle 'without counting a cow,' with no way of ascertaining how many cattle they were paying for except the seller's 'tally books,' is almost beyond belief."[135] Probably most people recognized that there was some

---

[133] J. Frank Dobie, *The Longhorns* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 364-365.
[134] Frink, "When Grass Was King," 24. It is easy to overlook how rampant the sales were, and how carelessly they were made. In 1882 the Cheyenne *Daily Leader* quoted the Laramie *Boomerang*: "A Cheyenne man who don't pretend to know a maverick from a mandamus has made a neat little margin of $15,000 this summer in small transactions and hasn't seen a cow yet that he has bought and sold. Cheyenne is wild over the market and Sixteenth Street is a young Wall Street. Millions are talked of as lightly as nickels." Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, July 28, 1882.
[135] W. E. Guthrie, "The Open Range Cattle Business in Wyoming," *Annals of Wyoming*, 5 (July 1933[?]): 26-31.

variance between book count and reality, and in 1883, in one livestock purchase, the purchasing agent for Swan Land & Cattle Company fatalistically reported, ". . . If the numbers on the range are within 2,000 or 3,000 of the book count, I consider the whole purchase a very fortunate one . . ."[136] Others assumed a wider disparity. John Clay, whose job it was to verify numbers of cattle to be purchased by some Scottish companies, wrote in his autobiography, "everybody in the ranch business knew that all the herds of cattle were notoriously short, many of them having 50 per cent less in the actual numbers than the book count."[137] That knowledge, however, did not prevent John Clay himself from approving a purchase of a ranch (and cattle) where, as it turned out, the herd was seriously under the book count and under what Clay had calculated; the case went to court and ultimately the party that Clay represented was awarded damages for the missing cattle.[138]

The numbers are thus impossible to use with any confidence of accuracy, but that factor notwithstanding the range cattle industry flourished in the late 1870s and the early 1880s. It was by many reckonings the most attractive investment possible in the West. In fact, it was the attraction for investment not just in the United States but in Europe as well. There had been a frenzy of activity in investing in cattle in the 1870s and that frenzy gained new strength in the early 1880s. As E. E. Dale noted, "Great as had been the growth of the cattle industry on the great plains in the decade before 1880 the years following were to see a much greater one. That date marks the beginning of a tremendous boom in the ranch cattle business, which had by this time begun to attract the attention of numerous investors in the East and in Europe. During the next few years an enormous volume of capital was to be poured into the industry."[139]

This boom took on several dimensions. One was a trend toward consolidation in the ranching business. It was not just that new ranches were being started now; rather it was that ranches that had been started a few years before were now being incorporated, being bought out, or otherwise being consolidated into fewer and fewer hands. Consider the incorporation of cattle ranches. Incorporation was still a far from common form of business organization, and this was especially true in ranching. Lewis Atherton witnessed a change, however, in his study of *The Cattle Kings*: "In general, individuals or simple partnerships constituted the most prevalent form of business organization in the early history of the cattle kingdom. Then came an influx of outside capital, with a tendency for partnerships to become more complex and corporate organization a common device."[140] The first recorded incorporation of ranch operations in Wyoming came in 1879 when four companies came into existence, including the incorporation of Pratt and Ferris, the Big Horn Live Stock Association, the Evanston Stock Growing Association, and the Scandinavian Live Stock Association.[141] In 1880, a total of eight ranching

---

[136] Prentice is quoted in Frink, "When Grass Was King," 24.
[137] John Clay, *My Life on the Range* (Chicago: privately printed, 1924), 206.
[138] Davilla Bright, "Foreigners and Foreign Capital in the Cattle Industry of the United States," M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma (1935), 55 -56.
[139] Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 90.
[140] Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*, 199.
[141] Frink, "When Grass Was King," 69.

operations incorporated in the four state / territory area of Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, and New Mexico—the area where the plains cattle industry was growing rapidly. The next year, nine cattle companies incorporated in Wyoming alone, followed by seven in 1882, twenty-four in 1883, another twenty-four in 1884, and twenty-three in 1885.[142] An important transformation was underway.

Representative of this process was the Converse Cattle Company, organized in December 1881. Capitalized at over a half-million dollars, the company was founded by A. R. Converse, H. S. Manville, and James Peck, along with others, and quickly began to expand by buying out other ranches. Within a month of its incorporation, the Cheyenne newspaper was able to report, "The Converse Cattle Company has absorbed another large herd. On Monday last, Clinton Graham sold his herd in the Lance creek country to this company, ..."[143] The Converse company continued to expand, acquiring additional herds, like that of Charles Wulfjen in 1882 and also that of John B. Kendrick, who worked for Wulfjen (his future father-in-law) but who also had his own herd, and the company also purchased still more herds. Within a few years, this ranch would change its name to the OW Ranch and would endure as one of the largest ranches in Wyoming, with John B. Kendrick himself ultimately purchasing and running the operation.[144]

The Converse Cattle Company was not an isolated instance, and if it was unusual, it was mainly so because some of the principals of the company were in fact living in Wyoming and involved in the cattle business. And there were others like it, for example, when the Cheyenne *Daily Leader* reported in 1882, "The sale of the Post & Warren spur brand to Reel & Rosendale is a representative of this season's numerous large transactions."[145] And when Thomas Swan purchased Charles Hecht's Hat Creek herd, this too was largely a local transaction. But companies organized in the East were even more aggressive in their acquisition of Wyoming cattle operations. The Bay State Cattle Company, a New England syndicate, acquired multiple Wyoming properties, including the Creighton Ranch, adding it to a mammoth collection of properties in western Nebraska. The plan of the Bay State Company, which also leased railroad lands from the Union Pacific and operated another ranch in Wyoming, was "to control enough range to run cattle all across Western Nebraska to the Big Horn Basin in Wyoming."[146] But there were others, too, like the Milwaukee and Wyoming Investment Company, and the Frontier Land & Cattle Company, incorporated in Wyoming in 1884, with offices in Chicago and London.

The pattern seemed to be present everywhere. Joseph Nimmo reported, "a single cattle company in

---

[142] Frink, "When Grass Was King," 73.
[143] "The Organization of another Large and Powerful Cattle Co.," Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, December 22, 1881; "A Big Transfer," Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, January 17, 1882; "Another Large Sale," Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, January 19, 1882.
[144] See especially, Eugene T. Carroll, "John B. Kendrick, Cowpoke to Senator, 1879-1917," *Annals of Wyoming*, 54 (Spring 1982): 52.
[145] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, July 28, 1882.
[146] Nellie Irene Snyder Yost, *The Call of the Range: The Story of the Nebraska Stock Growers Association* (Denver: Sage Books, 1966), 129.

Wyoming advertises the ownership of ninety different brands, each one of which formerly represented a herd constituting a separate property."[147] On Poison Spider Creek, west of future Casper, Orin Waid, according to Lewis Atherton, "told an interviewer in the middle 1880's that he knew of only two men in addition to himself in Wyoming who were continuing to operate as individuals. All the rest were in companies of one sort or another."[148] In 1882 the Cheyenne newspaper carried an article from the *Drovers' Journal* observing, "Slowly but surely are the choice range locations being bought up by the whales of the western cattle business, who are fencing the small fry away from the best water supplies. Every week or so some startlingly large sale is reported to one or more of the gigantic livestock corporations which are operating in the ranching regions."[149] The next year the same newspaper reported the growing alarm in Wyoming over this development: "In Wyoming, men of moderate means who are in the cattle raising business, or who contemplate entering upon it, look with concern upon the actions of the great companies which are buying the large herds of the territory. What, they say, will be the result of the practical monopoly of the business by the companies? What chance can a poor man have for success in ranging cattle with the vast herds?"[150] The next month, as the press reported more and more take-overs, the concern had grown: "It will not be long before all the cattle which roam over the prairies of the West will be owned by great corporations. The price of beef will then be whatever the caprice of the monopolists may want to make it."[151]

The frenzy of investment in the cattle industry in Wyoming attracted interest far and wide and included the eager attention and appetite of European interests. For reasons sometimes having to do with the allure of range life and the business potential it offered, or perhaps with the lack of opportunities in England and Scotland for the "second sons" who were routinely left out of the family fortunes and estates, or with any of a myriad other circumstances, an increasing number of the English gentry found their dreams focusing on the wide open prairies of Wyoming and other western states and territories. As early as 1878 Richard and Moreton Frewen settled below where the forks of Powder River joined and built their ranch, acquiring the 76 brand (and others) and making it their own. They may have owned a very small parcel where the elaborate ranch headquarters was located, although even that is uncertain, but they accumulated one of the largest herds of cattle in Wyoming and those cattle grazed throughout the Powder River Basin, and perhaps beyond.

Others followed the Frewens and established their own ranches in the territory, and, from the Laramie Plains to the Big Horn Basin, English ranches began to crop up. These people, in turn, after a short period of seasoning in the U.S., appeared to their countrymen in Britain to be fountains of knowledge about the cattle industry and the British government sent two members of Parliament to the West in

---

[147] Nimmo, *Report in Regard to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business of the United States*, 21.
[148] Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*, 199.
[149] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, February 7, 1882.
[150] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, April 5, 1883.
[151] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, May 12, 1883; the Cheyenne newspaper appears to have been quoting an unidentified article in the Denver *Times*.

1880 to investigate the beckoning investment opportunities.[152] After their favorable report, British bankers joined in the frenzy. This was not a quiet or subtle process, and one report noted in 1883, "there are quite a number of Englishmen stopping in Cheyenne with the view of making investments and next year there will be many changes made in the present ownership of stock and ranch property."[153] Companies like the Anglo-American Cattle Co., Ltd., of London, and the Powder River Cattle Company, Limited, became common fixtures in Wyoming. Actually the Powder River Cattle Company (not to be confused with the Colorado based Powder River Live Stock Company) had been started by the Frewens in 1882 and purchased and supplanted their 76 Ranch, but also brought more investors into the company, while retaining Moreton Frewen as manager.

The Frewen Ranch was vast and its herds immense, with estimates varying from 45,000 to 80,000.[154] To many, it represents the English presence in the cattle industry of Wyoming territory. But these ranches, often expansive and sprawling, sometimes tucked away, were seemingly everywhere. In 1883, Ezra Flemming sold the four ranches that made up the substantial Dutton Ranch at the base of the Medicine Bow Mountains to Alfred Sartoris of London; this would subsequently grow and become the Douglas – Willan – Sartoris ranch.[155] The next year, William Johnson, in Sweetwater County, reported to the Laramie *Boomerang* that he had "sold his herd of cattle to English parties."[156] In the Big Horn Basin, Charles Lindsay notes the arrival of British capital at several ranches that became large and prominent, including Captain Henry Belknap with two ranch sites southwest of future Cody, and the Hoodoo, "owned by Ashworth and Johnson, two Englishmen" on the south side of the Stinking Water, the Big Horn Cattle Company "representing English capital" in the Tensleep area; he also notes, "Five of the larger outfits represented English capital, and frequently the owners, after a period, returned to England."[157]

The largest ranch in Wyoming Territory was Scottish. Alexander Swan started ranching in partnership with his brothers Thomas and Henry and a nephew, Will, in 1873; this was the Swan Brothers Cattle Company. The company split in 1880 and Alexander and Thomas purchased the interest of Henry and Will, who started their own ranch, the Ell Seven (L7). Alexander Swan then formed partnerships with other ranches and in 1883 a new company, the Swan Land and Cattle Company, Limited, was formed in Edinburgh and acquired the ranches and cattle that belonged to the Swan and Frank Live Stock Company, the National Cattle Company, and the Swan, Frank and Anthony Cattle Company. Alexander Swan, who had been president of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, would be kept on as manager. The Swan Ranch—or combination of ranches—had always been huge, but now it was incredibly big. The range for its cattle generally extended from Ogallala, Nebraska to Fort Fred Steele and from the Union Pacific Railroad to the North Platte River. This one company thus maintained a

---

[152] Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 94.
[153] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, October 18, 1883.
[154] Smith, *The War on Powder River: The History of an Insurrection*, 17.
[155] "Heavy Transfer," Cheyenne *State Leader*, August 18, 1883.
[156] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, April 25, 1884.
[157] Lindsay, "The Big Horn Basin," 99-105.

herd of more than 113,000 cattle, possibly approaching 125,000 head.[158] The Swan Ranch continued to expand and in 1884 purchased a half million acres from the Union Pacific, and the company proudly reported to its owners in Scotland: "It can readily be seen . . . how very admirably situated that land is, extending in a belt of 20 miles in width for 80 miles along the Union Pacific Railroad. We here hold in perpetuity upwards of half a million acres in alternate sections, for which we obtain a freehold title, while we, besides, control, and have the unquestioned grazing of the alternate Government sections, with the certainty that we shall obtain the first chance of these when they come to be dealt with, either by purchase or lease."[159]

The result was that the English and Scottish cattle companies were widely viewed as dominating the Wyoming cattle industry. One form or another of the statement that "Most of the big outfits, of that time, were owned by Eastern or English companies"[160] can be found in almost every discussion of ranching in the eastern one-half of Wyoming Territory. Sometimes the calculation was more precise: Jack Flagg estimated that two-thirds of the 181,000 cattle at the 1884 Powder River roundup were English owned.[161] The perception was widespread: the cattle industry that had grown so dramatically in territorial years, that had expanded out from its original toeholds in the southwest and southeast corners of the territory, that had reached into virtually every drainage in the state, that literally included more cattle than could be counted, was largely controlled by fewer and fewer people, a good number of whom had never stepped on a blade of Wyoming grass or breathed Wyoming air, and some of whom who knew only vaguely what part of the North American continent their investment walked around on.

Such was the world of cattle ranching in Wyoming Territory by the middle of the 1880s. In the short span of a decade and a half, the territory had been transformed completely, from an area that some considered a wasteland and desert and others regarded as a barrier, to a locus for dreams of investors as a place they would not have to visit or even know well to reap the rewards from, and those rewards promised to be great and to keep growing. This was thus not just a system of ranching, and not just a system of colonialism, but a system of building the future, of organizing and extracting the resources of Wyoming, of occupying the land, and of making money on it all. That system, however, as it turned out, was built on a series of assumptions about the people and climate and resources of Wyoming that, like their ledgers, did not always square with reality.

3 A WAR FOR AGRICULTURE AND SOCIETY IN WYOMING, 1885-1892

---

[158] Frink, "When Grass Was King," 24, 66. See also Maurice Frink, *Cow Country Cavalcade: Eighty Years of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association* (Denver: Old West Publishing Co., 1954), 50-51.
[159] Edinburgh *Courant*, July 18, 1884, quoted by W. Turrentine Jackson, "British Interests in the Range Cattle Industry," in Frink, Jackson, and Spring, *When Grass Was King*, 205.
[160] Glenys Wilkinson, "T. N. Mathews and other Cattlemen of Campbell County," p. 3, WPA Collections, subject file 883.

By the middle of the 1880s, the range cattle industry in Wyoming Territory was the dominant element, aside from the railroad, in the economy, was continuing to expand, was seemingly robust and prosperous, and the cattle seemed to be flourishing. At any rate, they were grazing the range in unprecedented numbers with some estimates as high as two million head of cattle. Although that number is doubtless too high, the actual number was still very large. Those cattle were owned by fewer and fewer operators too, and these were the cattle kings of legend, the ranchers whose Wyoming domain could be spotted on a map of the world and who themselves may have lived on another continent. Yet there was more to cattle ranching in territorial Wyoming than owning cattle and counting profits, and that fact reflected a complex reality that others in Wyoming, too often left out of the ascendant system, knew intimately. That circumstance thereby produced the demise of the cattle kingdom as constructed in the early 1880s.

One would not know it from reading the financial pages or sometimes even the front pages of the local press, but there were others who also ranched, and there were even some who farmed. There were, in fact, when it came to cattle ranching, two Wyomings. One was a Wyoming of huge ranches and innumerable cattle spread across the plains for hundreds of miles while the other was a Wyoming of homesteads and small herds. One was a Wyoming of cattle ranching where the business was operated by a gathering of directors around a mahogany table in a boardroom in a distant city, state, or country while the other was a Wyoming where the ranch family made decisions at the supper table of their cabin and on horseback on the range. One was a Wyoming where the object of the endeavor was to turn livestock into dividends and profits and the other was a Wyoming where the object and the means—where the free life they lived was as important as any money they made—were entwined, inseparable, and, in the last analysis, inviolable. In the 1880s these two Wyomings were in conflict. In fact, this conflict escalated and soon they were at war with each other.

i. Two Wyomings

One of the most revealing facts regarding cattle ranching in Wyoming Territory in the 1880s is that while the number of large ranches dwindled in favor of those that were even larger, with fewer and fewer owning more and more cattle, the number of "farms"—a Census Bureau category that included all kinds of agricultural operations, whether tilling the soil or grazing livestock—increased exponentially. Although the number of farms and ranches in Wyoming increased from 457 in 1880 to 8,125 in 1890,[162] the power and size of the largest ranches increased and their number decreased, in the process exposing

---

[161] Smith, *The War on Powder River*, 18.

[162] U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Report on the Productions of Agriculture as Returned in the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880)*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 5; Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Report on the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), 235.

a chasm between the small rancher / homesteader and the large operators of the range cattle industry.

Segregating the ranches by size is always a difficult matter and drawing the line between large and small is highly subjective. Even so, it is possible to discern the spectrum of cattle ranches by relative herd size. The statistics, always subject to considerable margins of error when dealing with range cattle, especially in the larger herds, are notoriously difficult to nail down except by going through the census manuscripts—the forms completed by the census taker when interviewing each individual family. While the census manuscripts are a valuable source for researchers of particular properties, the reports based upon them, even at the county level, do not indicate the size of the herds in the 1880s. There are some indications of herd size, however. In his book promoting cattle ranching, General Brisbin listed and named what he termed "the principal owners" of cattle in Wyoming Territory. He also indicated how many head of cattle were in the herds they owned. Of the seventy ranches he listed, only three had more than five thousand head of cattle; in fact only four had more than two thousand (including the three with more than five thousand). Seventeen ranches had between one and two thousand head, and five had between five hundred and a thousand head. The majority (forty-four) had fewer than five hundred head of cattle. In addition, Brisbin appended this note to his list of seventy ranches: "There are many other small herds of 50, 100, and 200 head, but these will suffice to show the great cattle business that has grown up on the Plains within the past few years."[163] In General Brisbin's effort to demonstrate the significant size and success of the ranchers, he really showed how far removed the handful of the biggest ranchers were from the great majority of small ranchers in the territory.

As much as size, however, the chasm was one of outlook. The Cheyenne *Daily Leader* captured the perspective of those cattle barons who saw this as an economic investment—nothing less, but also nothing more. In the eyes of the range cattle business investor, the *Leader* explained, "there was nothing of a permanent character about it, it was simply a business opportunity of which he sought to make the most, and then quit as his pasture became crowded."[164] Agnes Wright Spring suggests that the newspaper may have had John Iliff in mind when it wrote those words, but they could have been applied with equal accuracy to several of those who sat atop the range cattle industry. The Edinburgh, Scotland, *Courant* was more specific when it offered a similar appraisal of Alexander Swan: "He has studied how to get the best returns from the herd; he has kept his eyes open for opportunities of buying out the cuckatoo ranchemen who are always trying to crowd into a good bit of country. Last year he absorbed several of these inconvenient neighbors."[165] From the perspective of a century or more later, these assessments seem not only accurate but also prescient, given the development of agriculture as agribusiness and the organization of that part of life along the lines of a corporate, profit-oriented model.

---

[163] James S. Brisbin, *The Beef Bonanza, or, How to Get Rich on the Plains* (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co., 1885), 32-34.
[164] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, October 25, 1887.
[165] Edinburgh *Courant*, March 17, 1884, quoted in W. Turrentine Jackson, "British Interests in the Range Cattle Industry," in Maurice Frink, W. Turrentine Jackson, and Agnes Wright Spring, *When Grass Was King: Contributions to the Western Range Cattle Industry* (Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado Press, 1956), 179-180.

At the time, however, these were revolutionary sentiments. The narrow focus on the bottom line and the notion of ranching as an investment and only an investment, to the extent that the cattle, the range, and even the "inconvenient neighbors," constituted only financial opportunities or barriers, was very much at odds with a pervasive ranching culture that prided itself on its neighborliness and mutual respect and that valued ranching as a way of life.

There was another perspective and that perspective emphasized ranching and farming as the fulfillment of more modest dreams, as the pursuit of a way of life more than as a path to riches. In fact, to many of these people the economics of cattle ranching was not only secondary to, but possibly quite remote from, their everyday focus. From their perspective, they were ranchers, not businesspeople. Lee Moore's reminiscence, as preserved in the personal scrapbook of W. B. Coy of Torrington, recalled of those early years, "I could handle the men and cattle alright, but the checkbook was considerable more trouble. It gave me some notoriety as I received a great many letters from bankers whose letters were all notifications of overdraft."[166] He also did not allow that shortcoming in his business skill to get in the way. Indeed, the nature of ranching and its mobile inventory, always in flux, often shaped its casual regard for accounting practices and discipline. Even the notorious "book count" had its more innocent side in that it reflected a low priority for inventory maintenance. In 1884 the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, representative of the business-side of ranching, bemoaned the prevailing practice of too many ranchers, but a practice which the WSGA believed was happily fading in the wake of a new approach that emphasized system, economy, and judgment: "In those times the calf tally was notched on a shingle, and the check book was the only additional record kept. By reference to his balance or overdraft at the bank, the rancher judged the degree of his success."[167] For some, ranching was a business every bit as organized and as profit-yielding as a manufacturing plant where the goals of profit on investment, the same principles of economy, and the same costs of production obtained; for others, ranching was what life was all about and they hoped that it would be sufficiently successful that they could stay in the saddle and on the land and that their children might be able to do the same.

If anything, the chasm between these two outlooks and groups was becoming wider. Part of it could be seen in the buildings on the ranches and the lives those buildings encouraged and reflected. The vast majority of these ranch buildings, of course, were modest in the extreme. The dugouts and log cabins where ranchers and their families ate beans and bacon were not only the first dwellings for many settlers but often were the long-time quarters they used. The English writer W. Baillie-Grohman estimated that between sixty and a hundred British pounds would be sufficient "to erect all buildings necessary to start an ordinary ranching enterprise" and John Kendrick estimated that even in substantial ranching operations the investment in improvements was limited to a few hundred dollars.[168] About the vast

---

[166] "Lee Moore Tells some real History of Cattle Business," in WPA Collections, subject file 1280.
[167] The 1884 WSGA report is quoted in Lewis Atherton, *The Cattle Kings* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 169.
[168] W. Baillie-Grohman, noted in Edward Everett Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), 98; John B. Kendrick, "Range Cattle Date Back to Texas Trail," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 399. The Kendrick article appears to have been published at an unknown

majority of the farm and ranch homes we know nothing or next to nothing individually. But there are some indications. Many of the first dwellings seem to have sprung from the earth, almost literally. Sod was the immediately available building material and the price was right while the construction was performed by the rancher. John Hunton, who had been a trader at Fort Laramie, built a sod house on Box Elder Creek in future Converse County probably in 1877. This structure, like the vast majority of its contemporaries, would have gone unrecorded and unremarked had the sod house not ultimately become the property of J. M. Carey, and even then the sod house was known mainly for having been in the location of the bunkhouse at Careyhurst.[169]

In the same category of buildings would be the dugouts, a group which likewise is often undocumented. Often the structures fell somewhere between sod house and dugout, being partially recessed into a hillock with the sod removed in bricks to build the remainder of the walls, or using stone or logs for those walls. On the 101 Ranch, John Winterling had started his operation with a dugout on Little Powder River in 1882.[170] In Fremont County, Ed Farlow lived in what was known as the Lamoureaux dugout on Beaver Creek, evidently a dugout built by the owner of the ranch for whom he herded cattle and horses.[171] The dugout was nearly ubiquitous in Wyoming Territory and Martha Waln recalled that when she moved to the Big Horn Basin, two ranchers, Ainsworth and Brammer, "were living in a dugout at the Flag Staff."[172] In the 1930s, Leslie Sommer recalled the early dugouts of the Sybille

---

date in the Omaha *Daily Journal-Stockman*.

[169] In his diaries, Hunton himself made no mention of the building of this dwelling, and sometimes referred to his "Box Elder Ranch." L. G. (Pat) Flannery, ed., *John Hunton's Diary, Vol. II, 1876-1877* (Lingle, Wyoming: Guide-Review, 1958), 210. Bill Hooker once worked as a bullwhacker for Hunton and had occasion to visit Hunton's various properties including the Box Elder Ranch and also Hunton's cabin on LaPrele Creek, a ranch that Hunton referred to as his "Milk Ranch," and Hooker describes visiting some of these dwellings many years later in 1921 in his memoir, William Francis Hooker, *The Bullwhacker: Adventures of a Frontier Freighter* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988; reprint of the 1988 World Book Company edition), 46-47. See also, for the connection with Careyhurst, Mary A. Skelton, "The First Garden," handwritten manuscript, April 20, 1939, in WPA Collections, subject file 1386.

[170] Jesse E. Spielman delivered a paper to the Campbell County Historical Society on June 1, 1954 which was extensively quoted in the Gillette *News-Record*, May 20, 1963; evidently Spielman had reviewed survey record field notes which "reveal a dugout on the Little Powder River in 1882 owned by John Winterling of the 101."

[171] "The First Sheep in Fremont county," WPA Collections, subject file 728. Edward J. Farlow, *Wind River Adventures: My Life in Frontier Wyoming* (Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 1998), 57.

[172] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 856. 31. This document was written by Paul Frison as told to him by Martha Waln and was originally published in a series of articles in the *Wyoming News* in 1935. Frison much later published this as a small book in 1969: *First White Woman in the Big Horn Basin: A Documented Story of a Pioneer Woman that Portrays Life in the Big Horn Basin of Wyoming 86 Years Ago* (Worland: Worland Press, 1969). I have used the typescript version.

country and remembered them with a certain admiration:

> The "dug-outs" were a sort of outdoor cellar, usually built in a small bank, or hillock; with hard packed clay floors, and roofs made of laid poles, covered with sod. Sometimes after a heavy storm, the sod would drop from around the ventilators. Then they learned to use pieces of corrugated iron, or boards to turn the moisture. So well made were these "dug-outs" that many of them are still in use as root cellars, and storage spaces.[173]

The composition and construction of these dugouts probably varied, but one description captures their essence. Harry Williams was a cowboy in the Big Horn Basin and he described the making of a dugout for a line camp—a regular activity for those few cowboys who were kept on the ranch over the winter and whose job it was, especially in later years, to keep water holes open and to keep cattle somewhere near their range. Williams reported the process:

> If a new camp was necessary, the camp site was selected with great care. Nearby there must be good feed for the saddle horses, it must be close to water and dry wood for camp use. It was the rule, not the exception to build a dugout for winter quarters for ourselves. First we selected a cut bank, that had enough clay in it not to cave easily, and that was seven or eight feet in height. Then we dug a 12 X 12 room and a fireplace in the end against the hill. We made a roof of poles, covered it first with grass and leaves to keep the dirt from coming through. Then we covered it with eight inches of dirt. The front of the dugout was a shoulder of dirt which we left standing. In this we cut a door, which was made of poles covered with fresh cow or elkhide. The door was hung on wooden hinges, each part of the hinge being three feet long. There were no nails in existence so wooden pegs were used entirely in building, where nails today are used. A window was cut and covered with a flour sack for light. The fire-place chimney was made by laying short poles two in one direction and two on top running the opposite direction until the necessary height was reached. Then they were plastered with mud.[174]

Although this was a line camp and thus possibly smaller than other dwellings, and probably intended mainly for seasonal use, the elements of construction were doubtless similar for those who built a dugout for their ranch accommodation, however humble it may appear. The one critical difference is that the line camp in the 1880s, and for a good while afterward too, was probably built on the public domain and in that regard its location virtually assured that it would be invested with little in the way of long-lasting features or expectations.

Most ranch buildings for which records exist usually have survived in memory because of their exceptional features. The Tom Sun ranch on the Sweetwater River is a case in point. Tom Sun was in the 1880s a prosperous rancher, well above the usual ranch size of several hundred cattle or less, and

---

[173] Leslie Sommer, "History of the Sybille country," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1367.
[174] Harry Williams, "Life in a Line Camp," WPA Collections, subject file 396.

Sun's ranch buildings were appropriate for a ranch of that substantial size. In 1882 the Cheyenne newspaper described the Tom Sun ranch buildings, noting, "they would not be spoken of in Cheyenne as 'palatial mansions,' but are 'the finest in the country' on the Sweetwater range." Although the main building was log cabin in design, it was substantially above other such log cabins in that it included planed boards, large windows and "artistic effects in whitewash and deerhorn decorations have assisted in giving it a style hardly to be expected in that far-off region." The main building had five rooms and was "large, cheery, and comfortable." The furniture was factory-made although the rugs consisted of the hides of "wild animals." The numerous outbuildings included a meat house, an ice house, a smithy, a chicken house, and more.[175]

Or consider the Searights' Goose Egg Ranch west of future Casper at Bessemer Bend. Several descriptions of the building remain, although the building was razed in modern times and the stones fill the pit that once was a basement. W. P. Ricketts was one of the cowboys who worked for the Searights and thus recalls some of the construction work. "As I well remember," Ricketts later wrote, "there were eight large, spacious rooms in this house; the left upstairs bedroom in front was my room for four years. . . . Standing on an eminence overlooking the Platte River, it was the talk of the country." The construction of the main house was something of an accomplishment. Ricketts wrote, "John Johnson, two stone masons, two quarry men and one carpenter came from Cheyenne along with six and eight mule teams loaded with timber, shingles, window and door frames, nails, lime, paint and what not. Two or three quarry men were set to work quarrying the rock and the astonishing word came to the bunk house that the cowboys must haul the rock and sand." The main house, it should also be noted, was not for the Searights; the Searight brothers had other ranches in the West, especially in Texas, and did not stay on this ranch. Rather, the main house was for the ranch manager, or as the cowboys referred to him, the "buggy boss," the employment of whom "made necessary the building of a separate house for him and his wife." The bunkhouse, substantially more modest than the main house, was made of log and was located three hundred yards away, on lower ground nearer the river.[176]

In its quest for a "typical" ranch, the Cheyenne newspaper visited another ranch, the V B ranch on Big Bear Creek in eastern Wyoming. Similar to Tom Sun's on the Sweetwater, the V B ran a substantial herd of about 4,000 cattle, and its headquarters buildings were tucked away in a valley and surrounded

---

[175] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, December 8, 1882. The Tom Sun ranch long remained one of the treasures of historic preservation as the buildings remained in the hands and use of the family. In 1967 a National Park Service assessment of the ranch noted: "A considerable number of the original ranch buildings have survived. The low-roofed ranchhouse is the original log structure built by Sun in 1872, though it contains log additions. Several of what are believed to be original outbuildings are still standing. The setting of the ranch is practically the same as when Sun first staked his claim." Robert G. Ferris, series editor, *Prospector, Cowhand, and Sodbuster: Historic Places associated with the Mining, Ranching, and Farming Frontiers in the Trans-Mississippi West* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1967), 141-142.

[176] William P. Ricketts, *50 Years in the Saddle* (Sheridan, Wyoming: Star Publishing Company, 1942), 65-68.

by trees. The headquarters complex included a spring house for the storage of dairy products and other perishables, a series of corrals and watering troughs, and "a half dozen small buildings" that included a cookhouse and bunkhouse. In the bunkhouse, "a tier of shelves running around the interior contain the bunks." There was also a stable for some horses and a wagon shed and saddle shed. The main house, a two-story stone building, was under construction at the time and when finished would be used for "culinary and sleeping purposes." The other buildings were hewn log, "the interstices being filled with rough mortar."[177]

With four or five thousand cattle on them, these ranches were not average at all, and they were widely known. There were, however, a few that were even larger and they were spectacular. Especially those of the English and Scottish lords, remittance men, and bankers were singled out by contemporary observers as exceptional. Robert David, in his biography of Sheriff Malcolm Campbell, wrote that the English ranch operators, "did everything on a grand scale, building expensive ranch houses, bringing furniture from the Old Country, importing chefs, and valets, laying in great stocks of wines and whiskeys, and bringing out large parties of sight-seers in the summer for hunting and fishing trips."[178]

This was no exaggeration. The ranch house built by Moreton and Richard Frewen on their 76 Ranch (later Powder River Cattle Company), was often referred to as Frewen Castle. Frewen Castle was either a two-story log building or a story and a half, probably in an L shape, with five large rooms downstairs, including a large kitchen and a dining room that could seat and serve twenty people; the dining room, either thirty by forty feet, or forty feet square, may have doubled as a ballroom. In any event, the ballroom itself was the showpiece of the house and the Frewens held extravagant entertainments complete with music from an interior balcony. Fireplaces abounded, the floors were hardwood (evidently imported) and the rosewood stairway definitely was imported from England and it included an imported walnut railing.[179] The house was not a castle in the sense of castellated stone walls and moat and drawbridge, but from local perspectives it was close enough. The house or castle at any rate projected and retained an exclusive atmosphere.

Frewen Castle was an impressive and imposing residence, but it was more than that. It was also the base

---

[177] "What Is a Ranch Like?" Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, September 28, 1882. The reporter mistakenly referred to the ranch in this article as the B V but corrected the name in the issue of October 7.
[178] Robert B. David, *Malcolm Campbell, Sheriff* (Casper: Wyomingana, 1932), 169.
[179] Something of an official artifact of Wyoming folklore, the house, long since dismembered and used for other purposes, has received but scant serious attention. The American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming has photographs that show two elevations of the house only. See also Charles Schultz, "The 76 Castle" *Wyoming Educational Bulletin* (April 1934), 4. Another account describes the "castle" as a "two-story, thirty-six room, pine log and white plaster structure," but that number of rooms does not square with other accounts or with photographs of the building. John C. Paige, "Country Squires and Laborers: British Immigrants in Wyoming," in Gordon Olaf Hendrickson, ed., *Peopling the High Plains: Wyoming's European Heritage* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Archives and Historical Department, 1977), 16.

of a social life that separated the owners from the other farmers and ranchers in the territory and from the cowboys who worked for them. Indeed, Frewen Castle was more important for its social significance than for its architectural qualities, as powerful as those may have been. The Frewens entertained at this ranch both more frequently and on a scale vastly different from the other ranchers and cowboys—and farmers. Frequent guests came from England and they would stay for long periods. Martha Waln served as a lady's maid accompanying a "right honorable" English gentleman and his bride, the daughter of an English general, on their trip to the U.S. in 1882. They traveled to Cheyenne where they stayed for the summer and then continued on the Union Pacific to Rock Creek where they took the stage coach as far as they could, and then they boarded a private coach sent by the Frewen ranch for the remainder of the trip. They arrived at Frewen Castle in October and spent the winter at the ranch; presumably there were other guests there at the same time.[180] The guest book at the ranch was filled with the names of lords and ladies and knights and gentlemen, and Helena Huntington Smith notes that Moreton Frewen "was smitten with titles; he undoubtedly suffered because he himself was not born the son of a duke; and rarely does he mention in his memoirs anyone who was not at least the brother-in-law of an earl."[181]

The Frewens would regularly employ locals to guide them and their guests on lavish hunts, like the bear hunt that they hired O. P. Hanna to take them on in July 1880, but, hunters or not, the guests made the trek to Frewen Castle, and often they came all the way from England just to stay there.[182] The guests who traveled the road from Rock Creek north to the 76 Ranch kept that road busy and supplies to Frewen Castle were not the standard fare for ranches and farms in the Powder River country—or anywhere else in Wyoming. Charles Schultz reported in his own study, "Some people say that a great deal of champagne was freighted to the Castle." The entertainment was lavish and Schultz maintains that the Christmas ball at the castle in 1881 was exceptional: "people for eighty miles around were invited and relay horses were taken from the ranch and left at various places for the convenience of the guests who came long distances." This is not to say that everybody for eighty miles around was invited, for a great many were not, and this also set the ranch apart. There was a certain social distance that was built into not just the social events at Frewen Castle but into the very lifestyle of the lords of the cattle industry.

There were, for example, other buildings at the 76 Ranch—how many and what kind are lost in the mists of time. Charles Schultz makes clear that at least one other specific structure was present, and the relationship of that building to the main building cluster was also clear: "The bunk house was near the river. Two men are still living [1934] in Johnson County who rode for this outfit and lived at the bunk house."[183] The bunkhouse was not near the castle, but was located at some remove, both physically and

---

[180] "Life of Martha Waln."
[181] Helena Huntington Smith, *The War on Powder River: The History of an Insurrection* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 16.
[182] O. P. Hanna, quoted in Ida McPherren, "History of Grazing," typescript, November 15-28, 1940 in WPA Collections, subject file 394; McPherren cites an untitled article in Sheridan *Press*, May 16, 1937.
[183] Charles Schultz, "The 76 Castle," *Wyoming Educational Bulletin* (April 1934), 4.

socially, so that those worlds seldom intersected. It was almost suggestive of a feudal manor with the nobility in the castle and the serfs at hand, but at a distance.

The distance between them cut both ways, with apprehensions and suspicions on the part of cowboys and small ranchers quite as intense as the exclusion and condescension on the part of the cattle barons. In Campbell County, C. C. Moore recalled, "most of the big outfits at that time were owned by Eastern or English companies. They would send out a manager from the East who hardly knew a cow from a buffalo. The foreman would put them to wrangling horses or some such work where they would be out of the way. A great many of the Englishmen were remittance men."[184]

Part of that negative attitude toward the English aristocrats stemmed from a nativist sentiment that rejected foreigners, but it was also imbued with class enmity. J. F. Wilson was a boy at the time in Albany County, but later recalled for Davilla Bright, when she was studying foreign influences in Western ranching, both the specific impression of these Englishmen and also something of the tenor of the relationship: "Where these Englishmen came from, and especially why they came, was always a conundrum not only to me but also to mature people as well. There were many of them on the southern Wyoming plains in Albany County and another group in northern Wyoming around Sheridan. Most of them had plenty of money, and when they ran out made a trip to England to replenish their pockets. They were primarily interested in raising polo ponies and other light horses, but used Hereford cattle and sheep as a source of revenue."[185] West of Laramie, Jack Willan and Lionel Sartoris of the Douglas – Willan – Sartoris Company, according to John Clay, "lived in a rather lavish way with a lot of help around them." While Willan seems to have adapted well to the conditions of life in the area, Sartoris was "completely out of place in his adopted home, and not averse to letting you know it. He had been brought up in an atmosphere of wealth where servants ministered to every want and wish, and he had not transplanted easily or gracefully."[186]

Others not only pined to be back in England or Scotland and yearned for the comforts and privileges of their homeland, but did their best to transfer the institutions, habits, and relationships of their native land to Wyoming with varying degrees of success. Oscar H. "Jack" Flagg recalled the presence of people he called "barons" at a roundup, where "Englishmen in knee breeches, accompanied by their general managers, buggy bosses and valets, rode around with an air of lordliness which was ridiculous."[187] Ed Salisbury, who had been a cook on various roundups, related a story of his own experience with one

---

[184] Glenys Wilkinson, "T. N. Mathews and Other Cattlemen of Campbell County," typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 883.
[185] This was in a letter from Wilson to Davilla Bright, June 30, 1935, which Bright quoted in her master's thesis, "Foreigners and Foreign Capital in the Cattle Industry of the United States," M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1935, 76.
[186] John Clay, *My Life on the Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 146-147.
[187] O. H. Flagg, "A Review of the Cattle Business in Johnson County, Wyoming since 1882 and the Causes that Led to the Recent Invasion," 6, in Elmer Brock Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming.

such "lord."

> I was cook for an outfit that was owned by the sons of an English lord. Their foreman was an American and was under contract to the two Britishers for a term of three years. One day the foreman was talking to me when the Englishmen rode up and dismounted. I went on about my work because I knew that the Englishmen had come to talk to the foreman, but I was in hearing distance and I heard one of the Britons say to the foreman, "You will have to bow when you meet us."
> The foreman replied, "I don't bow to any man."
> "But we are the sons of English lords."
> "Well, sons of lords and sons of bitches are all the same in this country."
> The Englishmen paid him three years' salary and fired him.[188]

Welcome to Wyoming.

One remittance man was doubtless the exception that confirms the rule: Clement S. Bengough, well-educated and from a titled English family complete with a castle in England, Wotton-under-Edge. Bengough acquired the ranch of another Englishman in Albany County and remained on that ranch the rest of his life, apparently, and increasingly, as a recluse. At least one visitor to the "primitive dirt-roofed cabin" on his ranch near Cooper Creek was surprised at "Ben's dislike for the comforts he had formerly enjoyed." Bengough not only adapted to the isolated ranch life he took up, but he even declined to return to England to claim an inheritance of some $300,000 and was buried on a hillside overlooking his ranch with a prominent grave-marker and a grave covered with stones; subsequently a fence was placed around the grave and the site conspicuously overlooks not only his ranch sprawling off toward the Medicine Bow Mountains in the west, but also stands as a sentinel over I-80 which passes directly beneath it a dozen or so miles east of Arlington. One line of verse on the headstone, from Robert Louis Stevenson, sums up his dreams: "Here he lies where he longed to be."[189] Welcome to Wyoming. But Ben Bengough was the exception.

Ethnicity was a factor, but class was the overriding barrier between the large and small operators. Regard by the big ranchers for the small farmers and ranchers—and even the cowboys who worked for them—was one of almost unqualified disdain and distrust. To these people the terms cowboys, farmers, and ranchers were synonymous with thief. In an environment where about everybody had a few head of cattle and where the huge herds were unprotected a good portion of the time, it was easy to lay any losses in the herd at the door of those who had but few and wished to increase their number—and certainly there were instances of rustling by small ranchers, by farmers, and by their own employees

---

[188] Edward Burnett, in Sheridan *Press*, May 16, 1927. A typescript of this newspaper article can be found in Ida McPherren, "History of Grazing: Early Ranches in Northern Wyoming," WPA Collections, subject file 394, p. 46.
[189] Robert H. "Bob" Burns, "Beef Makers of the Laramie Plains," *Annals of Wyoming*, 36 (October 1964): 190-193.

from the big herds. While people like Swan Ranch manager John Clay might on occasion admit that he admired their proficiency in dealing with cattle, and allowed that sometimes they even had traces of the qualities easterners romanticized in cowboys, he spoke of more than one group as "light-fingered, treacherous, inclined to gamble, and held human life as of little value." Some, he admitted, "were masters of their business, although their morals were shaky."[190]

The category of cowboy and thief in this lexicon included a wide range of people, not a monolith, and generally they were people of all kinds with varied backgrounds, and probably not the career thieves and "light-fingered" miscreants who used their vocation as a means of getting rich at their employers' expense. In 1883 the editor of the Cheyenne *Daily Leader* visited a roundup and reported, "Among the boys this year are a good many tenderfeet, some of whom have come on the range to get an insight into the stock business, with a view to following it as stock owners. Besides several young Englishmen, who, we all knew, were dukes in disguise, there were with one of the round up parties I spent a few days with a son of a prominent New York judge, two graduates of the Chicago university, a law student who had been eighteen months in Roscoe Conkling's office, and a Texas gambler after boys' wages."[191] Some, of course, remained in the cattle business as cowboys and some did start their own ranch. Barnett Swan, who as a young man worked as a cowboy on the family ranch, noted of the other ranchers, "many of them were cowboys, who while riding, had taken a fancy to some piece of land, filed a homestead on it, married and settled on the claim, then acquired cattle of their own."[192] But taking up a ranch itself often caused suspicions among the big ranchers. Where would they get their cattle? The only conclusion that many reached was that the small herds would simply be cattle subtracted from the large herds.

The mere act of owning cattle, unless you owned a lot of them, became nearly a mortal sin. Soon the big ranchers, through the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, determined that anyone who raised livestock on their own could not be employed as a cowboy on a ranch. Oscar Flagg in the Sheridan area recalled his own experience: "I was blackballed and not allowed to work for any of the outfits because I had bought cattle and taken up government land."[193] In a country where people put together jobs and incomes as best they could, this had a chilling effect on the small rancher and certainly did nothing to increase the amity between the classes.

There was also the tension between the ranchers and the cowboys they did not blacklist. Part of this had to do with the conditions of employment. Cowboying was a seasonal calling, given the need for their

---

[190] Clay, *My Life on the Plains*, 82.
[191] "A Cowboy's Life, as Viewed at Close Quarters by the Managing Editor," Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, June 14, 1883. Roscoe Conkling, U.S. Senator from New York, unofficial king of the senate, self-described author of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, was arguably also the most famous and powerful attorney in the nation and represented railroad companies in their cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.
[192] Barnett J. Swan, "The Round-Up as I Remember It," typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 1156.
[193] Flagg, "A Review of the Cattle Business in Johnson County," 15.

work during roundups but not at other times, and especially not during the winter. The cowboys and the cattle had the same dilemma during the winter: they had to forage for themselves and sometimes the theory of their ability to do so exceeded their actual experience. Only the older, more experienced hired hands were kept on during the winter. Thomas Richardson, who rode for the Union Cattle Company, related that, "I have heard many a one tell what a tough time he had to get thru the winter, often living on one meal a day, or less, and picking up a few odd chores to eke out an existence."[194] The saloons, predictably, served as a haven from life's vicissitudes for some, and with equally predictable results. When spring came, and with it the roundup, the cycle started all over. Again, the Cheyenne *Daily Leader*'s observation on the beginning of roundup: "The cowboys are disappearing from the streets and going to the round ups."[195]

The lines of class and ethnicity separating people on the range were many. And there was another element of ethnicity in this matrix which may have colored the class tensions, and this went beyond the English riding habit and the Scottish brogue. Some cowboys and ranchers from Texas were of Hispanic ancestry, and perhaps even from Mexico too, but their numbers were apparently small. Neri Wood rode as a cowboy for the Durbin Brothers on the North Platte and then for Willis Spear in Sheridan County. He recalled, "Most of the cowboys who came up from Texas were just plain American citizens but the Texas cowboy had his origin in the day when Texas was part of Mexico and originally of Spanish descent. I worked from 1875 to 1920 as a cowboy but I met up with a very small percentage of cowboys of Mexican or Spanish extraction. I would say that the cowboy that came to Wyoming from Texas was just an ordinary Texas cowpoke who had learned how to handle cattle from Mexican-Spanish cousins south of the Rio Grande."[196]

There were some Hispanic cowboys in Wyoming, although they are difficult to identify and locate. One account of the Creighton Ranch, for example, recalls a plaited rawhide lariat: "I had watched 'Viego' (Spanish for old) [*sic*] make it. Because of his extreme age we called him 'Viego'. He was at least two weeks making that lariat. After dressing the cowhide and cutting it into strands he would put it in a sack and take it with him on the prairie where he watched the horses and while the horses were grazing 'Viego' would work on the rope."[197] This faint glimpse into ethnic relations among cowboys and ranchers is frustratingly opaque since it says little about the dynamics in those relationships. Put together with other accounts, however, what is significant here is that even without the substantial presence of a Hispanic population on the ranches, their influence remained noticeable, and appreciable, in the Texas system of ranching transplanted to Wyoming. And it suggests that there may even have been more than two Wyomings.

---

[194] "The Life Notes of Thomas Richardson: Cowboy Days with the Old Union Cattle Company," WPA Collections, subject file 394.
[195] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, May 17, 1883.
[196] Ida McPherren, "History of Grazing: Early Ranches in Northern Wyoming," typed transcript, WPA Collections, subject file 394.
[197] Unsigned typescript, "Additional Notes Regarding Creighton Ranch," WPA Collections, subject file 210.

And on at least one occasion some of the strands of the cultural rivers flowing into the territory came together. Carol Smith was in the party of surveyors in early Johnson County and he recalled an incident which provided an elaborate, though grisly, symbolism of the changes underway and suggested the cultural contours of the time and place. He recalled that in the summer of 1882 he was on the 76 Ranch of the Frewens.

> In those early days the buffalo bulls were in the habit of invading the herds of cattle which had recently been turned loose upon the open range in the Powder River area. Needless to say these buffalo bulls caused a great deal of annoyance in the herds and a great deal of worry to the cattle owners. A number of English sportsmen and hunters were usually to be found at the "76" ranch. During the previous year they had shipped in a small Mexican fighting bull and they had equipped its horns with sharp, steel spikes. As a matter of sport as well as of necessity this little bull was turned loose whenever a buffalo bull came into sight on the "76" range. . . . I saw an encounter between this Mexican bull and a huge buffalo bull. The Mexican animal was out-weighted about two pounds to one but he had science. He had mastered the art of side-stepping and other maneuvers which we see in the prize-ring. The buffalo bull sought to over-power his small antagonist but without avail. The little animal ducked and side-stepped and by means of the steel bayonets on his horns in a very short time disemboweled the buffalo bull and the fight was at an end.[198]

There, in Johnson County, not far from Powder River, where Native Americans had been supreme a decade earlier, British nobility and upper-class English sportsmen watched a Mexican bull fight a bison bull in its home range where Texas cattle now grazed on a ranch worked by Texan and other cowboys.

The distance between the big ranchers and the small ranchers—and everybody else—was more than lifestyle and working conditions and ethnicity. It involved the way they went about ranching. Generally, the ranching practiced by the big ranchers was an extensive system, where a small amount of labor, proportionately, was spread over a very large area, seeking in this way to take advantage of the economies of scale. In the Texas system of cattle ranching, that purposeful neglect and "turning loose" had been the defining element and it continued to be such in Wyoming. Where ranches grazed several thousand head of cattle, or even a hundred thousand head, the system was by definition an extensive one. On the other hand, the smaller ranches may have had a few hundred head of cattle—and probably a lot fewer than that; with a small number, their effort was more intensive and it was to their interest and appropriate for their cattle's needs that they monitored and even maintained their livestock much more closely. What this meant was that the two systems of ranching not only intersected because their cattle used much the same stretches of prairie, but they came into conflict thereby too.

---

[198] Sheridan *Press*, May 16, 1937; a typescript of this newspaper article, untitled, can be found in McPherren, "History of Grazing: Early Ranches in Northern Wyoming," p. 48.

Simple access to land, and to water, proved to be a volatile issue. Often farmers and small ranchers fenced off their land, the land they had claimed and taken possession of under the terms of one of the homesteading laws, to protect their crops and their herds from the large herds that ranged where they would. When they erected fences, large ranchers were aghast and outraged because it meant that they would no longer have access to the water that went through that property. As W. Turrentine Jackson summed up the issue, "When the land-hungry settlers arrived, they squatted on the best lands along the river bottoms, took possession of the water holes and fenced in the pastures of wild hay. The cowman, while using barbed wire for his own benefit to inclose the best lands, and often some of the public domain in between, was furious when wire was used against him by the grangers. In the case of the settlers, their action was perfectly legal for they had filed claims under the Homestead and Pre-emption laws, and the ranchers were helpless."[199]

Of course, the big ranchers were not completely helpless, and they endeavored to claim land too, especially, and sometimes only, the land along the waterways. This device became one of the central charges leveled against the big ranchers. The idea was that in an arid region control of a small area through which streams flowed provided de facto control of much larger areas of grazing land that depended on the streams. Paul Wallace Gates summarized the practice observing of the large ranchers, "at this point they resorted to the homestead or preemption laws, had their hands apply for land along streams, commute their homesteads to pre-emptions, take title and transfer the quarter-sections to their employer. Possession of a few hundred acres might thus give the stockman control of many thousand acres of grass land."[200]

Exactly how much big ranchers abused the land laws is difficult to determine. At the time, accounts of abuse in the West caused inspections by the Commissioner of the General Land Office that proved sensational and spurred calls for reform of the land laws. Paul Wallace Gates has suggested that some of the instances of abuse were flagrant indeed, and, as it happened, some of them occurred in Wyoming. For example, two companies, the Union Cattle Company and the Goshen Hole Ditching Company, owned fifty-five Desert Land claims in Wyoming. Of those claims, Gates writes:

> Sworn testimony had been presented showing that ditches had been constructed and ownership of ample water rights obtained to make possible raising crops on the land, though no crops had as yet been produced. Investigation, however, brought out that the few observable ditches were mere plow furrows and were neither useful nor intended to be so. Of the 55 entrymen, seven lived in Wyoming, seven in New Jersey, 30 in New York, and 11 in Massachusetts. Testimony based on interviews with nine of these "foreign entrymen" revealed that they had filled out the applications "to oblige a friend,"

---

[199] W. Turrentine Jackson, "British Interests in the Range Cattle Industry," in Frink, Jackson, and Spring, *When Grass Was King: Contributions to the Western Range Cattle Industry*, 247

[200] Paul Wallace Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), 466.

> never considered that they had any interest in the lands or in any water rights, and that one officer of the companies was a final witness in 20 cases, a second officer was witness in 49 cases, and Thomas Sturgis was witness in 19 cases. Three of the claims were established on good grassland.[201]

So far only one student has carefully examined land law use in Wyoming in a way that can clarify how common this abuse may have been. In his master's thesis, George C. Scott studied the use of various land laws in Bates Hole, an area north of Shirley Basin and southwest of Casper, overlapping into the northern parts of Carbon County and he was sensitive to ferreting out cases where claimants may have been serving the interests of others, and to the use of claims on water to control broad expanses of land. Scott actually found two significant developments in this regard. One was that the theory was difficult to apply: ". . . to control a significant piece of land behind the river, a rancher would have had to own a large stretch of the river; otherwise, poachers could simply slip down to water around the ends of his land, and still use the back lands. Even along the creeks where control might have been more easily accomplished, it was rarely attempted." There was, however, one attempt that proved successful: "The only exception might have been the Swan Land and Cattle Company which controlled nearly five miles of Bates Creek." Even then, however, Swan's focus was not so much controlling the lands away from the stream but the actual development of the cropland adjacent to the stream. As Scott summarizes, "The abuse of land laws to control massive sections of rangeland through control of water seems to have been a rarity in Bates Hole."[202] But it did happen there and how much it happened elsewhere remains to be seen through additional studies.

A related aspect of that control, alluded to in various discussions of claiming land on streams, was the use of hired hands to gain title to lands and then transfer that title to their employers—the practice of using "dummy entrymen." Again, the evidence is ambiguous, and even conflicting. While George Scott finds evidence of specific instances where ranchers, especially the Swan Ranch, used this practice, he also observes that it was not a completely one-sided transaction since the rancher would finance the improvements on the land and would not be able to discharge the hired hand until the deal was complete—years into the future.[203] Even so, there was one other consideration that may overshadow the temporary benefits. When hired hands claimed land and dutifully turned it over to their employers, they also forsook the possibility of ever again taking out a homestead for themselves. They had, as in the ancient description of Esau's transaction, sold their birthright for a mess of pottage.

In any event the domination of the land by the largest companies moved forward inexorably. The situation was abundantly clear in 1885 when Joseph Nimmo reported, "it is, however, a notorious fact that the public land laws now in force, although framed with the special objects of encouraging the

---

[201] Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development*, 640.
[202] George C. Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1978, 20.
[203] Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," 77.

settlement of the public domain, of developing its resources, and protecting actual settlers, have been extensively evaded and violated. Individuals and corporations have, by purchasing the proved-up claims, or purchases of ostensible settlers, employed by them to make entry, extensively secured the ownership of large bodies of land."[204] Eight decades later, historian Paul Gates concurred with that assessment: "It was practically impossible for large ownerships to be established in the range cattle states except through perversion of the land laws."[205]

Any conclusion about the application of the land laws in the settlement of Wyoming must take into consideration the complexities involved in their use and misuse. The fraud is undeniable, but probably not pervasive, unless one includes the grazing of livestock free-of-charge on the public domain in such fraudulent use, which is different from taking ownership of the land. (It is also true that sometimes individuals who had used and grazed the land for enough years came to believe that it thereby belonged to them, but this seems to be a philosophical distinction as much as anything.) Probably the conclusion for now is that the fraudulent use of land laws was mainly restricted to the largest of the ranches, but it also appears that the largest also engaged in those practices routinely.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that no matter the extent of the fraud, something else important was happening at the same time. No less than Paul Gates pointed this out some decades after he made his initial findings that focused extensively, and almost exclusively, on fraud, mismanagement, and deception in the application of the land laws. In the 1960s Gates concluded that the land laws were, after all, successful. "The land system," observed Gates, "as it applied to the less humid region of the High Plains, was indeed adequately flexible." Of course, Gates continued, that flexibility was not always intentional. The law was flexible because it did not sharply limit land entries as reformers had sought; it was flexible "because of the laxness and incompetence of officials in the local land offices and because a penurious Congress failed to make sufficient appropriations to enable those officers to do the work of thoroughly scrutinizing entries for confirmation and patenting;" it was flexible because the shrewdest legal counsel money could buy "was available to capitalists to so phrase the laws or to find loopholes in them as to make evasion easy."[206] The law was not intended to be nearly as flexible as it wound up in practice, but in the political process in Washington by which the laws were written and in the administrative framework by which they were administered, they gained flexibility and that

---

[204] Joseph Nimmo, Jr., *Report in Regard to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885), 41.
[205] Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development*, 640n.
[206] Paul Wallace Gates, "Homesteading the High Plains," *Agricultural History*, 51 (January 1977): 109. Gates also observed that after land commissioners in the Cleveland administration focused on misuses of the land laws, "Historians have reflected this jaundiced view, relying upon these continued reiterations, and not finding much in the reports about the hundreds of thousands of people successfully making farms for themselves." Finally, Gates noted, "I must confess that I may have contributed to this misunderstanding some twenty-six years ago . . . ." Paul W. Gates, "The Homestead Act: Free Land Policy in Operation, 1862-1935," in Howard W. Ottoson, ed., *Land Use Policy and Problems in the United States* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 31-33.

flexibility enabled people to settle the lands.

One particular feature in the control of extensive land, including land that remained legally in the public domain, brought a sharper focus to the issue. The use of fences by the big cattlemen as a device to control the range built on and compounded the other abuses of the land laws. As Maurice Frink writes in his account of the range cattle industry, once the big ranchers established their claim, "The evil could be, and was, compounded by illegal fencing—by enclosing land a cattleman claimed without right, enforcing his claim by force or the threat of force. It was thus that the ground was laid for contention between the big man and the little."[207] As much as they valued the open range, as much as they protested the fencing off of parts of the range by their smaller neighbors, some of the large operators decided that fencing could serve a beneficial purpose when they used it. Two elements were at work in this. One was simply the effort to control range that they could not legally claim, purchase, or lease. The other, however, involved a transformation of the ranching industry. Wyoming had been considered by the big operators to be first and foremost a feed ground for steers. And most historians have agreed with E. E. Dale, whose judgment was that the Southwest "was primarily a breeding ground producing hundreds of thousands of calves each year, while the [central and northern plains] was, largely speaking, a feeding ground to which were brought young steers from the Southwest to be matured and fattened on the rich pasturage of these northern ranges."[208] Implicit in that system was that the breeding and calving of the animals was of little concern to the Wyoming ranchers; indeed, with the big herds those activities were secondary in nature and the main attention was in branding the calves to prove their ownership. That was part and parcel of the extensive agriculture practiced in the Texas system of ranching. And that contrasted with the practices of the small rancher, however, since each head in the small herds carried a larger importance and value and those ranchers were in a position to attend to their cattle and even to assure some improvement of the livestock through purposeful breeding.

The cattle that had been driven north from Texas were not prime beef. As E. E. Dale observed, "generally speaking, the animals making up the great herds of cattle that were driven north from Texas in the years following the war were wild, long horned Texans, angular, lean, narrow flanked creatures, comparatively light in weight, that furnished, when slaughtered, beef by no means high in quality."[209] So there were limited attempts to improve the breed and this usually involved the importing of shorthorn bulls; Durham bulls began to spread across the plains, at least among some outfits, and their progeny gradually began to replace the lanky, light-weighted, and stringy longhorns. But this carried an implication.[210]

When the big ranchers decided that they needed to improve the breed of livestock they sent to market,

---

[207] Maurice Frink, "When Grass Was King," in Frink, Jackson, and Spring, *When Grass Was King: Contributions to the Western Range Cattle Industry*, 65.
[208] Edward Everett Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), 71.
[209] Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 159.
[210] See on this generally, James Young and Darin Clements, "Durham Cattle on the Western Range," *Journal of the West*, 45 (Winter, 2006): 35-42.

that they needed to pay as much attention to quality of beef as to quantity, fences became important. Quite simply, fencing would keep the expensive purebred bulls they had acquired from mixing with the cattle of other owners and, conversely, keep the inferior bulls of others away from their own cows. (They would also make their more expensive cattle less subject to rustling than the open range cattle.) Frances Wagner King, who was a professor in the University of Wyoming College of Agriculture in the 1930s, studied this development and concluded that "Scrub herds began to give way to smaller and more pure bred stock, and even this breed was constantly sired by better and better bulls imported from the East. As herds grew in quality, it became incumbent on owners to see to it their cattle did not mix with inferior neighboring herds, and to prevent this, fencing became more and more widespread."[211]

That growth in fencing was dramatic and many people noticed it. In 1882 the Deadwood *Times* described the "corral" built by Sturgis and Goodell on the Cheyenne River, which contained "24,000 acres and which required 100 miles of barbed wire fence to fence two sides of it, the remainder being fenced by a mountain. This corral is to them what a barnyard would be to the average stock raiser of the states, and is used to put beef cattle in at the roundup. Their pasture is Custer and Forsythe counties [South Dakota] and all of Wyoming."[212] Other ranches, including the Swan ranch which set about fencing off property that it acquired from the Union Pacific as well as government land within the checkerboard, and other lands too, erected fences. This was a problem in two ways. First, as the Cheyenne *Leader* noted, the best range (and water) was being dominated by the biggest cattle operations who excluded the small ranchers and their cattle.[213] The other part was that the land enclosed by those fences included significant chunks of public domain. This was not only an effort to monopolize the range, but was also illegal. The tension was rife and found its way into the courts in Wyoming. In 1883 federal court in Cheyenne decided a prominent case, *United States vs. Swan et al*., in which the Swan Cattle Company was prosecuted for fencing in public lands, and the court found for the prosecution and against Swan. The outcome of the case actually surprised few people since the requirements of the law were abundantly clear. The only surprise, at least to some, was that the federal government was taking the side of the small farmer and rancher.

An Associated Press report from Cheyenne covering the case noted that this was not just a legal matter, and not just an isolated instance, but something that extended to daily use and life on the range for everybody: "Probably the larger part of the public domain for grazing is illegally fenced in. Certainly there are millions upon millions of acres so inclosed. The object in fencing is not so much to keep the owner's cattle in as to keep other people's cattle out. . . . If other stock raisers try to break through and get at the supply there is trouble at once. Moreover, if a legitimate settler comes into these inclosed lands he does so at his peril. The stock people are strong and rich, and among their employees are desperate men who have no regard for life or law."[214]

---

[211] Frances Wagner King, "A Re-Statement of Relevant Data Pertinent to the History of Grazing," typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 1182.
[212] This article from the Deadwood *Times* was reprinted in the April 4, 1882, *Cheyenne Daily Leader*.
[213] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, February 7, 1882.
[214] "The Fences," Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, August 26, 1883.

In apparent response to that judgment in this case in which the large ranching enterprises were pitted against the small, it was the Cheyenne newspaper that was in complete and utter denial of what the struggle was all about: "it is true that the case which evoked the decision of Judge Sever was one in which a small ranchman and a large cattle firm were contestants, but the quarrels between poor and rich men in this territory have been few, and it is not true that small ranchmen have been terrorized by threatened violence at the hands of powerful neighbors."[215] In truth, the tensions between the small and the large operators were actually growing more serious by the day and this case highlighted those tensions. Resistance to the laws continued and two years later President Grover Cleveland issued an order directing the removal of fences that closed off parts of the public domain, although even that did not settle the issue.[216] Even though many of the illegal fences came down—after substantial legal action and proceedings—a report for the General Land Office for 1886 showed Laramie County having ten large companies with illegal enclosures, including Swan Land and Cattle Company with 130 miles of fence.[217]

The forces that took the large and small ranchers closer to collision could be seen in other ways too. The ranchers developed an organization to help further their interests, but those interests were not defined so broadly as to include the needs of all who owned and grazed cattle. That organization, the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, sought to promote the livestock interests of its members who were the largest and the most powerful. The organization was aggressive, well-funded, and meticulously organized. Joseph M. Carey recalled, "in 1884 it had twenty-one of the best inspectors and detectives to be found in the country, and employed not less than five of the ablest attorneys giving attention to this particular business, in the live stock country. The Association expended over $1,000,000 annually in the promotion of the Live Stock business."[218] The WSGA even became politically active; in fact, in an ironic development, the largest ranchers, those who sought greatest use and advantage of the public domain, and who would on many occasions lament the active role of government in the economy, also actively organized to secure the intervention of government in their own business using the WSGA as their lever. The Wyoming Stock Growers Association, according to Maurice Frink, who wrote the WSGA sanctioned history of the organization, "would grow into the most militant and politically one of the most powerful of all the cattlemen's organizations."[219] Ernest Staples Osgood wrote in 1929, "for at least a decade, the [WSGA] was the unchallenged sovereign of the

---

[215] "The Fences."
[216] W. Turrentine Jackson, "British Interests in the Range Cattle Industry," in Frink, Jackson, and Spring, *When Grass Was* King, 228.
[217] Frink, "When Grass Was King," 94.
[218] Joseph M. Carey, "Early Days of the Cattle Business," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 407; this appears to be a transcript of an address Carey delivered to the annual meeting of the WSGA in April 1915 and possibly published subsequently in Wyoming Stockman – Farmer. Carey served as president of the WSGA.
[219] Frink, "When Grass Was King," 54. See also, Maurice Frink, *Cow Country Cavalcade: Eighty Years of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association* (Denver: Old West Publishing Co., 1954), 52-54.

Territory of Wyoming."[220] In the 1950s historian W. Turrentine Jackson analyzed the relationship between the Wyoming Stock Growers Association and the government of Wyoming and concluded that the WSGA exercised such influence over the territorial legislature and the territorial governor (appointed by the President), that "the organization was generally considered the *de facto* territorial government."[221] From county commissioners to the governor himself, public officials were limited in the choices they could make in appointments (from stock detectives to veterinarians) by the lists presented to them by the WSGA.[222]

The WSGA controlled the roundups, the key institution of open range ranching, and in 1884 it secured a law that outlawed the branding of calves before the beginning of the roundup. This effectively meant that an individual could not brand his or her own cattle until the WSGA had a chance to review, and possibly also brand, the calves. Moreover, the same law provided that all mavericks were to be branded by the association and then sold at auction to the highest bidder, with the association receiving the revenue. As Ernest Staples Osgood noted, "the law of 1884 was of very great importance in the history of Wyoming. It made the Association a quasi-public institution with full legal control over the stock industry of the Territory and with power to enforce its regulations as to roundups and brands. Since the Association had full control over the admission of new members, it was possible, by excluding the recalcitrant ones, to bring them to terms, for it would be next to impossible to operate on a range cattle basis outside of the Association."[223] If that judgment seems dated and severe, it has also been echoed by historians since who have arrived at exactly the same conclusion.
The WSGA printed and distributed its brand booklets so that the ownership of cattle at roundup could be determined conclusively, but the first booklet, printed in 1882, listed 156 brands in use in Wyoming. With several thousand brands actually in use, only the largest ranches were included in the booklet.[224] As for the mavericks which were, by law, sold to the highest bidder with the proceeds going to the WSGA, Lee Moore, who was the foreman of the roundup for the area from Fort Fetterman north to Black Thunder, recalled that one time he started to sell the mavericks to two independent—non-WSGA member—ranchers and was immediately rebuked by the secretary of the association. "Mr. Sturgis wrote back by return mail saying that it was not the intention of the law to sell those yearlings to little thieves like Metcalf and Williams . . .;" Moore appears to have then sold the mavericks to another man, apparently a member, "who wasn't any better in my estimation than J. T. Williams."[225]

---

[220] Ernest Staples Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929), 125.
[221] W. Turrentine Jackson, "The Wyoming Stock Growers' Association Political Power in Wyoming Territory 1873-1890," *Annals of Wyoming*, 20 (January 1948): 62. The same article had been published previously in the national professional history journal, *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 33 (March 1947): 571-594.
[222] Jackson, "Wyoming Stock Growers' Association," 67.
[223] Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman*, 136.
[224] Frink, "When Grass Was King," 50.
[225] Lee Moore reminiscence taken from personal scrapbook of W. B. Coy of Torrington, in 1915 in "Lee Moore Tells some real History of Cattle Business," WPA Collections, subject file 1301.

The powerful control that the WSGA exercised in matters of the range cattle industry was, of course, legal; the laws they secured made them so. And there were other parts of society, such as the railroads in Wyoming, that held similar power. In this, there are two points that need to be noted. One is that this was an early element of the rise of what is known in technical terms as modernization, in which society is fragmented into competing producer-oriented groups, seeking to use public authority for their own gain. The second point is that that system which rewarded the powerful with yet more power also left out those without the organized clout, without the financial resources, and without the access to the levers of public policy and enforcement. That becomes an issue in this context because the activities of the WSGA, which included at its peak in 1885 some four hundred plus members out of the thousands who ranched in Wyoming (and included some out-of-state members while excluding some in-state ranchers) and whose members were said to own two million cattle, actually changed the political and economic and social landscape. In its efforts to dominate the range and to control the cattle business in Wyoming Territory, it also widened the breach between the two Wyomings.

ii. Collapse of the Cattle Empire

If the rise of the cattle empire in Wyoming Territory was fast, then its demise was meteoric. Over a period of a decade and a half Wyoming had been transformed from a place largely unknown in the eyes of a great many people, and often as only a place to cross for many who were familiar with it, to an area known internationally for its open range cattle industry and a place where people and money were attracted by the profits to be reaped in that industry. It had also been transformed into a place that seemed to have reversed the large national trend toward distributing the public domain broadly to encourage an agrarian freehold democracy, since it concentrated control, if not actual ownership, of the endless prairies into fewer and fewer hands with more and more cattle. What was at stake in this transformation was not just how many cattle were owned by whom and where they would graze but what kind of a society would be constructed in territorial Wyoming.

By the middle of the 1880s in Wyoming there were serious questions about all of the above. The two Wyomings were not exactly at war with each other, but they did view each other skeptically and often fearfully. The cattle barons saw the solution to much of their problem as expanding and tightening their control of the range and the people on it. The cowboys, the small ranchers, and the farmers felt themselves being squeezed out of access to the range in various maneuvers—by fences, by restricted employment opportunities, by the inability to brand their own cattle—and often the subject of contempt and condescension. The cattle, the animals at the heart of the issues, were grazing the range in unprecedented numbers and no one knew how long this could go on. But there were indications that something would have to give.

As it happened, there was already a vigorous discussion underway among the largest ranch operators about the future of the prevailing system of ranching in Wyoming. Two specific concerns became the focus of intense speculation and argument. One had to do with exactly how many cattle the Wyoming ranges could hold. The other involved the ability of the cattle to manage during the severest of

Wyoming's winters. These two, of course, were related to each other.

Probably some of the earliest and most concrete worries over the ability of the open range system to sustain itself came during the winter of 1880-1881. That winter was cold, as Wyoming winters always are, but in January and February 1881, a particularly ferocious storm hit the eastern part of the territory. Even people who were in the habit of boasting about the hardiness of cattle and their ability to manage on their own in the winter found their confidence shaken. On January 22 the Cheyenne *Daily Leader* observed gently, "Cattlemen are anxiously looking for an abatement of the storm." That much could have been said about the cattle ranchers in most any storm, but the newspaper went on to comment on one ominous development: "There were a number of range cattle passing through the streets of the city yesterday. The poor beasts were almost famished and frozen."[226] The cattle were not only in trouble on the plains, but were seeking shelter and food in downtown Cheyenne. This was a troubling sign not only because of compassion for the livestock, but also since the ranchers knew that their own fate followed that of the cattle.

Four days later the situation had worsened, and "mavericks and branded cattle too, from the ranges, continue to meander into Cheyenne searching ash barrels and gutters for food."[227] The ravaging force of winter was no longer something abstract, something that happened out of sight and far away; starving cattle were stalking the city. The storm continued and reports began to filter in from the range and the situation was worse in those parts. In February the Laramie *Times* reported, "Stock is said to be suffering badly on the Laramie plains since the last storm. So far this has been the worst winter on these plains for stock that was ever known."[228] After the storm subsided and everyone tried to assess the damage, an "extensive cattle owner" from North Platte, Nebraska came to Cheyenne at the end of February and he brought worse news with him. The cattle, he said, "were in bad shape, owing to the unusually severe winter, and that he believed that fully fifty percent of the cattle between North Platte and Cheyenne would die before spring; the cattle were starving and were tramping back and forth in search of uncovered grass until they were actually worn out."[229]

Ranch owners from all over reported heavy losses and it seemed that a moment of truth had settled in. Moreton Frewen himself weighed in with a long, thoughtful letter from his ranch on Powder River that detailed the terrible toll of the storm. Further, he shared the awakening that the storm had brought him: "Now we on Powder River have been hugging the delusion that this district was as a winter resort unsurpassed in this territory; and yet, dead cattle, not in ones and twos, but in dozens, are to be found in every thicket on the river, and no doubt the worst is still to come." His real fear was that the ultimate toll would be discovered only in another month; he was confident that the calf drop in the spring would reveal more problems because the cows were in no condition to give birth.[230] There may have been no

[226] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, January 22, 1881.
[227] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, January 26, 1881.
[228] Laramie *Times*, February 17, 1881.
[229] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, March 1, 1881.
[230] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, March 2, 1881.

connection at all, but Moreton and Richard Frewen sold their ranch to the Powder River Ranch Company the next year; and Moreton Frewen stayed on as manager of the ranch although others now shared the risk of ownership. But there were those who learned a different lesson from the storm. One person wrote from Fort McKinney and pointed out the dire speculations of losses as a result of the cold and snow, and he was therefore pleased that the losses were no greater than they were and that so many cattle survived. "Was it thought twenty-five years ago that cattle could live in this country without man's care and that they could subsist the year through by grazing; or that they could survive for months amid snow drifts? Probably no one then thought such things possible."[231] The lesson learned by some was that if cattle could survive the past storm, they could endure any and every Wyoming winter.

Confidence, or complacence, thrived in the early 1880s, and even experienced ranchers like Ora Haley, when presented with the possibility of feeding in winter, rejected any change, and others did also. Laramie-based Haley owned or controlled over fifty thousand acres and believed that size was the key to profits. Haley and others were convinced that running large herds on the open range without tending them was necessary because of the economies of scale. Without the free public land, low labor costs, and minimal investment in anything other than livestock, the profits would not be sufficient. But in some quarters doubts began to grow about how well the open range system worked. Historian Lewis Atherton had an opportunity to study documents from contemporary interviews with some Wyoming ranchers and while he noted that some like Ora Haley and Thomas Benton Hord and Hubert Engelbrecht Teschemacher wanted to keep on ranching the same way they had, he also found, "By the middle 1880's many Wyoming cattlemen felt that fencing and feeding were necessary practices in good ranching."[232]

The reasons for this apprehension were several and only partly derived from the tolls taken by the Wyoming winter of 1881. Perhaps foremost was the problem of overstocking the range, something that more than a few ranchers believed impossible, but that distressed others more and more. The carrying capacity of any range is by no means easy to calculate, but it is impossible to calculate if the number of cattle on the range is also an unknown variable, as it was with the large herds. Those who rode the range, though, had a reasonable idea of the carrying capacity, or at least knew when it was exceeded. Part of the problem was that parts of the range, while apparently valuable grazing with good, rich grass, actually had a limitation. Joseph Nimmo put the matter concisely in 1885: "Experiences prove that cattle cannot advantageously graze more than 6 or 8 miles from water. The result is that vast areas now well grassed are of little value on account of their remoteness from water." While Nimmo at other points placed the limit at six or seven miles, and while Martin Post, former Wyoming Territory delegate to Congress, estimated the limit at five or six miles, the point was the same.[233] The only valuable grazing land was that which stretched in strips ten to fifteen miles wide along the streams. The only way that the grass on the benches and beyond that limit could be made useful would be for herders to drive the cattle from one drainage to another, thereby crossing the unused pasture, or to drill wells. They were not

---

[231] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, March 1, 1881.
[232] Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*, 168.
[233] Nimmo, *Report in Regard to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business of the United States*, 20, 42-43, 186.

inclined to do either.

In addition, once the carrying capacity of a range was diminished by overgrazing, the result was cumulative and the grasses would be progressively reduced. The result was that herds grew and productive grazing land shrank. Everywhere there was evidence of what Garrett Hardin has called the Tragedy of the Commons. By putting more livestock in a pasture than the pasture or range can support, the toll is borne not just by the excess livestock but by them all. All the cattle are deprived of sufficient forage, not just some. Frank Lusk observed exactly that where he was running his cattle: "one man, in spite of protests of everybody who was running cattle in that section, turned about 8900 head of big Texas steers loose, right on top of us. He only gathered about 1700 of these steers, but it increased the losses of everybody who had cattle on the same range, enormously."[234] T. N. Mathews recalled the situation in Campbell County, saying, "These big outfits had several thousand head of cattle apiece. And after a few years the range became over-stocked. In 1884 the country was pretty well eaten off."[235] John Clay told how the Swan Ranch purchased 9,764 Texas steers in 1884 and another 1747 the following year, "a total of 11,500 cattle placed on a range already seriously over-stocked. Most of these cattle died and never reached market."[236] Even the venerable Tom Sturgis, secretary of the WSGA, in an 1884 interview with the New York *Times*, expressed his fear of the overstocked range:

> The reports of the profits of the cattle business have induced capitalists, and especially foreign financiers, to form companies with a view of handling enormous herds on the plains, and, the land being free to all, they are sending cattle upon many ranges in such numbers as to expose a large proportion of the animals of the region to the risk of death by starvation – to the certainty of it in the case of a short grass crop and a severe winter. For example, 125,000 head of cattle have during the past season been driven upon the range lying between the North Platte and Powder rivers west of Fort Laramie, in Wyoming Territory. As a consequence, much of the land is as devoid of grass as the streets of New York, and if the approaching winter should prove to be a stormy one the loss in cattle by death will be perhaps 20 to 30 percent of all that graze in the region.[237]

There were dissenters. Joseph Nimmo himself, even though he reported that two million cattle were grazing the Wyoming range, and even though he found that the available grazing was less than often appeared, strongly disagreed with those who argued that the range was fully stocked and that there was no room for additional herds. He announced, "intelligent observers who have prospected the different parts of the great cattle area north of Texas assert that two, three, or even four times the number of cattle now upon the ranges can be fed upon them."[238] So, despite fears in some quarters of overstocking, and

---

[234] Frank S. Lusk, "My Association with Wyoming," *Quarterly Bulletin of the Wyoming Historical Department*, August 15, 1924, 16.
[235] Wilkinson, "T. N. Mathews and other Cattlemen of Campbell County."
[236] Clay, *My Life on the Plains*, 199.
[237] "The Grass of the Plains," New York *Times*, December 22, 1884.
[238] Nimmo, *Report in Regard to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business of the United States*, 20.

despite evidence of a diminishing range, the cattle kept entering Wyoming and were turned loose on the ranges.

Winter feeding, as an element of the range cattle business did not become common just yet. The main gestures in that direction were in the construction of hay barns on some ranches. The hay barn of Captain Torrey on the Embar Ranch in the Big Horn Basin, for example, was not only a huge building but a work of considerable pride and accomplishment. It was known as the biggest hay barn in Wyoming Territory and was a work of art. The dimensions are not known, but photographs show a very long building made of log and with painstaking piece-sur-piece coping. Ventilation was essential in hay storage and the logs were not chinked so as to allow open space between each, and four cupolas aided the movement of air. The corners show careful mortise and tenon work. As big as it was, though, this barn could not provide enough hay to see the thousands of cattle on the Embar Ranch through the winter. This hay barn, like those at other big ranches, was used to store the hay for the dairy herd, the saddle stock, the draft horses, and for the purebred bulls.

So the cattle business in Wyoming Territory was already stretched to its limits—the limits of the range, of feed, of water, of social relations, and everything else. Despite the huge numbers of cattle being grazed, itself a factor that some confused with the success of the system, it is clear that the ranching system was fragile, was filled with weaknesses, was incapable of sustaining itself into the future for very long, and, by some lights, was in its last throes even at the moment the winter of 1886-1887 hit. And the range itself was in poor shape going into that winter. According to Frederic Hultz, a professor of animal husbandry in the University of Wyoming in the 1930s who analyzed the Wyoming ranching industry of the 1880s, "The spring and summer of 1886 were exceptionally dry. Range forage did not develop."[239] In 1942 T. A. Larson, then a young assistant professor at the University of Wyoming, concurred with that assessment, noting that the summer of 1886 was "abnormally dry and warm" and that the total rainfall for three months of summer was about two and a half inches, compared with the normal of over five inches.[240] The natural forces on the range made the cattle grazing for the coming winter more vulnerable than ever.

The winter storms came, but the snow was often mixed with rain in November; that meant that when the temperature dropped afterwards, it formed a blanket of ice over the grass. And the weather remained bitterly cold, by some accounts hovering well below zero from the end of November to the end of February. And it continued to snow. William Peter Ricketts, a cowboy on the Half Circle L Ranch, which received its mail from Sundance, recalled, "the snow, some ten inches deep, was in layers and like ice packed in an ice house."[241] The winter would be long and it would be difficult.

---

[239] Frederic S. Hultz, "Wyoming Livestock Production," typed manuscript, p. 5, in WPA Collections, subject file 377.
[240] T. Alfred Larson, "The Winter of 1886-87 in Wyoming," *Annals of Wyoming*, 14 (January 1942): 6.
[241] William Peter Ricketts, "The Winter of '86—A Tough One," typed manuscript, November 9, 1935, WPA Collections, subject file 1194.

The deadly contours of the winter can be measured only approximately, but the account of the cowboy Ricketts suggests some of the human dimensions of the experience. Ricketts recalled, "Frost in the air was so dense that pine trees across the valley one-half mile away could not be seen. All gulches and creek channels were leveled with snow, all grass covered and only the sage brush in sight. Life at the Half Circle L ranch got very monotonous before spring." How the cowboys at the ranch fared in that situation was a tedium interrupted only by the ghastly scene outside: "We had wood and warmth, and grub to eat, but our hearts went out to the bawling, drifting and starving cattle. Both day and night the cries for food were heard, but we were powerless to help them."[242]

At Big Trails, south of Tensleep, Martha Waln lived with her husband, Frank Bull, who managed the Home Ranch for the Bar X Cattle Company, an English operation. She recalled that during the winter "there were hundreds of the Texas steers around the house and corrals both day and night. They would go out in the hills in the daytime and follow the trails that the men made on foot so the horses could get down near the ground and eat sagebrush and what little grass they could find." During the blizzard, she said, the cattle "were banked up around the house where they had already broken every window." Waln had made a pair of horse blankets out of quilts for their stallion and saddle mare that they kept in the barn at night in the winter, but when she and her husband went to the barn she discovered, "the cattle had gotten into the barn and had eaten every bit of those horse blankets from those two horses except two little patches where the quilts had been riveted to the two straps that held them in place. The willow pegs that had been driven into the logs to hold saddles and harnesses were green and they were chewed until they looked like frazzled-out paint brushes. The trees and brush along the creek banks were not only eaten, but gnawed until only hideous stumps remained on all of the trees that were around two and three inches thick."[243]

Maria Sliney recalled the sounds and smells of the deadly winter and spring as much as the cold, telling "how the cattle bawled all that winter; any time the family awoke at night they could hear them. At the end of that bitter winter thousands of them lay dead. All along the creek bottom they lay by the dozens, as many as seventeen around a single willow bush. By spring the stench was terrible."[244] That was on Owl Creek in the Big Horn Basin. In eastern Wyoming, Richard Pfister had just come from Junction City, Kansas with his family, and he saw the consequences of the winter in similar terms: "On June 4, 1887, we arrived at my brother's ranch, now known as the old Wood ranch, south of Lusk. As we came up Rawhide Creek the water was so full of dead cattle from the hard winter of 1886-87 that it was hard to get a decent drink of water."[245] All over Wyoming Territory the carcasses of the animals were scattered and left an inescapable reminder, and a shocking one, of the winter, and by implication a reminder too of the problems in the existing system. A grisly memorial of sorts remained as Martha

---

[242] Ricketts, "The Winter of '86—A Tough One," 2-4.
[243] "Life of Martha Waln," 13-15.
[244] Nellie Rankin, "A Pioneer Family," WPA Collections, subject file 975.
[245] Historical Committee of the Robber's Roost Historical Society, *Pioneering on the Cheyenne River* (Lusk, Wyoming: The Lusk Herald, 1947; reprinted 1956), 80-81.

Waln remembered, "There were piles of bones everywhere for years afterward."[246] Never again would the argument be made that cattle could just be turned loose on the Wyoming prairies and be able to forage for themselves in any weather and grow fat in the process.

The severe winter devastated the herds, and ranchers and others began to speculate on how many cattle perished in the storms. In Buffalo, L. R. A. Condit wrote in a letter that summer, "Losses last winter were the most severe in history. Cattlemen in this part of Johnson County put their losses at from 35 to 50 percent."[247] Struthers Burt later wrote his own finding that "The lucky ones sustained losses of seventy and eighty per cent. Men who had entered the winter with 10,000 head now had only 2,000. Companies with 50,000 head were lucky if they had 10,000."[248] In the Big Horn Basin, Charles Lindsay, after careful study of contemporary records, concluded

> . . . the winter losses in the Big Horn Basin were unprecedented. [Henry C.] Lovell estimated that half of his herd died of exposure and starvation. Another outfit whose identity is not disclosed shrunk in valuation in two years from $250,000 to $75,000. This cannot all be accounted for in the general decline of prices. Beckwith and Quinn were perhaps hit the hardest, having hardly enough cattle left in the spring to run a round-up outfit. The losses throughout the Basin were uniformly large.[249]

The final tally of losses will never be known since the count of cattle previously was not known either. Historian T. A. Larson in 1942 acknowledged that some herds were nearly wiped out, with losses of eighty or ninety percent, while the loss for the whole territory "would seem to lie somewhere not far above" fifteen percent.[250] If property tax assessments are any clue, which they may be in a general sense, the indication is that the losses were not evenly spread across the territory. The Crook County assessor reduced the count of cattle by 45 percent. The number of cattle in Carbon County dropped by 23 percent, in Albany County by 16 percent, in Johnson County by ten percent, and in Laramie County by five percent. Clearly, the winter storms were more severe in the eastern part of the territory. In Fremont County, the enumeration of cattle increased by half of a percent while Sweetwater County showed a five percent increase and Uinta County jumped up forty percent, but the numbers in Sweetwater and Uinta were so low as to turn small absolute increases into major increases by percentage.[251]

The consequences of the storm, however, could not just be assessed solely in terms of livestock death

---

[246] "Life of Martha Waln," 14-15.
[247] This letter, dated August 15, 1887, is quoted by Frink in "When Grass Was King," 99.
[248] Struthers Burt, *Powder River: Let 'er Buck* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1938), 253.
[249] Charles Lindsay, "The Big Horn Basin," in University of Nebraska, *University Studies*, XXVIII-XXIX (1928-1929): 132.
[250] Larson, "The Winter of 1886-87 in Wyoming," 15.
[251] "Report of the Governor of Wyoming" (1889), in *Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890), 657-659.

toll. There were other casualties as well, and these included a number of the biggest and most powerful ranching companies and those with the largest herds. The spring roundup confirmed their fears and the fall roundup convinced even those longest in denial. Lee Moore, who had been a roundup foreman in 1884, explained, "I continued to run this outfit [the O—O] until the bad winter of '86 put them out of business. So in the spring of '87 I started in to run the C-K and G-M outfit. It had taken me about seven months to find out that they had no cattle, and I told them so."[252]

More and more ranches discovered they had no cattle and were also, therefore, unable to pay their bills. As Frederick Hultz summarized the situation, "The western cattleman was broke and most of the big outfits never recovered from the blows of 1886-1887."[253] In the 1950s Thelma Gatchell Condit wrote a history of ranching and related activity in the Hole in the Wall country, and she summarized the situation thus:

> The former (big cowman) now had two alternatives, either liquidate his holdings and leave or reorganize his outfit to meet the changing time, which meant buying and fencing land and feeding in winter. Some stayed and some left. In 1886 the Frewens went broke. In 1889 the Bar C closed out and sold what was left to the NH outfit. Sir Horace [Plunkett] carried on until some time after 1890 when he, too, sold out and returned to Ireland where family responsibilities and other big financial ventures were becoming pressing.[254]

One after another the giants fell of their own weight. Thomas Sturgis himself failed. And in the summer of 1887 the biggest folded. W. Turrentine Jackson explains:

> . . . suddenly in May, 1887, the Swan Brothers announced bankruptcy. They had suffered losses during the cold winter and had been trading beyond the capital they possessed. When they were desperately in need of cash, loans could not be had at twelve per cent interest. The pressure proved too great for Alexander Swan, and he was forced to quit when the Scottish capitalists, already concerned over the shortage of their herd, refused to come to his aid.[255]

The cattle kings had been dethroned and their empire shattered.

iii. Social Struggle on the Prairies

---

[252] "Lee Moore Tells some real History of Cattle Business," 10.
[253] Hultz, "Wyoming Livestock Production," 5.
[254] Thelma Gatchell Condit, "The Hole-in-the-Wall, Part IV," *Annals of Wyoming*, 29 (April 1957): 65.

With the demise of the biggest ranches the fulcrum of history seemed to shift to others, both the small farmers and ranchers settling the territory under the provisions of the various land laws, on the one hand, and, on the other, the comparatively larger ranchers who actually lived in Wyoming, who rode the range, and who had substantial herds, a group different from those who had been lords of the earth without touching it. Both groups, in fact, moved to fill the vacuum created by the thinning of the herds in the winter of 1886-1887 and the subsequent thinning of the ranches.

One of the trends in the 1880s, of which the ranchers were acutely aware, was an increase in settlers throughout Wyoming Territory. The census of 1880 indicated that there were in Wyoming Territory a total of 457 farms, with "farms" being any kind of agricultural operation or domicile, including ranches for the production of livestock and farms for the production of crops or both. In 1890, however, that number had climbed to 3,125.[256] Considering that the number of cattle mushroomed in those same years, or at least up until the winter of 1886-1887, it is no surprise that the settlers and the big ranchers, competing for the same resources, crossed each other increasingly. With the departure from the range of the biggest operators, the settlers and the remaining ranchers saw each other, ironically, as more of a threat to their livelihoods and futures than they had previously, and they already viewed each other with suspicion, with scorn, and with contempt. Attitudes were hardening into more explosive postures.

There were a number of signs of the changes ahead. In 1883 the Cheyenne newspaper articulated what some saw as a hope and some saw as a fear: "The time is not far distant when a small capitalist will see a livelihood and something more in a small herd of cattle grazed on land he and one or two men situated like him may acquire under the land laws. When such men have cut out from the ranges of the big company herds the ranch land the government allows them, the companies must look elsewhere for the food for their cattle or devise some means to raise it at an increased cost."[257] And Joseph Nimmo, two years later, underscored the weight of traditional values in favor of the small farmer and rancher: ". . . The public sentiment of this country is, and always has been strongly opposed to the disposition of the public lands in large quantities, either to one person or to corporations. The genius of our institutions is in favor of comparatively small holdings, and the result of practical experience under this policy since the first settlement by colonists upon our shores, has caused it to become a cherished feature of our method of disposing of the public lands."[258]

It was true that ranchers had used the land laws in ways other than the purpose for which they were intended, and were using them to claim the "large quantities" either by legal ownership or by physical control, but it was also true that more and more people were moving in and claiming the small amounts

---

[255] Jackson, "British Interests in the Range Cattle Industry," 258.
[256] Census Office, *Report on the Productions of Agriculture as Returned in the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880),* 100; Census Office, *Report on the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890*, 196.
[257] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, April 5, 1883.
[258] Nimmo, *Report in Regard to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business of the United States*, 39.

provided for under the various laws governing the distribution of the public domain. In the annals of the history of Wyoming and the West, however, a curious inversion of judgment has taken place and the opprobrium has shifted to the settlers who moved in. In that view, the problem was not the ranchers who took over the public domain fraudulently or forcefully but the small ranchers and homesteaders who settled it lawfully. By the lights of many ranchers, and many historians too, it was the small farmer, the homesteader, the small rancher, and, by extension the laws under which they made their claims, that were the real problem in the development of Wyoming Territory. This argument runs that the land laws were the pernicious element in the settlement of Wyoming because those laws failed to provide sufficient land to make a living, encouraged the chopping up of the public domain into parcels doomed to failure, and deprived ranchers of the land they needed for grazing. [259] The land was suited for grazing, not for farming, and that was all. In fact, it is a virtual axiom that, modeled on a Midwestern climate and topography, the 160 acre parcels permitted under the Homestead Act fell woefully short in this arid climate. The corollary to that is that people should never have even made the effort to homestead Wyoming, that it was fit for livestock and only livestock.

The land laws and their implementation thus lie at the heart of an ongoing debate over Wyoming (and Western) settlement and land use. This is an important issue that requires further study, that requires sensitivity to the regional differences in the state, and that demands close, on-the-ground analysis. So far only a few studies have been conducted in Wyoming that bear directly on the question; many more treatments simply assume that the land laws were inappropriate for the state instead of exploring the question. Three master's theses at the University of Wyoming, examining land claims in Johnson County, Albany County, and Bates Hole (mainly in Natrona County but also partly in Carbon County), provide intriguing and revealing answers to basic questions. Still, because of the variation between these three—one in the northern part of the state where some of the largest ranches operated, one in the southern part where the Union Pacific was a major factor, and one in an arid part of central Wyoming—some of the conclusions can be suggestive for the broader territory. One clear conclusion is evident at the outset: The Homestead Act of 1862 may not have been the source of problems for either ranchers or

---

[259] In addition to the contempt for the small ranchers and homesteaders by large ranchers evident in the Johnson County War when the large ranchers tried to get rid of them, historians have even added their disdain, roundly denouncing the various homestead laws as victims, and those who used them to take up land as victims, as people who (according to Everett Dick) were "deceived into thinking that securing a piece of land was all that was necessary." The Homestead Act on the Great Plains (according to Benjamin Hibbard) "was a failure from the standpoint of both individual and nation," and was "vicious in its operation" for the damage it did to rangeland. According to Louise Peffer, "When Congress finally saw the error of encouraging the dirt farmer and instead provided for grazing homesteads, little of the grazing land which remained could support a family on the acreage allowed." Everett Dick, *The Sod-House Frontier 1854-1890: A Social History of the Northern Plains from the Creation of Kansas & Nebraska to the Admission of the Dakotas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1937, 1954), 131; Benjamin Horace Hibbard, *A History of the Public Land Policies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), 454, 409; Louise Peffer, *The Closing of the Public Domain: Disposal and Reservation Policies 1900-50* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951), 339.

farmers after all. First of all, most claims to land in territorial Wyoming, claims where metes and bounds were often used to define the boundaries, claims that overwhelmingly were situated on watercourses, were not subject to the 160-acre limitation of the Homestead Act. In fact, the Homestead Act applied only where land was already surveyed; where the survey had not yet reached, other land laws had to be used. Secondly, the Homestead Act was not always the chief measure used for settling the land and often was not even a principal means.

Consider the three studies. A master's thesis in history prepared by Francis Henry Tanner at the University of Wyoming in 1967 compiled a list of land claimants in Johnson County (as it is configured in modern times) to determine the location and date and authorization for the claimants. While Tanner's results cannot be automatically generalized to the rest of the territory, the information he gathered does shed light on the settlement pattern. Tanner pored over the Johnson County land records (not the records of the Buffalo Land Office) and compiled information about each transaction between 1884 and 1890. This represented a total of 64,615.88 acres and 213 separate land patents. One striking conclusion Tanner reached was that the Homestead Act of 1862 actually represented a small number of the patents issued in this period (they would be much more important in the twentieth century, he suggests, although even that is not certain). Only eighteen patents were issued, for 2,805.11 acres (just over four percent of the land patented), under the Homestead Act. On the other hand, 112 patents were issued for 46,399.27 acres under the Desert Land Act of 1877. Another seventy-six patents were issued on 13,657.59 acres under the provisions of the 1820 law.[260] These two measures combined accounted for ninety-three percent of the land patents issued in Johnson County in that period.

The 1820 land sales law, as amended by the Preemption Act of 1840, had been the basic law for the transfer of public land to private hands before the Homestead Act, had applied to land that was unsurveyed, and although it also had limits of 160 acres those limits changed over time with different amendments to the law so that the limits depended on the filing date; plus, this law permitted the land also to be purchased. (In Johnson County, the *average* claim under the 1820 law was around 180 acres, indicating that there were some claims that were substantially larger.) The 1877 Desert Land Act, on the other hand, allowed for easy acquisition of land to be irrigated, and certainly the land taken early in Johnson County was susceptible to irrigation. Tanner calculated the numbers of claimants on land through which streams flowed, 116 of the total 204 patents, and another 58 were close enough that they could have been easily irrigated.[261] Indeed, the presence of nearby water was a prerequisite to filing under the Desert Land Act, and that act, as Tanner makes clear, was definitive of early settlement: "It was under the provisions of this act that Johnson County was truly settled."[262] While these people may have established homesteads in the broad sense of the word, they were not establishing homesteads as a legal proposition under the Homestead Act. The Desert Land Act allowed for a maximum claim of 640 acres (until an 1891 revision in the law reduced the maximum to 320 acres), and Tanner found in

---

[260] Francis Henry Tanner, "The Disposal of the Public Domain in Johnson County, Wyoming, 1869-1890," M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1967, 110, 118-119.
[261] Tanner, "The Disposal of the Public Domain in Johnson County," 113.
[262] Tanner, "The Disposal of the Public Domain in Johnson County," 119.

Johnson County that the average claim under its provisions was 425.865 acres. This 426-acre average size, or even the 640-acre maximum size, may, according to some, still have been too small for farming or ranching, but that is a question that requires different analysis. Indeed, since these early claims were on watered land, and not just the dry benchlands well above the drainages, the question becomes that much more complex, with more distinctions to be made.

Several years before Tanner's study, Zachariah Lucian Boughn undertook a similar study of Albany County. While Albany County was vastly different from Johnson County because of the presence of the Union Pacific, with its enormous checkerboard land grant, and the University of Wyoming, which likewise received substantial lands, there were important similarities in the use of the land laws in the two counties.[263] As with Johnson County, in Albany County only a relatively small number of people claimed land under the provisions of the Homestead Act. Out of the 323 individual claimants for land, only 71 used the Homestead Act. Almost exactly half (160) of the claimants, however, used the Desert Land Act, while another 66 purchased land under the provisions of the 1820 Pre-emption Law. Another 26 used more obscure legal options for claiming land in Albany County.[264] Thirteen percent of the total acreage turned over to individuals was done under the provisions of the Homestead Act. On the other hand, 71.2 percent of the acres employed the Desert Land Act. In Albany County, the Homestead Act was more important, in terms of the number of people using it compared to Johnson County, but still the Homestead Act accounted for only 20 percent of the land claims. Moreover, the average claim under the Desert Land Act was for about 332 acres, far short of the full 640 acres possible; only 27 of the 160 claimants staked out their full section of land.[265] The vast majority of these people did not feel frustrated by the limits of the land laws.

George C. Scott, himself from a ranching family in Bates Hole, undertook probably the closest examination of the land laws in any part of Wyoming and did so over the longest period of time. Describing Bates Hole, Scott says, "like a shrivelled and dessicated heart twenty-five miles north and south, and nearly as wide east and west, it lies at the northwestern lip of the Laramie Plains, an arid, natural depression carved out of the surrounding plains by the actions of its streams." The streams tend to be dry, and "like the creeks the landscape is dry and withered."[266] As uninviting as that description

---

[263] Boughn also makes one important observation on the impact of the Union Pacific on the county: "The railroad laws worked decidedly in favor of the Union Pacific and contrary to the best interests of the county. The interpretations of those laws which allowed the railroads to make application for patents at their own convenience for that portion of the selected lands they so desired created a condition whereby valuable property was kept from the tax roles [sic]. It also meant that thousands of acres could be held in a non-taxable status until the value of that property was enhanced by surrounding settlement and then disposed of at a good price." Zachariah Lucian Boughn, "The Disposal of the Public Domain in Albany County, Wyoming, 1869-1890," M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1964, 150.
[264] Boughn, "The Disposal of the Public Domain in Albany County," 136-137.
[265] Boughn, "The Disposal of the Public Domain in Albany County," 141.
[266] Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," 2-4.

may make the area sound, Bates Hole was nonetheless settled and settled successfully. The people who moved into the area settled along the watercourses which, sparse though they may be, still offer meadows and natural hayfields where the grass is even lush, and offered opportunities for crop production. The Swan Ranch managed to take up significant land along the streams using dummy entrymen but other ranchers and crop-growers still managed to claim land in that area. And they succeeded. As Scott notes, "the relative abundance of good land available for entry before 1900 led to a remarkably low rate of failure among homesteaders. Slightly less than 13 per cent of those who filed before 1900 failed to carry their entries through to final patent."[267] One feature that Scott noted in the settlement efforts was the practice of filing claims next to other family members and sometimes next to friends. The role of family in the use of the land laws will remain a critical, and under appreciated and under studied, aspect of settlement that has the potential to reshape our understanding of the land laws.

Like the other counties studied, the Desert Land Act was important in the settlement of Bates Hole; unlike the other counties where we have information, in Bates Hole, the Homestead Act itself was also important. Although Scott does not break down the filings by date, he found that most (102) of the land claims were filed under the Homestead Act of 1862 and next were the Desert Land Act entries (60): "the Homestead and Desert Land Acts formed the primary vehicles for obtaining and starting a ranch."[268] In fact, Scott discovered that some of these claimants were the same families and that the husband would frequently file a claim under the Homestead Act and subsequently the wife would file another claim under the Desert Land Law. In describing two examples, Scott concludes, "Each family used the homestead as a nucleus around which they built a ranch; the Desert Land Act provided one of the primary methods of expanding the basic unit."[269] This is not to say that they built huge ranches like the Swan company. In fact, even using both laws, they did not claim the full amount allowed and many filed on very small parcels. The key to the system of settlement was that the settlers would use the land they claimed to grow their hay and grain and provide themselves a garden for home consumption only. Their livestock would graze the public land surrounding the ranches. Reserving a harsher judgment for twentieth century land laws (and also, then, the entire system of land laws), Scott nonetheless concludes:

> The land system in Bates Hole worked extraordinarily well, at least in the earlier years. Up and down the creeks the story remained the same, small settlers taking up land under the Homestead and Desert Land Acts, and from this limited foothold building remarkably stable ranches. Nearly half of these homestead based ranchers held onto their land for over 20 years, and a sixth of them owned their land for more than 40 years. Among these smaller settlers, fraud remained virtually non-existent. Having limited use for private land, the small ranchers could receive enough under the laws to satisfy their wants, and

---

[267] Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," 17-18.
[268] Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," 27.
[269] Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," 31-32.

did not have to resort to the type of land law abuse practiced by a larger ranch like the Two Bar.[270]

The data presented by these examinations can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and it needs to be emphasized that further study needs to be conducted to explore the questions these authors probed, and other issues too that were neglected in these studies, and research needs to be conducted in the rest of the territory and state. But at this point it is clear that the success and failure of ranching and farming in Wyoming territory is not an issue to be casually addressed, or worse, to be assumed, and that it is dangerous to attribute that success or failure, or even the tension between ranchers and farmers, exclusively to the provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862.

People were moving into the territory and taking up land, of course, but there were others too, some who had already been living there. There had been a tendency all along for cowboys who worked for ranchers to claim a small piece of land for themselves and start their own small farm or ranch, often a combination. It was not easy to start anew with a piece of land lacking any improvements, but by building a dugout, planting a small amount of crops, and raising a few head of cattle and some chickens and pigs, it was possible. Besides, it had not been easy living the life of a cowboy, sleeping in a bunkhouse, and hoping that the work would be more than seasonal. And, as Barnett Swan indicated, increasingly these were not just cowboys any more, for the cowboys, he said, "married and settled on [their] claim." These were families now. They were making long term plans to stay.

The number of cowboys—and their families—claiming a place of their own, however, sharply increased after the winter of 1886-1887. With the demise of some of the landmark ranches, unemployment among ranch hands spread like wildfire. Then, too, the ranches that managed to survive learned a sobering lesson from the winter, and also saw that the range was in worse shape than ever, and so cut back on the size of their herds. Again, Martha Waln, always a keen and sensitive observer, provides an accurate perspective on the process at work: "The so-called 'nesters' were most all men who were employed or had been employed by the large companies. With their passing the men were thrown out of employment. Many of them drifted to other parts of the country seeking a new and remote region. Many stayed. I doubt if any section of the country ever had a more diversified population than did we have. There were murderers, crooks, fugitives from justice, honest, fearless, and intelligent men all together. It was a melting pot where there had been poured, a sample of all humankind."[271] Ms. Waln also indicated that in the absence of the biggest ranchers after the disastrous winter, some of these "nesters" helped in the process of cleaning up the remnants of the herds, and also helped themselves, and the practice of rustling became commonplace. "I do not imagine," she said, "that many men in the Basin at that time felt it wrong or beneath them to partake of the spoils."[272]

---

[270] Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," 113.
[271] "Life of Martha Waln," 23.
[272] "Life of Martha Waln," 23.

The members of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, however, believed quite firmly that when other people took their cattle it was wrong, and they focused more and more on ways to stop what they saw as an epidemic of rustling. But the WSGA was not as powerful as it had been earlier in the decade. For one thing, the organization's membership declined. Having reached a peak of about four hundred members throughout the territory in 1884, the membership plummeted to 183 in 1887 or 1888.[273] As the membership dwindled, so too did the organization's muscle. If the WSGA had ever had a claim to be the representative of a broad cross section of Wyoming ranchers, that claim faded with the reduction in its membership rolls. And its power in the territory was trimmed. The territory established its own Board of Livestock Commissioners, although it did so on terms generally acceptable to the WSGA. And a new law no longer authorized counties to pay rewards for the arrest of stock thieves and it authorized the governor to appoint a state veterinarian without the approval of the WSGA.[274] These measures were modest, and some question remains as to how substantive they were and how much of a difference they actually made, but even the change in appearance, the reluctance to engage in the self-conceit and the disdain for others that had been characteristic of the WSGA in earlier years, along with the opposition of a territorial governor to their regime, all represented a significant departure, even if it was sometimes symbolic. If the ranchers who belonged to the WSGA felt vulnerable to the forces of nature, they possibly felt even more vulnerable to the forces of society, for they had controlled those forces just a short while before.

In this situation where WSGA members were being challenged on every front, where a continuing stream of small ranchers and farmers were taking up the land and water that had been part of "their" open range in recent times, where the fences of the small ranchers were keeping out their livestock while their own fences on the public land were being ordered dismantled by the government, the Wyoming Stock Growers Association responded by tightening its control. It used what devices it could find and it found some effective ones. The enforcement of the 1884 Maverick Law was a chief instrument of that control. Nonmembers of the association were expelled from the roundups, a move that prevented them from gathering their own stock. Along with the parallel blacklisting of individuals to prevent their employment as cowboys, these two measures created a situation in which, as historian Daniel Belgrad observes, small ranchers and others were "effectively . . . drummed out of the range cattle industry."[275]

---

[273] Hultz, "Wyoming Livestock Production," 9. Hultz's figures are probably correct or very close. Some of the membership lists exist and are contained in the Wyoming Stock Growers Association Papers in the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming, but their use is complicated by two factors. Some members lived and ranched outside Wyoming, and, indeed, for a while the organization was a regional body as much as it was a state institution. Also, while post office of each member's residence is listed, the residence for many is simply indicated as Cheyenne; a great many of the members also maintained residence in the state capital, spent time at the Cheyenne Club, and were otherwise domiciled in Cheyenne as much as they were on their own ranches.

[274] Jackson, "The Wyoming Stock Growers' Association Political Power in Wyoming Territory 1873-1890," 80-81.

[275] Daniel Belgrad, "'Power's Larger Meaning': The Johnson County War as Political Violence in an Environmental Context," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 33 (Summer 2002): 173.

In 1888 the WSGA recovered some of its clout and the laws were strengthened in favor of the WSGA; new legislation was even passed over the veto of Governor Moonlight. The creation of the Wyoming Livestock Commission in that legislation, far from threatening the organization, represented, in the words of W. Turrentine Jackson, "the greatest achievement of the association in this legislative session and revealed that the stock growers continued to exert some political influence."[276]

There is an important point made about the tightening of control by the WSGA in the late 1880s that has been developed especially by Daniel Belgrad. Belgrad argues that the practice of mavericking—branding unmarked calves as your own—had, by this point, become synonymous with rustling, and rustling charges filed by the stock detectives increased. Convictions, however, were another matter and they did not increase because of the widespread support for the small rancher and farmer. Historian Belgrad suggests there was a chasm between law and practice by this time and one case in particular demonstrates how wide that chasm was: "After Jack Cooper was acquitted of a rustling charge for mavericking in 1886, the general sentiment in Johnson County was that the Maverick Law was unenforceable, if not unconstitutional."[277]

Land use was inextricably mixed in with a fabric of other tensions that were social and economic so that the net effect was a class division. According to Daniel Belgrad, who has studied this issue, there is some evidence that the large companies imposed new rules in the second half of the 1880s that sharply circumscribed the freedoms the cowboys had been accustomed to exercising, including preventing them from carrying firearms, from gambling, and from running their own horses or cattle on the range. Plus their wages were cut. The much vaunted open hospitality of the range where itinerants were welcomed at the meal table of neighboring ranches was replaced with the cash-nexus, each cowboy being charged fifty cents per meal. In addition, the large companies began to contract roundup activities to other ranches, a practice that meant the layoff of more cowboys. When the blacklist was expanded to prohibit the employment of cowboys who were also owners of cattle, the pressure, and the tension, ratcheted up.[278] If the intention was, at long last, to teach the cowboys and small ranchers and farmers to bow, it did not achieve its result. In fact, these measures only fed the cycle more. The cowboys who no longer had a job turned in the obvious direction. They filed claims on parcels of land and started their own small ranches.

The large ranchers launched a major effort to thwart any and all rustling, or what they perceived as rustling, throughout the open range. This took place along the Sweetwater River. It happened in Johnson County. And it occurred also in the Big Horn Basin. That the actions were widespread does not necessarily suggest a carefully planned and coordinated effort; but it certainly reflects a common sense of desperation among those large ranchers who watched as the forces of history and nature were

---

[276] Jackson, "The Wyoming Stock Growers' Association Political Power in Wyoming Territory 1873-1890," 80.
[277] Belgrad, "Power's Larger Meaning," 174.
[278] Belgrad, "Power's Larger Meaning," 175.

moving against them.

In 1889, some of the prominent cattlemen of the Sweetwater River area silenced two people who had been thorns in their side. Jim Averill had homesteaded land in that area—near the village of Bothwell—and had been a vocal critic of the large ranchers whom he called range tyrants and grabbers of the public domain. Averill, in fact, was not accused of rustling, but Ellen (or Ella) Watson, who probably was his wife, but who homesteaded her own land as if she were single, was believed (or even just alleged) by the ranchers to have taken some of their cattle, some of them in trade for her services as prostitute and helper for local cowboys. At most, however, she had a herd of between forty and eighty head. Whether Ellen Watson actually was the unsavory "Cattle Kate" her murderers claimed, or whether this was a case of purposeful mistaken identity so as to besmirch the reputation of an innocent victim, remains open to question. The case is contentious, the facts are fuzzy, and the attitudes—past and present—are fiery, but evidently, as Lewis Atherton summarized it some years ago, "When Averill contested possession of some land desired by the cattlemen, both he and Kate were hanged by the ranchers' henchmen" in the summer of 1889.[279] It is easy to get bogged down in the disputes and trivia surrounding this violent episode, and also to continue to fight the wars of yesterday.[280] What is most critical about the episode, personal and political tragedy aside, is that the object of the lynching, as in all lynchings, was to send a message to others, and in this case a message to homesteaders, cowboys, and small ranchers that their "rustling," resistance, and outspoken positions would no longer be tolerated.

This lynching, however, did not end the cattlemen's troubles. In fact, their plight became more desperate as homesteaders continued to stream into Wyoming, as another severe winter in 1889 further thinned their herds, and as Wyoming secured statehood in 1890, meaning that voters rather than appointed officials had a greater voice in public policy. The ranchers continued to tighten their control over the range and attempted to intimidate those who stood in their way. In November 1891, independent small ranchers in Johnson County organized an association of their own in Buffalo with the object of finding political and social solidarity against the lords of the range, and the surest way to challenge the hegemony of the large ranchers was to hold their own roundup—and they announced that their roundup would *precede* that of the WSGA—thus giving them first claims on mavericks and other unmarked cattle.[281] In response to this, an army of "invaders" traveled north from Casper in April 1892 with a list of men whom they planned to eliminate. And thus was begun the Johnson County War—officially now an armed conflict.

---

[279] Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*, 53-54.
[280] One important, though tendentious, study of the lynching and its context is George W. Hufsmith, *The Wyoming Lynching of Cattle Kate, 1889* (Glendo: High Plains Press, 1993). Hufsmith argues for the innocence of the two people lynched; whether the reader accepts Hufsmith's conclusions or not, he also presents substantial information along the way about the larger environment of ranching and ranchers in the Sweetwater valley at that time.
[281] Helena Huntington Smith, *The War on Powder River: The History of an Insurrection* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 160.

The war had been going on for some time but the actual fighting in that war was brief. The army of invaders found two men on their list—Nate Champion and Nick Ray—at the KC Ranch and, after a protracted stand off, succeeded in killing them and then proceeded on toward Buffalo. Their movement, however, was detected, alarms were sounded, and an opposing armed force gathered. The invaders took refuge at the TA Ranch and found themselves under siege as the farmers and ranchers surrounded them. Although the invaders were near defeat after the three-day siege, they were in effect rescued when troops from Fort McKinney arrived to place them under arrest and take them into custody. Ultimately transferred to Cheyenne, the trial of the invaders never took place and the invaders went their own separate ways, thus ending the war in an inconclusive fashion with the different sides each proclaiming victory. The farmers and small ranchers felt victorious, and had reason for doing so, because they had humbled the cattle kings and preserved their own agrarian pattern. The big cattle ranchers were able to claim some measure of success, but only because they were able to escape punishment for their unsuccessful invasion.

The interpretations of the outcome of the Johnson County War are many and final judgment is yet to be agreed upon. Probably the main outcome was that the dispatching of a gang of gunmen to intimidate or eliminate small ranchers and homesteaders fatally tarnished the reputation of the ranchers and destroyed any credibility they once had—credibility that they desperately needed to dominate the public domain. Moreover, just as the ranching techniques were changing, so too were the social and political methods of the ranchers yielding to different priorities and purposes. Indeed, as Lewis Atherton observed, "their defeat in the Johnson County War accelerated the decline of the cattleman's power."[282] Historians and ranchers and homesteaders may disagree on many things, but no one denies this. A revolution was taking place on the Wyoming range.

This realization slowly but surely set in. Even in the Big Horn Basin, comparatively remote at the time from the main currents reshaping the Wyoming landscape, the last incident in this war sounded a muted echo to the violence of the Sweetwater Valley and the Johnson County invaders. While the Johnson County "invaders" were still negotiating their ultimate departure, in the fall of 1892, two Big Horn Basin cowboys, Dab Burch and Jack Bedford, who worked for bigger ranchers, started their own ranches and built up their herds. The two were arrested for cattle rustling during the fall roundup and were to be taken to Buffalo for trial; on the way, however, their guards later said that they were ambushed and the two prisoners were killed. The circumstances were suspicious and questions were immediately raised. While it appears that charges were preferred against the two "guards," there were no witnesses, the case was ultimately dropped, and the last skirmish in the war faded into obscurity with neither side eager to press for a resumption of violence, acrimony, or political strife.[283] The war was over. Gunsmoke lifted

---

[282] Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*, 55.

[283] Lindsay, *Big Horn Basin*, 154-156. Charles Lindsay provides as much information as any source for this incident, and even that is, as he acknowledges, sketchy and "pieced together from numerous interviews with early residents and employees of the cattle companies. All are reluctant to implicate anyone in the murder." See also, Marvin B. Rhodes, "Date with Destiny: A Brief History of the Livestock Industry in the Big Horn Basin," undated typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 1216.

from the range.

In a larger sense, however, the conflict was not just between the small ranchers and farmers on one side and the big ranchers on the other. The issue was more fundamentally what kind of a system would prevail on the land. That core issue remained unresolved. Viewed in terms of the systems at work, the conflict is both more complex and more meaningful. The Texas system of ranching suffered a devastating blow as a result of both the winter of 1886-1887 and the Johnson County War which together swept away the foundations—untrammeled use of the open range, neglect of the cattle turned loose, and huge herds owned by a handful of operators and investors. The system of political and economic power associated with that system of ranching also was undermined as a result of the developments associated with the war, broadly conceived. In an intriguing way, the conflict was actually between the forces of modernization—with its tendency toward centralization of power, a business approach to daily life, and a fragmentation of society into interest groups competing for the favor of government action—and the more traditional model of decentralized, broadly-diffused power, and ranching and farming as a way of life. The Johnson County war did not resolve these issues but it did constitute a serious blow to the gathering steam of the modernization juggernaut.

4 FROM CATTLE KINGDOM TO HOMESTEADER HAVEN, 1890-1910

The world of Wyoming agriculture in the two decades straddling the turn of the twentieth century appears in retrospect to be a world different from that often associated with Wyoming history, or, for that matter, a world that stands apart from the rest of the nation too. In profound ways, Wyoming in these years was a world of small farmers, which is significant both because of its contrast with the ranching kingdom that a few years earlier seemed destined to dominance in the territory and because it represented a counterpoint to the prevailing trend in the urbanizing parts of the nation. In addition, parts of Wyoming previously unsettled, or only lightly so, began to attract large numbers of land seekers, those following the Jeffersonian dream, those who believed that Wyoming could and would be their new home. And the cattle that once covered the plains were being replaced more and more by sheep with results that echoed previous conflicts in this rapidly transforming state.

i. Against the Grain: Wyoming Homesteaders in an Urbanizing Nation

It is a commonplace that the American people, beginning in the late nineteenth century, moved from the farm to the city. The nation had been since its origins an overwhelmingly rural society, and it would not be until 1920 before half the population lived in villages and cities of more than 2500 people. The U.S.

was a nation of farmers. As Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., wrote in his classic study of the rise of the city, "American civilization in 1878 was, in one essential respect, like that of earlier times: it rested upon the farms and country towns of the nation."[284] In 1880 the census indicated three fourths of the U.S. population lived on farms, ranches, or in villages. Ten years later, James Rupert Elliott could write, referring to the French philosopher and economist Sully, that "Sully's saying, 'Tillage and pasture are the two breasts of the state' is just as true to-day as when the expression was first used; and the ancient belief, that 'no other labor is at once so good for mind and body, and so worthy of freemen, as agriculture,' was one that might well be revived at the present day."[285] But those days were passing in the nation and as new industries and cities grew like magic, the farm population of the nation diminished palpably. In the East and in the South, in the Midwest, and on the West Coast, people were moving from the farm to the city. Even in some parts of the Rocky Mountain West, as the example of Denver illustrates, railroads fed dramatic urban growth. In other parts of the West homesteading surged forward, and in Wyoming people were moving to the farms as if pulled by a magnet.

Wyoming was going against the grain of an urbanizing nation. In this trend, and in this process, lies a key to understanding the forces shaping agriculture in the new state. In Wyoming, people were moving from other farms in other places, or from cities in other places, to the farm and ranch. Or, to put it another way, most people who moved to Wyoming in these years were moving in a direction very much different from those who were moving to the nation's rapidly growing urban centers, and that direction was more than a point on the compass. While the mainstream of agriculture in the nation in these years represented a depopulation of the countryside, in Wyoming, people were moving onto the small farms and ranches.

It is not just an irony and not just an extraordinary freak of circumstances that Wyoming's rural population increased while that in the Midwest declined; instead, and importantly, there was a vital connection between the two. American agriculture in the late nineteenth century was in crisis and in a curious way Wyoming was to reap the benefits of what elsewhere was a bitter harvest. The roots of the downward economic spiral that pulled the nation's yeomanry into its grip were deep but perfectly understandable.

Raised on the notions of hard work, thrift, and self-discipline, the farmers of the nation were caught in a storm of trouble that steadily increased in the years following the Civil War. During the Civil War, with a serious labor shortage on the farms just from the drain of the young men into the armed service, the nation underwent a true agricultural revolution. Prior to the war, the planting, cultivating, and harvesting of crops and the production of animal products were carried on by methods and implements that were literally ancient in their technological underpinnings; in fact, if a farmer from biblical times had somehow come to life in the 1850s, some of the tools may have been unfamiliar but many of them

---

[284] Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Rise of the City* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), 1.
[285] James Rupert Elliott, *American Farms: Their Condition and Future* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1890), 12-13.

could have been quickly figured out by their similarity to tools from their own times.[286] Most were handheld devices like the hoe, the scythe, and the cradle and flail, although a few were drawn by a draft animal, generally some form of plow—or, more crudely, even a digging stick—for breaking the earth.[287] Even with Cyrus McCormick's invention of a horse-drawn reaper in the 1830s, the older, traditional, labor-intensive system continued to prevail because the new systems were expensive, they required large holdings of land to justify them, and they were practical for use in a commercial system of agriculture rather than a system of production for home consumption. In an agrarian society where most people lived on or near the farm, those same people produced for their own consumption, placing onto the market only their surplus which they would then use to secure those goods that they—or their locality—could not produce. Moreover, the specialized equipment implied specialized farming, and the prevailing system of agriculture in the pre-Civil War years was a diversified system.

The farm labor shortage of the Civil War, however, planted the seeds of change in American agriculture. The absence from the farms in the North of men serving in uniform unleashed a chain of developments that ultimately transformed the nation's farms. This began when the war placed additional demands on the nation's economy to produce food and fiber at precisely the moment that the ability of the farms to respond to that demand dramatically diminished. In that context, the labor-saving machinery that had been available, but in very limited use, found a market. And the more reapers and harrows and other horse-drawn implements that were sold, the more likely they were to be mass produced in the emerging factory system, thus putting more of them on the market, more widely. But those people who then purchased the equipment made changes in the way they operated their farms. Given the nature of the equipment and the investment made in it, they first of all tended to focus their efforts on the crops for which the specific implement was made. This meant moving away from diversified agriculture to specialized agriculture and from subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture. Moreover, to reap the monetary benefits that the equipment promised, or, conversely, to justify the purchase of the machinery, they also expanded the size of their farms so that they could produce more of the crop; in this way large swaths of the American farm economy shifted from intensive cultivation to extensive. The implication of this action, in turn, was the increase of agricultural debt, first for the equipment, and second for the increased land, and that further tied those farms to the market economy, not just for the duration of the war but for the future as well.

The debt proved more difficult than at first anticipated. Two separate processes were at work here. One was that agricultural production increased, an obvious result of this mechanization. The increased

---

[286] In the 1920s, rural sociologist Macy Campbell argued that "The improvements in farm machinery in America since 1830 have done more to increase the productive power of man on the land than all the improvements which had been made in agricultural implements during the four thousand years preceding that date." Macy Campbell, *Rural Life at the Crossroads* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1927), 52.

[287] For an extensive and accessible discussion of this technology see especially Russell Lord, *The Care of the Earth: A History of Husbandry (*New York: Mentor Books, an imprint of New American Library, 1962), 23-25, 98-115.

production and the expansion of transportation networks meant that local surpluses now would reach national markets, in so doing often flooding them with a surfeit of commodities, with the consequence that prices for those products actually declined. Indeed, given the growth of international markets through increased shipping facilities in the last third of the nineteenth century, there was certain to be a glut in the larger market even if there was a local shortfall because of drought or other climate condition. Thus the investment in equipment and land actually generated a harsh reward since the increased production precipitated a decline in prices.

The second force had to do with expenses, which moved in exactly the opposite direction. The expenses of the farm increased because of the investment in equipment and land. The problem here is often unfamiliar to a modern observer where inflation, to greater or lesser degrees, is a continuing frame of reference; the problem of the late nineteenth century was *deflation*. During the Civil War the United States government had printed money in a measure greater than was supported by gold reserves simply to help pay for the war, but after the war that paper currency was literally being withdrawn from circulation in an effort to restore the nation to a gold standard, and, of course, the Confederate money that had also circulated in the South was then worthless. This meant that there was actually less money in circulation although the economy itself was industrializing and expanding dramatically and the population was growing, thus making each dollar worth more and more as time passed. This worked a particular hardship on people who had contracted debts, for it required the repayment of debts in dollars that were increasingly dear, dollars that were much more valuable than the money that had originally been borrowed. Among those who had contracted long term debts were those farmers who had purchased new horse-drawn implements and who had expanded their land holdings during the war. The longer they paid on their loans—and mortgages—the greater the burden they had to bear.

To make matters worse, while their expenses—in real dollars—increased, their income declined because of the national and international market they were now selling in. And as their only recourse, they had to produce bigger crops, to plant more seeds, and to harvest more wheat and other grains as cash crops, but the more they produced, the more the market was flooded with commodities and the lower the price they received. By the 1890s the American farmer was in serious trouble. Between 1888 and 1892 over half the population of western Kansas, for example, was forced from the land because of the farmers' inability to pay their debts and taxes and their farms were foreclosed.[288] And then the merchants in the villages serving them also closed their doors, which placed additional stress on the rural population. In the market of the nation, the farmers themselves were being harvested.

Some of those dispossessed farmers turned to the political solutions of the Populist Party. Some of them sought free land in the land rushes and lotteries for the former Indian lands in Oklahoma. Some moved to the cities to become part of the urban working class. And some moved farther west to places that promised a new opportunity, a chance to start over again, and to claim not only new farms but old dreams, and to do this they moved to places like Wyoming. There, land could still be homesteaded, land

[288] John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959; reprint of 1931 University of Minnesota edition), 32-33.

could be acquired without a mortgage, and the hard work applied to making improvements on the land would result in ownership and, in true Jeffersonian fashion, some degree of freedom from the market instead of increasing dependence on the market. And the depopulation of the countryside of the Midwest coincided with the effort of Wyoming officials to encourage migration to the new state. One student of the process concluded that after the Johnson County War, "with the political strength of the cattlemen somewhat curtailed, state officials began to orient their promotional activities around Wyoming's farming potential."[289]

There were two simultaneous, and related, developments. One was the transformation of ranching. The other was the surge in homesteading.

The death of the huge ranches was accompanied by last rites that seldom grieved over the misbegotten system of open-range cattle raising that those institutions represented. Instead, the ranchers who survived the winter of 1886-1887 and the subsequent conflict that came to a head in the Johnson County War offered assessments indicating that their colleagues in the ranching enterprise should have known better; they also gave their benedictions for the new system that replaced the old. Consider Joseph M. Carey's retrospective, all the more significant since he was one of the errant stockmen who had pursued the route of disaster. Carey said, "If the stockmen had commenced in a smaller way, it would have been better for them." And, he continued, focusing on the physical limitations of the open range system, "It was a big country and they thought there was room for millions of cattle. In the start there was no thought of feeding them through the winter. Great storms and blizzards came, and the stockmen were not in position to protect the cattle. If in the first instance they had had half as many cattle, with provision for feeding them when necessary, in 1886-1887, the business would not have been virtually destroyed, as were the large herds in Montana, western Dakota, western Nebraska, and Wyoming."[290] The solution, in Carey's retrospective, was simple and obvious: smaller herds.

John Kendrick, another survivor of the turmoils of the late 1880s, echoed Carey's assessment, but went further, noting also what structural changes smaller herds implied. "With the gradual disintegration of the large herds," Kendrick noted, "there came a clearer understanding as to the percentage of losses sustained in range herds, *even under favorable conditions*, all of which prompted owners to proceed on a more rational program of production." What was the more "rational program of production?" Kendrick answered that: "This included not only satisfactory summer grazing, but forage crops for winter feed. Almost coincidentally with the breaking up of the large herds there came the settlers, and with them the gradual elimination of the big ranges. And so it came about that the new order was actually builded upon the wreck of the old, which is in effect a reversal of the old from a few owners with large herds to many owners with small herds."[291]

---

[289] Bruce Noble, "The Quest for Settlement in Early Wyoming," *Annals of Wyoming*, 55 (Fall 1983): 21.
[290] Joseph M. Carey, "Early Days of the Cattle Business," an address to WSGA subsequently published in *Wyoming Stockman – Farmer*; the speech appears to have been delivered in April, 1915. A transcript of this article and address can be found in WPA Collections, subject file 407.
[291] John B. Kendrick, "Range Cattle Date back to Texas Trail," typescript, WPA Collections, subject file

And the changes took place throughout Wyoming. The Swan Cattle Company reorganized after its bankruptcy and, after the brief and unsuccessful tenure of a manager who attempted to continue operations as previously, brought in John Clay, who was scornful of the management of the company under Alexander Swan. Clay set about making a number of changes. He first reduced the bloated payroll and expenses of the company and cut costs "by closing the Cheyenne offices, and by dismissing many of the numerous array of assistants, whose services did not seem to be needed, including a regiment of cooks, and by renting out the ranches, or arranging that they be worked on . . . shares."[292] By 1893 Clay had cut the Swan herd to 40,000 head, still a huge herd, but just a fraction of what it had been. The same pattern prevailed in other places. In the Big Horn Basin, Marvin Rhodes recorded that after the Johnson County War, "many of the large cattle herds, including that of J. M. Carey, were then moved out of the Basin. Franc, Lovell, Luman and the Torreys held on, but greatly reduced their herds; they increased their hay acreage and practiced winter feeding; they bought hay from the farmers and were good neighbors. They and the owners of the smaller herds brought in purebred bulls; by careful breeding and handling they improved the quality of their herds."[293] Otto Franc himself, of the Pitchfork Ranch on the Greybull River west of Meeteetse, reported in 1900, "Ours used to be a great cattle country, . . . but it is mostly sheep now, and they are driving the cattle out. I used to run 20,000 cattle on my range, now I keep 1,200."[294] Herds were getting smaller and ranching practices were changing.

One additional way that ranching practices shifted was that they were now managing their herds more intensively, to the extent that they were more carefully breeding them. Some of this had already taken place, and conspicuous ranches that imported Durham (shorthorn) bulls, and even some Herefords, had already changed the size and quality of the beef cattle. For that matter, herds were also improving in Texas, and the average weights of cattle sold, having already increased in the ten years before the catastrophic winter of 1886-1887, increased more and the age at which the cattle were sold dropped. The longhorns were rapidly fading away and the new breeds, their crosses, and especially the Durhams and the Herefords were gaining ascendancy. And these cattle were not just turned loose on the open range to drift wherever they might.

In the twentieth century, University of Wyoming range specialist Frances Wagner King studied the transformation underway and concurred with the dominant view of the needs of ranchers after the calamity of the 1880s: "The more astute readily say that it was the largest outfits that were the heaviest hit and the little fellow with a good meadow of land and two or three hundred head of cattle fared the

---

399.

[292] Davilla Bright , "Foreigners and Foreign Capital in the Cattle Industry of the United States," M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma (1935), 65-66.

[293] Marvin B. Rhodes, "Date with Destiny: A Brief History of the Livestock Industry in the Big Horn Basin," 15; undated typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 1216. King's study was prepared in 1926 and 1927.

[294] Franc is quoted from the 1900 *Wyoming Industrial Journal* in "History," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1234.

best." So the changes in the system brought the big ranchers into line more and more with the practices of the smaller ranchers. The old system, King argued, "gave way to a better one wherein stock was wintered, sheltered and watered within fenced pasture owned by the individual cattlemen."[295] Among the revisions in the operation of cattle ranches were several conspicuous elements. Fences increased, both to keep their own quality bulls in their own herds and to keep the neighboring bulls out. Fences also meant that growing hay became a common practice; without the infinity of an open range to count upon, feed had to be nurtured and preserved as much as the cattle. This, then, involved not just harvesting natural hay in meadows, but actually cultivating the soil and growing crops that could then be put up for winter. Further, the growing of hay meant additional structures on the ranches for storing the equipment for cultivating and cutting the hay; it also, in some cases, meant additional hay storage structures, although the amount required usually meant that unprotected haystacks were the usual system. Again Frances Wagner King: "No cattleman who had lived through the winter of 1886-7 dared again depend entirely on grass feed; hay land was the answer; this increasing demand for hay land, brought in its wake the transition of the rancher proper into the rancher-farmer; a man who farms his hay land, looks after his own stock, superintends his own ranch, and takes fewer risks."[296]

The dependence on cultivating and storing hay for winter feed had some implications for management of cattle. It generally involved fencing land where the hay would be grown, but that carried a further consequence since that land would no longer be used for summer grazing. In the upper Green River valley, the cultivation of hay necessitated ranchers grazing their cattle elsewhere and that meant, in turn, moving their cattle onto distant lands where grass was available. Thus began what ultimately became known as the Green River Drift, a migration of livestock from winter pastures on the ranches to the grasses on land in the mountains, land that would soon become national forest; the cattle would remain there during the summer and then as snows began in the high country the livestock would drift back down to the ranches for winter feeding (or market).[297]

The lessons learned from the disasters of the 1880s and early 1890s were many, were personal, and were sometimes contradictory. Most, however, seem to have taken to heart the necessity of changing from the open range to individually-owned units. But in this there was yet another lesson that was seldom articulated and perhaps just as seldom internalized. The big companies that had failed because of the ravages of the winter of 1886 – 1887 often did so only partly because of the losses of the herds. After all, those losses would not be realized, or locked in, until it came time to market the cattle and with patience and luck, the herds could even rebuild over a few years. But the ranchers did not have the time to wait. They had incurred vast expenses and they had bills to pay. Their payrolls were perhaps the

---

[295] Frances Wagner King, "A Re-Statement of Relevant Data Pertinent to the History of Grazing," 4. This is a typescript essay in WPA collections, subject file 1182.
[296] King, "A Re-Statement of Relevant Data Pertinent to the History of Grazing," 5.
[297] Jonita Sommers, *Green River Drift: A History of the Upper Green River Cattle Association* (Pinedale: published by the author, 1994), 22; Jonita and Albert Sommers, "Green River Drift," http://www.grvm.com/drift/drift.htm. The change also included the emergence of grazing associations to facilitate the movement of cattle and to organize roundups.

least of their expenses. Much greater, and first in line, were the bankers from whom they had borrowed the capital to expand their herds. When the banks demanded their money, the ranchers had to take to market their diminished herds and sell them at lower prices, thus aggravating the grinding cycle further by causing them to sell more, and so on.[298] The result of this was, as Edward Everett Dale wrote, "The largest banking house in Cheyenne failed, as did also the Niobrara Cattle Company of Nebraska which carried with it the leading bank of the St. Louis Stock Yards."[299] Some ranchers, and many more farmers learned the lesson in all this, which was to endeavor to be debt free, to avoid mortgages, and to contemplate the purposes of the land laws carefully so that the birthright would not be mortgaged away.

There was one group, however, that certainly learned the lessons if in a different way. In the Big Horn Basin, in the 1890s, several banks emerged to help finance the local agricultural operations. As a condition of loans to stock-raisers, those banks, according to Marvin Rhodes, "incorporated that stipulation [the requirement of feeding cattle] in chattel mortgages, specifying in each case the kind and quantity of feed."[300] Those stipulations were not unique to the Big Horn Basin and were written into ranch mortgages and other loans elsewhere in Wyoming. Ralph Jones, whose father started the family ranch near LaGrange, explained to an interviewer that after the crisis of 1886-1887, "if they expected to get credit at the banks they pretty near had to have hay to do it."[301] And in this way the transformation of the open range industry into the farmer-rancher was institutionalized and written into the fabric of the economy. There may have been another consequence too. Possibly those stipulations and requirements, as well as the heightened sensitivity to the risks of the commercial aspects of farming and ranching, served also as a reminder to prospective borrowers about the perils of borrowing money from banks during a bonanza market, banking and praying on the hope that the bonanza would continue while the money was paid back.

It is clear that the size of ranches diminished although the statistical evidence to document by how much simply is not available. In the first place, there is no census or other information that indicates herd size, or even average herd size, except for the census enumerators' manuscripts recording information about individual farms and ranches and the assessors' records of those individual operations. The published census records on the county level indicate the number of livestock and also the number of farms, "farm" being an entity that is broadly defined so as to include farms and ranches and could, conceivably, include a farm that had no cattle whatsoever as well as a substantial ranch. On the other hand, there are indications on a macro level in the state that is convincing that the herd size did diminish. The census

---

[298] See also T. A. Larson's statement that in the wake of the 1886-1887 winter, "losses were magnified by the fact that those who lost were often hard pressed by creditors and had to liquidate as best they could in a market ruinously low." T. Alfred Larson, "The Winter of 1886-87 in Wyoming," *Annals of Wyoming*, 14 (January 1942): 16.

[299] Edward Everett Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), 111.

[300] Rhodes, "Date with Destiny: A Brief History of the Livestock Industry in the Big Horn Basin," 17.

[301] Ralph Jones interviewed by Vivien Hills, June 16, 1976, Wyoming State Archives, OH-439.

records show in 1890 934,000 cattle in Wyoming, exclusive of calves; ten years later that number had dropped to 561,000—a decline of 40 percent. That in itself would be a sign of a reduction in herd size, although it is theoretically possible that the number of ranches also diminished so that the herd size remained constant—an unlikely, but again, theoretical, possibility. The reality is, however, that the number of farms and ranches increased in that same period. In 1890 Wyoming reported 3,125 farms; in 1900 that number had increased to 6,095.[302] In other words, in the decade of the 1890s, the number of cattle in Wyoming had dropped by about 40 percent while the number of farms and ranches almost doubled. The average herd size had dropped and dropped dramatically. A revolution had taken place on the Wyoming range.

The other side of the revolution was the surge in homesteading, sometimes referred to as the "invasion" of the homesteaders. The increase in the number of farms in the decade of the 1890s was significant. But this was followed by yet another significant increase between 1900 and 1910 so that by 1910 almost eleven thousand farms were operating in Wyoming. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Wyoming increased its number of farms while other states in the Midwest, the nation's agricultural heartland, states like Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, and Pennsylvania were increasing in population but losing farms. It is not uncommon, in fact, to find literal connections between the loss of farmers in the Midwest and the gain of farmers in Wyoming. Accounts of Wyoming homesteaders are often peppered with references to the place of origin, indicating often, a farmer from Iowa, Illinois, or Missouri. Statistical studies are yet to be done on the origin of Wyoming's homesteaders, but the anecdotal evidence is strong that the closing of opportunities, and the narrowing of circumstances, in the Midwest contributed to the seeking of renewed opportunities in Wyoming.

It is customary in some circles to discuss the surge in homesteading as an invasion, as if this stream of small ranchers and farmers somehow blighted the landscape, as if settlement were comparable to a scourge of locusts. This perspective derives from two sources. One is that the farmers and small ranchers presented a very much different order from that of the cattle barons and their sprawling, untamed use of the land. The other is that, by some lights, the land was never meant for small farmers; those who tried to farm Wyoming were fools, and they not only wrecked themselves but also spoiled the land for others in the process. In either case, the treatment that homesteaders have received from historical accounts has often been as rough and disrespectful as that which they received from the lords of the cattle range they challenged and displaced. And the reality is that these people carried dreams with them to Wyoming that were every bit as deserving and authentic as the strident cattle companies

---

[302] The careful observer will note that the Census Bureau's own data do not always add up; this is because of adjustments made between census enumerations and because of the addition of qualifiers in the official analysis such as, in this case, the exclusion of calves from the totals. The figures used here are reported in *Census Reports, Volume V, Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900, Agriculture, Part I, Farms, Live Stock, and Animal Products* (Washington, D.C.: United States Census Office, 1902), clxiii-clxiv, 495-496; and U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Report on the Statistics of Agriculture of the United States at the Eleventh Census, 1890* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), 196.

and barons who deigned to care for or count their cattle only at market time. And the dreams they carried were more directly connected to the Jeffersonian heritage at the core of the American nation; where the Jeffersonian dream seemed to be dying in one part of the country, it was being brought to life in another. None other than Joseph Nimmo made this clear in his 1885 assessment of the tension between the cattle companies and the small settlers when he praised the history and practice of widespread, diffused distribution and ownership of public lands by small holders, calling it a cherished feature of the nation.[303]

No one knows who first put a plow to the earth of Wyoming, who set the single shovel moldboard plow point first into the dirt, looked off at a dot on the horizon to keep the furrow straight, and then prodded a team of oxen to pull, guiding the team to that distant point, and then turned around and repeated the process again and again until an entire field was turned over. Whoever that man or woman was, he or she marked a new phase of Wyoming history with each row, with each foot, with each inch breaking the prairie, turning into the sun brown dirt that had never seen the light of day, and turning over the dirt so that seeds of plants could be dropped in to take root, to grow, to flourish, to be harvested months later. When that first furrow was plowed and the first grass, grain, or vegetable was sown, cultivated, and harvested, Wyoming's future was altered.

All over Wyoming homesteaders were staking their claims and building their houses, making their farms and ranches. True to form, they went to the water initially, settling along the drainages first, working their way up the streams higher and higher once the lower lands were taken. Then, once the streams were settled, they used irrigation to bring the water to the benches and flats, diverting the streams into canals to water their lands miles from the rivers and creeks that carried the water away. By the 1890s and 1900s, whether conceived as scourge or Jeffersonian agrarians, they were virtually everywhere.

In 1897, the Uinta County newspaper the Evanston *News-Register*, observed, "From every mountain top you may look down into a valley embowered in foliage, with nothing to mar its wild beauty. Here and there you see the small, snug farm houses set in well selected spots, and all around are mountains—blue mountains stretching far off the horizon, into which they imperceptibly melt and are lost. The near slopes clothed in deep green pines and the distant ranges rolling away like blue waves of the ocean. Down in the valleys are emerald meadows, fields of golden grain and winding brooks, all of which combine to make the greater portion of Uinta County the most beautiful landscapes in Wyoming, at which you can gaze for hours in a mood of dreamy delight."[304] A similar sight of settlement met the eye four hundred miles away in the Powder River Basin. In 1894, the writer John White traveled the Powder River Basin and in a side trip into the Salt Creek area, beyond the divide separating the Powder River and North Platte drainages, White noted, "while the larger portion of the rough grazing land through which [the observer] passes is principally adapted to range purposes, the creek bottoms, which vary in width from a few hundred rods to many miles, are fast being reclaimed by irrigation, for the uses

[303] Joseph Nimmo, Jr., *Report in Regard to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885), 39.
[304] Evanston *News-Register*, May 8, 1897.

of agriculture." He made plain his conclusion about the recent record of agriculture in the area when he said that anyone who looks closely "cannot fail to be struck with the universal success which attends even the smallest attempt at farming."[305]

In Laramie, at the turn of the century, the Laramie *Boomerang* totted up the changes of recent years and pronounced "A Great Agricultural Revolution":

> The era of the large cattle ranch has passed and in its place we have the small ranchman and farmers.
> Land which formerly supported a few cattle is being brought under cultivation and is being made to produce splendid crops.
> Water which formerly made to grow a few tons of hay, is now to be used in the production of almost every cereal known.
> With water and our splendid sunshine failure of crops is unknown here.
> Every kind of vegetable grown in the temperate zone, attains perfection here.
> The science of irrigation is in its infancy, its possibilities but hinted.
> The soil of our plains and mountain valleys has endless capabilities.
> We are in the process of a great agricultural revolution.
> Ranches which formerly provided homes for one family are now being broken up into small holdings and will support numbers of families.
> More population means prosperity for the tradesman and the artisan.
> The farming of land in small parcels means a many times increased production and the bringing of money into the country.
> Water from rivers and streams is but a part of our available supply, we have a vast amount of subterranean water which improved mechanical methods can make available for agricultural purposes.
> We have an Experiment Station where information is easily obtained.
> Ten years from now we will see hundreds of farms where now there is one and thousands of inhabitants where there are now hundreds.[306]

These sentiments were echoed across the state, sometimes in a boosterish spirit and sometimes in a more mundane assessment of the local economy, but always in recognition of the transformation taking place. That Wyoming was (and even *is*) capable of producing crops often surprises observers. Yet crops were grown. In 1891 Natrona County rancher and county commissioner (and future governor) B. B. Brooks boasted of his 150 acres of alfalfa, saying that it was hugely economical to plant (even after clearing the sage), that it was essential for the rancher, and that, "the area being planted to alfalfa is yearly on the

---

[305] John M. White, *The Newer Northwest: A Description of the Health Resorts and Mining Camps of the Black Hills of South Dakota and Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming* (St. Louis: Self Culture Publishing Co., 1894), 200.
[306] "A Great Agricultural Revolution," Laramie *Boomerang*, July 21, 1904.

increase and the foothold it has gained as a winter feed for stock is deep rooted and lasting."[307] Alfalfa may be expected, given its association with the range cattle industry, but the other crops were equally successful and equally spreading across the state. In the LaPrele Creek drainage, small grains were doing well at the time of statehood with a yield of up to 110 bushels on 5/8 acre of land at the Bishop and Kellogg place, while Ed Smith in the same area harvested an astonishing fifty bushels of wheat to the acre. In fact, *Bill Barlow's Budget* in Douglas reported in 1890, "Experience has shown that wheat, oats, barley, rye flax, potatoes, sugar beets, turnips, rutabagas, lettuce, peas, carrots, alfalfa, millet, buckwheat and early onions can be raised successfully in the Platte Valley, wherever water can be put on the soil."[308] Even without irrigation, the crops were doing well. The Nefsy family near Sundance reported that in 1885 "they planted buckwheat, potatoes, and corn. The corn was the large Wisconsin variety, and they had an enormous yield. Everything grew wonderfully. The potatoes were immense." The crops were so successful that the next year Frank Nefsy built a dam and ditch to irrigate their cropland—one of the first dams and ditches in that area.[309]

Many crops were grown but potatoes were the staple. Every part of the state reported good crops of potatoes, and as a food for domestic consumption on self-sufficient farms the humble potato saw many families through the long winters. Martha Waln recalled in the Big Horn Basin, "I believe that credit should go to Frank Ainsworth for having planted and raised the first garden in the Basin. In the fall of '83 when I came to the Basin, Ainsworth and Brammer were living in a dugout at the Flag Staff, ... We moved down to the Two-Bar Cow Camp on Crooked Creek and one day a cowboy came along and told us that Ainsworth had harvested his spud crop, and had six sacks. That was, I am sure, the first garden crop to have ever been raised in the Basin."[310] John White told of the amazing potato crops of Johnson County in the 1890s, noting that *The American Agriculturist* awarded Johnson County farmers prizes for the largest number of bushels of potatoes raised on a single acre in 1890 and 1894. In 1894 J. R. Hutton, who lived fifteen miles from Buffalo on Rock Creek, according to White, "exhibited forty-one 'Early Rose' and 'Manhattan' potatoes that weighted sixty-five pounds, and two acres of Hutton's land produced six hundred bushels."[311] None other than State Engineer Elwood Mead made note of this, and also commented on the disbelief that this horticultural achievement generated. Mead reported that Wyoming "won the first prize in a national potato contest," but he also lamented, "the winner of the second prize demanded an investigation and wrote to the journal conducting the contest that the result showed fraud on its face because any one who knew anything of Wyoming knew it had no farmers and no farms."[312]

---

[307] B. B. Brooks was quoted in the Casper *Tribune* and then in *Bill Barlow's Budget*, July 29, 1891.
[308] *Bill Barlow's Budget*, February 10, 1892.
[309] Glenys Wilkinson, "The Nefsy Family, Pioneers of Wyoming," p. 2, WPA Collections, subject file 916.
[310] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 31, WPA Collections, subject file 856.
[311] White, *The Newer Northwest*, 148. See also the discussion of potatoes in Carl Hallberg, "Once They Raised Potatoes in Johnson County." Once again, I am grateful to the author for making this available to me.
[312] Elwood Mead, *Wyoming as an Agricultural State,* (Cheyenne: Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce,

For some, it came as a momentous discovery that there were actually farms in Wyoming. For others, the discovery was that there were additional places in Wyoming to be settled. In addition to the spread of farmer-rancher habitations and operations across Wyoming where previously had been the giant cattle herds, there was also the penetration of these small farmer-ranchers into new areas. More parts of Wyoming were being settled. There had been pockets of the state, separated by mountains from other areas and these were settled usually later, sometimes with distinctive cultural undertones. Consider Star Valley and Jackson Hole.

A long, slender valley four to six miles wide and twenty-one miles long, Star Valley, or, as it was known until about 1880, Salt River Valley, provided an attractive haven for two reasons. The inaccessibility that made it foreboding to some actually increased its desirability for those to whom seclusion and natural barriers possessed an advantage. In addition, the valley was in Wyoming. Both of those qualities were important to Mormons, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in neighboring Idaho, especially once polygamy was outlawed and U.S. officials in Idaho began vigorous prosecution. Indeed, as early as 1878 and 1879 the church sent explorers into the valley who reported positively on it and colonization by the church began. In the early 1880s, however, almost as many people who went to Star Valley promptly left and in some winters there were only two or three families remaining; in 1885 the church itself aggressively mobilized and reinvigorated the colonization with a call to settlement and at that point more people moved into the valley. Previously the valley had been used by the Mormons especially as a summer range for church cattle under the management of the Bear Lake Stake and the son of President Budge of the Stake herded them.[313] In the cash-poor Mormon society, tithing, an important element of participation in the church and community, was often made in the form of contributions of cattle with the result that the church developed substantial herds of cattle.

Those herds, and other church properties, however, were in jeopardy once the Edmunds – Tucker Act became law since it held confiscatory penalties for church-sanctioned polygamy; thus, as historian Leonard Arrington wrote, "most of the livestock on the church ranches at Star Valley, Wyoming; Oxford, Idaho; and Pipe Springs, Arizona, was sold to Mormon capitalists and semipublic livestock associations." He also noted, however, that some of the livestock sold was sold "in such a way as to suggest that the 'sale' was merely the assignment of a trust."[314] That this was in fact the case is borne out by one statement in the Bedford Ward record book, as penned by Andrew Jenson of that ward, "As early as the year 1888, that part of Salt River Valley now embraced in the Bedford Ward was used as a herd ground for church cattle."[315] Likewise in Freedom Ward: there the records indicate, "Stock raising

---

1894), 2; this booklet was originally an address before the Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce, January 16, 1894.

[313] Star Valley Historical Society history page at http://svhs.us/svhs_v5_home_page_6_jan_09_044.htm.

[314] Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1958; reprint of the 1958 Harvard University Press edition), 362-364.

[315] Jenson's work was then placed in a scrapbook for the Wyoming National Forest which was

was the principle [sic] occupation of these first settlers. And no attempt at farming to any extent until 1885."[316]

As with other Mormon rural villages, the impact of religion on the landscape was substantial in Star Valley with the settlers' communal emphasis, with their orientation on the church as central location, with their similar architecture, and in one important way that bears on homesteading and stock-raising. The half dozen Mormon villages strung along the river were more rural, more agricultural, than other villages and towns in Wyoming; in this regard they resembled Mormon towns elsewhere for they used a similar layout to that employed elsewhere in the LDS society. The towns were platted on a grid with city blocks generally containing ten acres each. These large blocks, moreover, were often divided into four lots of two and one-half acre each. There were, in other words, on each city block four miniature farms.[317] On their lots the residents had not only their houses but usually also barns, granaries, sheds, gardens, corrals, wells, and other farm-associated structures. The house itself would be located at the corner so that the intersection of streets would bring the four houses close together—for sociability purposes, the church would often explain, while those outside and critical of the church would suggest the proximity was more for control. In classic nineteenth century LDS fashion that stressed the well being of the community over any individual, it appears that they would often draw lots for their location rather than jockey for competitive advantage.

Outside the villages, Andrew Jenson wrote in 1891, "the majority of the settlers still live where they first located in a scattered condition on their ranches and farms."[318] In this, the Star Valley experience seems to have deviated slightly from the pattern that Richard Francaviglia found characteristic of Mormon settlements. Francaviglia, whose studies of the Mormon landscape are essential reading, describes the usual combination of village and field, saying "The open fields, semi-arid mountainous setting, irrigation ditches, and occasional rows of poplars and primitive fences lining fields give the rural landscape an almost biblical quality. . . . Mormon farmers live in town and travel out to their fields during the daytime."[319] It appears that in Star Valley, both patterns can be found. One 1986 observer noted about one of the communities in Star Valley, "Today Bedford is still a collection of meadows and small, scattered farmsteads more than a town."[320]

---

transcribed in the WPA Collections, subject file 408.

[316] Wyoming National Forest scrapbook transcription in WPA Collections, subject file 408.

[317] See the letter to the *Deseret Weekly*, January 2, 1891, from Andrew Jenson in which he spelled out the platting of Freedom, Wyoming: "It is surveyed into blocks of ten acres each, with streets six rods wide, which cross each other at right angles. Each block contains four lots."

[318] Jenson letter to *Deseret Weekly*, January 2, 1891.

[319] Richard V. Francaviglia, The *Mormon Landscape: Existence, Creation, and Perception of a Unique Image in the American West* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1978), 7. An example of precisely this pattern can be found at Mormon Row in Jackson Hole, where houses were located in a cluster from which the farmers would travel to their fields.

[320] Judith Hancock Sandoval, *Historic Ranches of Wyoming* (Casper: Nicolaysen Art Museum and Mountain States Lithographing Company, 1986), 66.

In the rural villages and out on the farms, the buildings tended to be log, similar to those elsewhere. One account describes them as log chinked with split poles and then daubed with mud for sealant. "These cabins were low, dirt roofed, one or two room structures. They were brown color outside and inside until time and material were available for white-washing. Some had rough board floors which was almost a luxury, to say nothing of a rag carpet; but if a ceiling of unbleached muslin could be secured, they were 'super-deluxe.' They were frost proof in winter but when spring thaws melted the tall snow caps, it rained in the cabin while the sun shone overhead . . . . These cabins were built on the homesteads previously staked out by the settlers."[321] Even at that, there was a housing shortage, and the daughter-in-law of stake president Osmond recalled of one of his wives (evidently her mother-in-law), "there were very few good houses in the valley and none vacant that were livable, so he moved Amelia and her three young sons into a one room cabin with a dirt roof . . . In this one room were beds, chairs, table and cook stove and a stand for dishes and some room left to work in."[322]

In many respects, the Star Valley community—and it often considered itself a single community by virtue of church organization, common beliefs, shared circumstances, and communal spirit—with separate neighborhoods, was self-sufficient and very modestly able to meet its own needs. Stock raising was dominant, although it is not clear how marketable the livestock was and reports are mixed as to the adaptability of beef cattle to the rigorous winter conditions of the area. While farming was successful, though not much more so, and for the same reasons, than the livestock, they produced small grains in sufficient quantity that Archibald Gardner was able to establish a mill to grind the grain, and his grist mill "provided some flour for the destitute Saints during the severe winter of 1889-90."[323] The first wheat was planted in 1886 and the first potatoes too with Fred Brown planting the potatoes while his wife drove the team. The frost—early and late—jeopardized the vegetable crops and the threat of freezing always hung over them, increasing their awareness of their isolation from outside provisions. And even when all went well, they were essentially growing the same crops and stock as everybody else in the valley and thus were unable to generate cash for purchases of necessary goods from outside the valley. What would work, though, was dairy cattle.

Quite separate from the herds of beef cattle that had previously ranged in the valley during the summers, the settler families brought a few head with them to take care of their own domestic needs. The milk they produced generated a surplus and somehow this surplus was sold as butter and cheese, usually in exchange for other goods available at the mining towns of Evanston, Kemmerer, Almy, and Rock Springs. Using only household utensils—laundry tubs and hoops and cheese cloth—families made their own butter and cheese and sold it in the slightly burgeoning market, but this system gave way to one in which the cream was gathered to a central point for the making of butter and cheese. The next step in the process was the establishment of actual dairies whereby the operators milked their own cows

---

[321] Maud C. Burton is quoted by Ray M. Hall, "A History of the Latter-day Saint Settlement of Star Valley, Wyoming," M.S. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1962, 51-52.
[322] Quoted in Hall, "A History of the Latter-day Saint Settlement of Star Valley, Wyoming," 52.
[323] Hall, "A History of the Latter-day Saint Settlement of Star Valley, Wyoming," 73.

and rented cows from others, paying the rent in cheese. As it turned out, butter would not do well as a marketable product because of the distance to be traveled, nor would eggs for the same reason, but the cheese tolerated the travel quite well and by 1900 the farmers focused their resources on this product and creameries emerged in several of the villages, including a cooperative "union creamery" west of Afton. As Ray Hall articulated the impact of the change, "Large herds of dairy cows soon became the mainstay in the economy of this growing district."[324]

North of Star Valley, the isolated Jackson Hole country was settled a little later. Tucked away beyond mountainous barriers, the valley—Jackson Hole—was inaccessible to all but the most determined and intrepid. Never a location of a fur trade rendezvous, the valley and its streams still had attracted trappers and mountaineers in the 1830s, including David Jackson for whom the valley was named. One study of the fur trade in Jackson Hole notes that after 1840, "Jackson Hole relapsed into virgin solitude. For twenty years thereafter there is little positive evidence of white men in this valley."[325] In subsequent years occasional explorers passed through and only a few, like trapper Beaver Dick Leigh and his two, successive, families who lived on the western side of the Tetons claimed familiarity with the area. It was only in the 1880s that people began to filter into the valley, and this was anything but a deliberate migration. Explorers, surveyors, soldiers, and artists had put the valley and the mountains literally on the map and in the nation's consciousness and they were followed by occasional adventurers who sought gold, who were on hunting expeditions, and who wanted to see the hidden wonders of Jackson Hole and Yellowstone, but none of them seems to have thought of this as a place to make a home, farm, or ranch. (One of these adventurers was even the president of the United States in 1883.) As a serious place for settling, for raising crops and families, Jackson Hole was not the first choice. Other places were better suited for that endeavor.

By the late 1880s, however, scattered individuals, most of them as solitary and lonely as the place they moved into, started to take up claims. The first claims, evidently under the provisions of the Homestead Act, were made in 1884, one by John Holland and the other by John Carnes. But stake out their claims they did, in the Flat Creek area, and stay they also did. Moreover, John Carnes had a wife and daughter, the first family in the years of white settlement of the valley, and the Carnes family also brought some agricultural equipment and they proceeded to farm hay.[326] Jackson Hole would never be the same. As National Park Service historian John Daugherty, observes, "By 1888 Jackson Hole had a population of 20 men, two women, and one child."[327]

The following year that population jumped when a miniature Mormon migration came into the valley,

---

[324] Hall, "A History of the Latter-day Saint Settlement of Star Valley, Wyoming," 74-79
[325] Merrill Mattes, *Jackson Hole: Crossroads of the Fur Trade* (Jackson, Wyoming: Jackson Hole Museum, 1987), 57. This small booklet is a reprint of Mattes's two articles in the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* in 1946 and 1948.
[326] John Daugherty, *A Place Called Jackson Hole: The Historic Resource Study of Grand Teton National Park* (Moose, Wyoming: Grand Teton National Park, 1999), 90-93, 128.
[327] Daugherty, *A Place Called Jackson Hole*, 91.

from Utah by way of Idaho. Two brothers, Sylvester Wilson and Elijah N. Wilson ("Uncle Nick"), were attracted by the native grasses of the valley and brought their substantial caravan of six wagons, with, all told, five families named either Wilson or Cheney over Teton Pass. These people also brought eighty head of cattle with them. They settled at the bottom of the mountains on the west bank of the Snake River, along Fish Creek, and to the south into the area known as South Park, where, as Nellie VanDerveer described, "their cattle wintered well and by the following winter these new settlers had established themselves in the lower part of the valley where there was also wild hay to be had for the cutting."[328] These scattered clusters formed the main population centers of the valley in the 1890s.

Additional settlements—again merely clusters of settlers and families—emerged to the north, as far north as Moose and then even farther to the shores of Jackson Lake and also in the area east along the Gros Ventre—typically locating along the streams and avoiding the flats except as public domain grazing for their cattle. For these people were, almost to a person, ranchers. They were not ranchers in the sense of ranchers in eastern Wyoming of the beef bonanza years, but they were ranchers nonetheless. Daugherty, who has studied the settlement of the valley closely, concludes that the cattle herds "generally ranged around 100 head or less." Only one rancher (Pierce Cunningham) had more than a hundred and most had substantially fewer. Lee Lucas, who homesteaded on Spring Gulch in the spring of 1897, started his herd with an extremely modest beginning. At that time, he received forty dollars from the sale of land he owned in Nebraska. With that money he purchased a cow and calf from a neighbor. "So now he had a milk cow," reports the WPA worker who interviewed Lee Lucas.[329] So now he also had the beginning of his cattle herd. Others were similarly disposed, but the ranches had started, small though they were. Given the severe climate of the valley, small herds were almost mandated by nature; the long and serious winters dictated putting up even more hay per head of cattle than ranchers elsewhere in Wyoming were required to furnish their cattle. And what that meant, further, was that the ranchers were also farmers, devoting attention to their herds and also to the production of crops to feed them, even replacing the native grasses with timothy, alfalfa, and brome grass.[330] They also developed some irrigation canals for their operations, like James May's three mile ditch east of Blacktail Butte and Emile Wolff's ditch north of Spread Creek.

The resulting economy was local and inward-oriented, self-sufficient and subsistent in nature, and carried with it particular benefits and disadvantages. The valley was full of game, especially elk, and hunting was ever an element of providing for the table. Vegetables and fruits, though, were a different matter and local diets showed the imbalance. These ranchers grew cattle, but there really was no substantial market for them. Buyers would come into the valley to purchase the livestock they wanted, not the ranchers driving their herds to market, although in the future they would drive them to Lander over the Gros Ventres. Likewise, any supplies they needed, like dried fruits and manufactured goods,

---

[328] Nellie VanDerveer, "Jackson Hole," pp. 5-6, typescript dated April 23, 1940 in WPA Collections, subject file 1308.
[329] "Some Jackson Hole Data," typescript based on interview with Lee Lucas in WPA collections, subject file 397.
[330] Daugherty, *A Place Called Jackson Hole*, 96-7.

had to be purchased from outside the valley and this usually involved a trip to Victor or St. Anthony, Idaho, although that was possible too if time permitted. Although time sometimes proved available, the distance, the topography, and the inconvenience worked to keep the valley relatively enclosed and isolated. On the other hand, the 1900 census manuscripts, completed by local resident Daniel Nowlin, showed that 638 residents were in the valley, and there were 145 separate farms. Importantly, every single farm that Nowlin listed on the census report he showed as completely free of any mortgage.[331] Despite the isolation, despite the lack of markets, despite the lack of cash, life was not altogether a hardship. It had its advantages, most notably the freedom of the Jeffersonian heritage—and the inspiring landscape. Lee Lucas suggested the advantages and the shortcomings of life there when told his interviewer in the 1930s that "the pioneers of his time lived almost as good then as now, especially if they liked lots of meat."[332]

Compared to Star Valley and Jackson Hole, the Big Horn Basin was a vast area, much of it eminently arable, with a more forgiving climate, and ample opportunity for the farmer and rancher. It beckoned the settler. After the demise of the big ranches, many of those who had worked for them took up their own places and started a new life with a few head of cattle and a few acres of crops. Martha Waln's husband, Frank Bull, no longer had a job with the English ranchers who had employed him as manager so he and his wife and budding family filed on land, cut logs, and built their own house and other buildings. They were not alone. Martha Waln was struck by the migration of settlers into the basin at a growing pace and increasing volume: "Few were the summer months from 1887 to 1890 when prairie schooners were not to be seen lumbering slowly down the winding, dusty road on their way into the Big Horn Basin. Men, women, and children were to be seen now where only men were seen a few years before, and they all invariably asked the same questions . . . ."[333] And more were on the way.

The completion of a privately organized irrigation project, directed by William A. Richards, east of the Bighorn River seems to have stimulated more immigration into the basin and a party of Mormons investigated the potential of the area in 1892 and reported positively on the prospects for settlement. As Charles Lindsay writes, "the next spring about fifty families, or in the neighborhood of three hundred men, women, and children, were on their way north. It was the largest colonization enterprise the Basin had yet witnessed."[334] Whether this was the largest or not may be argued, given the substantial influx in the previous five years, but it was considerable nonetheless and it was somewhat organized. In May 1893, the Evanston *Register* reported that a volunteer company of people from Star Valley, Bear Lake

---

[331] Daugherty, *A Place Called Jackson Hole*, 101-105. Although Daugherty dismisses this absence of mortgages saying that it "is difficult to believe given that most settlers were cash-poor," this circumstance is consistent with census reports elsewhere and reflects the different aspirations of people filing on land from what some historians expect. People moved to Jackson Hole, and to other parts of Wyoming, and used the land laws to claim land not to get rich but to gain freedom.
[332] "Some Jackson Hole Data," 3.
[333] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 29.
[334] Charles Lindsay, "The Big Horn Basin," in University of Nebraska, *University Studies*, XXVIII-XXIX (1928-1929): 163-164.

Valley, and Utah were preparing for departure to the Big Horn country, all under the leadership of the president of the Star Valley Stake, George Osmond. Osmond acknowledged that he had never been in the Big Horn Basin, but he understood, "it was a beautiful farming country, plenty of water, forests of timber and any amount of game." Plus, it had a milder climate than Star Valley.[335]

That "colonization" effort, however, was not entirely organized and coordinated and it was only superficially a church endeavor. The church in Salt Lake City never endorsed it and it was accompanied by none of the tight-knit structure and planning and discipline that characterized other LDS emigrations and settlements. As Lindsay points out, "the groups filtered in throughout the spring and summer of 1893, and were still coming in 1894. For the most part it was each man for himself until he got there; then there was some co-operation. No arrangements had been made for either land titles or water rights prior to their reaching the Basin. This, again, was not characteristic of church supervision."[336] The group's efforts to settle the Burlington Flats and Germania Bench encountered major difficulties and setbacks, the canals proved more ambitious projects than had been anticipated, and the consequent privations of the would-be settlers ranged from the lack of crops in 1894 to the absence of housing and the unavailability of food for their horses doing the work on the canals. One participant in the undertaking recalled that the going was slow as the settlers attempted to build the Farmer's Canal at Burlington, and "they would have to work on the canal for a while and then seek work at the Pitchfork Ranch or any other place they could get employment to provide provisions for themselves or their families."[337] Probably half of the original settlers were gone by 1895, although others had joined and the Mormon colony began to take off, or hold its own, once the harvest of 1895 was in. More of their religious brothers and sisters came into the Big Horn Basin about the same time, settling along the Shoshone River and also along the Greybull. Burlington became the core community and, as Lindsay reports, that town "took on the characteristics of an inland agricultural community with a liberal flavor of the cattle range; but [the settlers] scattered up and down the river for miles."[338] Another community emerged at Otto, several miles below Burlington and by 1897 it was clear that the settlement of the Big Horn Basin was well underway and also that, church-sponsored or not, it had a definite Mormon flavor to it.

Likewise, settlement of the upper Green River valley proceeded steadily. Somewhat spared the rancor and also the economic and political turmoil of the 1880s because of the sparser population (of both cattle and people), there was not the wholesale closing of ranches and culling of herds in this area. There were also, for that matter, not the huge herds that roamed the eastern part of the territory, although the Budd and McKay herd was the largest, and their herd ranged as far as Daniel. In fact, Budd was already taking steps like some of his counterparts in the eastern part of the state to improve his herd—a significant step that involved fencing and more intensive management. In the spring of 1883 Budd

---

[335] The Evanston newspaper story was printed in the *Fremont Clipper*, May 5, 1893 as "To Colonize the Big Horn."
[336] Lindsay, "The Big Horn Basin," 164.
[337] Dave Henderson, "The Farmer's Canal Company," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1208.
[338] Lindsay, "The Big Horn Basin," 166-167.

became the subject of news reports noting that he was returning from the East with a car load of "well-bred calves" to graze his range in the Big Piney area. This shipment included Durham bulls and heifers as well as one young Hereford bull. He also brought a three year old Norman stallion "with a straight pedigree." Although this was all the seed of future herds, it was also the mark of a maturing cattle operation, not one at its beginnings.[339] In the following two decades new communities took root to serve the growing homesteader / rancher population.

Although the Green River drainage, broadly defined, was primarily a ranching country, it too was being settled by homesteaders. An 1895 survey of the upper Green River noted that around LaBarge, but also elsewhere, "there are families quietly moving in, taking up their quarter sections of land, building little log houses and out-buildings and planting in the virgin soil seeds that are already blossoming into promising crops." More than twenty-five families had located near LaBarge that spring: "most of these new arrivals are from Nebraska and have come prepared to start right in to build up farms." Part of this expansion owed its prospects to a privately funded three-mile long ditch sufficient to irrigate eight thousand acres, with more such projects in the planning stages.[340]

Settlement in some parts of the state was aided by irrigation, and in most parts of Wyoming irrigation companies were as bountiful as the crops that could be grown with the water, sometimes more so, but just as often as the crops, the irrigation companies themselves also withered on the vine, leaving those who invested in them as barren and impoverished as the fields. Basic to the development of irrigation in Wyoming was the state water policy developed by Wyoming Territorial Engineer, and then State Engineer, Elwood Mead. It was no overstatement when T. A. Larson suggested, "this outstanding state engineer brought order out of the chaotic water-rights situation."[341] The key to the system devised by Mead was the idea that the water, like the air, was by right the property of the public and should be dispensed by the state to private individuals in a systematic way; while individuals may claim rights to use the water, it was the state that owned that precious resource.

One contemporary study noted the wisdom of Wyoming's law and also how other states sought to emulate the key provisions. William Ellsworth Smythe in 1905 evinced great enthusiasm for the system: "It is based on the sound proposition that water belongs to the public and that only the public can grant the right to its use, which must be a beneficial use, with due regard to the rights and interests of all other users, present or prospective."[342] By seeing that the state had ownership of the water and

---

[339] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, April 22, 1883.
[340] "In the Piney Valley," Evanston *Wyoming Press*, July 20, 1895, and reprinted in Sublette County Artists' Guild, *Seeds-Ke-Dee Reflections* (Laramie: Modern Printing, 1985),1-5. See also "The Hard Winter of 1889," Pinedale *Roundup*, December 15, 1921, for a description of the small herds, "a few head of stock," that most settlers ran on their own farms and ranches, and which suffered significantly in the winter of 1889 that hit that part of the territory with special severity.
[341] T. A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965, 1978; Second Edition, Revised),, 302-303.
[342] William E. Smythe, *The Conquest of Arid America* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905),

then by establishing a system for allocating rights to it, Mead prevented the water from being entirely monopolized, and he persisted in his efforts to see that it was made as widely available to the public as possible. And he wanted to increase the amount of water through various reclamation plans, although his efforts in this regard, by his own estimation, fell short.[343]

A considerable amount of the irrigation effort was private, and this ranged from, on the one hand, a farmer / rancher simply digging a ditch to divert water to flood or seep into a field, to, on the other hand, the formation of a corporation for developing land and selling parcels to be irrigated by an elaborate system of ditches, flumes, and laterals. John White's description again provides an insight into how this system developed. In 1894 he estimated "that there are seven hundred miles of main and seven thousand miles of lateral ditches in Sheridan County alone. The area thus affected is put at two hundred and seventy thousand acres."[344] White also offered a good description of the construction of the irrigation canals and laterals:

> The maximum allowance per acre is fixed by law, and the head of the main ditch or canal, where it receives its supply, is provided with a gate so constructed as to admit only so much water as the aggregate allotments of its patrons requires. This ditch or canal is cut along the downward course of the stream, but with a lessening fall until the water rises over the level of the banks in its lower course, and is then directed wherever desired and the contour of the surface will permit. From this main ditch laterals are run, and these are divided and subdivided as the local demands and the situation suggest. These details differ on the different properties, but the principles of irrigation are easily understood and readily applied. A slight stone dam diverts a part of the current into the main ditch, and the rest passes on, to be interrupted in a similar way by the next canal feeder.
>
> For the most part these ditches are simply made; the larger ones with plow and scraper, and the smaller ones with the plow or spade. In almost every case the supplying canals have been built by co-operative companies—the farmers owning the land to be irrigated joining in their formation, and taking shares of stock in proportion to the water they wish to obtain. The stock and water-right become appurtenances of the land, and are transferred with it in case of sale. The cost of these improvements is largely regulated by the current rate of wages.[345]

Systematic irrigation had begun on a small scale by Mormon colonists in the area around Fort Bridger in the southwest corner of Wyoming as early as the 1850s and there was some irrigation taking place near Fort Laramie not long after. Bit by bit the practice spread and the irrigation requirements of the Desert

---

230-231.
[343] Larson, *History of Wyoming*, 302-303.
[344] White, *The Newer Northwest*, 142-144.
[345] White, *The Newer Northwest*, 144.

Land Act, under which a substantial portion of the land was taken up, increased the construction of irrigation systems. In 1889 there were signs of irrigation in most parts of the territory. The next year the census published a map indicating the location of irrigated lands and that map showed extensive, though by no means complete, irrigation. By 1894 one study calculated that there were nearly ninety corporations involved in irrigation operations in the southern part of Wyoming.[346] And the projects grew and multiplied in the following two decades. By 1897 the Evanston newspaper could say, "we cannot call to mind any of the populated valleys in the county in which canals and ditches do not thread the surface from north to south, and from east to west."[347]

To promote further irrigation endeavors, the federal government in 1894 enacted a law granting to arid land states a million acres, provided the land would be irrigated. This was the Carey Land Act, named for its sponsor and author, Wyoming's senator Joseph M. Carey of the CY Ranch in Converse and Natrona counties. The Wyoming government accepted the land, made the promise of irrigation, and set about encouraging the development of water projects on the land that had been, up until that point, public domain. Within a few years eight projects had been planned, and most of them were in the Big Horn Basin and in the southeast corner of the state. In fact, the whole effort faltered. By 1910 the Carey Act projects watered a total of 7.6% of the total irrigated land in the state. In comparison, 71.8% of the irrigated acreage was watered by individuals and partnerships, and 10.3% by cooperative endeavors. Commercial projects notably ranked low, right alongside the Carey Act projects with 7.8% of the total irrigated land.[348]

Where the water belonged to the public and where the land that it often was being diverted to was part of the public domain, it would seem that there was abundant opportunity for the realization of the Jeffersonian dream of small, independent farmers. And certainly this worked out in some instances. But there were complications and the dream often fell far short. When irrigation projects were private commercial operations prospective settlers frequently waited—and waited—for irrigation systems to be developed before they moved in. If the land needed water brought by irrigation flumes or ditches, that land by definition would not be productive for the settler who claimed the land in advance of constructing the system. Conversely, the irrigation companies generally needed settlers on the land to invest in the system so that capital would be available for construction. Sometimes settlers were caught in a tight squeeze from those conflicting pressures.

In the construction of the Lovell Canal, exactly that happened. Robert J. Bischoff in the 1930s researched that problematic development, and surely this was not the only such instance. "The people signed contracts for the lands," Bischoff explained. Then they "filed on the land and when they received patents, mortgaged their lands to pay the Canal Co. When they got their loan money there was not

---

[346] Jacob Harris Patton, *Natural Resources of the United States* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1894), 393.
[347] Evanston *News-Register*, May 8, 1897.
[348] U.S. Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, Vol. V, *Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 962, 967-968.

enough to satisfy their obligations but their lands were released for what they could get and their lands went boggy and they could neither pay the Company or the Loan Company and they lost and the Canal Company lost. . . . Ten years went on this way when the Canal Company finally payed all their obligations and put the Canal Company out of debt in 1912."[349] In this instance it was the canal company that got out of debt, not the settlers. Those settlers had released their lands and lost about everything they had. In some instances, the private developer of an irrigation company—or a rancher with lands to be irrigated—would lease land to settlers upon terms essentially amounting to those of share-cropping, where the owner would stipulate what and how much would be planted and how it would be marketed.[350] This was not exactly the fulfillment of the Jeffersonian vision of a freehold democracy.

An impasse seems to have been broken when the federal government itself got into the irrigation business with the creation of the Reclamation Services, or, as it would be known after 1923, the Bureau of Reclamation. This new agency, created by the 1902 Reclamation Act, or Newlands Act, aspired to "reclaim" desert land through irrigation, by creating dams and reservoirs that could then be used to provide water to small holdings of public land turned over to settlers. One of the first projects undertaken by this new agency actually supplanted the effort by William F. Cody to launch an irrigation project under the Carey Act. That led to a significant dispute, with accusations of betrayal, between Cody, and people in the namesake town, when engineers opted to launch the smaller Corbett Dam and Ralston Dam because they would be cheaper and start to generate revenue earlier than the larger Shoshone Dam west of Cody.[351] The smaller projects were completed, however, and then the Shoshone Reservoir, behind the Buffalo Bill Dam, was completed in 1910 with settlers arriving promptly to take up land in the main project and its divisions.

Three other large Reclamation Service projects were also undertaken in Wyoming in the first decade of the twentieth century. One was located southwest of Casper—the Pathfinder Dam on the North Platte with a diversion dam far to the southeast, near the Nebraska border—and another a dam on the Snake River that enlarged Jackson Lake, although the latter was designed to provide water to irrigate potato farms in Idaho, not in Wyoming. A third emerged on what had been the Wind River Reservation. After the distribution of tribal lands to individual members, the additional land, the so-called "surplus" or "excess" land, was managed by the Reclamation Service which developed irrigation projects on them. While irrigation projects began to take hold, unevenly, across the state, it was clear that Wyoming had moved into a new phase of settlement, a phase where different farming methods and cultures would be necessary.

There were other changes as well. The penetration of Wyoming by railroads in the 1880s and 1890s

---

[349] Robert J. Bischoff, "The Lovell Canal," WPA collections, subject file 1208.
[350] See for example, Charles W. Burdick, Secretary of State, *The State of Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Wyoming Secretary of State, 1898), 47-61.
[351] William F. Bonner, *William F. Cody's Wyoming Empire: The Buffalo Bill Nobody Knows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 206-209.

ushered in vast changes for everybody, including both the livestock growers and homesteaders. Access to Wyoming's northeast corner was becoming easier each year, primarily because of the development of railroad lines. In 1886 the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad (a subsidiary of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad) began construction west of Chadron, Nebraska and reached Douglas by the next year and then moved on to Casper in 1888. To the north, in 1891, the Burlington and Missouri River (subsequently, Burlington – Northern) Railroad reached Gillette and the following year its construction connected to Sheridan and then moved on to the north toward Billings. Ranchers in the Big Horn Basin had to drive their cattle long distances to the Union Pacific in southern Wyoming or to the Northern Pacific in Montana—neither particularly easy, fast, or efficient movements. In 1894, when the Burlington railroad reached north from Sheridan and connected to the Northern Pacific at Huntley, Montana, basin ranchers could drive their cattle over the mountains in the fall to ship them at Parkman, finally eroding, if not breaking, some of the isolation.[352] Most of this development, however, was in the eastern part of the state. Railroad construction in the western precincts, except for the Oregon Shortline Railroad which moved northwest from Granger, Wyoming in 1882, would generally come in the twentieth century.

When railroads did come to an area, however, they unleashed powerful forces for change. In a curious but significant way, the railroads, wherever they went, performed a function similar to that provided by the streams and creeks for earlier settlers; and often the railroad followed those same drainages and reinforced those routes as arteries of communication and transportation. But more than the waterways, the railroads provided access to shipping that was unequalled by other means. Everywhere the railroads went, new stations and communities sprang up along their sides. And facilities like pens and ramps for loading goods—like cattle—also emerged beside the railroads. In 1894 John White noticed in the Powder River Basin that "The building of the Burlington road right through the middle of this great region has proved an immense advantage to the [cattle] business. Yards for shipping are established every eight or ten miles along the road, and any club of stockmen can secure one at any especially convenient point by assuring the shipment of a reasonable number of cattle each year. This obviates the risk and expense of long drives; and under special provision for the comfort and speedy delivery of the stock, the business has received a new impetus in the last four or five years."[353]

This, in turn, generated a profound shift in the center of gravity for the areas penetrated by the railroad—and for those left behind as well—as commerce and people moved closer to the railroad. Historians Sande Oliver and William Bryans examined the development of the area around Pumpkin Buttes and noticed that the completion of the railroad to Gillette "appears to have diverted attention away from the southwest corner of the county."[354] Indeed, the Keeline Ranch moved its headquarters from near Lusk

---

[352] Marvin B. Rhodes, "Date with Destiny: A Brief History of the Livestock Industry in the Big Horn Basin," 15; undated typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 1216.
[353] White, *The Newer Northwest*, 139.
[354] Sande Oliver and Bill Bryans, "Historical Literature Survey of the Pumpkin Buttes Area of Southwest Campbell County, Wyoming, including the North Butte Mine Site," prepared for Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company, Casper, Wyoming, April 1980, p. 42.

northward to the head of Caballo Creek near Gillette where they established the 4J Ranch (purchased a few years earlier from the Converse County cattle operation of Adams and Glover). "The move," says one account, "was made principally because a railroad line had been built through Gillette."[355] And for the cattle industry this had other less obvious effects, including the abandonment of the old Texas Trail and other trails by which ranchers would take their livestock to market. The savings in distance the herd had to travel was significant even when the drive was still considerable, a feature that was important to the rancher, but the direction and route also changed, which was of importance to the broader area. A later account of John Kendrick and his OW Ranch reported that, "One year, from the OW Ranch, the beef herd was driven to the railroad at Belle Fourche, S. D., 200 miles away. Then the Burlington Railroad penetrated Wyoming and the herd was driven to Gillette, 115 miles."[356] The distances from ranches to the railroads were being gradually reduced.

Moreover, there was another and greater, but more subtle, impact of the railroad. Cattle ranching had held an advantage over other commodities because it was possible to transport them to market in part on their own power, something that could not be said of grains and produce—and wool. With luck and careful management, the cattle might even gain weight on their way to the shipping point. But the arrival of the railroad dramatically reduced that advantage and made it possible for people who produced other less mobile commodities—like grain and potatoes—also to have access to shipping, a factor which encouraged commercial farming. And by delivering equipment and supplies to the merchants in the region's towns and villages, farmers were able to set up their own operations more easily than previously, thus placing additional pressure on the ranches because of their taking up of land. In addition, the arrival of the railroad, especially in the 1890s, sometimes converged with depressed wool prices, and the easier shipment allowed by closer railroads meant a significant shift (or addition) from wool to mutton (a nebulous group that included not only the young, tender lambs but also the aging sheep that would not be able to make it through the coming winter); the lambs could be shipped to market and not have to be trailed long distances to shipping points.

The railroad made it possible not only to export livestock more easily, but to import homesteaders. Railroad companies routinely set up immigration bureaus advertising the availability of lands along their lines and offered special rates for those who would emigrate on their lines, offering the emigrant cars—a rail car in which a family would have all its possessions including implements and a few head of livestock, accompanied by one family member while the rest of the family traveled separately. This would bear fruit for the emigrants and for the railroad alike especially in the twentieth century, but as early as 1888 Maurice Frink observed, "The granger invasion—the coming of the small farmers—was now in full swing. In Wyoming alone, they were coming in along the railroad lines in large numbers—

---

[355] Margaret Dillinger Bowden, *1916: Wyoming, Here We Come!* (Gillette, Wyoming: privately printed by James H. Bowden and Jessie Outka, 2002), 41.
[356] Malcolm C. Cutting, "A Cattle Magnate Sits in the Senate; Kendrick of Wyoming Applies Efficiency Methods to the Beef Raising Business and Takes the Gamble Out of It," New York *Times*, December 19, 1926.

at the rate of fifteen families a day in the spring of 1888."[357]

One influence of the railroad has been often-overlooked by historians, but actually may have been one of the most visible at the time. Because of the constant and huge need for water replenishment to help the big train engines generate the steam for propulsion, the railroad had to position water tanks on towers along the track every eighty or sixty, or even fewer, miles. These tanks would be filled with water pumped by commercially manufactured windmills. The result was, as Allen G. Noble notes, "to introduce the windmill as a feature of the Plains landscape."[358] Plus, the railroad could now ship the windmills into the region, something that would have been much more difficult in the transportation system that the railroad supplanted. Indeed, the railroad could bring in all kinds of building materials, including dimension lumber; architectural historians often note the arrival of the railroad as a turning point in local construction styles and techniques because of the availability of dimension lumber. And that is in addition to the new variety of consumer and producer goods—canned goods, farm implements, equipment of all kinds, manufactured clothing—that became accessible, or more easily so. In matters of trade and communication, of commerce and commodities, of social and economic organization, and of the appearance of the landscape itself, the railroad was the engine of change.

In the years at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the transformation taking place on the land involved several components. One was the replacement of the ranching dynasties not just with smaller cattle operations but with a multitude of small farms. Another was the movement of those small operations into new territory, sometimes territory that had been too remote or too severe for the first comers who got their pick of the land and sometimes territory that was made the more attractive by putting water onto it. And more of the state was being connected to the world of markets by railroads. Wyoming's countryside was looking substantially different from what it had just a few years before.

The bonanza in cattle ranching, as sharp and dramatic as it was, eclipsed the sheep operations of the state, sometimes replaced them, and sometimes just made them seem less significant. But once the bonanza was finished and the bubble had burst, all over Wyoming, even in places not long before considered too far out of the way to bother with, small ranches and farms emerged, almost invariably associated with both livestock and crops. And more and more of those livestock were woolly rather than horned.

The numbers of sheep across Wyoming increased after the blizzard of 1886-1887 and after the Johnson County war and related conflicts. A few owners increased their flocks to take advantage of the opportunity created by the diminishing herds of cattle. More commonly, however, cattle owners, badly burned by the environmental, political, and economic consequences of their open range ranching, saw

---

[357] Maurice Frink, "When Grass Was King," in Maurice Frink, W. Turrentine Jackson, and Agnes Wright Spring, *When Grass Was King: Contributions to the Western Range Cattle Industry* (Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado Press, 1956), 104.
[358] Allen G. Noble, "Windmills in American Agriculture," *Material Culture*, 24 (Spring 1992): 3.

benefits to the sheep industry and began to move in that direction. Edward Everett Dale points out, "As the number of cattle was reduced the number of sheep increased. They were brought in large numbers to many ranges that had been so closely grazed in the past as to be no longer capable of supporting a large number of cattle. Wyoming, which in 1886 had according to the assessment rolls 898,121 head of cattle and 308,997 head of sheep, by 1894 had only 234,724 head of cattle and 881,695 head of sheep. By 1900 the cattle numbered 359,069 while the number of sheep had risen to 2,624,689."[359] Dale's use of the assessors' roles, as he doubtless understood, even underestimated the dimensions of the change. The census report for 1890 showed Wyoming with 712,520 sheep. The census report for 1900 showed a total of 5,099,613 sheep, an increase of 716% in the decade.

This growth of the sheep industry had a context of its own and sheep were not increasing in the mountains and on the ranges of Wyoming in isolation from the rest of the nation. In fact, just as farming increased in Wyoming while it was declining in the Midwest, the same process defined the shift of the sheep industry in the 1890s. In that decade the sheep industry in the United States was generally in decline, having been ravaged, first by the depression that started in 1893, and then by a glut on the world market—what was called "free wool" where import duties that had previously protected the domestic wool market were relaxed; prices for domestic wool thereupon plummeted. This meant disaster for the sheep industry in what was called "the farming states" of the Midwest and East, and the numbers of sheep in New England fell by forty-three percent, in the Middle Atlantic by forty-seven percent, in the South by thirty-one percent, and in the North Central states by forty-six percent. By contrast, in Wyoming, the number of sheep not only did not decline but increased by over seven hundred per cent in the decade. One study of the larger sheep industry in the nation captured the larger trend, but seriously understated what was going on in Wyoming and the West when it noted, "The rise of the western sheep industry in the 1890s is complemented by the decline of the sheep industry in the East and Midwest."[360] While it would not be literally accurate to suggest that Midwestern farmers left their homes and moved to Wyoming, bringing their sheep with them, it is still true that farmers and sheep disappeared from the Midwest and, at the same time, farmers and sheep found homes in Wyoming. What is more, although the woolen and mutton business partially recovered in the East and Midwest in the twentieth century, it was during the 1890s that the industry actually shifted, permanently, to the Far West, and especially to the Rocky Mountain West. The sheep industry was overtaking the cattle industry as the primary grazier of Wyoming.

Grazing sheep was not the same as grazing cattle and the sheep industry had its own structure, rhythms, culture, and economics. There was one part of the sheep industry, however, that resembled in some respects the cattle industry and that was one for which the cattle industry probably provided the model. That was the practice of herding cattle to, and into, Wyoming. The analogue for understanding this system would be the cattle trail drive where livestock were herded from point A to point B, perhaps a

---

[359] Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 111-112.
[360] L[ouis] G[eorge] Connor, "A Brief History of the Sheep Industry in the United States," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1918* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), vol. I, 141-142.

thousand miles away, herding them in such a way as to allow them to fatten and thrive so that they would even be in marketable shape upon arrival at their destination. In the case of trail herding sheep, there are few accounts of the early sheep movements to Wyoming. These sheep were mostly known as Mexican sheep because they came from New Mexico; subsequently sheep were brought from the Midwest, but it appears that the great majority of the sheep in the 1880s and 1890s came from California and Oregon. Edward Wentworth found in his research that:

> During the period from 1880 to 1900 one of the most spectacular movements in the history of the American sheep industry developed with the driving of the great trail herds out of California and Oregon into the mountain states and over to the Platte, Cache La Poudre, Kansas and Arkansas river valleys. It is estimated that three-quarters of a million head traveled across Wyoming during these two decades. Two trails led into Wyoming from the west, one reversing the old Oregon Trail and coming into the state from southeastern Idaho, the other leading from northeastern Utah through Evanston and Fort Bridger. Most of the flocks that came through the latter gateway were ewe bands, while most of those that came up the Bear river and across the Green and Big Sandy over South Pass were wether bands.[361]

Once on the eastern side of South Pass, the sheep trails would continue to follow the main emigrant trail, the Oregon – California Trail, especially those bound for Nebraska which would continue on the trail following the North Platte to Fort Laramie and beyond. Those destined for Kansas or Arkansas River ranges or feedlots would turn south where the Sweetwater River joined the North Platte, and move across Shirley Basin and the Laramie Plains into Colorado.

These drives from California would generally take two years, would include usually 6,000 sheep and three herders. Multiple herds would travel together though, and a foreman would be in charge of four to six herds. Typical of these would be the trail herd that Hartman K. Evans accompanied. Evans left a diary of his journey trailing 23,000 sheep from LaGrande, Oregon to Laramie in 1882, a year which he reported as very busy with livestock of all kinds traveling eastward on the trail.[362] Typically these vast herds would travel ten miles a day, more or less, and their daily routine included morning travel and then rest in the afternoon with travel again in the evening before bedding down—a pattern strikingly similar to that of the cattle drives from Texas.

The specter of the movement of sheep in large numbers was an impressive one that observers commented upon—and newspapers sometimes took note of. A Cheyenne newspaper report in 1882 hinted at the immensity of the migration when it said: "It is stated that from 40,000 and 45,000 sheep

---

[361] Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming."
[362] This diary is widely available with copies in the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming, the Wyoming State Archives, and in an abridged form as a special publication of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association in 1942.

are now on their way between Eagle Rock, Idaho and Green River, Wyoming, on their way east."[363] Whether these sheep were intended to become Wyoming flocks, or whether they were simply passing through the state, the distinction probably mattered little to those who saw them consuming the range their cattle needed. Wentworth described these sheep as journeying from California and Oregon through the intervening states and then, "they would reach the Wyoming line by mid-summer and leisurely trail across the state to arrive in the Nebraska and Colorado feedlots the first of November."[364] The more "leisurely" the pace, possibly the more aggravating the visage from the perspective of those in the neighborhood of the migration.

Once the sheep reached their destined ranges, the difference in managing cattle and sheep was as different as night and day; the key distinction was that sheep required constant attention, or at least protection (from predators, storms, disease, and people) and guidance (to grazing grounds, to bedgrounds, to new ranges, and away from other bands of sheep), and that close attention shaped the cycle of activity on a sheep ranch, a system of transhumance. This system, essentially a pattern of movement to and from seasonal ranges, marked Wyoming sheepherding not only as different from cattle ranching but as different from sheep growing in other climates. After spending the summer fattening in the higher elevations, the sheep would be moved down in the fall, sometimes first to foothills, and then to lower elevations preparatory to winter, and at that time sheep—mainly yearling lambs—to be marketed as mutton would be separated and shipped to the major markets, usually Chicago or Boston. Then the winter grazing took place in the lower elevations, still under the watchful and protective eye of a herder, as the wool grew and the fleeces thickened and the lambs from the previous spring matured. Once the threat of spring snow diminished, but not too late—always a delicate determination—the sheep would be sheared and the pregnant, or heavy, ewes would be separated into what was called a "drop herd" and put into a lambing ground where attention was more or less constant and close. After lambing and shearing, the sheep were put onto summer grazing generally in higher elevations, although again an intermediate stay in the foothills was also common, and the cycle began again. Sometimes the summer and winter grazing grounds were a hundred miles or more distant, so the trails between the two became as important as the destinations. This cycle of movement was usually referred to as the seasonal round.

Yet within this seasonal cycle was another cycle, the daily pattern of tending the sheep. Each sheepherder would usually be responsible for 2500 or 3000 sheep, and this required moving them around so that they had food and water, so that they did not overgraze any single area, and so that their bedgrounds remained sanitary and disease-free. Thus the sheep moved in a daily, as well as seasonal, pattern based on the location where the herder gathered the sheep for the night. By driving them to the place where the herder's camp was located (or, more precisely, locating that camp where the sheep could be safely herded), the sheep could bed down at night without attention beyond the alert sheep dogs. The herder would be based in a mobile camp; at first these camps were simply tents pitched and moved, but during the 1880s and 1890s the sheepwagon—a covered wagon complete with bed, table, storage for cooking essentials (food, pans, etc.), and often a stove—came into common use except in the

[363] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, August 8, 1882.
[364] Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming."

high country inaccessible by wagon.[365]

The bedground thus served as the anchor for daily movements. During the day the herder would move the sheep from their bedgrounds to grazing and watering areas and then back to the bedgrounds, moving out in different directions (like the spokes on a wheel) from the bedgrounds. Once that area had been fully used, possibly after several days or a week, a second person, the camp mover, would find new grazing locations, and campgrounds, and move the camp, while the herder tended the sheep. Then they would go through the daily movements again and again, repeating the process as often as necessary to utilize the range, maximize the resources available, and minimize the energy-depleting movement of the animals. The herder would be out with the sheep, thus for months on end, sometimes seeing only the camp tender or mover who moved the camp and brought provisions periodically. In some ways, this herding activity was almost timeless, bearing much in common with the way herders had tended their flocks not only for centuries but even for millennia, although it had become more refined and systematic in modern times.

The modern revisions in the system were especially evident in the spring at shearing and lambing. This event was a noticeable departure from the pre-industrial patterns that obtained the rest of the year. Shearing was more specialized, more organized, more synchronized, and more centralized and in that way bore the marks of modern industrial systems. In the spring the flocks were brought together for shearing, lambing, docking, and branding, and this would usually take place at a more permanent location, although in the early years those central camps were not always established. In the early years, too, the shearing took place in an open air setting, and this practice would remain true of smaller operations far into the twentieth century. An 1892 Congressional report on the sheep industry noted that the sheep shearers themselves were an itinerant group, moving about to offer their services, but the sheep were brought to the shearers, not the shearers to each flock: "When a gang of sheep-shearers make their appearance in a county, a date is fixed and a suitable place arranged for the shearing, which is done on a wholesale plan."[366] From the very beginning the crews doing the shearing tended to be, but were not always, identified as Mexican. The same Congressional study also noted importantly, "Herders and ranch hands employed are usually foreigners or Mexicans [sic]. The herders receive from $30 to $40 per month, and the ranch hands $20 to $30 per month by the year."[367]

That central location would be a set of pens and related structures organized in a fashion so that multiple procedures could take place in sequence. There would be the pens holding the sheep to be shorn and then those that had been fleeced. The fleecing, ordinarily done outside in the open air and light, was a specialized activity with the skilled shearers at the center. One observer at the shearing pens near Lander watched as the shearers did their work and then he noted, "at the rear of the shearing-pens a number of men pick up the fleeces as they are thrown out, and toss them to the packer, who sits at the

---

[365] Nancy Weidel, *Sheepwagon: Home on the Range* (Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 2001) contains not only important information on this wagon, but on the system which it served.
[366] "Special Report on the Sheep Industry of the United States 1892," 775.
[367] "Special Report on the Sheep Industry of the United States 1892," 776.

top of a high platform, treading the wool down into the long sacks in which it is freighted to the railroad."[368]

That finished the work for obtaining the fleece, but they were not done with the sheep. There were other steps too that had to be done in the spring and generally happened at the shearing pens. Lambing also required close attention and increasingly sheep were brought off the range to drop their lambs. If, as in some instances it continued to happen, lambs were born on the range, this complicated the life of the herder. Sometimes to ward off coyotes, whose sophisticated palates especially savored the new, vulnerable lambs, the herder would circle the drop herd with lanterns and flags to keep the coyotes away. At the centralized pens, the coyote problem was not entirely solved, but it was greatly diminished by the pens and people in attendance. Plus the sheep were also branded and docked and dipped. Wyoming law required that sheep be dipped annually and the dipping trough added another element of the industrial process to the spring event. The same observer of the Lander shearing pens described this, noting that the shorn sheep would work their way through an alleyway at the pens in a continuous stream. Then, "after being daubed with a bit of black paint in the distinguishing mark of the owner, each sheep is made to swim about fifty feet through the trough containing the tobacco [nicotine] extract." The trough was usually dug into the ground and lined with wood that extended well above to provide additional depth and to prevent the sheep from clambering out. At the end of the trough was yet another holding pen to facilitate the gathering of the flock. It was possibly a slight exaggeration, but the process at the shearing pens generally involved, as he said, "at one end they come in bearing their dark and dirty fleeces; at the other end they come out shorn and white as snow." [369]

In addition to shearing, dipping, docking, and lambing, the sheep endured certain other procedures that altogether must have made the event a memorable occasion for them. Docking actually involved two different steps. The docking of the tails was necessary as an act of sanitation for the woolly beasts; the clipped tails also provided a concrete tally for those getting paid by the animal. The next step in the process was to separate the males from the ewes. Ruth M. Irwin recalled the process from her father's sheep operation in Uinta County. "The lambs were separated from the ewes and driven down narrow chutes in the corral. The men seized the male lambs, threw them down on their backs on a board across the chute, and castrated them with a pocket knife."[370] Other accounts differ on the method of castration and it is clear that it was common for the crew members to use their teeth to castrate the animals and this practice endured well into the twentieth century—perhaps it still does in some circumstances. In 1968 Leonard Hay, a prominent sheep rancher of Rock Springs, acknowledged that for years he had used his teeth, as had others: "Most outfits now use a hand piece, a castrator that does most of the work. I used my teeth for years and years and years but they finally wore out and that's a fact. I did have to go to the hand thing which I said I would never do, but I've had to use it. But otherwise, it's [the process] about

---

[368] Frederic Irland, "In the Big Dry Country," *Scribner's Magazine*, XXXVI (1904): 299.
[369] Irland, "In the Big Dry Country," 299.
[370] Ruth M. Irwin, "Life on a Wyoming Ranch: Early 20th Century," 24, typescript memoir in Ruth M. Irwin Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming.

the same."[371] While it is understood that this method of castration was common, it is much less clear to what extent it prevailed and what its role may have been in the culture of the sheep operations, for example as a male ritual or an element in male bonding.

After shearing, docking, and lambing, the sheep left the pens, still under the care of a herder and dogs, and the cycle began over again, marked by movement to high country in the summer, lower country in the winter, and marketing of wool in the spring and mutton in the fall. The fundamentals of the system were put into words by E. B. Viall, a sheep grower near Sheridan, who described his own efforts thus in 1892:

It should be noticed that Viall referred to feeding his sheep hay in the winter. This also suggests the difference between the cattle industry and the sheep growers, and some, on both sides of that fence, have indicated that the cattle ranchers borrowed this practice from the sheep growers. In Will Barnes' history of livestock uses in the national forests, published in 1913, he noted, "Although many old time cattlemen blamed their misfortune on the settlers who had fenced so much of the formerly open range area, the change to winter feeding actually was an inevitable step toward security. Sheepmen, at that time just becoming well established in the west, set the example." The sheep rancher, said Barnes, "had his herd under his eye at all times, and could move it to better feed before the animals became too weak to travel" and the sheep rancher also "found out much earlier than did the cattleman that buying feed against a hard winter was money well invested."[372] And Frederic Hultz, in his study of cattle ranching in Wyoming, concurred, and acknowledged: "It was the sheepman who first conceived the idea of laying in a supply of feed against severe winters."[373]

In effect, what distinguished sheep ranching from cattle ranching was the utilization of a system that included cycles of movement and intensive ranching by the sheep growers. Sheep operators did not own the significant parcels of land that the cattle ranchers increasingly used. George Scott noticed the difference in the land records for Bates Hole and then explained why it was so:

> Unlike the ranchers along the creeks, the sheepmen did not need to own much land. The migratory nature of the industry precluded both the necessity and the expenses of land ownership. Following their bands of sheep about the open range in their sheep wagons, the sheepmen had little use for the more permanent ranges of the cattlemen; and buying what little winter feed they needed from local hay ranchers, they had no interest in

---

[371] U.S. Forest Service, interview with Leonard Hay and William D. Thompson, Rock Springs, June 1968 by James Jacobs (USFS), p. 6. Transcript of interview located in Hegewald-Thompson family papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.
[372] Will C. Barnes, *Western Grazing Grounds and Forest Ranges: A History of the Live-stock Industry as Conducted on the Open Ranges of the Arid West, with particular Reference to the Use now Being Made of the Ranges in the National Forests* (Chicago: The Breeder's Gazette, 1913), 140-143.
[373] Frederic S. Hultz, "Wyoming Livestock Production," typed manuscript in WPA Collections, subject file 377.

> developing extensive field systems. The simple control of some additional lands about their headquarters suited their limited needs well.[374]

Even though they used the public domain with the same casual regard for ownership technicalities, and even though they faced the same natural forces that were hard on human and beast alike, and even though they operated in the midst of economic forces that decimated sheep and wool production elsewhere, the sheep growers of Wyoming moved into a position of agricultural dominance. Along with that growth, however, came far-reaching consequences for, as with the other elements of the agricultural community in the state, any expansion and growth in one would soon come into conflict with the others.

There were instances and places where the conflict between sheep operators and cattle ranchers was minimal. B. B. Brooks, from his ranch east of Casper, probably articulated the suspicion as well as anyone, but he also proved more tolerant of the sheep than many others in the cattle ranching industry.

> To us old cowboys they were a strange insignificant, unromantic animal. We didn't like their size, their appearance, their taste or their smell. We could not chase them on horseback, for they would not run. We could not rope them, for they dodged and would not fight. We could not brand them on account of the wool.
> So we just left them alone, mostly, and wished them all kinds of bad luck.[375]

And many cattle ranchers were equally tolerant, some because they also grazed sheep, and some because the particular range where they were located was sufficient to prevent conflict and competition. For example, one account indicates, "sheep and cattle men did not have the bitter feeling between them in the Green River Valley as did others in some sections. They observed the rights of each other."[376]

In other places, however, the conflict with the cattle ranchers was deep-seated, pervasive, and intense. There were widely held beliefs about the injurious nature of the sheep. Edward L. Wentworth, in his studies of the sheep industry, observed that a series of beliefs "that cattle would not drink after sheep, that they would not graze range that sheep had crossed because of an offensive odor left by oil glands in the crevice between the hoofs of a sheep or because of a natural antagonism between the two species were mostly 'hokum.'"[377] Hokum they were but they were also tenaciously accepted. Robert Macy, postmaster at Moorcroft, was from a Wyoming cattle ranching background and was educated in the College of Agriculture at Iowa State College at Ames. In his thesis there he wrote, "Sheep graze the land very closely and tramp much of the good grass into the ground with their sharp hoofs. This was the

---

[374] George C. Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1978, 97.
[375] Bryant B. Brooks, *Memoirs of Bryant B. Brooks: Cowboy, Trapper, Lumberman, Stockman, Oilman, Banker, and Governor of Wyoming* (Denver: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1939), 195.
[376] "Stock Raising," manuscript, WPA Collections, subject file 328.
[377] Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming."

thing that aroused the ire of the owners of herds."[378] R. B. Mullens, a former cowboy in the Sheridan area, went on to become a physician and he recalled his cowboy days and the sweet bunch grass that was so plentiful and nourished the cattle and said, "Now this wonderful grass had been destroyed by those root-eating sheep, which were such a sorry substitute for good wholesome beef."[379] The animosity was widespread and evident even in the rarified halls of academe. In the 1930s Frances Wagner King in the College of Agriculture in the University of Wyoming, who appears not to have been related to the family that owned the prominent sheep operation at the King Ranch in Albany County, wrote a short of history of livestock raising in Wyoming, and noted that in the 1880s sheep "became a menace of major proportions."[380]

It was not entirely a matter of prejudice, though, and there were real issues between the two range users, especially as the range diminished, as it clearly did in the 1890s. One source of the problem was the roving trail herds of sheep. In the 1890s the problem of "tramp herding" or "nomad herding" of sheep caused serious resentments in the sheep industry and between the sheep operators and everyone else. "Tramp herding" was a practice in which the herders who claimed no home would wander with their herds over a huge area, even from state to state, allowing their sheep to graze anywhere and everywhere, generating bitterness and consternation, even among other sheep grazers, wherever they went. Often they were identified simply as "foreign sheep," meaning out of state, and those foreign sheep were as welcome as parasites, something to which they were regularly compared. Even the ardent defender and chronicler of the sheep industry Edward Wentworth acknowledges the problems caused by these roaming flocks as he wrote that, "Roving predator flock owners frequently massed their droves on weaker grasslands so that their animals ate down into the roots and tramped the grass crowns above the roots into a powder. Until rain came these ranges were completely destroyed for cattle. Furthermore, the driver of the big trail flocks, uninterested in further grass until the following season, was often inconsiderate of the winter range of local ranchers, regardless of whether they were cattle or sheep owners."[381]

The tramp herds were, indeed, a serious problem and they were often at the core of the conflict. In the spring of 1896, resident sheep owners in the Rawlins area, for example, were agitated because of "the presence on the ranges of the county by Utah, Idaho and Montana men. The flocks aggregate over 275,000 sheep. As they will be driven out of the state before time to collect taxes upon them arrives, the loss to the county is considerable."[382] This was only one example, but those numbers were staggering and immediately suggest the nature of the problem. This can be seen also in Uinta County in what

---

[378] Robert W. Macy, "Some Factors in the Development and Destruction of the Open Range," B.S. Thesis, Animal Husbandry, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa, 1924, 11. A copy of the thesis can be found in the WPA Collections, subject file 369.
[379] Dr. R. B. Mullens, "The End of the Open Range," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1063, p. 177.
[380] Frances Wagner King, "A Re-Statement of Relevant Data Pertinent to the History of Grazing."
[381] Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming."
[382] This Rawlins account was published in the Evanston *News-Register*, March 7, 1896.

George Rollins, who studied the conflict between sheep and cattle at the turn of the century, termed "one of the earliest of the Wyoming range struggles and one of the longest in duration."

In this case, as often happened, non-resident sheep, "foreign" sheep as they were called, antagonized the cattle ranchers. In 1893, tramp herds had moved into Uinta County from Utah and had quickly spread over the range, consuming grass as they went. There were multiple bands and the size is not known, but the reaction was vigorous. Eighteen cattle ranchers mobilized to move the sheep bands out. Most of the herders willingly complied, but a few did not, and each then called upon the sheriff to enforce the law for their own protection. A series of meetings were called, the issue was argued (usually in a one-sided debate), and the newspaper was filled with expressions of disgust for the sheepherders. One representative letter to the Evanston newspaper reflected local sentiment:

> . . . I will say that this little valley, from Black's Fork to the Uintah Mountains, was at one time the garden spot of our state. Springs were to be found bubbling from our hillsides, wild flowers bloomed in profusion, and succulent bunch grass grew in abundance. Then our hardy pioneers, after having fought their way across the plains, settled along these little streams, fenced in a ranch, got a little bunch of cattle, and tried to maintain themselves and families.
>
> But now this once beautiful country is so badly beaten down with sheep that there is scarcely enough grass to support a sage hen. Those owning cattle have been compelled to sell or seek a new range, and now at last they are crowded to the foothills of the Uintahs on Henry's fork and the sheepmen are still after them. The sheepmen say they have just as good a right to this range as the first settlers. Of course under our laws they have, but when it comes to rights existing between man and man they have not.
>
> On the other hand two-thirds of the sheepmen are non-residents of our state having their homes in Utah and elsewhere, and no interests here except to clean up the grass.[383]

In this instance, the solution devised by the cattle ranchers was to draw what would become known as a "deadline" separating sheep from cattle. This amounted to a dividing of the range. Some, like Judge W. A. Carter, sought to have the deadlines imposed on foreign sheep, not the sheep of residents, but the deadline was applied to all sheep. What in some ways began as a conflict between outside sheep interests and resident sheep and cattle operators, turned into a conflict between sheep and cattle.

The tensions between the cattle owners and the sheep owners increased during the 1890s and became even more pronounced in the 1900s. George Rollins, in his University of Utah dissertation, borrowed somewhat from Wentworth's study of the conflict and outlined the usual pattern that range conflicts between sheep and cattle followed.

---

[383] Evanston *News – Register*, January 27, 1894.

> First came warnings by cattlemen to sheep graziers to keep their sheep out of a certain area. Next came the drawing up of deadlines which prohibited sheep from specified ranges. Finally, came altercations between cowboys and sheepherders which often led to gun play and other acts of violence resulting in loss of life and damage to flocks.[384]

This pattern seems generally to have been followed in Wyoming. A key element in that pattern was the deadline, although that served an ambivalent function, both as threat and as resolution.

The use of deadlines became common in the 1890s and 1900s and these dividing lines, paradoxically, were both threatening devices—the sheep and herder that crossed the line being thus warned and subject to violence, even death—and, simultaneously, resolutions of the conflict because they allowed both sides space in which to operate without interference by the other. Often they were informal and unwritten barriers. They may, in some instances, just have been verbal warnings to herders not to go beyond a certain geographic feature—thus, only existing on an *ad hoc* basis, much like the informal separation of livestock ranges before fences. There may also have been lines that were literally plowed into the earth marking the limits of grazing, but those using natural or constructed features appear to have been the norm. One example of a deadline can be seen in the case of the Henry's Fork dispute in southwest Wyoming. The cattle ranchers met and passed a resolution spelling out exactly where the deadline would run:

> Resolved, That the section of country lying between Muddy Creek, Black's Fork, Green River and the Uintah Mountains be divided by a line running as follows: Beginning at the head of Big Muddy, following that stream to Piedmont, thence along the old stage road to Fort Bridger; thence down Black's Fork to Millersville, thence to the north side of Twin or Black Buttes; thence due east to Green River to what is known as the Bridger Bottoms; thence down Green River to the Utah line. That the country on the north and west sides of said line shall be designated as sheep range and that the country on the south and east sides of said line shall be designated as cattle range.[385]

Other deadlines followed a similar pattern. In the Big Horn Mountains, Professor John George Jack, forest specialist, conducted a study of "Forest Grazing Conditions in the Bighorn Forest Reserve," and in his report he indicated that the thirteenth standard parallel formed a dividing line in that forest separating sheep grazing south of the line from cattle north of the line, although he also noted that cattle near Tensleep and Hyattville were allowed parts of the area on Brokenback and Paintrock Creeks.[386]

---

[384] George W. Rollins, "The Struggle of the Cattleman, Sheepman and Settler for Control of Lands in Wyoming, 1867-1910," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1951, 254. See also Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," and Wentworth, *America's Sheep Trails: History and Personalities*, 537-543.
[385] Evanston *News – Register*, April 21, 1894, as quoted by Rollins, p. 264.
[386] Florence Wardell, "Grazing," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1216.

The consequences for crossing the deadline, however defined, ranged widely. Probably most were instances like that in Jackson Hole where 4,000 sheep crossed to the east side of the Snake River at an unspecified date. Local ranchers pulled down the bridge the sheep had used so that no more could cross, ordered the two herds waiting to cross to turn around and return to Idaho, back up over Teton Pass, and then they forced the sheep and herders who had crossed to leave the valley by way of the Wind River Mountains. "This was also done," Lee Lucas reported, "and without any stop to rest and graze being allowed. They had to keep moving."[387]

A number of instances of range violence, invariably attacks on sheep, sheep camps, and herders by cattle ranchers and cowboys, punctuated the years around the turn of the century in Wyoming. Probably many of these went unreported, or at least unrecorded, but there were enough that were documented to indicate the widespread tension on the range. A sampling provides an indication of the strife:

- *Bill Barlow's Budget* in Douglas described some attacks there, but the specific attacks have not been otherwise documented: "About 1893 a number of sheep outfits were visited by armed bodies of ranchmen and cattlemen who were called 'gunny sackers' on account of being disguised with gunny sacks over their heads and who marked off deadlines on the range. Sheep wagons were burned, sheep shot and clubbed to death, herders shot and mistreated."[388]

- In 1900 a band of masked men raided a sheep camp near Grover in Star Valley. They reportedly drove 1,500 sheep into a blind draw and there clubbed them to death. A year later a similar attack on three sheep camps resulted in the camp wagons and supplies burned, the sheep driven away.[389]

- In 1902 a "bloody battle" between cattlemen and sheepmen took place near Big Piney when 1100 sheep belonging to the Hill brothers were shot or clubbed to death and the Hill brothers themselves were badly hurt and others were wounded. In this episode, unlike most others, two cattlemen were reportedly shot and wounded.[390]

- In 1902 a raid took place at a location, subsequently known as Raid Lake, on the Bridger National Forest, before it became national forest. William Thompson, whose brother was at the raided camp, estimated that the raiders killed 1,000 or 1,100 sheep and other estimates were as high as 2,000.[391]

---

[387] "Some Jackson Hole Data," 1.
[388] Mary A. Skelton, "Sheep," 4. This is a transcription of an article that appeared in *Bill Barlow's Budget*, 21st Anniversary edition, June 1907.
[389] Laramie *Boomerang*, May 24, 1901.
[390] "Cattle and Sheep Wars" typescript by unidentified author in WPA Collections, subject file 404.
[391] U.S. Forest Service, interview with Leonard Hay and William D. Thompson, Rock Springs, June 1968 by James Jacobs (USFS), p. 8-10; Jamie Schoen and Merry Haydon, "The Raid Lake Sheep

- In the spring of 1903, 2,000 sheep from an unidentified ranch, evidently in the Laramie area, were slaughtered, the camp wagon and supplies burned, and the herder murdered.[392]

- In autumn 1903 a report described an attack forty miles north of Lusk: Seven men overpowered, tied, and blindfolded the herder, burned his wagon, killed his horses and in a leisurely manner slaughtered 500 sheep. They rode away leaving the herder to freeze to death but as he was insecurely tied he struggled free and walked fifteen miles to telephone the sheriff. A week earlier four men attacked another camp tying the herder and pitching him into a bank of snow. Then they clubbed 500 sheep. [393]

- William Minnick, a sheep operator near Basin, was murdered and 200 of his sheep were slaughtered in 1903.[394]

- In the spring of 1904, sixteen masked men attacked a sheep camp belonging to prominent wool grower H. L. Stevens near Tie Siding, south of Laramie, filled two sheep herder wagons with firewood and set them on fire, tied up two herders and a foreman, poisoned the dogs, and ran off the horses. The attackers then used clubs to kill about three hundred sheep. [395]

- Also in the spring of 1904, five hundred sheep belonging to Fred Henderson near Casper were poisoned "in a mysterious manner," with all of them dying after the unseen attackers drove them into the mountains.[396]

- In January 1906 an estimated more than two dozen raiders attacked a sheep wagon at Burnt Fork, killing one herder, A. H. Garsite, and wounding two others. An unknown number of sheep were then clubbed to death and the camp burned.[397]

- In 1908 near Lander J. W. Blake's band of sheep were attacked, with 350 killed or wounded; the attackers had been unable to burn the herder wagon because of the wetness

---

Massacre," *The Wyoming Archaeologist*, 47 (Spring 203): 28-47. I wish to thank Judy Wolf for bringing this archaeological study to my attention and Jamie Schoen for providing the article and photographs.

[392] Laramie *Boomerang*, April 21, 1903.

[393] "Cattle and Sheep Wars."

[394] See also John W. Davis, *Goodbye, Judge Lynch: The End of a Lawless Era in Wyoming's Big Horn Basin* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 85, regarding the killing of Minnick's brother by an assailant who mistook the identity of the two brothers.

[395] Laramie *Boomerang*, April 27, April 29, 1904

[396] Laramie *Boomerang*, March 10, 1904.

[397] Evanston *Wyoming Press*, January 13, 1906.

caused by storms, so chopped spokes from the wheels and turned the wagon box upside down.[398]

Before the attack on Blake's sheep, there had been a brief lull in the violence, although the tensions continued. But a year later, a raid on a sheep camp on Spring Creek in the Big Horn Mountains south of Tensleep brought a climax to the war. In that attack, raiders murdered two sheep ranchers and a herder as well as destroying a small number of sheep and scattering the remainder on the range. The attackers, however, left not only carnage at the scene but also some evidence and this time, the culprits, or at least some of them, were aggressively prosecuted, convicted, and incarcerated after some turned state's evidence on the others.[399] Just as the raid was intended to send a message to sheep operators, the prosecution and conviction of those who did the dirty work—and the willing settlement of the case by their benefactors—sent an even stronger message to the cattle ranchers instigating such crimes. After this, just one other incident was recorded, that in 1912, when the wagon-mover of a sheep camp was beaten, the wagons burned, and about sixty sheep killed on Crow Creek. While charges were filed against three men identified by the Wyoming Wool Growers Association, they were found not guilty.[400]

How many other such raids took place in the state is not known, but it is clear that these instances are but the tip of a very large iceberg of animosity. A systematic study is yet to be conducted to determine the extent, frequency, and geography of the battles of sheep and cattle war. If such a study is ever done, that study would need to ask important questions to determine local histories of sheep – cattle ranching animosities to determine where the raids fit in that pattern (At the beginning of tension? At the end? Before or after grazing permits were required on forest land?), to identify the role of tramp herds in the area, and to examine whether the raids took place on or near public domain or private land. Statewide, T. A. Larson noted that the violence, though quite real, has sometimes been exaggerated and has cautioned against taking all accounts at face value, which is sound advice for any historical inquiry.[401] It is still clear, though, that the violence surrounding the sheep and cattle tensions was substantial and that its role in shaping both cattle and sheep industries was significant.

In addition, more and more cattle ranchers either switched from cattle to sheep or ran sheep as well as cattle, marking a decision where the economic advantages of the industry (selling the wool as well as the animal, and thus having two markets) trumped the culture to which so many had been so loyal. This became increasingly the pattern too and it became more and more difficult for ranchers to oppose all sheep when they found themselves gathering their woolies in for shearing and lambing—and market. And source after source suggests that not long after the violence of the sheep and cattle war, "It speedily became apparent that the [sheep] business had come to stay, and the men who had been the most bitter

---

[398] Wentworth, *America's Sheep Trails: History and Personalities*, 540-541.
[399] John W. Davis, *A Vast Amount of Trouble: A History of the Spring Creek Raid* (Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1993).
[400] Wentworth, *America's Sheep Trails: History and Personalities*, 543.
[401] T. A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965, 1978; 2nd edition, revised), 372n.

'Gunny sackers' engaged in it and are today wealthy men."[402]

Moreover, the sheep industry itself was becoming more consolidated and more controlled. The business of tramp herding, which accounted for at least some of the antagonism between cattle ranchers and sheep operators, was equally offensive to some of the Wyoming sheep growers who were as much displaced by the tramp herds as the cattle ranchers were. In the early years of the twentieth century tramp herding largely, but not completely, came to an end as a result of a variety of factors. Part of this was simply the obstacle created by increased settlement—more people and new fences—and the consequent loss of range the big herds needed as they roamed.

But part of this also came from the collective, combined efforts of Wyoming sheep operators to reduce the opportunities for tramp herding and to complicate that part of the sheep industry. This could be seen most explicitly in the southwestern part of the state where especially Utah herds ranged freely and broadly in the vast public lands of Wyoming, to which presumably everyone had equal right and access, but in the process they depleted the range that resident herds depended upon. How to keep some herds off the public land while reserving it for yourself, of course, was a delicate question but there were several approaches. In 1901 some of the sheep operators who used the Red Desert developed a plan to organize and control some of the private land and thus also access to public land. In December, the New York *Times* reported, "A gigantic combine is being formed at Rawlins by the sheep men of what is known as the 'Sweetwater country' for the purpose of excluding Utah flock masters and local cattlemen from encroaching upon the Red Desert Winter ranges in Sweetwater Valley." The plan was simple but shrewd: the combined southwest Wyoming operators would lease the alternate sections of private land in the Union Pacific checkerboard. By doing so, those Wyoming operators would have exclusive use of the Union Pacific lands, but just as, and possibly more, important, they would also have exclusive use of the public lands *within* that checkerboard, public lands which could not otherwise be accessed. In this way, the *Times* reported, the Wyoming operators would "control approximately 1,500,000 acres of the finest Winter feeding grounds in the West," and "the sheep men will hold full control, and range conflicts, which have been frequent, will come to an end."[403] This was the beginning of the Rock Springs Grazing Association, an organization of sheep operators in southwest Wyoming that would become one of the largest such operations in the nation.

That action probably removed the tramp herders from the Union Pacific corridor, but there remained much other public land beyond that corridor that they could use, so the Wyoming operators developed

---

[402] Skelton, "Sheep," 4. This would have been in 1907.

[403] "Wyoming Sheep Men Combine: Effort Will be Made to Shut Utah Flock Owners Out of 'Sweetwater Country,'" New York *Times*, December 66, 1901. Before long, however, the Union Pacific decided to sell some of the land instead of leasing it; at that point the Rock Springs Grazing Association began purchasing those parcels. One report notes the scale of that effort: "Since that time, RSGA has purchased the majority of those odd-numbered sections, and expanded the area to about 80 miles long by 40 miles wide. It continues to lease other federal, private and state parcels for grazing as well." Cat Urbigkit, "RSGA Celebrates 100 Years of Unity," *Wyoming Business Report*, November 1, 2007.

other strategies as well. This could be seen in legislation lobbied for by the sheep operators and adopted by the state. One such law required that sheep that had been dipped not be moved for sixty days afterwards. This, of course, was easy for resident herds to comply with, but, as Colonel Wentworth observes, "Since there were no places where the trail drivers could hold their flocks that long profitably, the trailing suddenly ended."[404] Wentworth may have overstated how successful this measure was, since some tramp herding continued until the 1930s, but the measure certainly made it more difficult for the trail herds to operate.

Another approach could be seen in actions undertaken by the federal government. The national forests, or, as they were known at the turn of the century, the forest reserves, were important to the grazers because the forest service land often was in high country where summer forage was optimal. In the 1880s and 1890s that land had been wide open and was used by all comers—and their livestock. The administration of Theodore Roosevelt not only dramatically increased the forest reserves and created the Forest Service to administer the land, but, under the direction of Gifford Pinchot, Chief Forester (head of the Forest Service) and his assistant, Chief of Grazing Albert Potter, a sheep operator from Arizona, the Forest Service instituted a program where grazing on the national forests would be limited to a number of animals calculated to be the maximum that could be carried on that range. Barbara Anne Brower, who studied this process in the Wind River Mountains, and placed the process into a national context, concluded:

> Established stockmen were invited to share in decision-making about forest grazing and took the opportunity to entrench themselves while excluding less influential competitors. Thus, recent immigrants and, often, disenfranchised Native and Mexican Americans who depended on itinerant bands of sheep trailed through publicly owned rangelands were the losers. Federal agency and dominant industry cooperated to produce a system of national forest forage allocation and grazing management that shaped the administration of other public lands, ensured a strong voice for affluent, influential stockmen, and remains in effect today.[405]

The same process seems to have been at work in southwest Wyoming. William Thompson and his family had been sheep operators in southwest Wyoming for many years. In a 1968 interview he recalled that the new system on the national forests required sheep operators to own (or lease) land outside the forests before they could secure a grazing permit. So the Thompsons, who evidently previously did not own grazing land, proceeded to file on land and the next year they qualified for a grazing permit. The net effect of this requirement was to eliminate the tramp herds who had no such permanent base. As

---

[404] Edward N. Wentworth, "Historical Phases of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," address to Wyoming Wool Growers' Association, Worland, Wyoming, August 2, 1940, p. 36.

[405] Barbara Anne Brower, "The Forest Service and the Range Sheep Industry in the Wind River Mountains, Wyoming" (M.A. Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1982) and Barbara Anne Brower, "Sheep Grazing in National Forest Wilderness: A New Look at an Old Fight," *Mountain Research and Development*, 20 (May 2000): 126-129.

Thompson observed, this requirement was a significant improvement over the unregulated forests because in the new dispensation the residents, those near the national forests, were able to secure permits and others were not:

> That was one of the best things that happened; when this was made in a Forest reserve and people were granted an allotment and a number of sheep, and you knew where you were going and what you could do there all summer long. Then, the outside sheep were excluded. They gave these allotments to those who owned the land closest to the Forest. That was their allotment. Those fellows who were the farthest away had to go farther along the Forest for their allotments.[406]

This is not to say that all sheep operators welcomed the regulation of the forests, for clearly many were not only disappointed but deeply distressed by the new system. Although some, like the Thompson outfit, were able to purchase land near the forest so that they would qualify for a permit, others, especially the small herd operators, the operators without substantial assets beyond their sheep themselves, found the new requirement not only onerous but prohibitive. It was not just the tramp herders from out of state that were excluded; it was also those who could not afford the ante in the new game.

iii. A Life as Good and as Worth Living

In the ten years before and the ten years after the turn of the century, the first two decades that Wyoming was a state in the Union, Wyoming was very much an agricultural state. The population was growing, and by 1910 there were 145,965 people living in the state. And the cities in Wyoming were growing in that time, especially in the counties along the southern tier where the Union Pacific operated, but these were not reflective of Wyoming as a whole. In 1900 77.03% of the population lived outside the urban parts of the state, and urban parts were any town with a population greater than 2,500. Exactly how "urban" a village of 2,500 was can be debated, but the census statistics used that as a point of separation between urban and rural. By 1910 more people lived in the cities and the rural percentage had dropped so that now there were 70.39% people living on Wyoming's farms and ranches, with the remainder living in "big cities," or at least commercial, mining, education, and government centers like Laramie, Rock Springs, Cheyenne, and Casper. Before jumping to a conclusion that Wyoming was becoming ever more urban at this date, it is important to remember that while the urban population in the state increased from 33,536 to 43,521 between 1900 and 1910, the rural population also increased—from 65,874 to 102,744. A decade into the twentieth century more than two-thirds of Wyomingites lived on the farms and ranches and the tiny hamlets that served them and more and more people were joining them there. The homesteading and ranching segment of Wyoming was vibrant, flourishing, and evident

[406] U.S. Forest Service, interview with Leonard Hay and William D. Thompson, Rock Springs, June 1968 by James Jacobs (USFS), p. 6.

everywhere; for that matter, even the cities were not far removed from the rural denizens—physically, socially, statistically, and every other way.[407]

A closer look at the farms and ranches reveals more. The number of farms (which included ranches) increased in the first decade of the twentieth century from 6,095 to 10,987. Especially significant is the fact that 9,779 of those farms—89.01%--were operated by their owners. These were not share-croppers, tenant farmers, renters, serfs, or any other group beholden to the owner of the land they tilled; these were people living out the Jeffersonian formula of freehold democracy. While a small number were large operations, the kind that one might expect in a ranching state and where ranches at one time extended beyond several arcs of the curvature of the earth, the overwhelming majority (81%) of these operations were each under 499 acres. In fact, the most common grouping of farms, measured in terms of acres, were those in the 100-174 acre category. That classification included 3,816 farms, more than a third (35%) of all the farms and ranches in the state. Nearly half of all the farms and ranches in the state, 5,219 of them, were small operations of 174 acres or less. Finally, the census data for 1910 are frustratingly skimpy, often providing only gross numbers that can not be examined on a county-by-county basis, the kind of examination that would be possible with an analysis of census returns at the county level, or even at the individual residential unit level. But there is one statewide statistic that begs to be inserted into any discussion of the world of the homesteaders and ranchers in the early twentieth century. Of the 9,779 farms owned by their operators in 1910, 7,815, or four out of every five, were absolutely, completely, and totally, individually and collectively, free of any kind of mortgage on their property. Those eighty percent of the farms did not owe a dollar.

The farms and ranches were, in other words, decentralized, small, owner-operated, and independent of the lords of finance and, for that matter, independent of the ravaging potential of the market; those who were dependent upon the market for their livelihood suffered a very much different fate, and experienced a very much different life on the Wyoming prairies—and in the city too. This vast majority constituted farms and ranches that grew both livestock and a variety of crops, most of it destined for home consumption, operations that were diversified so as to produce the materials that the families on the farms needed and used, and if there was a surplus, that could be sold on the market to obtain other goods. But selling was a choice, and even an opportunity, not an imperative. The formulation in all this is utter simplicity in its conception and is so straightforward and guileless as to appear almost naïve, but it is also a critical element that formed the foundation of economic, social, and political arrangements.

The buildings suited to those circumstances were often isolated, modest, and tended to the homemade. When John White made his tour of the Powder River Basin, he noted, “Farm structures, scattered over the landscape where the convenience of the owner suggests, are principally comfortable log buildings.”

---

[407] These statistics are widely available, but the most convenient source is U.S. Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, Vol. V, *Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 952-954, 962, 967-968. This is the source for the data in the following paragraphs too. In addition, the researcher should check the online census statistical data at the University of Virginia Library’s Historical Census Browser, http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/.

But he also said he

> . . . visited one "dug-out," which lay near our route and was receiving the last finishing touches. It was simply a cellar, about twelve by twenty feet in area and six feet deep, with the plain dirt walls white-washed. Rising from the surface, a gabled frame-work upheld the sod roof, through the middle of which a stove-pipe projected. Such dwellings are quite common to the newcomer who desires to husband his resources. They are dry the year round, cool in summer, warm in winter, and attractive to snakes, a feature that constitutes the principal disqualification. With the exercise of care, however, these unwelcome visitors are excluded and many a prosperous settler looks back with regret to the comforts of the early dug-out.[408]

Dugouts were common, but the log cabins were also frequently used and they ranged from the primitive to the elaborate. Mike and Maria Sliney homesteaded on Owl Creek in the 1880s, only the second family to locate in that area, Nels Mickelson previously taking up his homestead at what became Padlock. Their home was simple, but it served its purpose:

> When it was completed, it was only one large room with a dirt floor that had to be dampened every night to keep it hard. No beds, only bunks made of skinned cottonwood poles, which had to be curtained, for often riders came through and had to be put up for the night. The furniture did not come, and all sorts of makeshifts were used. Branches of sagebrush tied together served for a broom, rustic benches made of logs served for chairs, and the big open fireplace the substitute for a stove. It was just a year before the furniture did arrive, and then only half of it . . . . Improvements were made on the floor from time to time. At first flat sandstone rocks were laid down; still later packing boxes were saved until there were enough to floor the house. These were none too satisfactory, as a board was continually breaking through and had to be replaced.[409]

The Slineys' daughter, Nellie, recalled this house and she also recalled the vicissitudes of living in modest circumstances, but she retained a crucial perspective: "And so this little pioneer family grew up in the Wyoming wilderness, and the day came when they all had better homes and more elaborate pleasures and soft cushioned cars in which to ride; but in the hearts of each and every one of them is the feeling that those were the happiest days of their life, those days of hardships on the Wyoming frontier."[410]

In Crook County, Eva Ogden Putnam recalled a more substantial house that her father and brother built:

> In just two and one-half years from the time we moved to his ranch my father and

---

[408] White, *The Newer Northwest*, 171.
[409] Nellie Rankin, "A Pioneer Family," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 975.
[410] Rankin, "A Pioneer Family."

> brother, unaided by anyone else, built a good, substantial house of five rooms, with rock cellar, pantry, porches and clothes closet. It was built of hewed logs, weatherboarded and painted without and plastered within and finished completely before we moved in. It stood forth a gleaming white among the green trees near and for those times very good indeed. It was so well built and the logs so hidden from storms that it would not be surprising if it stood for many years to come, a relic of and a sort of monument to those early pioneering days.[411]

It is also important to note that these buildings, while not exactly taking on a life of their own, did evolve and reflect the changing circumstances of the families that built and used them and also the environment in which they provided shelter, hearth, and operational headquarters. As the Big Horn Basin became more settled, Martha Waln noted some of the subtler changes, observing, "Gradually the country took on a new atmosphere. . . . . The worst streams were bridged and in the settlers' cabins that were being built there appeared windows with panes of real glass. Door knobs were replacing the buckskin stringed latch. Some few of the women had dainty curtains and sewing machines; and wooden floors in the cabin became a common necessity and custom. The children grew accustomed to seeing other children instead of running away to hide like wild animals. A rapid transformation had engulfed the Basin." She herself had started with a dirt floor cabin too.[412]

That process of building on, in what sometimes appeared to be a haphazard pattern, was firmly entrenched as an effective and economical system. Even in 1894 John White had noticed, as once when he traveled the road to Clearmont to visit a ranch:

> Rounding the projecting point of a hillock, we came upon the ranch buildings situated in a cove of about ten acres. The residence was a combination of log houses, covered with clap-boards. The original structure had been added to as necessity or convenience demanded, until it was now a picturesque arrangement of wings and extensions, half covered by a vine-latticed porch and clambering ivy. Originally, two good-sized log buildings had been erected, with their gable ends confronting each other, about twelve feet apart. The intervening space had been closed, and now constituted the main and only hall, from which spacious rooms opened on either side.[413]

There were exceptions, of course, and probably every precinct had a home of singular appearance and distinction, but the most common was the middling farm / ranch of perhaps a few hundred acres on which homesteaders grew a small herd of cattle, some hay, some oats and barley, some draft horses, a few pigs, and a vegetable garden that could be measured as a fraction of an acre—or more. And it is important to remember that the size of the house does not determine its historical significance. The

---

[411] Eva Ogden Putnam, "Pioneering in Crook County," Annals of Wyoming, 3 (April 1926): 206-207.
[412] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 30.
[413] White, *The Newer Northwest*, 201-202.

small or modest dwellings and ranch buildings of the multitudes were as much a part of the lives, perhaps more even, of those who worked to build the ranches and farms of the region.

The self sufficiency of these farms and ranches, like many other parts of life and history, is not to be either casually asserted or blithely dismissed. To some degree, especially when contrasted with the modern system of commerce where people are dependent on markets in an infinity of goods and services to provide everything from food to fuel, entertainment to information, the farms and ranches of Wyoming at the turn of the century exhibited a striking degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency. They may not have been wealthy but neither were they keeping their eye on the market to determine if they would survive. In addition to breaking the bonds of renting and mortgaging, they were able to provide for themselves a substantial amount of their domestic needs. This was part of the purpose of a diversified farm or ranch. Wes Johnson spoke for many when he recalled of his childhood in the Harmony community southwest of Laramie, "The folks planted potatoes, the garden, milked cows, raised their own beef and pork and we lived well; taxes were no problem, the country was free and the United States was at peace with the world."[414] Not far away John Spickerman fondly remembered the substantial productivity of their garden, "We raised cabbage and rutabagas on that piece of ground and [kohlrabi] and cauliflower with marvelous success. It was just unbelievable, the crops," and he vividly spoke of the German foods that they grew and made from their "marvelous" garden.[415] So go the accounts from virtually every part of the state: small, diversified operations that grew a variety of small grains, vegetables, meats, and forages. They also, in a wood- or coal-burning stove environment, often managed to provide their own fuel or not go far for it.

By the same token, the independence and autonomy of these farms and ranches sometimes also signifies an equal degree of isolation and loneliness. Certainly the land laws emphasized and almost required some isolation because of the separate parcels of land on which people would live, requiring careful, deliberate effort to bring neighbors together. And certainly too there were many instances in which people lived apart from others, no matter how close physically they may have been. On the other hand, it is also clear that people often structured their homesteads and their lives to facilitate interaction and cooperation with each other. From the very beginning they would do this—in the selection of their property. George C. Scott, in his study of the settlement and development of farms and ranches in Bates Hole, makes exactly that point. In choosing where to claim land under the various land laws, a variety of factors were at work, including the availability of water and hay meadows, but, Scott notes, "the proximity of a friend might have proven decisive in picking a homestead location, as in the case of Dan Clark who homesteaded near his friend Ed McGraugh."[416] It was not uncommon for friends and neighbors in other states to move to Wyoming together and to claim land near each other so that they would continue to be neighbors and friends and reciprocal helpers in their new homesteads; it was also

---

[414] Wes Johnson, interviewed by Bob Burns in Laramie, 1971, Wyoming State Archives, OH-77.
[415] John Spickerman interviewed (with Henry Spickerman) by Bob Burns, Wyoming State Archives, OH-88.
[416] Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," 22.

common for one family to write back to their previous home, explain to their friends the prospects around them, and invite others to join them, which they would. Eva Ogden Putnam thus recalled that her father took out a claim on land near where friends of the family had settled the previous year.[417]

Even more important than locating near friends, however, were family relationships. That kinship connection, and the importance of being near to family, may actually have trumped every other consideration. Again, Scott explains the importance: "members of the same family tended to enter land together, even if that meant choosing land of lesser quality."[418] In virtually every part of Wyoming, the importance of family is found in the land records and oral histories. Margaret Dillinger Bowden, whose father's cousin appears to have settled near their own family, recalled other neighbors in Campbell County, "There were four Pickrels who each filed on half sections near our place in 1916. They had come from Nebraska and were all related." She also noted, "Four other families of homesteaders cornered up to each other. Their houses were built within a half-mile of each other so the ladies would have companionship."[419] Besides, physical proximity itself turned out to be a relative measure of distance. Eva Ogden Putnam explained, "People ten and fifteen miles away were counted as neighbors then, even if travelling was slow."[420]

This suggests a strong undercurrent of cooperation and neighborliness among people sometimes dismissed as victims of a misguided land policy that stranded them far from a friendly face or people romanticized as rugged individualists operating with no assistance from others. The cooperative, even communal, strain was evident in fundamental matters of economy; or, more precisely, economy was thoroughly integrated into, and subordinated to, social relationships. In a cash-poor society, in a society where markets were a secondary consideration, where homesteads and ranches could strive for some measure of self-sufficiency, barter and trades and cooperation formed the basis of many transactions. One of the most visible examples of this was the practice of butchering meat. The prevailing custom quite simply was for neighbors to take turns slaughtering a steer or hog or sheep. The meat would not keep indefinitely, so the practical solution was for one family to butcher an animal one time and share with neighbors; another neighbor would butcher the next time and reciprocate. Ted Olson described his family's ranch on the Big Laramie River as nearly self-sufficient:

> We were farmers as well as ranchers. We grew much of our food, though of course we had to bring the staples from town—flour, sugar, coffee, spices, canned goods to supplement the fruits and vegetables we put down for the winter. Milk, cream, butter and eggs we had in abundance, with a surplus for sale or barter. When we needed meat we butchered a steer or a pig or a sheep, and stowed it.

---

[417] Eva Ogden Putnam, "Pioneering in Crook County," *Annals of Wyoming*, 3 (April 1926): 203-205.
[418] Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," 22.
[419] Bowden, *1916: Wyoming, Here We Come!* 14.
[420] Putnam, "Pioneering in Crook County," 205.

At that point, however, Olson adds this in a footnote: "Or more likely a half or a quarter; the rest would go to a neighbor, who would pay back in kind the next time he butchered."[421] The same practice was evident elsewhere. Ralph Jones, near LaGrange, described the butchering practice there and described it as part of a larger cooperative social fabric:

> But we, the ranchers exchanged meat a whole lot. You'd butcher a beef and probably 4 ranchers would, would use it and then they'd kill and exchange that way. But the one thing, there was a very close relationship among those old ranchers. It was more or less a clannish sort of thing. And if somebody's house burned down, well they gathered at that place and built another house.[422]

Jones notably suggests the deeper implications of reciprocity and mutuality in these simple practices. From day-to-day operations where someone with fruit or honey or eggs would trade to someone else for coal or butter, to the less frequent but equally important exchange of bulls by neighbors to keep the gene pool of their dairy herds diverse, or to the seasonal coming-together of a neighborhood to undertake major tasks, like round-ups and threshing, which turned into festive occasions as well as hard work for all members of the families, it is evident that the farms and ranches of Wyoming were not completely isolated. While often independent of the market, they were also not strictly and individually self-sufficient in the sense of completely self-contained, isolated units. They were, however, and perhaps more importantly, self-sufficient on a community or neighborhood basis.

Some of those ranchers and farmers maintained that this attitude reached further into a philosophy or set of values about proper social relationships. Leroy Smith in Johnson County saw in the neighborliness of people an opposite meaning of the competitive and predatory relationships that were evident elsewhere:

> The way I remember it, most of the time people liked people. You didn't take advantage of other people if you thought you could get a little better money. You didn't crowd them. I found this word in the dictionary; I always thought it was like jousting, like when you jousted livestock. The definition of that is when you beat somebody out of something. But people didn't jousted people in those days. You didn't have to watch 'em, and make them sign on the dotted line. You didn't even have to shake hands with a fella. If he said he was gonna do something, he did it. That's the way people were in those days.[423]

There is often, of course, an element of romance or perhaps embellishment in our memories, and there are doubtless ample exceptions where some farmers and ranchers took shameless advantage or their neighbors, but what is especially notable here is that the evidence of cooperation and mutual regard can be found broadly around Wyoming and is supported by concrete examples. Without that system of

---

[421] Ted Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 133.
[422] Ralph Jones, interviewed by Vivien Hills, June 16, 1976, Wyoming State Archives, OH-439.
[423] Leroy Smith, interviewed by Patty Myers, November 3, 1980, Wyoming State Archives, OH-1124.

cooperation, in fact, the farms and ranches that were spread across the state like a night sky full of stars may as well have been light years away from their neighbors; instead they formed small, but active, functioning, communities in the most authentic sense of the word. To say that they were not market-oriented is to say more than that they did not produce mainly for markets; they did not live for the markets either.

Farming, ranching, and homesteading represented not just a source of income for people, but a way of life. It is all the more important therefore to emphasize that farmers, ranchers, and homesteaders in Wyoming were not, as a consequence, just suffering in privation and penury because of the absence of modern, efficient, market-oriented systems of production and markets. Consider the further recollection of Eva Ogden Putnam. Her father had homesteaded in Crook County, arriving there in 1882 and later took up his own place. While she was just a girl, her father started "in the fall of the year on a totally new place with not even a house anywhere near completed, no feed for the cattle, no sheds, ..." "I know we lived out doors until our log cabin was finished." And while life in the new cabin was not sumptuous by any measure, it seems to have had its rewards: "we were happy and content in that simple life, altho I confess it would be very hard to go back to it now. We had health and an unbroken family. We had plenty of good, wholesome food, milk, butter, eggs, cream, and from the first summer a fine garden. We had beef and pork occasionally, and a neighbor, who was a hunter, would go up into the mountains any time we requested, killed and dress a deer (no game laws then), bring it on his pony for the big sum of one dollar." And, while surely the life of Putnam and many others knew privation and hardship, their own perspective carries a different tenor: ". . . I do know this, that what I saw in those early pioneer days of Wyoming and what I experienced then seemed as all right and life as good and as worth living as it seems today with all its conveniences and modern inventions."[424]

Such were the worlds and lives of the Wyoming homesteader and rancher at the beginning of the twentieth century—demanding, unassuming, self-sufficient, at least in a communal way, and, in some ways, satisfying and good. But the circumstances of life also were connected to a person's gender.

iv. "This country has always been death on women"

Lore has it that Tom Sun had a sign at his ranch in the early years, clearly before he started his own family, that read "No women or barbed wire allowed."[425] Setting aside the barbed wire exclusion, how well the other prohibition was observed can only be conjectured, although some have speculated that this was part of "Cattle Kate's" undoing—being a woman in the man's world along the Sweetwater

[424] Putnam, "Pioneering in Crook County," 203-205.
[425] Robert G. Ferris, series editor, *Prospector, Cowhand, and Sodbuster: Historic Places associated with the Mining, Ranching, and Farming Frontiers in the Trans-Mississippi West* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1967), 142.

River. It is also, alas, a prohibition that too many historians have too politely respected for too long, restricting their investigation of women in Wyoming to the voting booth on election day and failing to give sufficient attention to the lives of women all the other days of the year. For women could be found on Wyoming's ranches and homesteads and their life in the rural areas is an important part of the set of relationships and patterns of life that the material artifacts reflect. It is true that women represented a minority of the population for some time in most parts of Wyoming, and it is also true that the society often bore a distinctly masculine tone. The moment when women arrived in an area is often noted in the local histories usually with a commentary about someone being the "first" woman, or sometimes, the "first" white woman, to that part of Wyoming. The moment is marked all the deeper in the memories of those who actually were the first, or who believed themselves to be. For example, when Andrew B. Wilson established a home with his family on Meeteetse Creek in 1881, one local account records "His wife and daughters were the first white women to make the basin their home."[426] About the same time, in the upper Nowood area of the Big Horn Basin, Martha Waln recalled, "Mrs. Ellis and I were the only women in the Basin at that time."[427] The point is not that there were competing claims to being first; the point is, rather, that the isolation of these women was sufficient that each one may as well have been the only woman in the entire basin. If the men lived lonely lives in remote areas, the women with them were surely all the lonelier for the lack of female companionship.

But their circumstances were different, and those differences stemmed from the varied forces that brought them to Wyoming, their living conditions, their expectations, and whether there were other friends or family nearby. When Eva Putnam arrived near Sundance in 1882 or 1883, she was thirteen years old, but she was riding a horse, driving cattle.[428] She had, in fact, been somewhat conditioned to the life she found because, as she said, "Had my mother not been accustomed to pioneering in Colorado and Montana so many years before, it no doubt would have seemed a much greater hardship than it did. To my sister and me, of course, it was somewhat of a lark, something new and different, and in the exuberance of youth that always appeals."[429]

And then there were the circumstances of women in the Mormon communities of Star Valley. There, according to Ray Hall's study of the emerging social order, "often . . . the wives of these men had a harder lot than their husbands." He quotes Maud Call Burton, who was a youngster in that community at this time, who said of the "typical" woman, ". . . she could make an attractive home of dug-out or cabin. If her mate was logging, freighting, or otherwise from home, she often cut the wood to keep the home fires burning; harnessed the team and hauled the water; rode the pony to hunt the cows and then milked them. She knew all the flourishes of scrubbing-brush and washboard, and took pride in her freshly scrubbed floor, and jetblack polished stove . . . She could provide a good meal from only wild

---

[426] "History," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1234; no author is indicated, although it could have been either Ernest J. Hennebeck or Florence Wardell.
[427] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 10-12.
[428] "Reminiscences of Pioneer Women," WPA Collections, subject file 155. This is a verbatim typescript of reminiscences that several women offered at the Cheyenne Women's Club in March, 1936.
[429] "Putnam, "Pioneering in Crook County," 203.

meat and flour, if necessary, but if she had milk and some dried serviceberries she could serve a banquet." That assessment is burdened with a certain amount of hagiography and group glorification, although it also provides a glimpse of the expectations of the women—and, evidently, by the women. Of her own mother Call was more specific: "She could plow, and harrow, sow and harvest, as well as many other farm jobs."[430]

This description, and others like it, of women's roles on the farm and ranch in Wyoming raises large questions and suggests some tentative answers. The traditional role of "true womanhood" that appears to have dominated gender formulas in the nineteenth century contained the specific, separate spheres of "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity." Also termed the Cult of Domesticity, by this conception woman's place was in the home, as the carrier of religious faith and morality, the upholder of chastity, and in a subservient position to the males around her.[431] At one time this formula was at the core of the analysis of women in history, with its sharply defined separation of genders in life as well as in theory. In the past several decades, however, it has proven less valuable especially in understanding women's lives in nineteenth century rural America. The main utility in the formula at this point may be as a juxtaposition, a way to identify ways in which the narrow role sometimes ascribed to women either did not transfer to life on the ranches and farms of Wyoming or was eroding more broadly. Women, to put it bluntly, in Wyoming's rural quarters were active outside the home, were involved in work and processes that were sometimes denied them elsewhere, and were notably involved in areas where men ordinarily prevailed, either in standard prescriptions or in other places—like the middle classes of the American cities, if even there.

This is not to suggest a surge of egalitarianism in Wyoming's farms and ranches, for the enlarged concept of woman's participation was not necessarily offset by men accepting duties that had been considered female. In other words, while women on the farms and ranches were able to do more of the men's jobs, they were doing them in addition to other duties they already had. Moreover, at least one historian views this enlargement of a separate sphere as a gradual process of change in which the transition itself presented challenges to women. A modern study by Dee Garceau examines women's roles and work in southwestern Wyoming, in Sweetwater County specifically, and addresses some of these issues. While her study accepts the division between outside and inside work as defined by gender, she mainly finds that "by the early twentieth century, crossover into men's work had become routine—except in the case of work with beef cattle." This exception was because, Garceau argues, that work was especially gendered as a male occupation and it carried "a male mystique that excluded women."[432] There is an abundance of evidence indicating, Garceau to the contrary, that such

---

[430] Hall, "A History of the Latter-day Saint Settlement of Star Valley, Wyoming," 55-56.
[431] This standard interpretation was best articulated by Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966): 151-174. This has also been substantially revised in the intervening years, and especially so in the case of farm women. See most pointedly the chapter "No Separate Spheres," in Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).
[432] Dee Garceau, *The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family in Sweetwater County,*

"crossovers" were already firmly entrenched, not really extraordinary, and actually quite routine in life on the farms and ranches and homesteads. Such "crossovers" were perhaps not a major innovation at the end of the century after all. There are also substantial indications that women often worked with livestock, including beef cattle.

Much of the evidence in this area is fragmentary and often opaque. For example, Lola McWilliams Walker and her husband raised sheep near Medicine Bow, and she seems to have participated very much in that livestock business to the extent of offering advice on how to run a successful sheep operation. A biographical note about her, however, raises an intriguing set of questions when it says, "Mrs. Walker was an excellent horsewoman and was allowed to ride or drive the horses to Forty Mile stage station to get the mail, which came by daily stage from Rock Creek."[433] One can only wonder if she "was allowed" to ride or drive the horses or if she did so anyway. Matilda Laird told about her own experiences on the farm that she and her husband settled in the Hanover Irrigation Project near Worland. She said of one time when she was given a runaway team of horses to drive, "I was not in the least afraid of horses and was accustomed to handling them; this they probably sensed, for they behaved very well. I have always been able to handle horses on the ranch that the men could not do anything with."[434] Orpha Dow settled with her parents near Newcastle in 1889. Years later she wrote, "soon after we settled father began clearing away a five-acre plot of ground and that spring we planted the first crop of oats known in that part of the country. I harrowed the ground and drove the oxen for that first crop."[435] And then there was Lucy Morrison, the famous "sheep queen" in the Lander area. She and her husband ran their sheep operation but she was very much involved in the business and when her husband died, she took over full responsibility, and demonstrated her ability "to operate sixteen to twenty bands of sheep with abundant range holdings on Kirby, Poison Creek, Copper Mountain, and additional leases on the Shoshone Reservation." The same biographical note comments, "she loved the outdoors, and made the best of her hardships. Had she been of the feminine type she never would have worked in the sheep corrals, marked lambs, herded the drop band of sheep, or manipulated the fork or sheep hook when dipping under Government regulations."[436] In many instances, these biographical notes reveal as much, or more, about the writer as about the subject.

Or consider the comment of Julia Nefsy about her mother when they lived on a ranch near Sundance. The traditional chores associated with a subsistence homestead were there, but so too was another feature for which her mother is especially remembered.

> The food was principally things that they raised. There were some dried fruits they could buy, but seldom were any fresh fruits shipped in. The girls and their mother gathered servisberries, chokecherries, and wild plums which they canned and used in preserves

---

Wyoming, 1880-1929 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 93.
[433] Olive G. Kafka, "J. Frank Walker," January 8, 1941, typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 401.
[434] Lottie Holmberg, "The L. E. Laird Family," WPA Collections, subject file 836.
[435] "Orpha Mae Dow," WPA Collections, biographical file 1993.
[436] Edith K. Alger, "The First Sheep in Fremont County," typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 728.

> and jams . . . . Julia's mother was a great bread baker, sometimes baking as many as twenty-five loaves at a time. These she sold to the bachelors on different ranches. Julia said her mother was a woman of exceptional ability, a lovely refined character. Her most out-standing characteristic was her courage. She was an excellent judge of stock and had a decided agricultural turn of mind.
> Together they [her mother and father] built up one of the best ranches in northeastern Wyoming.[437]

Here was the domestic duty, but here also was the deliberate move beyond the hearth and home boundaries, whether in actively selling bread, in judging livestock, in "her decided agricultural turn of mind," or in her shared responsibility for building the ranch. Was this what her daughter referred to as courage? Again, these bits of information offer tantalizing insights about the gender roles on the ranches and farms of Wyoming, and they suggest possible contours of change, but more research needs to be done in this area.

That research is possible, and the life of one person indicates some of the opportunities for inquiry as well as some of the difficulties. In the 1930s Martha Waln, or Martha Bull, as she was known during the years of her marriage, sat down with Paul Frison and told him the story of her life, which he transcribed and published first in the *Wyoming News* and in a revised form three decades later. Aside from the particulars of her life, what is especially valuable about Martha Waln's story is her uncanny ability to perceive subtle developments and to articulate them. Which is not to suggest that her story is in any way typical of women in Wyoming, or typical of women in the Big Horn Basin. No one was typical and each lived a different life, but her account does illuminate some circumstances that were shared by other women and that can help illuminate the contours of change in ranching and homesteading in Wyoming.

In her life, Martha Waln traveled far, but the biggest journey came early when she left Wales in 1882, as twenty-one year-old Martha James, to accompany "the Right Honorable William Cairus Armstrong and his bride, the daughter of General Lushington," on a trip to America. Martha James was the lady's maid. The destination of the honeymooners, and their maid, was first Cheyenne and then the 76 Ranch of Moreton and Richard Frewen, where they spent the winter. In the spring she left her position and married a cowboy on the ranch, Frank Bull. After a homesteading effort at the junction of Clear Creek and Powder River that was thwarted by troubles with Crow Indians seeking revenge for a wrong done them, they moved to Buffalo, "the toughest place I had ever been in," she said.[438] Her husband soon was hired by an English rancher to manage the Home Ranch of the Bar-X Cattle Company at Big Trails in the Big Horn Basin. The response of the young wife to this opportunity was probably shared by others in similar situations: "I was thrilled and enthusiastic, never dreaming of the loneliness that was to

---

[437] Julia Nefsy Noble, "The Nefsy Family, Pioneers of Wyoming," typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 916. Evidently Julia Nefsy Noble either wrote this in the third person or related it to another person who recorded it, with Julia Nefsy Noble listed as author.
[438] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 3.

fall to my lot in this remote region."[439] When they arrived at their new home, the house that she was planning to move into was not complete and the rooms that had been started were only four or five logs high; this was the first of a series of disappointments. Soon afterwards, she "took sick and we didn't have any kind of medicine," her husband left her alone when he went to find some medicine, and she spent a terrified night in her house, where there was not yet chinking, and she had rats running "back and forth over the bed and all in all I put in a terrible night."[440]

About nine months after moving to their new home, her first child was born, a daughter, which she calculated to be the first white child born in the basin, and at this point, she began a different journey in her life, one for which she was not entirely prepared: "I never had a nurse, a doctor, or even another woman attending me when any of my children were born. I washed them and took good care of them in bed, and in five days I was on my feet again doing my work."[441] Her background may have made the transition to motherhood in this remote area especially challenging:

> As a girl back in England I had not been taught to do any house-work, but had always enjoyed the comforts of a modern home, and the shift from England to the Big Horn Basin was one that stands out as I review my life. I was neither a house-keeper, a cook, nor was I trained in the things of life that a mother should know, so you can perhaps imagine my plight as I assumed the responsibilities of wife, house-keeper and mother. My husband and I were very close. We loved each other, but to say the least, I was completely lost, and to make it worse I had grown as a child to love flowers, finery such as dainty curtains, pretty dishes, pictures, etc., as well as pretty clothes for myself. A woman's life at that time in the Basin was a substantial one, but not full and pleasant. I might say I was "happily dissatisfied" until my first baby was born; then I was busy with her, and had little time to think of the less important things that I longed to have.[442]

This birth was followed by the birth of a son in October 1885; that son fell sick suddenly the following July. "I did not know what was the matter with him, and there was no one to go to for help." He died the following day. Her third child, another daughter, was born in December 1886, and during "that terrible winter of 1886 and 1887, while the cattle were starving and freezing to death by the hundreds in our door yard, I was trying to keep my babies warm and well."[443] The youngest baby grew ill and as the family traveled through a blizzard to get to Buffalo and medical hope, that child died too, just on the outskirts of their destination. Martha Bull's own experience shaped her thoughts when she said, "The life of every woman in the Big Horn Basin at that time was one of sacrifice. Overwhelming odds were to be expected at every turn. The solemn pledges that we had taken, 'for better or for worse' kept us fighting at our husbands' sides. Day by day we struggled, as we looked forward to a better day, trying

---

[439] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 4.
[440] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 6-7.
[441] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 8-11.
[442] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 24-25.
[443] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 25.

to believe in a hoped for and promised future."[444]

After the winter of 1886-1887, the English company that had employed her husband began to liquidate its property and close its operation and Frank and Martha Bull joined many others who were no longer employed on the big ranches and they homesteaded south of the home that had been provided them: "I helped my husband cut logs up on the mountain side and haul them down to Canyon Creek where we built a cabin, about ten miles below the Home Ranch. It was crude, with dirt floor and dirt roof, but it was sure and we looked upon it with the same pride that a monarch might look upon his kingdom."[445] Martha Bull knew whereof she spoke when she talked about how a monarch might view his kingdom too. Possibly the Jeffersonian vision has been seldom this deeply appreciated. This could have been a new beginning for the family, and to some degree it was, but her husband, an alcoholic, proved less and less reliable and "from a position of security we had slowly been reduced to penury and want, and I could stand it no longer; so we parted. . . . I now found myself confronted with the proposition of making a living for myself and five children."[446] She loved him still, and she spoke highly of his other qualities, but she had to break free of his destructive power. She moved to Spring Creek where she obtained appointment as postmaster and also started a retail operation, selling her two milch cows to purchase an inventory of goods to sell to local cowboys. This came to an end too when she took her husband back and moved to Lovell, only to be let down again by his drinking, and so returned to the Tensleep area and began her retail store all over. Serving also as a midwife for the area, she remained active in the Tensleep area and also near Buffalo where she sold Watkins medicines from a wagon, and after several more years she sold her retail business and purchased a small ranch on the Tensleep River.

As Martha Waln reflected on her life she found a number of lessons to pass on to others. One was the importance of staying out of debt: "in all of the years that I was forced to make a living for myself and children, never did I at any time go in debt. I was on a cash basis. And to this day I believe that 'for cash' is the only way for people to live. If the wars that were fought and that are in contemplation today were fought on a cash basis, they would be of short duration. I am an avid enemy of the credit system for the average struggling family."[447] The second lesson was more gender oriented: "This country has always been death on women. The little tragedies of the home during the pioneer days are the same tragedies as of today. They used to occur under a mud roof and today they occur under shingles. A home, the mother, the father, and the children, are all there is in life that is worthwhile. Humankind are much the same. I have lots to be thankful for now, and as the evening hours of my life draw closer and closer, I am extremely happy to feel that I have accomplished about all that any woman can be expected to do if she does it well and that is to raise a family of children to a self-supporting age in life, realizing that they are respectable men and women and worthy of the efforts to make of them good citizens. I had a deep hatred for the state of Wyoming for many years, and perhaps I now look back at times in my life with a twinge of bitterness, but I must frankly confess that I now love the good state of Wyoming and all

---

[444] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 26-28.
[445] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 29.
[446] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 38.
[447] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 44.

its people."[448] She had such an affection for Wyoming and the United States in the 1930s that she hoped that the people of Wyoming and the U.S. would not involve themselves in the problems of Europe—the place from where she had started her journey in 1882.

Martha Waln's autobiographical statement speaks to her own life in the Big Horn Basin, to the circumstances of women in the new state's ranches and homesteads, and to the human condition. It is a story of personal tragedy and triumph, a story of sacrifice and perseverance, and a story of love and betrayal. It is a story that, in its details, is unique, but that in its broad strokes is probably a story familiar to many women in Wyoming at the turn of the century. It is also a story that demonstrates that the business of homesteading and ranching was vastly more than the business of filing a claim and building a cabin; it was a story of the complexities and tragedies of life. Perhaps those elements actually give more meaning to that precious moment when a homesteader could build a humble cabin and look at it "with the same pride that a monarch might look upon his kingdom."

5 THE SEEDS OF MODERN TIMES: AGRICULTURE IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY, 1900-1920

Turning the page on the calendar and stepping into the twentieth century did not automatically generate a single change in the operation of the homesteads, farms, and ranches of Wyoming. There were, however, certain forces gathering steam with powerful claims to modern outlooks, techniques, assumptions and goals. That development, in turn, meant that traditional patterns were, if not left out, certainly being challenged more and more. What is remarkable in the first two decades of the twentieth century is not the degree of change, but the extent and the tenacity with which Wyoming's people were able to hold onto those traditional patterns. This was not just a matter of reluctance to accept something new because it was new, nor was it a resistance to complexity or efficiency; it was instead a matter of goals and objectives, and even the organization of life and the ranking of its priorities. Perhaps always an issue in life, this became especially pointed in the first two decades of the twentieth century as Wyoming's homesteaders, ranchers, and farmers faced the compelling issues of their day: the organization of labor and production on the farm and field, the gains and perils of markets, the social costs of technology, the power of gender and ethnicity to shape experience, and the very purpose of life on the land.

This is not to suggest that traditional systems and values united the countryside of Wyoming, for they patently did not. It is to suggest, however, that the traditional system of homesteading and farming and ranching, with all its diversified production, its modest goals and size, its self-sufficiency, and its often holistic organization, was alive and well and even expanding in the face of pressures to yield to other

[448] "Life of Martha Waln, Pioneer of Tensleep," 45.

goals and pressures.

i. A Patchwork Quilt of Social and Economic Fabric

To examine the farms of Wyoming in the first two decades of the twentieth century is almost to visit a foreign land, to step into a place unfamiliar to modern eyes, and to behold especially a system and practice of agriculture that seems at odds with prevailing notions of Wyoming's historic capacity for crop production, and out of sync with conventional understandings of the limits of small farming in the state. The visage is sometimes startling because it is widely understood that small farms raising diversified crops cannot succeed in the Wyoming climate, because of the low temperatures and low moisture. The reconciliation of what actually obtained with what is expected is usually accomplished by applying the notion that these people on the small farms and ranches and homesteads were not really succeeding; they just had not had enough time to realize their failure. Their foolish adventure in the deserts was a matter of time, a matter of sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind; their bitter harvest just had not yet come in. Or so goes the conventional understanding.

The reality, however, was quite otherwise and it was impressive. And it was characterized by an increasing number of farms as homesteaders planted their stakes and filed their claims, cleared away the sage, built homes, plowed fields, tended gardens, raised a few head of livestock, and somehow made it year after year, managing to prove up on their claims and take ownership of their farms. Between 1900 and 1920 the number of farms, which included all farming and ranching operations, increased significantly. From 6,095 farms in 1900, the number jumped to 10,987 ten years later and then continued to climb reaching 15,748 in 1920. A trend that had long since shifted in most of the nation of people moving from the farm to the city seemed to have exempted Wyoming and the state even provided an outlet for the reverse trend, a place where people could move from other farms and even from cities to the farm. This was not new, of course, and this was the pattern that had already existed in the state. But it continued in Wyoming even as the census of 1920 revealed, for the first time, that more than half the population of the nation lived in the cities of more than 2,500 people.[449]

That dramatic increase in the number of farms in the state, however, only hints at the larger pattern. As

[449] These statistics, and other data in the following paragraphs, are taken from the agricultural census returns for 1900, 1910, and 1920: *Census Reports, Volume V, Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900, Agriculture, Part I, Farms, Live Stock, and Animal Products* (Washington, D.C.: United States Census Office, 1902), 495-496, 578-579; U.S. Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, Vol. V, *Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 938-968; and Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States [*1920*], State Compendium, Wyoming* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), 35-77.

in the first decade of the century, the farms of the second decade continued to be overwhelmingly owner-operated affairs; while the proportion dropped during the decade, it only fell a few points and in 1920 still eighty-five percent of the farms were operated by the people who owned them. There was no broad trend of consolidation underway. And the farms were generally small units with just 2,076 of the total 15,748 farms—13%—reaching a size of more than a thousand acres. About twice that number (4,140) were farms of under 175 acres. The single largest category of farms included those between 260 and 499 acres, with 5,080 farms in that range. That also meant that nearly two-thirds of the farms (64%) were less than 500 acres in size.

But that is the state. An examination of the various parts of the state reveals an uneven pattern, something almost like a patchwork quilt, where different kinds of farming and ranching were practiced. The largest ranches and farms were those in the northeast quadrant (Campbell, Converse, Crook, Johnson, Natrona, Niobrara, Sheridan, and Weston) where 87% of the farms were 260 acres or larger and where there were more operations of over a thousand acres than there were 259 or less; even so, 70% of the farms and ranches were between 260 and 999 acres, and the single largest census grouping was that of 260-499 acres—exactly the group that would fit the 320 acres possible under the revised homestead laws. This was in striking contrast to the Big Horn Basin where 1,766 (75%) of the 2,352 farms were 259 acres or less, possibly reflecting the profusion of small, irrigated farms; only 65, or 3%, were over 1,000 acres. In southeast Wyoming (Albany, Carbon, Goshen, Laramie, and Platte Counties), almost a fourth of the farms and ranches were under 260 acres and significantly outnumbered (1,120 to 709) the 1,000 acre plus operations; again, the most common (1,828) size was the 260-499 group. In southwest Wyoming (Fremont, Lincoln, Sweetwater, and Uinta counties), more than half the farms were small farms of 259 acres or under, and only 230 (9%) were over 1,000 acres. The statistical constant in the four quadrants of Wyoming was the most common group of 260 to 499 acres.

There were some other differences in 1920 too. Northeast Wyoming continued to dominate the beef cattle industry with 319,227 head, followed by 221,513 in southeast Wyoming; southwest Wyoming had 178,174 head of beef cattle, while the Big Horn Basin had fewer than a hundred thousand head: 98,267. On the other hand, when it came to dairy cattle, the picture shifted. Southeast Wyoming had 21,853 dairy cows while northeast Wyoming had 15,283, a not-unexpected set of figures given that southeast Wyoming had 4,689 and the northeast quadrant had 6,268 of the state's 15,748 farms. It was not just a matter of gross numbers, though. Southwest Wyoming had 10,756 of the state's dairy cattle and the Big Horn Basin had 10,500 milch cows. Proportionately speaking (dairy cattle to beef cattle), the Big Horn Basin was the area of greatest concentration of dairy cattle. But a closer examination shows something else. In southwest Wyoming, one county, Lincoln County, had 6,781 milch cows, almost two-thirds of southwest Wyoming's dairy cattle. The circumstance was more than coincidental. Dairy cattle could be found all across Wyoming, and commercial dairy operations likewise could be found throughout the state. But dairy farms were most concentrated in those parts of the state, namely Lincoln County and the Big Horn Basin, where Mormon influence was strongest. This was a case of culture shaping economy.

There was one other aspect of dairy farming that is important to note because it reveals a larger trend. Everywhere there was a farm or a ranch, there would likely be a milch cow or two, sometimes more.

But not always. Ironically, the largest beef operations tended to shun milk production. Ted Olson recalled from his boyhood days in the 1900s and 1910s on a ranch southwest of Laramie that the large Riverside Ranch, which ran over three thousand head of cattle, produced only enough milk for the "big house." The cowboys on the ranch had to use cream from a can. But he also said that those same cowboys "ate the best butter, churned and packaged by my mother."[450] The Olson ranch consisted of 100-150 head of cattle, but they always had a few head of milk cows. The big ranches were becoming so specialized that they had to turn to their smaller neighbors for everyday provisions including dairy products.

And then there were the sheep. The sheep industry had spread across Wyoming in the 1890s and 1900s, often replacing cattle, and often even replacing them on the very ranches that had previously run cattle and fought the arrival of sheep—sometimes literally and violently. But the sheep industry peaked around 1911, at least in terms of the number of sheep raised and shorn. It was slow recovering from the blizzard of 1911. The distribution of those sheep seems reasonably uniform in terms of the numbers in the four sections of the state. Southeast Wyoming had 392,038 in 1920; 580,651 sheep were in the northeast quarter; another 378,980 in the Big Horn Basin; and 478,106 were in the southwest. Again, though, the county level, and probably even smaller subdivisions, shows the actual concentration. In 1920 the county with the largest number of sheep was Fremont with 190,433, followed by Lincoln with 172,806, and then Carbon with 137,801, and Big Horn with 126,878. At the other end of the scale, Niobrara had only 18,451 and Sweetwater only 22,147.

On top of the sheep and cattle, the census returns also show that in 1920 Wyoming's farms and ranches raised a significant number of pigs; every county, even those in the higher elevations and colder climates, reported swine as a common feature of the farms. Chickens were equally ubiquitous and so were the eggs that numbered in the millions. Even bees and honey were substantial in the rural areas of the state and only Albany County failed to report the production of honey and wax, possibly an oversight since the apiaries tended to be small colonies, and perhaps so small as to be hardly worth reporting. As with the chickens and pigs, the bees were kept not so much for market as for adding to the diet of the family on the farm.

Farming in the narrower sense of growing crops increased dramatically in Wyoming in the first two decades of the century. First of all, between 1900 and 1920 the amount of improved land on farms in the state almost trebled in those years, going from 792,332 acres in 1900 to 2,102,005 acres in 1920.[451] Those acres were put to work producing diversified crops, although hay and forage were dominant. But more and more of the land was being put into the production of grains. That said, however, the state was still diverse and almost every county produced some of every grain. Even corn, probably the most difficult of grains to grow in Wyoming because of its five month season and need for enough, but not too much, precipitation, was being produced in every county of the state except for Albany, Sweetwater,

---

[450] Ted Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 128-129.
[451] Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States [*1920*], State Compendium, Wyoming*, 48.

and Uinta. But oats were the dominant crop and in 1900 and 1910 the state produced more oats than any other grain, reflecting both the heavy consumption of oats by domestic livestock and also the production for home consumption; some oats found their way onto the market, often as barter in town for other goods, but they were especially important for fueling the horse-drawn equipment on the farms. In fact, during the first decade of the century oat cultivation increased from 26,892 acres to 124,035 acres, or from 763,370 bushels to 8,861,425 bushels—an impressive growth. During the following decade, however, half those acres were taken out of oats and wheat was the grain that topped the others by 1920, going from 41,968 acres in 1910 to 181,420 acres in 1920. While many factors can explain this, one is the increase in market agriculture, where wheat had a better national market than oats. The other cash crop, although not statewide, was sugar beets, which had a minimal production at the turn of the century but had grown to 1,207 acres in 1910—still small, but obviously growing. Ten years later, though, reflecting the opening and growth of irrigation projects in the Big Horn Basin, on the Wind River near Riverton, and in the North Platte drainage of eastern Wyoming, 99,935 acres were planted in sugar beets.

The increase in cash crops reflected yet another trend—the increase in farm and ranch mortgages. Again, the second decade of the twentieth century marked a shift in this regard too. In 1890, 87% of the farms in Wyoming were free of mortgages. This dropped to 80.8% in 1900 but it remained steady at that approximate level, despite the considerable growth in number of farms, and in 1910 still 79.9% of Wyoming's farms were free from mortgages. By 1920, however, the percentage had plummeted and only 50.9% of the farms in Wyoming could say that they had no mortgage.[452] This was a significant turning point in the lives of those people who took out the mortgages, and it was a significant turning point in the history of homesteading.

It is easy to get lost in the statistics, seduced by their conditioned subtext of progress and productivity, or repelled by their reduction of life to economic units, and it should always be remembered that the numbers only tell part of the story of the transformation that was underway. Part of that transformation, a very basic and fundamental part, was actually in the assumptions of what ranching and farming and homesteading were all about. Increasingly, agriculture was about exactly those units of production, those quantitative measures of success, about the economics and markets and prices and output rather than the values that accrued to that way of life, instead of about the independence that the homestead provided, instead of about the larger purpose beyond a job. In subtle ways, in bold ways, the face of the map of Wyoming was changing. The process of transformation would take several more decades to take full shape, but the seeds of change had been planted.

ii. Dry Land and Dry Farming

---

[452] Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States [*1920*], State Compendium, Wyoming*, 39.

From some perspectives, the surge in homesteading that took place in the second decade of the twentieth century seems not just surprising but even bizarre, an inexplicable anomaly, an archaic development in the modern world—log cabin dreams in an age of automobiles. From other perspectives that increase in homesteading activity shows the perversity of land laws and human nature, both of which attempted to reshape the earth and exceed its natural limits. The reality is that much of the new homesteading had its roots in two related developments. The first is that the first settlers to take up claims on the land tended, naturally enough, to situate their homesteads, by whatever provision of law or economics, near live water where they would be able to either use the natural streams or divert them into ditches and laterals to provide sustenance for their fields and livestock. Obviously, the choicest lands were taken up first. And after, say, four decades, most of the land that was left was land that was not only far from water but was not irrigable in any way. The lands were not only dry, but they were also high and distant from sources of water. Thus it was that in some parts of Wyoming at the end of the first decade of the century there were vast tracts of public land that had no farms or ranches and these were tracts of land where there were also no streams within shouting, throwing, or stealing distance. If those lands were going to be settled, some method other than the conventional ditch and dam would have to be employed.

And that was the second development. The practice of dry farming was not new in the early twentieth century, but in those years it emerged as an enticing formula, and by some lights an intoxicating nostrum, for turning the desert into the Garden of Eden, or at least for making gardens grow where none had previously taken root. The agricultural practice of dry farming had emerged and spread across the Great Plains in the late nineteenth century, and while this form of agriculture offered hope to many aspiring settlers, it was almost in the same category as astrology or alchemy in the eyes of its detractors. Often perspectives on the practice were shaped by preconceived potential uses of the land, so that some who were intent on farming the land became devout believers in the religion of dry farming, abiding in the faith that "rain follows the plow," while ranching and other advocates came to see it as yet one more way to break up the public domain and make it unusable for grazing, and suggested that it was a sham, led by a platoon of charlatans for their own profit.

The practice of dry farming had its origins in the arid and semi arid lands of Utah, of western Kansas and Nebraska, and in the valleys of California in the late nineteenth century. The principles of "scientific soil culture" were preached by no less than Samuel Aughey, Territorial Geologist for Wyoming in the 1880s. Aughey was a minister-turned scientist who had been a professor at the University of Nebraska (when it had a faculty of five), who had carried the title of "honorary state geologist," and who had been consumed with a boosterish enthusiasm for Nebraska that faded only when the university asked for his resignation. At that time he returned to Wyoming—a place that he had previously visited as a member of the Hayden Survey and that he continued to visit in his study of the territory's oil deposits and fossil remains. In fact, (1) the time he spent in Wyoming caused some of the dissatisfaction with him in Nebraska, and (2) his studies of Wyoming's geology—and the abundant fossils of tropical plants and fish he found—convinced him that at one time the area had been a lush, moist and verdant land capable of growing anything, and that it could be such again. At first Aughey boasted that Nebraska was destined to become a farmers' paradise because the tillers of the soil would be able to take advantage of modern soil science and then he expanded his argument to include

Wyoming. In his 1880 book, *Sketches of the Physical Geography and Geology of Nebraska*, Aughey had described how the breaking up of the hard sod would prevent rainfall from running off into the rivers; instead, once the hard crust was broken, water would soak into the soil, nourish crops, and then be returned to the air as it evaporated, and would in that way increase the amount of rainfall in the future, and it was Aughey, with his town-booster colleague and friend, Charles Dana Wilber, who pronounced and popularized the notion that the rain literally follows the plow; the more the earth is planted and cultivated, the more rain will fall.[453]

Indeed, rainfall in much of the late nineteenth century seemed to increase, but not for the reasons that Aughey and Wilber had postulated. In 1885 when John Nimmo issued his report on the cattle industry, he was intrigued by the possibility of the increasing rainfall and presented several various theories of its source. That report, like the increased rainfall itself, generated much discussion. One commentator on Nimmo's was skeptical about the rain-follows-the-plow theory of increased rainfall: "The farmers judge this to be due to their turning up of the ground and their planting a few trees, with the effect of inducing precipitation. Some otherwise intelligent legislators, with the natural tendency that is inborn in many to prefer the opinion of a practical man to that of a scientific one, have hence come to the conclusion that it will be but a short time before precipitation will have increased over the whole of this arid area, so that it will bloom like the valley of the Mississippi." The same commentator dissented from that growing consensus and argued that climate change takes place only over a much longer time and "the possible change during the present generation is not such as can sensibly affect the present conditions of precipitation in the area as a whole."[454] The increase in rainfall was clear, but it was also natural; but that increase, when coupled with the supposedly scientific body of knowledge supporting farming on the semi-arid lands of the Great Plains, encouraged people to draw upon the homestead laws to seek their own fates as farmers.

By the beginning of the twentieth century enthusiasm had waned for the belief that the rain actually followed the plow, but because of the dry farming crusaders there actually was enough experience to show that crops could be planted, cultivated, and harvested on lands that were much dryer than those people had left behind in the Midwest—if they used careful agricultural practices that would conserve, if not exactly recycle, the moisture. The new practitioners usually followed the more scientifically-based principles developed by Hardy W. Campbell and others who emphasized plowing deeply, packing the seeds in the subsoil, fallowing land (not planting it, but plowing under any moisture that should fall) for a couple of seasons, frequently cultivating it to keep down the weeds, practicing careful crop

---

[453] M. Jean Ferrill, "Rain Follows the Plow," in David J. Wishart, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 395-396; Robert N. Manley, "Samuel Aughey: Nebraska's Scientific Farming," *Journal of the West*, 6 (1967): 108-118; Mary W. M. Hargreaves, "Dry Farming Alias Scientific Farming," *Agricultural History*, 22 (1948): 39-56; Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 210-212. On this issue, see more generally, Mary Wilma M. Hargreaves, *Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, 1900-1925* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

[454] "The Cattle Business," *The Nation*, July 2 1885, 15-17.

diversification and rotation, and using different strains of crops that would be more resistant to drought.[455] And this knowledge became eminently practical as people moved in to claim lands after the choicest land, the land either along a drainage or otherwise accessible by irrigation, had mostly been taken up.

In 1918 I. S. Bartlett published his history of Wyoming, a history that looked forward as much as it did backward. And the future of Wyoming that Bartlett saw included dry farming.

> Dry farming was begun in Wyoming at Salem forty miles northeast of Cheyenne, over forty years ago by a settlement of Swedes and they have prospered ever since. At Manville, Niobrara County, dry farming has been practiced over thirty years and in Crook County it has been a success ever since the county was settled, but it is only within the last twelve years that the rush of high class, well-to-do farmers has swept into Wyoming from the old states and nearly swamped the six United States Land Offices of the state with their homestead applications for dry lands. Within ten years the section east of Cheyenne now known as the "Golden Prairie" which was but a sheep and cattle range up to that time, has been settled by eight or ten thousand dry farmers, and where once even the sheep-herder was lonesome, there are thriving villages with schools, churches, elevators and banks. The dry farmers ride around in automobiles, hold institutes and fairs and send to market over a million bushels of grain annually, besides live stock, dairy [production] of Wyoming.[456]

To advance his point Bartlett quoted former governor Bryant B. Brooks when he said, "We will eventually be able to reclaim practically every acre of land in this western country, and make it produce profitable crops, where it was formerly thought nothing but weeds and range grass would grow." This, of course, was an overstatement, but the reality of the success of dry farming techniques was undeniable. Near Clearmont, east of Sheridan, for example, a local history reports that in the 1890s, "it was found that dry farming could produce hay and wheat as well as the irrigated places. Wheat could be planted in the fall, taking advantage of the winter snows."[457] Near Newcastle, Frank W. Mondell engaged in dry farming on his land as early as the 1880s.[458] But it was in the 1900s that dry farming became especially important as more people moved in and had to settle on lands that could not be irrigated. Especially in the eastern part of Wyoming, dry farming took off and gained momentum. And dry farmer Frank Mondell proved instrumental in helping others into that endeavor.

---

[455] Mary W. M. Hargreaves, "The Dry-Farming Movement in Retrospect," *Agricultural History*, 51 (1977): 149-165.
[456] I. S. Bartlett, *History of Wyoming* (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1918), 354.
[457] Clearmont Historical Group, *Backward Glance: Ulm, Leiter, Ucross, Clearmont, A Century of History* (Buffalo, Wyoming: The Office, n.d.), 9.
[458] Mondell described that experience in J. D. Towar, Wyoming Experiment Station Bulletin No. 80, "Dry Farming in Wyoming," March 1909: 11.

Frank Mondell came to Wyoming in 1887 and helped develop the coal mines around Newcastle and Cambria, became mayor of the new town of Newcastle, and from there pursued one of the most distinguished political careers of any Wyoming politician. He was first elected to Congress in 1894 and then served as assistant commissioner of the General Land Office, but won election to Congress again in 1898 and remained in that office until 1923. While in Congress Mondell retained his interest in the public lands and served as chair of the Committee on Irrigation of Arid Lands and the Committee on Public Lands, but more importantly served as the majority leader in the House of Representatives—a position of incredible power in Congress. Ultimately he left the House of Representatives to run for the U.S. Senate in 1922, which he lost. But while in Congress Mondell became one of the most vigorous advocates of dry farming in the nation and helped shape the laws governing the disposal of public lands so that they would encourage settlement, even when they were arid.

The issues surrounding the public domain had become complicated in the years since the passage of the Homestead Act and then the Desert Land Act, and much of the debate over the laws went back to the struggle between ranchers and farmers. As each homesteader's claim was taken out and as each farm field was plowed, more of the domain that had been used by cattle was taken away, and so conflicting pressures mounted to secure land laws favorable to either the farmer or the rancher. The issues sometimes got tangled because advocates for both farmers and ranchers pushed for greater allowable homestead claims. Some dry-farming advocates wanted 1862 Homestead Act claims (as distinct from claims under other laws, which were more liberal), which had been limited to 160 acres and which had widely viewed as inadequate for arid conditions, increased to a full section—640 acres. The livestock growers and their advocates had likewise concluded that 640 acres would suit them too, although some of them preferred a system of leasing the larger public domain to outright ownership of parcels. The final measure that emerged into law in 1909 was a compromise; significantly, that law was promoted mainly by Congressman Mondell, whose own experiments with dry farming in Wyoming seem to have guided him.

The resulting Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 increased the allowable size of a homestead claim to 320 acres, provided that the claimant cultivate one-fourth of the land, and it stipulated that there be no irrigable land, timber land, or mineral land within the entry. This was exactly a response to dry-farming advocates and the next year Mondell became president of the International Dry Farming Congress.[459] What is usually noticed about the 1909 homesteading law is the doubling of land available to settlers, but there is a separate item that also adds to the significance of this policy change. The Enlarged Homestead Act was passed and signed into law in February 1909; the next month Mondell pushed

[459] Mondell's sponsorship of this legislation has been more commonly recognized in Wyoming than in national discussions of the measure. See T. A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965, 1978; 2nd edition, revised), 362, and "Mondell, Frank Wheeler," in Howard W. Lamar, *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 765; Paul W. Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), 503-509; and Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain 1776-1936* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 362-363.

another, related, provision since he opposed President Theodore Roosevelt removing mineral lands from private entry. In this measure Mondell enabled claimants to enter agricultural land, and, should coal be discovered on that land, the homesteader would receive a patent to the land but not to the coal rights (separate from other minerals) which would be retained by the federal government.[460] Mondell was thus able to satisfy interests that had been opposed in this discussion—the dry farming lobby and also the coal mining industry. Both interests were important to Frank Mondell.

The impact of the Enlarged Homestead Act—or, as Mary W. M. Hargreaves termed it in her study of dry farming, the "Dry-Farming Homestead Legislation"[461]—was two fold generally, and probably carried the same weight in Wyoming as elsewhere in the West. First, it did allow larger entries and it appears that some people who were already homesteading used the law to claim additional land. Secondly, the simple passage of new legislation and the attendant publicity provided a psychological encouragement for more people to enter claims who had not done so previously. In 1910, the first full year in which it was in operation, nearly a hundred thousand claims were entered nationally, although this was not a record number and was still lower than had been filed previously in some exceptional years. And historian Paul Gates notes that after an initial rush to settlement following the Enlarged Homestead Act, claims dropped sharply in the following two years of drought, but increased afterwards. Despite Gates's claim that in Wyoming the results of homesteading in these years was meager, a conclusion that he reaches despite the 43% increase in the number of farms between 1910 and 1920, his own data indicate that "slightly less than half [of the claims between 1910 and 1934] went to patent."[462] This was a substantial record of patenting success. This, in fact, provides a key opportunity—and need—for future research to determine exactly how this law, and its kindred homesteading laws, worked to provide a basis for people seeking a new home in Wyoming. In this way it may be possible to come to a clearer understanding of the role of dry farming in the state and on the High Plains. At a minimum, it is evident that as the amount of irrigable dwindled, which it did with each claim taken out, the methods of the dry farmer would be applied to the land more and more. It is also clear that the direction of the land laws was toward changes that allowed larger claims so that more land could be left fallow and thus retain more moisture for the crops when they were planted.

Dry farming techniques and land available under the Enlarged Homestead Act were not identical, although there was a considerable overlap. It is important to remember that the Enlarged Homestead Act applied to semi-arid lands on the public domain. According to a map put together by the Department of Interior, the vast bulk of those eligible lands were in the eastern part of the state, especially north of the North Platte, although there were also significant blocks in the southeast corner, in the southeast and northwest sections of the Big Horn Basin, south and east of Wind River Canyon, and in the southwest corner of the state. Of course, this did not apply to Department of Agriculture lands administered by the Forest Service. On the other hand, dry farming techniques were not restricted

---

[460] Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage*, 370-371; Robert W. Swenson, "Legal Aspects of Mineral Resources Exploitation," in Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development*, 728-729.
[461] Hargreaves, *Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, 1900-1925*, 346-356.
[462] Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development*, 504-505.

to specific legal boundaries and were found in many places. Just as that system of farming had been utilized well before the 1909 legislation, it was also true that as homesteads turned into patented lands, the chance was all the greater that dry farming methods, in some measure, were used there too.

In 1909 the University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station in Laramie studied dry farming throughout Wyoming and that meant, at the time, gathering information about current practices and experiences of individuals who had used dry farming techniques. The Agricultural Extension Service had been created to supplement the agricultural and mechanical—land grant—colleges in each state as a result of the Hatch Act in 1887, with the intent of researching issues of benefit to farmers and to provide that information to them. In Wyoming, the Experiment Station was created as a part of the university in 1891 and promptly, though limited in resources, began its mission. In those years the role of the Experiment Station (and substations around the state) was very much that of a cooperative endeavor with the states' farmers and ranchers. In 1913 the Sheridan *Post* quoted the regional director (for Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah) about the efforts of the experiment stations and extension agents, then known as "county agriculturists" and that cooperative spirit was very much in evidence: "We are required to work with farmers—to study with them rather than to study for them, so we become partners with the farmers to whom we are sent. They give us facts; we give them facts; and then they and we try to find the meaning of the facts as they may apply for good or harm on the farmer's own farm."[463] The topic of dry farming provided an early example of just such a cooperative effort.

In 1909 the Experiment Station gathered information from farmers in the state engaged in the practice of dry farming and published that information to help others. The bulletin published excerpts or whole responses to the questions circulated. While those responses were designed to help others who planned to farm, they also provide an insight into where and how dry farming was being used in Wyoming. The replies were generally reflective of the core areas of dry farming with responses from: Cheyenne, Kirtley (Converse County, and soon to be in the new county of Niobrara), Horton and Newcastle (Weston), Freeland (Natrona), Evanston, Millburne, and Cokeville (Uinta and soon Lincoln). One of the respondents was none other than Frank Mondell himself. Responses had not yet been received from some parts of the state, but generally the replies indicated that dry farming could be successful. None reported failure (an obvious self-selecting result of a survey in which case they may not have been around to respond) and several reported their experiences using similar language:

- "that dry farming has been profitable in the locality for the past 19 years;"
- "there has never been an entire failure in the locality;"
- "should always be done in connection with stock business;"
- "considers dry farming profitable in his locality;"
- "thinks dry farming profitable if one could have 125 acres with proper equipment. Would suggest the dry farmer own additional grazing land;"
- "the locality has been cropped profitably for 20 years;"

[463] Quoted in Johanna Nel and Johannes E. Nel, "University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station: 100 Years of Service to the State," *Annals of Wyoming*, 64 (Winter 1992): 18.

- "has not had a failure in the entire seven years;"
- "claims that his particular locality is especially favored, and 'will stand more drouth than any other place I ever saw, and raise a crop;'"
- and "regards the heavy snows of winter as the most beneficial agency in dry farming."

Frank Church at Kirtley reported "yields of oats, 40 bushels; wheat, 20; rye, 20; barley, 30; spelt, 30; potatoes, 150 bushels per acre." Lige Christensen at Cokeville dry farmed about 60 acres and reported yields of "barley, 32 bushels; wheat, 26; oats, 30 bushels to the acre." Henry Miller dry farmed thirty acres at Arcola in Laramie County, with estimated yields of thirty bushels for wheat, fifty bushels for oats, and thirty-five for corn. A. G. Cheney at Freeland had been dry farming and ranching for twenty-one years and reported a hundred bushels of potatoes to the acre. Andrew Peterson, at Horton, had been dry farming a hundred acres for nine years and said that his yields averaged twenty bushels for wheat, forty for oats, and that one neighbor had as much as fifty-five bushels of wheat to the acre. Peterson calculated that the best system was one which worked 75 to 125 acres, leaving the remainder of the total half section for livestock which would consume the roughage on the farm. One farmer, H. Altman of Cheyenne, had conducted his own experiments on ten acres, had plowed deep, as much as fourteen inches, did not fallow the land, cultivated while the crops were growing; the result was crops of sugar beets, milo maize, potatoes, turnips, sweet corn, pumpkins, squash and peas. Dry farming, the report implied, seemed to be a productive and effective system of agriculture provided strict adherence to the necessary practices was followed.[464]

Several conclusions can be reached using the information provided in this survey. One is that these farms were small. Most who reported were farming small acreages, with the size of their dry farming ranging from ten or fifteen to 260 acres, although Congressman Mondell reported that at one time he had farmed 800 acres. Two thirds of them said that they farmed a hundred acres or less. Most recommended a farm of 160 acres as the proper size for dry farming, though some indicated that as few as fifty would work and several recommended 640 acres, the primary reason for the larger size being the efficient use of heavy machinery and the ability to allow half the land to lie fallow one year while it accumulated moisture. Statistically, the average recommended size for a dry farm was 272 acres. By virtually any measure, these farms, even when they suggested a larger acreage than they had, were modest in size.

Secondly, the recommended and practiced system of farming was diversified and generally included both livestock and a variety of crops. Not a single respondent recommended the development of a monoculture system of agriculture with, for example, the growing of wheat to the exclusion of all else because that crop was best adapted to semi-arid lands. In fact, while the list of vegetables and grains produced in dry farming was impressive, it probably understated the actual production since they were unlikely to report the full array of crops grown in their vegetable gardens. Thirdly, it is important to

[464] J. D. Towar, Wyoming Experiment Station Bulletin No. 80, "Dry Farming in Wyoming," March 1909: 1-29.

note that these experiences and these recommendations were not developed on economic matrixes and models, but derived from the actual practice, from actual uses of dry farming methods in Wyoming. It was the farmers who were developing the techniques and the agricultural experts at the university who were learning from the farmers—not the other way round. And that leads to the final point that emerges from this survey. It is by no means clear that these farmers were engaged in commercial agriculture. Indeed, given the small size of the farms and given the diversified production, there is reason to believe that producing for a market was a secondary consideration; the role of the market seems to have been as a way to dispose of surpluses of particular crops, not as a force to shape their selection of crops and the methods used to produce them. Dry farming did not have to be oriented toward the marketplace.

There is another point to be made and that is one about what the survey did not show. Both at the time and since, dry land farmers have had to not only master the intricacies of their kind of agriculture but have also had to do so against a powerful current of opposing views convinced that, at least in Wyoming, dry farming is inherently unsuccessful, and when successful requires much larger tracts than those available under the law for the support of a family. It is certain that some who practiced dry farming did not succeed, but why they failed can only be speculated; what this survey reveals, though, is that their failures, at any rate, were not due exclusively to the size of their farms or to the inherent folly of dry farming.

In the years since this major enhancement of homesteading laws, the laws themselves and also the practice of dry farming have been roundly denounced because, at least from some perspectives, they lured innocent homesteaders to the land with false visions and hopes of success. Certainly there were individuals, and possibly government agencies too, that sought to foist barren land as paradise, just as there remain individuals and companies with alluring beachfront properties for sale in uninhabitable places. And it is equally true that the railroads, with their aggressive marketing of lands that they owned and their promotion of homesteading opportunities near their lines, bear a burden of responsibility for enticements that exceeded the actual capacity of the land. On the other hand, there was an effort in some quarters not just to provide information about how to farm dry land but also to suggest that the practice had its limits.

While the Enlarged Homestead Act passed in 1909 encouraged further settlement, that encouragement was enhanced by action at the state level. In 1911 the state of Wyoming created a new Board of Immigration and allocated $40,000 to publicize the agricultural opportunities awaiting any who would come to Wyoming whether they wanted to settle on irrigated land, to engage in dry farming, or to settle on mineral lands and establish some kind of business. One brochure the Board of Immigration printed and circulated engaged in a broad array of promotional devices calculated to make the state look attractive. It was titled, appropriately, “Map of Wyoming Resources Showing at a glance the HARVEST OF GOLD Which awaits the Settler and Investor in Wyoming.” While it painted a glowing picture of the life to be made in Wyoming agriculture, it also offered surprisingly candid insights into expectations the newcomers should have. About dry farming, for example, the brochure noted, “While so-called dry farming does not produce anything like as big yields as farming under irrigation, the land suitable for it is much cheaper, and those who have tried it claim that one can make a larger percentage

of profit on the investment by dry farming than any other way." It proceeded to spell out what crops (row crops, drought resistant crops) under what conditions (only where rainfall is above twelve inches annually, on a large enough acreage such that half can be left fallow each year), and how to tend to the crops (mulching to hold the moisture, deep plowing to allow the rain and snow to soak the soil, stirring the crust of the soil after every shower to capture the water). The brochure made no claims about abundant rainfall expectations or huge crops nor did it make comparisons with the Garden of Eden as some promoters were wont to do.[465]

Nor did the brochure—and the Immigration Board—devote all its attention to dry farming. To the contrary, it also promoted the settlement of irrigated lands, and even offered an example of how much a farmer could make on eighty acres of Wyoming irrigated land, an amount that came to a tidy net profit of $3497.00. What is instructive about the calculation is partly the ledger sheet behind the diagram, and partly the modest yields anticipated, and especially the diversity in crops planted: wheat, oats, field peas (for livestock feed), barley, alfalfa, and potatoes. The brochure estimated the cost of irrigated land at twenty-five to a hundred dollars an acre, and, in an indication that the board was pushing more than settlement on the public domain, pointed out that the land could be bought on easy terms and "the crops should take care of all payments after the down payment." This was introducing a different factor into the equation, one that, though not new, was frequently absent in previous promotional literature: the idea that a person should take out a mortgage on the land to be settled and expect to be able to pay it off with cash crops. The invisible ledger used by the Immigration Board anticipated production for a market, not production for home consumption. This may have even been the biggest change underway, subtle though it was. If there was a problem with the promotional efforts, it more likely derived from the assumption that settlers would need to embark on a system of farming for the market rather than for home consumption.

During the 1910s additional legislation encouraged settlement of the dryer areas of the state by easing the terms and increasing the size of the claims. Although the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 made possible homestead acreages larger than before, pressure still mounted in Congress for even larger acreages and for easier terms. In 1912 Congress reduced the five-year residence on the land requirement to three and permitted the homesteader to be away from the farm for five months in each of those three years. In addition, Congressman Mondell was convinced that dry farmers needed at least 320 acres and after he secured that in the 1909 legislation he continued to push for larger acreages, but it was Congressman Edward Taylor of Colorado (who would be the author of the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act) who secured the 1916 Stock Raising Homestead Act which allowed homesteads to be established with 640 acres. This land had to be "chiefly valuable for grazing and raising forage crops," and could not have timber that could be potentially harvested commercially, could not be susceptible to irrigation from known sources of water, had to be reasonably compact, and had to be land where that size was

[465] State Board of Immigration, "Map of Wyoming Resources Showing at a glance the HARVEST OF GOLD Which awaits the Settler and Investor in Wyoming" (Denver: Clason Map Co.,[1911]), copy located in American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

"reasonably required for the support of a family."[466] The homesteader claiming this land had to improve the land with expenditures of at least $1.25 an acre and mineral rights were reserved by the government. Water holes and stock driveways were also withdrawn and reserved by the government. It is far from clear how effective this law was in promoting, or even encouraging settlement, since, as Paul Gates reports, two years after its enactment only 734 applications had been accepted in the entire United States.[467] But the total package doubtless was a significant force in (1) the settlement of at least some parts of Wyoming, and (2) the expansion of existing ranches in the state interested in acquiring additional grazing land and able to afford the land either through direct purchase or the use of "dummy entrymen."[468]

State funding for the Board of Immigration was cut off after just two years, the publicity for the dry farming crusade also faded, and Commissioner Roy Schenck of the immigration board lamented in 1913, "Wyoming has anything but an enviable reputation among prospective homeseekers, immigrants, or investors. This undesirable impression apparently has been growing greater instead of less."[469] Even so, the farms increased during the 1910s and they increased especially in the counties where dry farming was practiced and where land was available under the Enlarged Homestead Act. In 1910 the four counties making up the eastern section of the state consisted of Laramie, Converse, Weston, and Crook, and these four counties had 4605 farms. Ten years later, Platte and Goshen counties had been created from Laramie County, Niobrara had separated from Converse, and Campbell had been created out of the western parts of Weston and Crook Counties. That same area in 1920 contained 9502 farms—two-thirds of all the farms in the state. It is fair to say that that area was where the growth in farming was in the 1910s and it is also fair to suggest that dry farming contributed substantially to that growth.

Much of the growth in dry farming was spread around, almost randomly scattered dots on the countryside, widely distributed in the time-honored pattern of finding the best land available and settling it. But sometimes entire dry-farming neighborhoods emerged. Not far from Douglas, for example, in the spring of 1917, the community of Dry Creek took shape abruptly. Prospective settlers filled all the possible lodging in Douglas "until they could get their goods unloaded and hauled to their respective homesteads, and suitable shacks built in which the families could live, and even then there was not enough shelter and many were camped in tents on what is now known as the flats and in the fair grounds."[470]

The spring was difficult and the summer was a different challenge for these people. One account

---

[466] Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development*, 517.
[467] Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development*, 517-519.
[468] George C. Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1978, 64-79.
[469] Larson, *History of Wyoming*, 263.
[470] Mrs. Rhue M. Lynch, Mrs. C. B. Dickson, and Mrs. R. L. Featherston, the Committee for Historical Facts for the Dry Creek Community, "Notes on Pioneering in Dry Creek Community, Converse County," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1390.

indicates the priorities and the process for settlement: "Many were the hardships we all encountered but as the summer advanced we got shacks up and began in earnest to fulfil our part of the contract with Uncle Sam. There was only one well in all the country, and that was at the Dry Creek shearing pen, and people for miles around hauled water for cooking and drinking, unless they were fortunate enough to live near a spring of good clear water, but this condition was not to last long, for one by one the settlers put down wells of their own, and little by little improved their homesteads until they were quite comfortable."[471] Other areas were similarly settled and in 1918 I. S. Bartlett wrote, "In two years' time the Chugwater flats, formerly without habitation, was colonized by four thousand people who built seven hundred houses. It was so quietly done that it was hardly noticed by the general public. A little later these thriving communities dotted the whole state."[472] Bartlett then went through a list of the advantages offered by dry farming in Wyoming and concluded it with the broadly shared, and often articulated, paean, a yearned for, and now reachable, "vision of future happiness and prosperity."[473]

iii. The Song of the Harvest: Technology and Agriculture

The technology of agriculture is often taken as a given and changes in that technology are frequently lumped together as a parade of progress in which the burdens of tilling the soil are gradually reduced, the productivity of the farm unit is increased, and all the advantages of modern life are brought to those whose life in the benighted rural areas of the nation lacks the luster and efficiency of the industrial age. Technology thus comes to the agrarians as a redemptive force. Within that assessment, that is as severe in its judgment of farmers as it is blithe in its elevation of machines, however, lie a multitude of assumptions about the purpose of agricultural life, the nature of the technology involved, and the origins and impact of technological change. The reality is that the transformation of agricultural technology at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries represented not just an exchange of smaller tools for bigger ones, and not just a swap of slow tools for fast tools; it represented a complete transformation in the entire world of the tiller of the soil and of the means and ends of agricultural production. Instead of giving the farmer greater control over the elements of her or his life, the increasingly complex and expensive technology undermined traditional systems and relationships and placed the farm in an increasingly precarious position. While ample attention has been given to the factors of climate, soil fertility, and legislation as obstacles to agricultural life in Wyoming, one of the most powerful forces subjugating the farmer has remained in the shadows.

This transformation in technology took a surprisingly small time to play out, at least in its fundamental contours, and in just a few decades the tools and practices that had been associated with agriculture for centuries—for millennia—were revised, were replaced, and were turned on their head, regardless of the

---

[471] Lynch, Dickson, and Featherston, "Notes on Pioneering in Dry Creek Community, Converse County."
[472] Bartlett, *History of Wyoming*, 354.
[473] Bartlett, *History of Wyoming*, 357.

success in the field that they had demonstrated since time immemorial. Several steps can be discerned in this transformation and the first one was simply making many of the hand tools, and the purposes which they implied, obsolete. The tools of the American farmer, including the farmer and rancher in Wyoming, had been tested and proven through the ages and they reflected a distinct and different form of agriculture. There had been some evolution of agricultural technology, the prime achievement of which had been the plow, but even that paled with the development of agricultural techniques associated with the three field system and the consequent rotation of crops in medieval times.[474] The tools themselves remained incredibly familiar after several thousand years. Even the moldboard plow, the most substantial invention in the cultivation of the earth, and a far cry from jabbing a stick into the ground, turned the soil over (and did so in defiance of biblical curses on the practice, which was believed to destroy the ground), but its use could have been discerned by an earlier farmer. Russell Lord catches the essence of the continuity in technology:

> The implements of the plowmen mentioned in the bible were just a bit beyond the planting-stick stage of development; their "plow" was a sharpened stick drawn by some beast of burden so as to cut a slice or furrow in the soil or sod. These primitive plows did not—and in many parts of the world still do not—turn the topsoil or bare it. But they do rip asunder matted ground-cover more thoroughly and throw that piece of land more open to the beat of the weather than does the simpler hand-thrust downward of a sharpened planting stick. [475]

If the plow was one of the more sophisticated implements to emerge in the subsequent two millennia, the others were archaic in their simplicity: the hoe, the sickle, the scythe, the knife (for cutting corn and other stalks), the fork (for winnowing and lifting), and the flail. The hoe survives, and knives and pitchforks still abound anywhere agriculture is practiced, although some of these tools are more associated with gardening than with farming. The scythe, the long-bladed, graceful, L-shaped grain cutter, is now most often seen in images of the Grim Reaper as a symbol of death instead of life, its ancient association, or in museums—not on the farm. The cradle, a modification of the scythe, had several fingers reaching out, parallel to the cutting blade, to catch the grain as it was cut and keep it together, so that bundling and binding would be easier. The sickle, or reaping hook, a smaller, curved-blade cutter, would be held in one hand while the grain was held in another.

These instruments have several features in common. One is that they are generally obsolete now and are seldom found in use; they can be found, however, in virtually every museum in the state of Wyoming, remnants of a system of agriculture that no longer exists except in pockets and scattered instances. The other features are practical and suggest some of the contours of the system of agriculture of which they were a part: each was hand-held, each was readily available, each was affordable, each could be

---

[474] See especially Lynn White, Jr., *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 41-57.
[475] Russell Lord, *The Care of the Earth: A History of Husbandry (*New York: Mentor Books, an imprint of New American Library, 1962), 23-24.

mastered, and each was time tested. And they were ubiquitous. Paul Gates, in his study of agriculture before the Civil War, described them thus:

> Many of the simpler tools the farmer used were self-designed and self-made. Wooden plows, harrows, cultivators, rakes, forks, shovels, ox yokes, and many items of household equipment that to a foreign traveler looked "clumsy and uncouth" provided farmers with opportunity for whittling and designing that absorbed many winter hours and sharpened their Yankee ingenuity. If they needed a piece of iron for the moldboard or the share, or cutting edge, of the plow, or preferred iron tines to the clumsier wooden fork, or wished for iron spikes to insert in their harrow, or wanted to sharpen an iron shovel, they went to the local blacksmith, who could forge and hammer out almost anything the farmer wished. In this way most of the implement needs of the farmers were taken care of locally.[476]

After the Civil War, one of the most significant innovations was a change in the plow. The traditional plow was known as a walking plow because the farmer would walk behind, hold onto, and guide the plow as it was pulled by one or more horses or oxen. While some efforts had been made to put the farmer on top of, instead of behind, the plow before the Civil War, it was only in the 1870s that the sulky plow was introduced in the Midwest. With the sulky, the farmer would be seated on top of the plow as it was pulled by horses; it remained, however, still a tool of great simplicity.[477] Well into the twentieth century farmers in Wyoming would still often be found walking behind the plow, not riding the sulky. Likewise, the development of a harrow was slow coming, not only to Wyoming but to the U.S. While the spring-tooth harrow could occasionally be found earlier, it was only in the 1890s that the disc harrow reached the fields of American farmers. The disc harrow would cut and turn stubble and help form humus. Even so, as Fred Shannon notes, "Till after the end of the [nineteenth] century, some farmers continued to use limbs of trees or clod crushers made from sections of logs."[478]

These simple tools, moreover, were basic to the kind of agriculture practiced in Wyoming at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. In important respects they fit the homesteader experience. They were cheap and were within the grasp of people with limited means. They were portable and could be brought from their previous homes. They provided independence without reliance on others (save for the occasional visit to the blacksmith). They were hand-held or oxen-pulled and did not require the hiring of laborers. They were appropriate for intensive agriculture, for small holdings where a limited acreage of different crops would be grown and where also a small crop would be harvested for home consumption. These were the tools of the Wyoming homesteader.

---

[476] Paul W. Gates, *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture 1815-1860* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960), 279.
[477] Fred A. Shannon, *The Farmer's Last Frontier, Agriculture 1860-1897* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1945), 129-130.
[478] Shannon, *The Farmer's Last Frontier*, 131.

Some steps in the process were even performed without benefit of actual tools. The planting of seeds was often done completely by hand; here, skill and years of practice were the essential ingredients. Each crop had its own requirements. Near Laramie, John Spickerman explained how his father was an expert broadcast seeder for their critical crop of rutabagas: "And now like sowing a third of an acre father sowed it broadcast. He's a wonderful broadcast seeder, he done that in Germany and he was just a wonderful broadcast seeder and that's the way that he seeded the rutabagas and we had rutabagas, oh, just, well he was told to sow it real thick they'd crowd one another out of the ground that's what put the flavor to 'em."[479]

A third of an acre of rutabagas may be a lot of rutabagas, but even wheat, which became increasingly important in the twentieth century, would be broadcast seeded by hand into the 1920s. Bertha Chambers Gillette described how her father would seed the wheat on their homestead in Jackson Hole. While her mother drove the wagon, nudging and guiding the team of horses, with all the children grouped behind her, Jim Chambers knelt at the rear of the wagon with both hands in a metal tub full of wheat, the same tub the family used for their baths. And so the sowing went: "He put his right hand in the wheat, grabbed a handful, flung it over his left shoulder, then a handful in his left hand and flung it over his right shoulder. We children offered to help, but Daddy was afraid if we did, he might have a few [stalks] of wheat come up in a crooked line . . . ."[480] His wife would drive slowly and then make a wide turn for each row, back and forth across the field until it was covered, a field large enough that it took most of a day in May to complete. Planting the seed was serious business, was a time-honored craft, was symbolic of much that life was about, was passed down from one generation to the next, and would, weather and skill providing, produce a good crop. As the crop grew, it required more attention and more skill. Bertha Chambers Gillette continued: "It wasn't long before the wheat sprouted. Daddy watered and cared for it tenderly, and every day he walked out in the field to measure a [stalk] to see if it had grown any during the night."[481] This was intensive agriculture. This was agriculture the old way. This was farming on a homestead. This was Wyoming agriculture.

The harvest of the various crops involved their own distinct practices. In autumn 1884 the Evanston *Chieftain*, the local newspaper, published a series of tips for the "home, farm and garden." Among those tips was one providing guidance in the harvesting of buckwheat: "Buckwheat should be harvested before frost can injure it. Cut it in the morning when the dew is on, to prevent shelling. Thresh as soon as the straw is sufficiently dry, and spread the grain thinly upon the floor, as it may heat in large heaps."[482] Not particularly news to many people, and of slight import in itself, this brief injunction carries with it a set of assumptions about the kind of agriculture practiced that its readers would have understood immediately and they also reveal subtle elements of that system. Primarily, these instructions have to do

---

[479] John Spickerman, in an interview (also with Henry Spickerman) by Bob Burns, no date, Wyoming State Archives, OH-88.
[480] Bertha Chambers Gillette, *Homesteading with the Elk: A Story of Frontier Life in Jackson Hole, Wyoming* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1967), 135-136.
[481] Gillette, *Homesteading with the Elk*, 136.
[482] Evanston *Chieftain*, October 10, 1884.

with small-scale farming where an individual can restrict cutting the crop to the morning hours "when the dew is on" and when the crop from that cutting could be threshed as soon as the straw dried. This was not a wholesale operation, but a piecemeal process where part of the crop would be cut and then threshed each day, the farmer returning to the field the next to repeat the process. In addition, the threshing itself, and spreading the grain on the threshing floor, are particularly revealing of the system of agriculture practiced. The very concept of a "threshing floor," once commonplace and applied variously to both the harvest of crops and the harvest of souls in religion, went to the heart of the system.

If the planting of the grain was accomplished in a slow and measured manner, and if the cultivation of it with a hoe was equally deliberate and unhurried, and if the cutting of it with a scythe or cradle was also time-consuming, so too was the threshing. The threshing of the grain on the threshing floor was one of those agricultural practices that had not changed much in the preceding centuries. Yet it was all over Wyoming in the nineteenth century. In 1880 Edward Burnett witnessed what he called "the first scene of civilization I had seen in this land," and this was the harvesting of crops. He stood atop a hill on the way from the 41 Ranch near Buffalo on his way to Creighton and looked down the "Piney valley upon a field where men were cradling and binding wheat and oats." The next day Burnett rode into Big Horn "and there I saw men flailing grain."[483] A few years earlier Oliver Perry Hanna had cultivated crops along a tributary to Little Goose Creek, and used a plow to dig an irrigation ditch. "His garden was a success—as was his oats patch which he threshed with a flail and sold at 10c per pound the next year."[484] And at the end of the 1880s, in Crook County, the Nefsy brothers planted a crop of three acres of buckwheat, and other small grains "and cut it with a hand cradle and threshed it with a frail [*sic*] making twenty bushel per acre."[485]

In all this, one of the least remembered, most used, and most symbolic tools was the flail—the prevailing system for threshing the grain—whether it was wheat, rye, barley, or oats, and it was also used for threshing beans and other crops. A tool that was at the heart of the agricultural system of the small homesteader and farmer, the flail was an instrument that was used to separate the grain from the straw. The small grains were popular anywhere once land was cleared because their growth was reasonably dependable, because grain held the advantage of being able to be stored for use during the winter, and because the tools used for planting, cultivating, harvesting, and threshing were simple and relatively inexpensive. Of those tools perhaps the flail was the simplest and least costly and was usually made at home. It consisted of two wooden poles, a short one and a long one, attached usually with a braided leather loop; the operator would hold the long pole, and, swinging it down like an axe handle,

---

[483] "Interview with Edward Burnett Recalls Historic Occurrences; Many Interesting Events are Remembered by Buffalo Man," typescript taken from Sheridan *Press*, May, 16, 1937, in WPA Collections, subject file 394.
[484] "Interview with Edward Burnett Recalls Historic Occurrences; Many Interesting Events are Remembered by Buffalo Man." See also the discussion of Hanna and his use of the flail in *Progressive Men of Wyoming* (Chicago: A. W. Bowen & Co., 1903), 218-129.
[485] Carl Plattner, "Farming in Crook County," note attached to this typescript document in WPA Collections, subject file 1265.

would bring the beater pole—the shorter rod—crashing down repeatedly on sheaves of grain placed on a floor or hard earthen clearing—the threshing floor. This would separate—thresh—the grain from the straw and it would usually take a skilled thresher about forty minutes to thresh and stack the straw for a bushel of wheat, and less time for other grains.[486]

The threshing would be done either outside or inside. Barns were sometimes equipped with a threshing area with either a solid wood or packed dirt floor, often times located in the corridor between bays on either side. It was also performed in the open air, and a special place would be prepared, generally a shallow, circular pit possibly forty-feet in diameter into which the sheaves would be placed and then flailed. After the grain was threshed, it would be further separated to dispose of the chaff either by pouring or tossing, using the wind to carry away the lighter particles while the heavy grain fell into the container below. This winnowing process was often done in the barn too, in a location determined by the positioning of windows or doors opposite each other to carry a steady breeze through the winnowing area.

The social and economic implications of this system of hand threshing are significant. In the first place, the flail system was attractive because of the minimal investment required, something of importance to people starting out on a homestead. Secondly, because it required considerable labor and time to use, it encouraged an intensive system of agriculture, and it encouraged diversified farming, or, to put it the other way round, it encouraged farmers not to plant too many acres of grain. The three acres that the Nefsy brothers planted and harvested may seem outlandishly small from the perspective of modern farms that reach from one horizon to another and to horizons beyond them, but the sixty bushels those three acres produced probably produced about the right amount for home consumption. But more than this, the flailing system had the weight of tradition behind it. It was a practice, as historian J. Sanford Rikoon has observed, "with roots predating the writing of the Old Testament."[487] Moreover, it could be performed by members of the family farm without having to pay a professional thresher.

There was another aspect of flailing that bears acknowledgement. This was a system of production that was distinctly pre-industrial in its rhythm and time-orientation. The effective and skilled thresher sustained the movement of the beater by a steady pace, often paced to the rhythm of traditional work songs, and the flailing itself produced something that was poetically referred to as "the song of the flail."

> And can ease and wealth avail
> To make any music sweeter
> Than the pounding of the flail?
> Oh, the sounding of the flail!
> Never music can be sweeter

---

[486] J. Sanford Rikoon, *Threshing in the Midwest, 1820-1940: A Study of Traditional Culture and Technological Change* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 7-8.
[487] Rikoon, *Threshing in the Midwest, 1820-1940*, 1.

> Than the beating of the flail![488]

When an individual was flailing the grain, it was important to maintain consistent beats and steady exertion; when two people were threshing as a team, it was even more important; the steady, sing-song rhythm assured that they would do so in a synchronized way without collision. E. P. Thompson's famous study of "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," examined these pre-industrial systems of work as both symbols and regulators of work activity, and in fact as systems shaping life and labor alike in pre-industrial society. In those systems the worker controlled the tool instead of vice-versa; the task, rather than the clock, determined the time expended; the work rhythm was "natural" instead of governed by automated, mechanical systems; the work was, in Thompson's words, "more humanly comprehensible than timed labour." Thompson's framework has thus been widely used to understand the contours of the transformation to an industrial system of production—a transformation that was significantly more than just increased production.[489] Those changes were underway in Wyoming.

Horse drawn equipment gradually replaced some of the older practices, but never at a uniform rate and never with equal success. Most notably the reaper or mower began to appear in the areas where substantial acreages of grain were to be cut. The reaper itself was soon replaced by a combination mower and binder that would cut the grain and also tie it into bundles. Commonly this would involve three or four horses, pulling the binder and driven by one person, with a helper walking behind the binder to pick up the bundles and arrange them into shocks.

Some used horses for threshing. In the Big Horn Basin, in 1890, for example, former cowboy A. J. Brosios near the town of Kane drew upon his horsemanship background to thresh beans. Brosios cleaned his horse corral, which was round, then smoothed it (and probably scooped it to make a shallow bowl) and then wet the area and let it freeze and harden; this became his threshing floor. Then, as one account describes, he

> Tied ten head of horses together on a lead rope[,] got on his saddle horse and road [sic] around and around in the corral leading the ten horses behind him until they had tromped the beans all out of the pods. Then he would clean up his threshed beans and spread the floor with fresh beans to be threshed and repeated the process. In this way he threshed his beans crop until 1896.[490]

Horse-powered (in the literal sense) threshing was used all over Wyoming too. One account of threshing in Star Valley, for example, indicates its use there: "The early pioneers of star valley threshed

---

[488] J. T. Trowbridge, "Song of the Flail," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 49 (September 1874): 501-502.
[489] E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism" *Past and Present*, No. 38 (1967): 60-61.
[490] "Bean Industry in the Big Horn Basin," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1216.

their grain with a horse powered thresher which used twelve to fourteen head of horses, traveling in a circle around the power unit which was equipped with long sweeps about twelve feet long and fastened together with chains so that each team pulled on an evener. The driver would stand in the middle with a long whip and keep the teams pulling evenly."[491] The horse-threshing system held serious disadvantages, including the hardship it worked on the horses. It also required a different configuration and greater work area and often tended to be an outside activity, and it required both a team, or usually multiple teams, of horses and at least two laborers to manage. Plus, using horses generally involved threshing larger quantities of grain at one time, whereas an individual flailing the grain not only had an incentive to do a small amount at a time because of the labor expended, but losses were kept to a minimum by the intensive nature of the process. If the production was for home consumption, the flail still held serious advantages.

It was in threshing that mechanical innovation appears to have taken special hold on the farms and ranches of Wyoming. There were several, maybe more, kinds of threshing devices, that emerged; unlike their humble predecessor, the flail which was universally taken for granted as a fixture of the rural countryside and farmer's toolbox, the threshing machines were widely remarked upon in diaries and letters when they entered virtually every county, hamlet, and neighborhood. That advent was often associated with the coming of the railroad. None other than William Nefsy, one of the Nefsy brothers who had flailed the buckwheat crop, was recorded as being the first person in the Sundance area to have a threshing machine in that area, perhaps in a much larger area. The threshing machine and a haystacker were transported to Rapid City by rail and then freighted overland.[492]

The threshing machines were conspicuous because they were so big, because they displaced labor, because they revolutionized the harvest process, because they transformed social relationships, and because they brought even more changes in their wake. The thresher itself was a big machine and it stepped into one part of the harvest process. After the grain had been cut, after it had been gathered into bundles, after the bundles had been arranged in small stacks called shocks or cocks, the threshing could begin. The threshing machine itself would take the grain tossed onto a conveyor belt or chain and separate the straw from the grain; the grain and the chaff—the husks surrounding the kernels of grain—would fall into another compartment, but a fan would blow the chaff and dust away during the drop so that only the grain itself landed in the bottom. An elevator would then lift the grain continuously up to be expelled by the machine either into bags or into a stack. The straw would continue through the thresher, flailed more, as it were, to be sure that all grain was removed and captured and the straw was blown out of a chute to form a separate stack. The whole process was fast and continuous and the crew operating the thresher had to work hard and fast to keep up with its ravenous appetite for grain. The pace of work had changed so that now workers paced their actions in response to the needs and demands of the tool, not the tool according to their needs and guidance. Moreover, the grain bundles had to be brought to the thresher; it did not journey into the fields but was parked at a point of convenience and

[491] Ray Hall quoted an early Star Valley source in "A History of the Latter-day Saint Settlement of Star Valley, Wyoming," M.S. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1962,, 128.
[492] Julia Nefsy Noble, "Nefsy Family: Pioneers of Wyoming," WPA Collections, subject file 916.

there wagons would converge bringing bundle after bundle of wheat or oats or other grain to be handed in daisy-chain fashion to the operator feeding the grain into the machine. That cluster of tasks occupied some of the threshing crew. Others were involved in keeping the machine operating, attending to burps in the flow of the crop and the transformation of it from cut grain into separated grain, straw, and chaff. Still others were positioned at the output to attend the grain, the prize of the system, by bagging the grain and stacking the bags. It was, in a sense an assembly line, and the thresher was, in the same sense, a factory in the field.

The thresher, the main separator, however, did not have a self-contained power system to run it. It was dependent on an external source of power which could be even horses on a treadmill for some of the smaller systems, but increasingly it was a mechanical engine. The first engines were steam powered. In fact, it was the steam engine that made the thresher both practical in its potential for processing grain and impressive in the speed and volume in performing that task. For all its remarkable ability to generate changes in production and in life, the threshing machine was only part of a larger system. The rest of it was the steam-powered traction engine, a powerful engine capable of moving itself as well as powering other equipment, towing the other equipment along behind it. The steam engine, after it hauled itself to its workplace on some farm, for the engines were expensive and were owned by the operators only on the very largest of operations, would be fired up and its drive wheel connected to the threshing machine by a long canvas belt so that the two machines were usually around forty or fifty feet apart. That distance was dictated by safety, to keep the sparks from the engine fire away from the dried grain. In the future, the steam-powered traction engine would be reduced to simply "tractor," but in the early years the outfits were mainly steam engines that could move. The early steam engines, in fact, resembled more railroad locomotives than they did modern tractors. They were huge, they were loud, and they required at least two operators, sometimes three on the engine itself, and always more if the people hauling fuel and water are included. Their tracks were like the tracks of a giant dinosaur that once roamed Wyoming and they left a striking imprint on the earth with their enormous weight and their great steel wheels and they left just as indelible an imprint on the minds of all who beheld its advent.

Ted Olson was just a boy in the first two decades of the century, growing up on his parents' small ranch southwest of Laramie near Jelm and Woods Landing. Years later he could still recall with striking detail the arrival of the threshing machine pulled by a steam tractor in the autumn evening; it was no longer the song of the flail that accompanied the harvest:

> We hear its approach long before we can see it—a distant clank and rumble beyond the crest of the hill. Louder and louder. A massive bulk materializes, black in the thickening twilight, a smoking monster with a fiery glow in its belly; it drags behind it an even massier bulk. . . . The traction engine grunts cautiously down the hill, the separator lurching behind it, and is directed to its berth near the grain stacks. Pails of water from the ditch quench the fire in its belly; a neglected spark could send a whole season's harvest up in flames. The engineman comes to the house for a wash, a late supper and a

bed in the bunkhouse. The rest of the crew will report in the morning.[493]

The arrival of the steam engine and the threshing machine marked a significant turning point in the agricultural, social, and economic history of every farm it touched.

One aspect of the threshing process using the new machinery appears to have been welcomed. The farming neighborhoods were famous for their neighborliness, their willingness to help each other whether in the building of barns and schools or in the matter of coming to the assistance of a neighbor in distress. When one butchered a beef, it would often be shared *with* a neighbor, with the understanding that the next one would, in turn, be shared *by* the neighbor also. The small rituals of daily life reinforced bonds of mutuality and, with some irony, the arrival of the threshing machine likewise reinforced those same bonds from the past. In the past, the work associated with the harvest often involved communal relationships and work exchanges where neighbor helped neighbor, doing so on a piecemeal basis during the fall and winter until the crops were all in. The machine-powered threshing compressed that same process into a smaller time segment, and also intensified the communal participation and work sharing. The steam engine and the threshing machine would be owned by an entrepreneur, an individual who took the behemoths around, often on a regular route each year, but the work was done by the farmer and the neighboring farmers. They would characteristically, except, again, on the largest spreads, congregate for the threshing—a *thresheree* it was often called—to harvest one crop and then everyone would move to the next farm, repeat the process, and then on to the next and the next until everybody's crop was in from the field and threshed and bagged.

It was therefore, considering the big meals, the friendly rivalries, the renewed camaraderie, the shared burdens and shared delights, the culmination of a season's labor, a major occasion and intense moment in which work and celebration were mingled in ways that reach deep into the mists of time and conjure images of ancient rituals. Men, women, and children gathered and worked hard and played hard. Sylvia Epler recalled threshing in the 1910s in the area around Burns (formerly Luther) in Laramie County. At threshing time, "every man came with a team and a hay rack. So many men made much work for the women who went from place to place helping each other, for all the food was prepared at home and there was no refrigeration."[494] Aside from the glimpse this offers into gender roles at threshing time, it also indicates the community nature of the event and the bonds of mutuality. It was also just plain exciting. As Ted Olson recalled, "When I was a small boy threshing was about the most exciting event

---

[493] Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie*, 186.

[494] Sylvia Epler, "Frank Epler," in *Calico Hill: Recalling the Early Years, Good Times and Hardships of Homesteaders Laramie County, Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Jolly Dry Farmers' Club, 1973), 27. The exact same pattern was at work in the hay stacking operations. Caryn Murdock Bing recalled that in addition to the threshing that kept the family busy, "the busiest season was haying, with large amounts of food to be cooked for the haymen, bread to be made, fruit canning, gooseberry picking and doing all the usual housework. Haying usually lasted three weeks to a month." Caryn Murdock Bing, "Reminiscences," in Sublette County Artists' Guild, *Seeds-Ke-Dee Reflections* (Laramie: Modern Printing, 1985), 334.

of the year, except for Christmas."[495] Historian Mary Neth, who has studied the social impact of threshing in the Midwest closer than anyone, concurs: "The arrival of the threshing machine brought a thrill to farm people not only because of its impressive size, but also because it signaled the arrival of neighbors, work crews, hard work, and socializing."[496]

Historically, as a mainstream activity, this convergence of celebration, communal cooperation, and intense work did not last long, and in those instances where it did continue, it was as a conscious effort to hold on to important values and traditions and relationships that were being undermined by the very machine that brought the people together. The crews were changing. Increasingly the owner of the threshing machine preferred to hire the crew to work the harvest rather than rely on the farmers themselves to do the work cooperatively and voluntarily. The entrepreneur owned not only the machinery but increasingly the laborers were his as well. It remains unclear who the people were who hired on to the threshing crews, and, for that matter, who went to work for individual farmers at threshing time, and a whole folklore of migrant laborers following the harvest across the wheat belt of the Great Plains has muddied the reality. Mary Neth suggests that these workers were, contrary to prevailing conceptions, largely local in birth and residence, rural in origin and upbringing, and valued participants.[497] Even so, they tended to be single rather than married, they did not have farms of their own, and they were in some way outside the close-knit relations of a particular farming neighborhood. The large farms viewed them, especially when they sought better wages and working conditions, as a "social evil." And they were widely viewed with suspicion and not a little fear. Hamlin Garland, in his stories and novels of farm life in the Midwest, helped promote this idea, and his magazine columns were sometimes picked up by the Wyoming press. He pronounced the threshing crews that he saw in the Midwest as made up of men who "are no longer the farmers' boys of the neighborhood come on to help; they are nomadic fellows from somewhere—nobody knows where—to help harvest and to help thresh. They are rough, swearing, drinking fellows, with whom the farmer has as little to do as possible. In Dakota the threshers even carry a tent and a cook, and feed and lodge the hands whom they take with them. In this way the farmer hardly comes in contact with the men, and all of the old time bustle and neighborliness are gone."[498]

---

[495] Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie*, 185.
[496] Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 148. The comparison of the thresheree with the roundups on the cattle ranches and the sheep dipping and docking at the pens is important and begs for serious study. In the case of cattle roundups, those roundups would continue not just as a necessary component of livestock raising but also as a social ritual, a ritual marked by the coming of spring, the gathering of neighbors, and the renewal of a commitment to a way of life. Participating in the castrating, branding, vaccinating, and other processes, as well as in the social atmosphere of the roundup, was (and is) also an initiation into ranch life and as such represents a vibrant, living connection to the past.
[497] Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm*, 166-170.
[498] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, April 5, 1888.

That view spread across Wyoming too. In December 1905 twenty-three year-old Ethel Waxham was teaching school and staying with Gardiner and Mary Mills at the Red Bluff Ranch southeast of Lander—a conventional arrangement for an unmarried female teacher. At that particular time, the Mills family, with a 160 acre ranch, still had not threshed the grain and Mr. Mills was "still on the trail of the threshers." The arrival of the threshers meant, however, that Ethel Waxham needed to leave the ranch until the threshing was done. The reason for this, as explained by Waxham's granddaughters, Barbara Love and Frances Love Froidevaux, citing one of the Mills family descendants, was that "these migrant workers of the early 1900s were a source of concern for the parents of young ladies, and Mrs. Mills often sent her daughters to stay with friends while the threshers were at Red Bluff Ranch."[499]

The appearance of something akin to migrant labor was one development associated with the mechanical thresher. Another was what some perceived to be a decline in quality of the finished good. No sooner had the threshing machine made its appearance in the Midwest than its defects were roundly discussed and circulated. The Lusk *Herald* reprinted an article from *The American Cultivator* that took the new machines to task. The fundamental flaw, that commentator explained, was that the threshing machines made no distinction between strong grain and poor grain; where hand-threshing had given an opportunity to separate the two, with the poorer quality grain to be fed to the livestock and the stronger grain planted as seed, the threshing machine mixed and mingled all grades of the crop and bagged it together, thus diminishing the next year's crop with inferior seeds from this year's crop.[500] Moreover, as *Bill Barlow's Budget* at Douglas noted, damp grain was threshed along with the dry, again impacting the outcome, with the resulting grain more likely to become musty.[501] A third consequence of the thresher was its encouragement to expand production, and especially to expand production of those grains that could be sent to market—in other words, to promote the commercialization of agriculture and to shift from production for use, for home consumption, to production for market. The combination of forces caused Hamlin Garland to deliver a eulogy to the system that the threshing machine destroyed: "There are picturesque phases to the modern methods, with its traction engines, the sleeping tent and the cooking car, but the spirit which made the old time threshing festival, the circumstances which made of it a delightful meeting together of neighbors, are, in many places, a memory. The growth of the farms in area, the further increase of machinery, the change in products—all are working to render the farmer more independent of outside help, but, at the same time, separating him from the fellowship of his neighbors."[502] Clearly the traditional systems lingered on, and possibly even flourished, in some parts of Wyoming in the coming decades, but the process of technological, social, and economic transformation was underway and would play out on different schedules and in different circumstances on Wyoming's farms.

The threshing machines expanded in use and in the early twentieth century it was increasingly difficult

---

[499] Barbara Love and Frances Love Froidevaux, eds., *Lady's Choice: Ethel Waxham's Journals & Letters, 1905-1910* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 63, 371.
[500] "Home, Farm, and Garden," Lusk *Herald*, June 3, 1887.
[501] "Threshing Damp Grain," *Bill Barlow's Budget*, September 9, 1896.
[502] Cheyenne *Daily Leader*, April 5, 1888.

to find any but the most isolated and smallest of farms using the flail, although some continued to use horse-drawn threshing devices. Equally important, and perhaps more so, the engine that pulled and ran the threshing machine assumed a larger role on the farm as it began the slow process of replacing the teams of horses that had already replaced the oxen pulling the plows. The "traction engine" was on its way to becoming the tractor. In 1906 E. W. Stickney made headlines in the Laramie *Boomerang* when he went to Denver and purchased a thirty-nine horsepower Reeves steam engine to plow five hundred acres in various small grains near that city. The engine would be able (*guaranteed*) to "pull in sod ground eight 14 inch plows behind these two disc harrows each 8 feet wide and behind the discs a drill 9 feet 4 inches wide." The paper assessed this and said, "to see such an outfit at work on the Laramie plains will certainly be an innovation in comparison with our present limited farming operations." Not long after this, a group of prominent business people from Laramie drove out to watch the twenty-ton tractor work and were pleased; three others had been purchased that year and this was the wave of the future.[503]

Again, these huge engines were also hugely expensive and few could afford them. That meant that ownership usually was limited to the largest farming operations and to those who took up the occupation of "custom plowing." When this happened, other changes followed in the wake of the steam engine. Historians of technology often refer to the "diffusion" of that technology, a trickle-down of alterations in the actual machines and tools used, as the new replaces the old, as the sophisticated and complex replaces the simple. In a parallel process, however, other changes in agriculture also began to "diffuse" through the countryside. William Affeldt of Story, Wyoming, threshed grain from Big Goose Creek to Crazy Woman at the end of the nineteenth century and on up into the 1930s. Late in life he recalled the years of his threshing and his interviewer recorded the change in farming that he saw. "There was little money in the country in those days. The farmers were just getting a start, and their markets were few and mostly distant. Exporting their grain was practically impossible and out of the question. . . . So the grain they raised had to be consumed locally. The result was that few of the farmers were in circumstances to pay cash for threshing. They had to pledge grain to their merchants for supplies to carry them from one harvest to the next. This was considerate of the merchants, but they could not handle all their grain. So they would accept only what was required to settle the farmer's account. So the men doing the threshing generally had to accept grain in exchange for the job or wait until such a time as the farmer could get the money to pay them."[504] Being able to pay the merchant and being able to pay the thresher caused changes, and, in this way, the thresher, and the custom plow operator, using the new steam engines, helped turn the self-sufficient farmer into a commercial farmer, producing more for the market. Of course, the more that was produced for the market, the more the farmer needed the help in the field those operators and their machines could provide.

The steam engines for threshing and custom plowing were substantial investments with substantial promise. In 1910 the Pinedale *Roundup* carried a column by G. Wellesley Brabbit who noted that the

---

[503] "To Sow 500 Acres," Laramie *Boomerang*, March 14, 1906; "Plowing up a Field of 150 Acres," Laramie *Boomerang*, April 25, 1906.
[504] "Pioneer Thresher Relates Stories of Early Days," Sheridan *Press*, February 22, 1932.

typical "up-to-date outfit or rig costs $4,000 and consists of a 20 or 30 horsepower traction engine and a series of plows, usually in groups of 10, 12, or 14 . . ." "With this outfit," Brabbit observed, "the engineer or owner goes forth and breaks up the soil at from $3 to $5 per acre, according to the character of the land. If it be new, more is charged; if old, less. The farmer in both cases furnishes the coal." They were expensive to own and expensive to operate: "The cost of running one of these plowing outfits per day is as follows: Man to steer, $1.50; water hauler, $1; board, $3; feed for one horse, 50 cents; sharpening plows, $2.50; oil, $1. About $6 worth of coal is burned." In return for this considerable investment and operating expense, the results were impressive: "They travel at the rate of two miles per hour over even ground and can turn under 25 to 30 acres daily. From five to seven inches is the depth of the furrow."[505]

That was the promise. The reality was different. Historian Gilbert Fite's assessment of the traction engines in neighboring South Dakota indicated that the new machines left much to be desired: "Although South Dakota farmers were among the earliest tractor users, the first machines were heavy, cumbersome, and poorly suited to modest field work."[506] Certainly that experience was repeated in Wyoming. Near Moorcroft, Charles Floyd Spencer recalled his neighbor with a tractor, remembering that the man had one of the first Rumely tractors in Wyoming.

> His idea was that custom plowing for settlers would be a big help to the homesteaders who were required to cultivate a certain number of acres each year to prove up on their land. It sounded like a good idea, but actual practice showed that the Rumely could plow only twelve to fifteen acres of land a day, when it was running. The rough sagebrush land, the hard to replace parts, and the lack of a good mechanic to run the tractor made it a poor investment.[507]

On the other side of the state, in Star Valley, the experience was repeated. As one resident recalled, "in 1912 Eugene Weber bought the first tractor to come to the valley. It was a huge steam outfit with power enough to pull six plows at one time and for a few years did much of the plowing in the Etna area. . . . There were no roads or bridges capable of carrying such a heavy load at that time so the company which delivered the tractor shipped it to Soda Springs, Idaho and brought it down Tin Cup Canyon. Where the roads would not carry the load they would pull into the bottom of the canyon and make a temporary road and ford the streams. This outfit was fired with wood and proved to be so slow and expensive that it was finally used to run a sawmill instead of plowing."[508] The steam tractors caused a sensation when they were introduced to an area and they plowed many acres of farmland all over Wyoming, and

---

[505] G. Wellesley Brabbit, "Custom Plowing," Pinedale *Roundup*, June 23, 1910.
[506] Gilbert C. Fite, "The Transformation of South Dakota Agriculture: The Effects of Mechanization, 1939-1964," *South Dakota History*, 19 (1989): 280.
[507] Charles Floyd Spencer, *Wyoming Homestead Heritage* (Hicksville, New York: Exposition Press, 1975), 5.
[508] Hilda C. White quoted by Ray Hall in "A History of the Latter-day Saint Settlement of Star Valley, Wyoming," 128.

probably every area had at least one farmer or independent operator who had a steam tractor and used it in the neighboring properties. But the tractors did not became an integral element of Wyoming farm life, or farm life anywhere else really, until innovations in the 1920s made them lighter and cheaper; even then it was not until the 1930s and 1940s that they really replaced the horse.

The effects of steam-powered machines were substantial and they included a revision of farming practices, an increase in commercial farming, sometimes an increase in debt to pay for the new equipment or for its use, and the advent of migrant labor. There was another technological and commercial development, though, which provided a similar, if more indirect, impact on farming. If the threshing process sometimes resembled a factory *in* the field, a factory *near* the field or in the towns served by the fields could initiate changes that rippled through the entire countryside. Flour mills routinely encouraged area farmers to put more land into wheat; alfalfa mills similarly provided an enticement for the cultivation of alfalfa so that local crops could be turned into alfalfa meal for livestock feeding. Both were common around the state.

Processing plants for turning beets into sugar, however, were not so common, and when they did emerge, their consequences were striking and enduring. In the Big Horn Basin, the various irrigation projects had opened up land for settlement and farming especially in the northwest part along the Shoshone River, and in the eastern part along the Bighorn River, with those areas farther from streams remaining ranch land. But the farms were small and many. And, despite the financial burdens associated with irrigation assessments, often involving mortgages, they were to a surprising degree oriented to producing for use rather than for the market, managing to scrape together enough to meet their obligations by selling just a little on the market. Charles Lindsay studied the agriculture of the area and reported, "Small farms, diversified crops, and intensive cultivation if great yields were expected, were the chief characteristics of the irrigated area of the Big Horn Basin after all the projects were in operation. A few of the old cattle ranches had placed considerable tracts under cultivation, sometimes as many as a thousand or more acres, but the forty or eighty acre farm unit predominated."[509]

Beginning in 1906 when Senator Reed Smoot of Utah visited the Mormon settlements along the Shoshone River and encouraged sugar beet growth there—and the construction of a beet processing plant—sugar beets became a more pronounced part of the agricultural system of the basin. Beets had already been demonstrated as successful crops in that climate and soil and in 1901 the Agricultural Experiment Station at the University of Wyoming identified the Big Horn Basin, the area around Sheridan, and the irrigated lands near Wheatland as the most promising in Wyoming for the production of sugar beets.[510] The key to the equation was a factory, for the beets could not be shipped long distances or stored a long time where they might freeze; a nearby factory was a necessity. Lindsay reports, however, that the prospective owners of such a factory in the basin declined to build it "until it

[509] Charles Lindsay, "The Big Horn Basin," in University of Nebraska, *University Studies*, XXVIII-XXIX (1928-1929): 227.
[510] E. E. Slosson, "Sugar Beets in Wyoming," typescript of paper published in proceedings of Wyoming Industrial Convention, December 1901, in WPA Collections, subject file 1172.

was more fully demonstrated that farmers could and would grow beets."[511] Beets were already in production and rotated well with alfalfa and a local alfalfa mill had been a success, but the farmers in the basin took up the challenge, shifted their production, and began to grow more beets. As the railroad extended from Frannie to Basin and then Worland and Kirby between 1906 and 1908, and then Thermopolis in 1910, an outlet became possible and production increased. The beets were shipped to Billings, Montana. In 1907 Lovell shipped out thirteen cars of beets. Nine years later that community sent to Billings three hundred cars of beets and that appears to have been sufficient to cause the Great Western Sugar Company to proceed with a factory in Lovell in 1916. The next year the Utah Wyoming Sugar Company built a factory at Worland.

Along the Bighorn River, the shift to commercial agriculture was substantial and beets became very much the focus of a single-crop system of production. And this held other consequences too, especially in the matter of field labor. Again, Charles Lindsay reported the next step: "The beet industry immediately introduced a new social element. The first success with beets was achieved by importing German Russians to do the field labor required to grow them. Later on these laborers were replaced by large numbers of Mexicans, who contracted by the acre to thin and cultivate the crop, and were satisfied to realize a living wage on the labors of all members of the family, old and young."[512] It is unclear when this transformation from German-Russian to Mexican labor was complete, but it appears to have been accelerated by World War I.

The same forces unfolded elsewhere in the state. At Douglas, Wheatland, and Torrington, a major push began in 1915 and 1916 to promote the growth of sugar beets in the irrigated lands there, and contracts were signed in some places for five years obligating farmers to plant the beets. The hope for community promoters was that a beet factory would be located in those communities; meanwhile the sugar plant at Scottsbluff was the magnet that caused the farmers to shift to beets in Torrington and another plant in northern Colorado drew beets from Wheatland. It would only be in 1923 when Goshen County Sugar was incorporated and three years later before a plant was built at Torrington.[513] Again, however, the same set of forces was at work and even without the sugar factories farms shifted increasingly to single crop agriculture and expanded the acreages on which those commercial crops were grown.

---

[511] Lindsay, "The Big Horn Basin," 229.

[512] Lindsay, "The Big Horn Basin," 230. In the late eighteenth century, Catherine the Great of Russia had encouraged western Europeans to migrate to Russia and establish their own communities, promising them land and freedom; a hundred years later, however, they found themselves oppressed and many migrated to the United States, many of them going on to the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain region where there were hopeful opportunities in the growing agricultural region, and where they established their own ethnic communities, separate from other German and Russian groups. They are usually, and correctly, known as Germans from Russia, but are sometimes found referred to as German Russians or Russian Germans.

[513] Douglas *Budget*, November 11, 1915 and January 20, 1916; Daisy B. Robey, "The Sugar Beet Industry," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1292.

It was even more so near Sheridan. Levi Leiter had taken over the Pratt and Ferris cattle ranch, of which the U Cross was the centerpiece property, and his son Joseph switched from ranching to farming and especially promoted irrigation projects. Evidently with Leiter's encouragement, the Holly Sugar Company opened a sugar factory in Sheridan in 1915, and thereupon Leiter "leased his operation to the Holly Sugar Company and by means of the tenant system, brought hundreds of families into the Lower Clear Creek Valley for the production of sugar beets."[514] The Ucross Foundation is more explicit: "Gradually, the properties were divided into individual tenant farms and leased to many of the Russian-German immigrants who had come west. This tenant 'project' was called the Leiter Estates, and most of the farmers grew sugar beets."[515] This was a single-crop, commercial system of agriculture with an exclusive focus on the market and this was the same pattern evident in the Big Horn Basin. It was also the pattern of the future.

In a short period of time, three or four decades perhaps, the sweet music of the pounding of the flail had been replaced in rural Wyoming with other sounds. Sometimes those sounds were the rumbling and roar of the steam traction engine over the hill. Sometimes the new sounds were the sounds of the factory in town processing the sugar. But it was not just the song that had changed, for the tools had not only become more complex, of vastly greater size and weight, and more central to the work; the tools, the machines, had also become the element that governed the actions of the laborers, instead of the laborers controlling and guiding the simple tool as a reflection of that person's own identity. And it was not just a matter of swinging a flail; the movements of the workers included growing one crop instead of another, growing more crops for the market instead of for home consumption, and moving from one place to another, even across the ocean, to go to work as tenant farmers or as migrant laborers. The forces unleashed by the coming of industry to the farms of Wyoming were greater than those that had been applied to separate the husk from the seed with a simple flail.

iv. Putting Industry into the Ranching Industry

In 1913 the *Wyoming Farm Bulletin* observed, "Crook County, like many other counties in Wyoming, is in a transitional period. In general the old-time stock business is a thing of the past. The range has been fenced up by homeseekers. Many of the ranchers have decided that it is useless to try anything further."[516] It was too early for an obituary of Wyoming ranching, but certainly the *Bulletin* was correct in its fundamental observation: cattle ranching had changed and would never be the same as it had been. In the 1910s cattle ranching had come to resemble, with some important structural exceptions, the

[514] Clearmont Historical Group, *Backward Glance: Ulm, Leiter, Ucross, Clearmont, A Century of History*, 10.
[515] "About the Ucross Ranch: History," on the World Wide Web at http://www.ucrossfoundation.org/about/history.html.
[516] Albert E. Bowman, "Dairying in Crook County," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 3 (July 1913): 4.

Midwest system of ranching more than the Texas system.

There were actually several dimensions of this. The influx of homesteaders in the 1900s and 1910s was an important part because they did increase and when each one settled on a piece of the public domain, that meant, fenced or unfenced, that piece of land was no longer available for grazing. In addition, even the holdout ranchers found it prudent to fence their land, to keep their livestock in and the livestock of others out. Fences were a critical part of the maintenance of both ranch and farm. Richard Pfister, near Lusk, suggested that fences even solved problems at several levels because of the competition for land use that had been endemic in that area. Pfister, a small rancher, recalled, "In 1909 the country around Lusk began to settle up, the land agents locating people on the government public domain. Up to this time the small ranchers had the country all fenced up, and there was plenty of land-fighting among them. It was not long until all the best land had been homesteaded. The homesteaders went into the big pastures and this put a stop to our fighting among ourselves."[517] About the same time and to the north, Charles Floyd Spencer recalled the closing of the open range southeast of Moorcroft where his family had homesteaded: "The summers of 1911 and 1912 saw much of the open range fenced in by homesteaders, so the cattle and sheep ranches had to adjust to a new method of operation. Most of them cut down somewhat on the size of their herds and started more improvements on their original holding."[518] Where fences had once been anathema to the rancher, they were now a source of pride. When Ted Olson described the feeling of accomplishment he and others felt when working on the fence on the family ranch, his comments doubtless would have seemed strange to ranchers in the same area just a generation earlier: "There's solid satisfaction in spiking a rail into place to close a break in a fence, having a gate swing smoothly and latch snugly after you have reset a sagging post."[519]

Fences were now an accepted, even mandated, part of farm and ranch life alike. In the Big Horn Basin, Charles Lindsay reports that the stake president in those Mormon communities "visited the various wards, supervised their religious and social programs, instructed them in church doctrines, and advised them in temporal affairs. The people were urged to keep out of debt, comply with the 'Word of Wisdom,' build good fences, attend fast meetings, plant trees, and pay a full tithing, all in the same sermon."[520] While building good fences may not have been exactly a sacrament in other places, they constituted a priority all over the state.

The fences represented not just a boundary on the farms and ranches but signified a different kind of ranching too. In the fading of the open range the ranches were more self-contained than they had been, in the sense at least that their cattle had to manage on the water and food that was produced on the ranch property, not elsewhere. As Ted Olson said, "We were farmers as well as ranchers." They grew not only their own foods but the feed for their cattle. For their small ranch that ran a hundred to a hundred

---

[517] Historical Committee of the Robber's Roost Historical Society, *Pioneering on the Cheyenne River* (Lusk, Wyoming: The Lusk *Herald*, 1947; reprinted 1956), 80-82.
[518] Spencer, *Wyoming Homestead Heritage*, 55.
[519] Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie*, 178.
[520] Lindsay, "The Big Horn Basin," 207.

fifty cattle, the Olsons would put up 150 tons and sometimes 200 tons of hay. This was a substantial amount of hay, but quite small compared to the Riverside Ranch nearby which ran 3,000 head of cattle and put up 3,500 tons. In any size operation, the hay required a considerable portion of the ranch land and also considerable labor. That too was dependent upon the farm technology of the horse-drawn equipment days. After weeks of preparation—"oating up the horses" for the labor ahead, sharpening the sickles and replacing worn blades, tightening and greasing the mower, replacing straps and buckles, and drying out the fields by closing the headgates—the day of cutting was its own reward: Olson's father "drove the mower into the field below the house, lowered the sickle bar, clucked the team into motion. . . . The grass folds back over the sickle in a constantly breaking wave, green and russet, specked with the froth of daisies and wild caraway. The scent is sweet and pungent. By late afternoon the meadow below the house is a rug of broad swaths of paling green, following the irregular frame set by the creek, the fence and the corrals, but converging toward the center." Then they had to put up the hay.

> In good weather hay cures fast. By noon next day it is ready to be raked into windrows and then into cocks. The third day we load it into the hay rack and stow it away in the mow and the cribs around the corrals to feed horses and milk cows.
>
> That much we manage by ourselves. Now the action shifts to the larger meadows, and a much-augmented cast is required.

In Sublette County, Pearl Budd Spencer recalled the family basis of the labor system: "the earliest hay crews were family oriented with perhaps two or three neighbors helping out. This was necessary because both manpower and money for wages were scarce."[521] But in Albany County labor was available, albeit not all of it from ideal sources. Drawing upon neighbors and a crew gathered from "the itinerants lounging in front of the saloons, flophouses and brothels along First Street," Ted Olson's family put together a crew that nonetheless made haystacks that were works of art. "Our stacks are geometrically accurate, rising plumb-line true for seven or eight feet, then tapering to a wedge. The art is in 'topping out' the stack, pulling the sides in symmetrically while the ends remain vertical until the builder stands astride a gable roof as he pats the last forkful into place. Then the stack is fettered against the winter gales with a ridgepole and four sets of hangers straddling it."[522] This was the prevailing standard and Jim Dillinger recalled of his grandfather's haystacks on the Bar Padlock Ranch north and west of Thermopolis, "His haystacks were actually almost put in with a transit."[523]

In the technology of hay stacking, several systems were available including two that used the beaver slide, a sloping wooden frame device onto which the hay would be placed and then either pushed or pulled up the slope to the stack. The Olson ranch used a pusher with horses specially trained to push a T-shaped pole and plunger (this was often a sweep rake that had been adapted to the beaver slide) that

---

[521] Pearl Budd Spencer, "The Changing Face of Haying," in Sublette County Artists' Guild, *Seeds-Ke-Dee Reflections* (Laramie: Modern Printing, 1985), 76.
[522] Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie*, 179-181.
[523] Jim Dillinger interviewed by Patty Myers, April 6, 1985, Wyoming State Archives, OH-1157.

would force the hay up the slide and over, onto the stack.[524] The alternative used horses to pull the hay up the slope on a frame pulled by ropes and pulleys. A third system, the overshot stacker, also used ropes and pulleys but the hay was placed in a massive basket (again, often an adapted sweep rake) and as the horses moved away from the stack, the basket swung out and over the posts and frame on which they were hinged and dropped the hay into the stack. These devices would sometimes be used as well to put hay into the loft, or mow, of a barn using the outside large opening on the second story of the barn. The stacks tended, but not always, to be numbered so that they each had an identity and would be used in a systematic way during the winter.

In one important respect, the ranching system of Wyoming in the 1900s and 1910s varied from the Midwest system. The open range was indeed over, except that the public domain was still grazed. Now, however, much of the public domain was national forest, or, as it was originally known, forest reserve land, and the grazing there was seasonal. In the mountains and plains of Wyoming a system of transhumance continued wherein the livestock often grazed in the mountains in the summer months and then returned to the lower elevations for the winter, and the summer range in the mountains was often on national forest land. Grazing was generally done by permits issued for a certain number of cattle; some reports indicate that cattle were not assigned specific locations (as opposed to sheep which had geographic allotments), and practices may have varied by forest administration on this. For example, in the Shoshone National Forest, large operators were assigned specific ranges in the forest while "the small owners who cannot afford to hire a rider" were assigned community ranges.[525] The permits on that forest jumped from fifty-one in 1906 to 130 in 1915, and almost all of that increase was with permits for herds ranging from one to forty head. (The report lumped cattle and horses together, but indicates that they were primarily issued for cattle; the report also recognized that horses were necessary to the herding of the cattle and permits needed to include their grazing activities too.) Similar arrangements, with variations, appear to have obtained in other forests in Wyoming.

The use of the national forests, in turn, had some implications. One was that facilities on forest land were required. This included the building of fences, especially drift fences, on forest land to keep livestock generally within their assigned range and to make control and enforcement easier.[526] Again, using the example of the Shoshone Forest, by 1915 there were twenty-eight miles of drift fence on that forest. In addition there were five corrals (not counting sheep counting corrals at the entrance of the driveways) and two cabins for use by the owners of the livestock.[527] Will Barnes reported in 1913,

---

[524] I am grateful to Ann Noble for sharing information on this system of stacking and on the necessity of having specially trained horses for that work.
[525] "From the Files of Shoshone National Forest," typescript of report sent to District Forester in Denver, July 23, 1915 in WPA Collections, subject file 408.
[526] Will C. Barnes, *Western Grazing Grounds and Forest Ranges: A History of the Live-stock Industry as Conducted on the Open Ranges of the Arid West, with Particular Reference to the Use Now Being Made of the Ranges in the National Forests* (Chicago: The Breeder's Gazette, 1913), 220. Barnes was a grazing inspector for the Forest Service.
[527] "From the Files of Shoshone National Forest," 9-10.

"Stock driveways are established wide enough to admit of reasonable grazing en route, over which stock may be driven under a permit, which is in most instances granted without charge."[528] The major developments on the forest land would come in subsequent years. The Bighorn National Forest reported, for example, "no record of range improvements can be found prior to 1916. In that year there were ten miles of drift fences and five corrals on the Forest. By 1931 there were fifty-two miles of fences, six corrals, sixty-five miles of stock driveways and trails, four stock bridges, and twelve water developments."[529]

Because of the moving of the cattle from summer range to winter range and back again, because of the sometimes mingling of the herds on the public domain, and because of the continuing necessity for branding, castrating, and shipping cattle, the roundup continued, but it was substantially different from the roundups of the 1880s. It would be a smaller event and often would take place on private land, even within the corrals adjacent to the barns and ranch houses. Charles Floyd Spencer reflected on this period as the end of an era and he focused on the demise of the roundup. "The old open-range roundups were on their way out," Spencer recalled. "The last one that I remember in our part of the country was in the first part of June, 1911. It was held on a large flat near our homestead."[530] When people like Spencer referred to the end of the roundups, as they often did, they were referring to the old roundups, not those that had taken their place.

The roundup continued in the changed circumstances but it was every bit as much of a social institution as part of the system of production. It was a direct descendant of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association roundups where the roundups were designated as "wagons" and where representatives of the different ranches would come to participate in the work, in the claiming of calves, and in the socializing that took place. At one time under the sponsorship of the WSGA the roundups sometimes were organized by regional associations, like the Laramie River Stock Association and the Big Piney Roundup Association, which coordinated cooperative grazing of national forest lands. They were also, however, neighborly gatherings as the open range diminished. The area covered was smaller and the size of the roundup was also smaller, though just as intense. They would gather to help each other out and also to gather up the strays from their own herd that had drifted onto adjacent ranges. Leroy Smith explained to interviewer Patty Myers, "Our bunch was small enough that we generally did our own branding. But you know there'd be two or three neighbor fellows who'd come in and help then father would go and help them."[531]

The spirit of cooperation evident in the roundups was important. And performing the series of chores that had to be done at roundup time required more than a solitary cowboy, or cowpuncher, as they were often called. Separating the branded from the unbranded, and the cattle to be sold from those to be kept, required skill and teamwork. Holding still a good-sized animal that was not in a cheerful mood about

---

[528] Barnes, *Western Grazing Grounds and Forest Ranges*, 213.
[529] J. F. Connor, Forest Supervisor, "Grazing," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1216.
[530] Spencer, *Wyoming Homestead Heritage*, 43.
[531] Leroy Smith, interviewed by Patty Myers, November 3, 1980, Wyoming State Archives, OH-1124.

the branding, castrating, and dehorning that was taking place required physical strength and fast reflexes as well as seasoned judgment. And the only way to get the seasoning was through repeated exposure to the vicissitudes and satisfactions of the roundup. This would continue day after day for as long as it took to treat (soon including vaccination as well) all the livestock in the cooperating ranches. In that way the roundup became not just a part of the process of raising cattle but a social activity where the people of the range tested themselves and each other, where they shared their knowledge and skills, and where, despite the hard work, the real dangers, and the blood and pain, they enjoyed good company, good food, and good rivalry. There was even a celebratory aspect to the roundup, one associated with neighbors coming together and simply socializing, exchanging work and meals, gossip and news. It emerged as a meaningful counterpart to the seasonal communal activities associated with the threshing bees. Branding cattle, of course, was at its most fundamental a way to tell cattle apart, to tell which cattle belonged to which owner. But the process of branding, as it developed, and often remains, became a rite of initiation, a way of keeping the people on the range together, of forging the bonds of mutuality between people who may be neighbors but may also be separated by substantial distances.

Cattle ranching was still alive and it appears to have made its accommodation to the increase in settlement and the increase in farms and farming. Sometimes the fences helped this by keeping the farmers and ranchers apart, both by keeping the cattle out and keeping the cattle in; there were difficulties, there were issues, but generally, as Charles Floyd Spencer acknowledged, "The law, however, was on the land owners' side, so after a few years of adjustment, the problem disappeared, and settlers and cattlemen got along fairly well."[532] Sometimes the accommodation was practical. In 1912 the Wyoming State Dry-Farm Association met at Jireh, where an active colony of dry farmers had settled; the dry farmers were addressed by Jack Moore who spoke "from the standpoint of an old cattle man who had turned to dry-farming as a means of increasing his feed to supplement the forage grown by other methods. He stated that at one time the cattle man was an enemy of the dry-farmer, but today he realized that the dry-farmer had come to stay and rather welcomed him."[533] Probably the most typical accommodation was that recorded on the Shoshone National Forest where the Forest Supervisor reported in 1915, "with one or two exceptions, the attitude of the cowman cannot be said to be hostile towards the bona fide settler. Most of them look upon the settlement of the country as inevitable, and simply regard it as a matter of course, and do not try to interfere with the settler." He also added, though, "Naturally, however, the larger stockman tries to discourage settlement by trying to convince prospective settlers that the lands have no value for agriculture and that they cannot make a living upon them."[534] The fact that they were not shooting at each other was a positive sign, although the ranchers did try to lead them to other parts to settle.

As a result of the changes in cattle ranching—and the diminution in range—some cattle growers and also new farmers turned to dairy cattle. In 1912 the *Wyoming Farm Bulletin* lamented "the present

---

[532] Spencer, *Wyoming Homestead Heritage*, 55.
[533] "Meeting of the Wyoming State Dry-Farm Association," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 2 (November 1912): 227.
[534] "From the Files of Shoshone National Forest," 8.

scarcity of milk cows" in Wyoming and encouraged those in the cattle business to consider operating a dairy farm. "Irrigation has made cultivation more intensive and boosted land values, and open ranges are now almost a thing of the past," it said, and argued that a dairy operation could provide real profits.[535] The next year the same bulletin noted that ranchers were turning in that direction and "even some of the new-comers who expected to do nothing but raise grain and thereby make quick money, have caught the idea. And this idea is that dairying must come to fill a very important place in the system of farming."[536] Transportation remained an important problem, the argument ran, and it was more economical to take concentrated goods like butter and cheese to market than crops or livestock. Revealingly, Albert Bowman, who began his career in 1913 as assistant state leader of farm management demonstrations at the University of Wyoming, told prospective dairy farmers that they would find "that a regular cash income is something to strive for." This had two unspoken components: one, that producing for the market was a good thing, and two, that dairy operations generated revenues that were regular, not just seasonal.[537]

Two particular developments enhanced the possibilities of successful dairy operations. One was the technology of separating cream. Traditionally cream had been separated from the milk by allowing it to set overnight, usually in some kind of shallow pan; in the morning the cream would be skimmed off leaving the skim milk. The mechanical cream separators being marketed in the 1910s brought some efficiencies to the process and, according to the experts at the University of Wyoming experiment station, the cream separator was "one of the wisest investments a farmer who keeps four or more cows can make."[538] Actually most of the advantages to the cream separator applied only if the dairy products were being actively marketed. The separator allowed the farmer to keep the skim milk to feed to other animals on the farm, especially the pigs, and retaining that part of the nutrients on the farm where they would ultimately be absorbed back into the soil. The alternative was to send the whole milk off to the creamery where the skim milk would be lost as waste.

The second development involved the expansion of the sugar beet industry. Because alfalfa rotated with beets, the alfalfa needed to be used and it, and the meal it provided, worked well as cattle feed. For that matter, the tops and crowns of the beets themselves also provided excellent forage for dairy cattle.[539] Unlike beef cattle which might range distant pastures, the necessity of keeping milch cows close to the barn and house implied a system of feeding. And silage—a mixture of fermented grains—was an important element of their feed. In the 1910s concrete silos began to emerge on the farms of Wyoming, especially where dairy operations were substantial.[540]

---

[535] A. D. Faville, "Dairy Possibilities in Wyoming," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 2 (July 1912): 180-182.
[536] Bowman, "Dairying in Crook County," 4.
[537] Bowman, "Dairying in Crook County," 4, and TSP, "Dairying on the New Farm," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 2 (September 1912): 208-209.
[538] "The Cream Separator on the Farm," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, I (July 1911): 12-13.
[539] See in particular, Lindsay, "The Big Horn Basin," 230.
[540] A.D.F., "Silage and Concrete Silos," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, I (November 1911): 69-72; "Silos and Silage," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, I (July 1911): 4-6.

Dairy operations of various sizes, from the small farm with its one or two milch cows, to the larger commercial dairies with rows of stanchions in big dairy barns and with nearby silos, were spread all across the state, and just about every community had some kind of commercial dairy farm nearby. But some areas showed special concentrations. Dairies were well established in Star Valley, of course, and cooperative creameries emerged at communities throughout the valley. The Thatcher brothers operated a creamery at Thayne and the Burtons ran creameries at Afton, Smoot, Auburn, and Freedom while Jensen creameries were located at Grover, Thayne, Fairview, and Etna.[541] The dairy promoters at the University of Wyoming hoped these dairies would expand to the north. In 1911 a letter from California indicated an interest in moving to Jackson's Hole (as it was then known) and inquired about the possibility of planting crops there. The response of the *Farm Bulletin* noted that the valley there was "one of the best farming and stock raising parts of the state. It is as yet but little developed and its main drawbacks at the present time are distance from railroads and lack of markets." After suggesting that a variety of small grains, alfalfa, potatoes, and root and garden crops could be grown there successfully, the magazine also noted, "Just south of the Jackson's Hole in the Star Valley, is one of the best dairy regions of the state, and there is no reason why the Jackson country should not be just as good for dairying and mixed farming."[542]

Jackson did not immediately become a dairy center for the state but another area did expand substantially. The rise of the dairy business in the Big Horn Basin stemmed from the expansion of irrigation there. And the production of alfalfa (with mills at Powell and Garland) and sugar beets contributed, in turn, to dairy operations. In 1917 George Wharton James, in his study of irrigation and reclamation projects under the Reclamation Service, observed, "one of the most important industries on the [Shoshone] project is that of dairying. The farmers are conducting a co-operative creamery which makes an excellent quality of butter, the demand for which is far in excess of the supply."[543] "Ere long," according to Marvin B. Rhodes in his short history of the Big Horn Basin, "every sizable community had its creamery."[544]

If cattle ranching was not the same in the 1910s as it had been earlier, neither was the sheep industry. During the 1910s, the sheep industry became increasingly an industry in terms of organization,

---

[541] Hall, "A History of the Latter-day Saint Settlement of Star Valley, Wyoming,", 78.
[542] *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, I (January 1911): 101.
[543] George Wharton James, *Reclaiming the Arid West: The Story of the Reclamation Service* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1917), 363. See also the article, "Shoshone Project," Powell *Leader*, April 2, 1915, promoting the dairy business: ". . . Where can more ideal conditions be found than right here to carry on this highly profitable [dairy] business? Flies do not torment stock in the summer; there is no intense heat to cause discomfort, and we produce the best hay known to the dairy industry." This was a recurring theme in the area at the time. "Can a Profit be Made with a Dairy?" Powell *Leader*, October 14, 1915.
[544] Marvin B. Rhodes, "Date with Destiny: A Brief History of the Livestock Industry in the Big Horn Basin," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 393.

operation, and technology. In the first decade of the twentieth century the state's sheep operations had survived weather, animosity, and raids and the numbers of sheep had grown dramatically. In 1910 there were 5,397,161 sheep in the state. But the next decade proved to be even more of a challenge and by 1920 that number had plummeted by two-thirds, falling to 1,859,775 animals. The reasons for this are easy to identify. One obvious impact came with the winter of 1911-1912, which in turn followed on difficult years in 1910 and 1911, years when rainfall was light and winters were hard. In one year the tally of sheep dropped by two million head and the decline between 1910 and 1912 was thirty-four percent.[545] Stories about the blizzards of the winter of 1911-1912 recall harrowing experiences, losses of entire herds—and their herders—and grisly clean-up efforts afterwards when sheep carcasses were skinned so as to salvage some of the wool. That year the Wyoming Board of Sheep Commissioners reported, "The winter of 1911-12 was the greatest check the sheep industry of this state has experienced in several years. In several instances the entire flock was annihilated and in eight cases the herders perished with their bands. . . . When the April storms swept over this state many of these men, who up to that time had been quite fortunate, were in the short time of forty-eight hours left entirely destitute of live sheep. The fact that more sheep were lost at this late date, due to the extreme exposure and weakened condition is the most discouraging feature. There was a great shortage of lambs and decided injury of the wool clip as a consequence of the foregoing facts."[546] In part it was the storm that wreaked such damage on the sheep industry, and certainly the stories of tragedy—human and animal—remain to be told, or at least found.

In larger measure, though, the storm revealed fundamental structural problems. The way the decline in the number of sheep actually worked included several factors, not just one. First were the losses due to exposure and starvation. In addition, though, the next step was the forced sales as a result of those losses, which compounded the problem; the sheep owners had substantial debts and the loss of a significant portion of their herds (in terms of both wool and mutton) required them to sell more of the remainder to meet their obligations, and forced sales meant a glutted market which further reduced the prices they received. Finally, the stresses of the winter also weakened the ewes which meant additional losses in lambing and wool production for the survivors of the storms. Given these circumstances for two or three years in a row, the devastation in the sheep industry was both comprehensible and huge.

Paul Richards of Douglas, one of the sheep operators in that area, expressed some of the frustration and lay bare some of the particular forces involved in the calamity of the sheep industry after the winter of 1911-1912. Part of the problem, Richards observed, was the bubble in sheep for some years. Richards described the fever of investing in sheep in Douglas over the previous decade saying that that town was a true "community of sheep-men."

---

[545] A. F. Vass and Harry Pearson, "An Economic Study of Range Sheep Production on the Red Desert and Adjoining Areas," University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 156, July 1927: 10-12.

[546] That report is quoted by Vass and Pearson, "An Economic Study of Range Sheep Production on the Red Desert and Adjoining Areas," 12-13.

> Not only were there sheep-men, pure and simple, who were nothing else; but all the saloon-keepers were interested in sheep, so also were the hotel proprietor and the leading lawyer and doctor, and all the officials of the First National Bank, and the newspaper man, of *Sagebrush Philosophy* fame, and the men in the Land Office, and the taxidermist, and all the merchants but one; even two of the preachers had retired as pastors and become shepherds. It was a sheep town, sure enough. They worshipped not the golden calf, but the golden fleece.[547]

Richards noted that many a person who started herding sheep on shares "was freely furnished with credit by the bank and the stores till he could realize on his wool and lamb crop." With the loans and with the open and free grass of the public domain, it often seemed that riches were assured. But, he said, "there has gradually developed a congested condition of the range." With everybody trying to run their sheep and cattle and horses, and also homestead, on the range, the range had become seriously overstocked. The result was something akin to seven biblical plagues, according to Richards, and as drought, low prices, disease, blizzard, and a low tariff on wool hit the sheep industry, the deeply indebted owners were not able to pay their bills; in fact, at each turn they were forced to borrow more and to go deeper into debt, and that made them even more vulnerable to the next calamity. The sheep industry was being thinned not only of wool, and not only of sheep, but of sheep-owners as well. "In the little town of Manville, Wyoming, two years ago, there were thirteen men engaged in the sheep business. Now there are seven. The rest are looking for jobs." As for his own town of Douglas, the situation was not much better: "the town of Douglas, which I have mentioned as an example of the prosperity and optimism of the range country ten years ago, breathes an atmosphere of gloom. There have been many failures and there will be more during the next twelve months. . . . The banks, the stores, and all lines of business, reflect the great and radical change which range conditions, disastrous weather, and finally the tariff nightmare, have wrought in our midst. It is a community that stands in fear of disaster."[548]

The plight of the sheep industry in Wyoming was bad enough by Richards' account, but there was yet one other feature that he had not anticipated. The Rocky Mountain sheep industry had prospered partly because of the decline of sheep growing in the Midwest and East. Low land prices and free grass had made the western states a haven for the sheep grower, but those prices and that overhead increased. In 1918 one important study reported that sheep were on the increase again in the Midwest and East, that small flocks on farms were growing once again. As L. G. Connor wrote, "A new phase in the history of our sheep industry is now developing. This is the return of sheep to the farm. In the future an important and increasing percentage of our meat and wool supply will undoubtedly come from the small farm flock."[549] The Midwest sheep farms, that at one time seemed to hand the opportunities of sheep raising to the mountain states, now seemed ready to take them back; at a minimum, they would be shared. As a

---

[547] Paul S. Richards, "The Golden Fleece," *The Forum*, XLVII (May 1912): 546.
[548] Richards, "The Golden Fleece," 552-557.
[549] L[ouis] G[eorge] Connor, "A Brief History of the Sheep Industry in the United States," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1918* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), 165.

result, the numbers of sheep on the range in Wyoming would never again be as high as they had been before the decline of the 1910s set in.

Like the cattle ranchers, the wool growers grazed on national forest land that was now regulated. The sheep operators, since the regulation of the forests beginning in the Theodore Roosevelt administration, had found it necessary to purchase or lease land, often next to the forest, for grazing in seasons other than summer. Those requirements increased, but they increased in a way that seemed to benefit the largest operators who could afford larger leased or owned land outside the forest. The Shoshone National Forest Superintendent explained this system in 1915:

> With the settling up of the country, the stockmen, particularly the sheepmen, have found it necessary to lease an increasing acreage of state and private lands both for the forage upon the land and also [for] its strategic value in connection with the use of adjacent range, in order to provide spring, fall and winter range for their stock. Where a number of years ago only a small amount of ranch holdings and leased lands were necessary in connection with the sheep business, much larger holdings are now necessary to safeguard against winter losses.[550]

Specific policies governing the actual grazing on the different forests varied according to the needs of the resource and also the judgment of the forest administration. Again, using the Shoshone Forest as an example, the policy was changed from allowing bedgrounds to be used for six nights and instead to allow "open herding and bedding down where night overtakes them;" the object was to avoid constant, repetitive use and deterioration of the same area. Sometimes grazing was prohibited altogether. In 1905, for example, parts of the Bighorn National Forest were closed to the herders to let the resources replenish and they were not reopened until 1913. And when they reopened, Robert Macy reported, "the new plan of individual camps was inaugurated," so that they would now be leasing assigned lands where they would be the sole flocks and the size of the flocks would be limited instead of roaming the forest in unlimited numbers.[551]

They would also be traveling through the forest, not just grazing the forest, and that passage was regulated so that they would use specific trails, or driveways. John Niland, whose family ran a sheep operation out of Rawlins for at least three generations, recalled one of these driveways that was incredibly long: "There were designated trails to and through the forest that had been laid out by the government, the Forest Service and the railroad. One particular designated trail that I recall started at Shoshoni, Wyoming, and went south to Wamsutter, Wyoming, from Wamsutter to Dad, Wyoming, and then into Colorado as far as Rabbit Ears Pass. We could walk our sheep and horses every foot of the way and never cross any private land."[552] And those trails were sometimes busy, because they were used by

---

[550] "From Files of Shoshone National Forest," 7.
[551] Macy, "Thirty Years of Back Ground," 1; see also Barnes, *Western Grazing Grounds and Forest Ranges*, 208-225.
[552] John Niland, *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Lagumo

all the herders in that area. Again, John Niland gives an idea of the congestion on the trails: "When moving to the mountains, there were often two to four herds on any given length of trail each day. The trails were about a half-mile wide and every herd had to keep moving and make five miles a day or there was hell to pay and a mess of sheep to be sorted."[553]

Finally, there is one other implication to this regulation of sheep on Forest Service land. With the requirements for leased or deeded land on which the sheep could graze at those times of the year—the winter—when they were not on national forest, the nomads, or tramp herds, had been effectively pushed out of the national forests, much to the relief of resident sheep operators. But there were still vast parts of the public domain, the land lightly administered by the General Land Office within the Department of the Interior, that was not regulated, that set no limits, that issued no permits, that seemed to be just as free for all comers as the open range of the cattle king era had been. The nomads seem still to have used that land, along with others, and the competition for that grazing land was thereby the more intense as it became something of a safe haven for grazers.

If the sheep industry was different on the public land, which it was, it was also different now on private or leased land in other seasons—which is to say, it was different in its operating essentials. Increasingly, sheep growers relied on winter feeding of their flocks. While sheep ranchers had often set aside feed for emergencies in the winter, increasingly some came to the conclusion that regular winter—late winter at least—feeding would be beneficial. In Douglas, *Bill Barlow's Budget* reported in 1914 that the sheep rancher who consistently received the highest prices for his wool was "Elsa B. Combs who feeds his sheep every winter and who undoubtedly has a much better quality of wool than the average flock produces."[554] The winter feed consisted mainly of corn at first, but by the end of the decade the sheep operations were purchasing cottonseed cake for their winter feed.

In addition to feeding the sheep in the late winter - early spring before lambing, the sheep ranchers also started to use sheds for lambing. This was something of a remarkable event and again *Bill Barlow's Budget*, ever sensitive to sheep ranching in the Douglas area, pronounced the new development a major contribution when it reported in 1916, "a most interesting sight is the bunch of lambs at the Olsen & Heller ranch just south of town. The 'Swede Boys,' as they are called, were the first to introduce the lambing in sheds and the other sheepmen are rapidly following their example. They have been feeding corn and alfalfa the [past] two months and are certainly being repaid for the bother and expense, as they have 135% of lambs. . . . The Swedes have refused an offer of 30 cents per pound for this spring's wool."[555]

The practices of winter feeding and using lambing sheds certainly benefited the ranchers who could

---

Corp., 1994), 108.
[553] Niland, *History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin*, 40-41.
[554] *Bill Barlow's Budget*, May 14, 1914.
[555] *Bill Barlow's Budget*. March 30, 1916. The percentage of lambs is the ratio of lambs to ewes; one lamb per ewe is 100%.

afford to implement them—and also their sheep, of course—but as with the innovations in crop production through mechanization, the development of more tightly managed operations, the acquisition of additional facilities and equipment, the use of "scientific" agriculture methods, and the leasing of land instead of the free use of land, also placed additional pressure in a competitive market system on the smaller operations that could not afford the innovations. The different practices served as a marker separating the large commercial operator who was, in the language of the day, "modern" and "up-to-date" and businesslike from the small herds.

Possibly the clearest sign of the new order of sheep raising came in 1915 when several sheep operators built what was called an "Australian system" shearing shed at Bitter Creek to be used cooperatively. The organization of the Australian shed, or pens, brought a different, modern system to the shearing and related processes; that system was modeled on industrial principles and factory organization. Historian Nancy Weidel quotes W. T. Ritch, the individual responsible for designing and constructing various sheds in Wyoming, who observed that the shed design was "merely the highly organized system peculiar to an Eastern factory brought to a Western shearing shed."[556] Another contemporary account of that system noted that:

> The sheep are transferred from the gathering pens to the sweating pens, which in turn are next to the catching pens from which the shearer takes the sheep. The temperature of the sweating pens is usually 10 degrees or more greater than the normal temperature. The sheep are closely herded together in the sweating pen for two hours during the day or eight hours during the night. Sweating causes the yolk to flow more freely, thereby putting the wool in the best possible condition for shearing. The sheep shear much easier when sweated. The actual shearing is performed in the same general manner as the shearing in this country, except that the shearers handle the sheep more skillfully and gently, and the belly wool is usually shorn separate from the rest of the fleece. Great care is taken to protect the fleece from contact with foreign substances. After the fleece has been removed from the sheep the Australian method of preparing it for the market is widely different from ours.[557]

The fleece was placed on a special table where it was skirted (different fragments removed according to location and fineness) and the fragments sorted, the fleece rolled, flesh side out, but generally not tied; then it was baled with hydraulic presses into bales weighing about 330 pounds. The shed was organized to facilitate this process with multiple teams operating on multiple sheep simultaneously. In 1915 the Bitter Creek shearing shed saw 80,000 sheep pass through in three weeks, each sheep shorn, the fleece "skirted, classed and prepared according to the Australian system." Stanley Hart reported that the wool was then sold directly to mills in the East at advantageous prices "which more than repaid the sheep

---

[556] Nancy Weidel, National Register nomination of Walcott Shearing Shed, Carbon County, Wyoming, Section 7, page 9, August 6, 1997. I wish to thank Nancy Weidel for making this copy available to me.
[557] Stanley H. Hart, *Wool: The Raw Materials of the Woolen and Worsted Industries* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Textile School of the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, 1917), 105.

owner for the additional trouble." He also noted that the system caught on in Wyoming, sixteen more sheds were built, always near a railroad to facilitate shipment, and in 1916 270,000 sheep were shorn in that system, in those sheds.[558]

The sheds with their industrial organization of the processing seemed to work satisfactorily from the perspective of the operators, but the Australian system that they accommodated was quickly jettisoned because the wool manufacturers and dealers resisted the shift. The Australian system, with its graded wool in bales actually allowed a higher return to the wool growers; the American system, with its bagged wool, was routinely downgraded by the purchasers to allow for lower grade wool in the sacks, even when all the wool was of higher grade. So the manufacturers and dealers declined to purchase the baled wool except at the lowest price. Leonard Hay, whose father built the Bitter Creek shed with Ed Rife, recalled, "the first year they had this modern shearing shed, they sorted their wool using the Australian method. They skirted the fleeces and all and sorted it. They graded it and skirted. I know my dad said that when he went to that system he could not sell his wool. His was the last wool that was sold in the country and he sold it at a discount because it had been put up, supposedly in the most modern way that it could be handled." Hay was joined in this rejection of the Australian method by virtually everybody else. Fellow sheep operator William Thompson said, "it cost us so much more to put up the wool and then we couldn't get as much as we could for shorn wool packed into a bag by a man with his two feet. These were put up in square bales, Australian fashion." Thompson quit using the Australian system after two years. Hay's father did the same after the first or second season. There were other problems, too, including the electric shears with a finer comb which cut the wool too close; the result was, for the Hay operation, that they lost 8,700 sheep within a week of shearing when a storm hit.[559] The sheds remained, but the skirting and grading stopped, the square bales were replaced by the bags that had been used formerly, and the machine-powered clippers were replaced by hand clippers which did not cut so close.

J. B. Okie helped spread the system of sheds in the state. Okie had been a prominent sheep operator in Fremont County since he started running sheep in the Badwater Creek area in the 1880s. Okie's timing was good and his location was also good; as his herds grew he created his own town of Lost Cabin, built his mansion there, lived in town instead of on the range, and his ranch ultimately included more than fifty-seven thousand acres.[560] In 1917, he reportedly made a trip to Australia to inspect the system there and returned to Wyoming to build his own sheds at Lost Cabin, Arminto, and Moneta. His sheds used the sweating room concept (a distinctive Australian innovation), putting five sheep into a pen, with rows of the pens built into the design; once they were sheared, the shearer would push the animal through a swinging door and down a chute to a lower level where the animals were counted and inspected and

---

[558] Hart, *Wool: The Raw Materials of the Woolen and Worsted Industries*, 108; Weidel, National Register nomination of Walcott Shearing Shed, Section 8, page 19.
[559] U.S. Forest Service, interview with Leonard Hay and William D. Thompson, Rock Springs, June 1968 by James Jacobs (USFS), p. 6. Transcript of interview located in Hegewald-Thompson family papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.
[560] "Empire for Sale," *Time*, June 11, 1945.

otherwise processed before returning to the range. What is especially notable in the way that his sheds were constructed was that they seemed to lack the skirting tables, the feature which was at the heart of the Australian system of trimming and sorting and then baling the wool.[561]

The sheep industry had long possessed certain elements of industrialization and modernization and with the adoption of the modern sheds, even without the Australian system, that industrialization seemed to have progressed far. In the 1930s Charlie Chaplin made a movie, *Modern Times*. One of the signature scenes of that movie is an overhead view of a flock of sheep churning in a pen, then rushing blindly through a chute; the visual metaphor quickly becomes clear as the camera dissolves into a different view, this one of industrial workers at rush hour pushing out of a subway station, exactly as the sheep had been pushing and crowding and pursuing their own processing. Some critics have suggested that the point of the scene and dissolve segment is to show the dehumanization of people and work in modern industrial society, by displaying their similarity to the beasts of the field. It actually may be quite the opposite, that the processing of sheep was simply following very much the lines of the organization of human society.

The sheds and the increasingly industrialized organization of the sheep business highlighted a series of cultural, economic, and social differences. In the large operations, the workforce and the management and owners of the sheep often lived in different worlds, with different values, different outlooks, different burdens, and different languages. However fluid the lines of ascent in the sheep industry may have been in the nineteenth century, when people started herding sheep on shares, taking their pay in sheep and developing independent herds, by the 1910s those lines had closed and distinct cultural and economic differences separated them. There was also even an urban – rural divide that reinforced the class divisions. The owners, unlike their cattle-ranching counterparts, typically lived in town, and cities like Rawlins and Douglas and Casper had entire neighborhoods with fine homes where sheep operators made their residence. Cattle rancher Tom Sun referred to Rawlins as The Rookery because "the sheepmen came home to roost every night in town, unlike the cow men, who generally lived on their own ranches."[562] The Rock Springs Grazing Association, the pre-eminent such group, famously had, as Annie Proulx writes, "connections to every imaginable business activity, from sheep and cattle to railroads, gas and oil, hunter outfitting, groceries."[563] In contrast, the herders and camp movers, of

---

[561] See the Historic American Building Survey, HABS No. Wyo-53, Sheep Shearing Shed, Moneta, Wyoming (1973).
[562] Niland, *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming*, 147.
[563] Annie Proulx, "Red Desert Ranches," in Annie Proulx, ed., *Red Desert: History of a Place* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 322. The Rock Springs Grazing Association was not a group of small farmers and herders casually coming together on the range and instead was a sophisticated commercial, legal, and managerial entity. Wesley Calef notes in his study of management of the public lands, "The Rock Springs Grazing Association was organized in 1907 by nine livestock men, at least two of whom had major interests other than livestock ranching; one was a banker and another a lawyer. The association was organized as a corporation, and it was the lawyer who had the requisite experience in both the ranching and legal aspects to set matters up properly." Wesley Calef, *Private Grazing and*

course, lived on the range, often for extended periods of time, in sheep wagons when they could, and in tents when in the high country inaccessible by the wagons, following, leading, and caring for their flocks. And the shearers, a separate group, were themselves constantly on the move, traveling from one shearing pen to another performing their craft.

Both herding and shearing required great skill and hard work. The herders remained the symbolic and actual keystone of the entire operation, the person that both the sheep and the owners depended on, in a sense, for survival. John Niland spoke respectfully of his herders: "A real herder," he said, "was a professional, just like a doctor or an engineer. If they knew what they were doing, they would do a tremendous job and make money for us and for themselves. If they didn't, they could break us."[564] Shearing also required a certain skill and the people who did that work traveled around contracting with the various ranchers, following a vast migratory route that was repeated from year to year. The shearers formed a distinct class and were looked upon by the owners often with both grudging respect for their ability to quickly and professionally trim all the wool from a sheep without nicking the animal or cutting the wool twice (and lowering its value) and also a degree of fear or resentment. One guidebook for sheep owners minced no words, warning readers that

> Operators of shearing plants often have difficulty with shearers. The shearers lead a more or less nomadic life and if they hear of better wages further on in the way of more money for each sheep shorn or of easier shearing, they are likely to leave the plant before the shearing season is over. The operators have been forced to protect themselves by requiring the shearers to sign a contract which keeps them on the job till the last band of sheep contracted for has been through the pens.
>
> Sheep shearing is hard work and it requires strong men whose backs are as untiring as springs of steel. They must be well fed and comfortably quartered. Since they live a nomadic life they are not given to accumulating much, for gambling is a game which puts their wages in the hands of the few who are cleverer at it than the rest.[565]

At shearing and lambing time extra help would be necessary for all the chores and tasks that had to take place, and also for feeding the crews at this time of intense labor. Charles Floyd Spencer worked at the Metcalf Land and Livestock Company west of Moorcroft in 1913 during shearing time, which proved to be an incredibly busy time. In addition to the hard work, he noticed, "Mexican shearing crews, moved in by caravan to do the job, lived and cooked by themselves and were furnished mutton while at work. There were about fifteen to eighteen men to do the shearing, besides two or three extra to sharpen shears and carry wood and water for the cook wagon. Several women, accompanied by their small children,

---

Public Lands: Studies of the Local Management of the Taylor Grazing Act (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 203.

[564] Niland, *History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin*, 120.

[565] Walter Castella Coffey, *Productive Sheep Husbandry* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1917), 413.

did the cooking for the entire crew, as many of the men were single."[566]

The ethnic association suggested by Spencer is one that was as strong as the class distinction and provided a further separation of worker and management in the sheep operation. John Niland indicated that this was nearly universal on his operation when he said, "The older herders we had employed for years were of Mexican descent and came from the same areas of Colorado and New Mexico."[567] This was not entirely new and the 1892 Congressional study of the sheep operations had noted back then the prevalence of "foreigners or Mexicans."[568] Charles Floyd Spencer, while working for another sheep rancher, his brother-in-law, noted, "Sheepmen at that time employed Mexican herders to a large extent. For the most part, the Mexicans were dependable and stayed on the job better than others." [569] The ethnicity also suggested bonds among the workforce, bonds of culture, of language, of tradition, and often of family. John Niland and others often refer to their herders bringing their sons to become herders too, and, at time of lambing and shearing when extra help was needed, the shearers' friends and relatives, in addition to the herders', showed up to participate.

But the herding of sheep was an occupation not exclusively associated with Hispanic workers. If anything, the Basque association has sometimes overshadowed the Hispanic role, especially in Johnson and Sweetwater counties, and that association has often had its negative consequences through an occupational / ethnic reductionism that implies that all Basques are sheepherders. Documentation on Basque sheepherders is sparse, but it is clear that a population of Basques emerged in Buffalo in 1902 and that they earned a solid reputation as herders that made them much sought after by area sheep ranchers. Many, perhaps most, of those who settled in the Buffalo area not only followed the example of John Esponda who came to Buffalo in 1902 but were even connected to Esponda by virtue of their origins—including their own ancestors—near Esponda's home community in the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain, through a system of chain migration.[570] A similar group emerged in Sweetwater County, although at least one observer has found the Sweetwater Basque community less cohesive than the Johnson County Basques. Also, the Sweetwater Basques were both French (Rock Springs) and Spanish (Green River), while the Johnson county Basques were French in origin. The

---

[566] Spencer, *Wyoming Homestead Heritage*, 49.
[567] Niland, *History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin*, 120.
[568] U.S. Congress, *House Miscellaneous Documents*, 2d Sess., 52d Cong., 1892-93, Vol. 15, "Special Report on the Sheep Industry of the United States 1892" (Serial 3124), Chapter II, "The Sheep Industry in Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah," 776.
[569] Spencer, *Wyoming Homestead Heritage*, 151.
[570] Nancy Weidel, *Sheepwagon: Home on the Range* (Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 2001), 103; David A. Cookson, "The Basques in Wyoming," in Gordon Olaf Hendrickson, ed., *Peopling the High Plains: Wyoming's European Heritage* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Archives and Historical Department, 1977), 105. See also the interview of Jeanne Iberlin in Buffalo by Patty Myers, Wyoming State Archives, OH-1348. Ms. Iberlin provides important information about the development of the Basque population in Johnson County, observing, "Oh, if there wasn't any Basque people there wouldn't be any Johnson County."

Sweetwater Basques also arrived, and settled, earlier. That fact notwithstanding, David Cookson, in his study of the Basques of Wyoming, maintains, "To many Basque young men in Rock Springs, Buffalo was much like the Old Country had been to earlier Basque residents of Johnson county; it was the place to go to find a Basque bride."[571] So the two are not identical, although definite common elements and cultural bonds can be found.

While sometimes associated with tramp or nomadic herding elsewhere,[572] in Wyoming the Basques largely followed the pattern of seasonal transhumance, and indeed they were able to use employment as herders to develop their own herds and sheep operations. There were some distinct features about Basque activity in the sheep business that deserve note. One is that many of the herders did not develop permanent dwellings on the range. As part of the system of chain migration, they would often herd for a certain period and save money or develop a herd of their own to sell and then return to the home country, at which time a replacement would come to Wyoming; in that system ownership of land would be a burden more than a help. Aside from their dwellings on wheels—the ubiquitous sheep wagons—dotting the plains, a temporary lodging might be found in Buffalo at the Basque hotel or with family and friends who were remaining permanently. And, of course, there were those who found a spouse either in the Basque country of the Pyrenees or locally, and who raised their own families in Wyoming.

The second feature had to do with the role of women in the sheep business. Historian Nancy Weidel has perceptively noted that Basque women were much more involved in the sheep industry than was the case with other ethnicities. "Certainly many ranch wives of all nationalities," Weidel writes, "were involved in various cycles of the business, most remembering the nonstop cooking at shearing time. But a Basque woman usually spent all or part of her summer in the mountains, living in a sheepwagon along with her husband and children."[573] Weidel speculates that this active involvement may derive from the persistence of a strong matriarchal tradition and also their shared commitment to the work with the sheep.

The omnipresent sheepherder monuments in Wyoming provide evidence of both the state's herding expansiveness and its cultural heritage. These cairns, usually flat rocks stacked high on a prominent hill, can be found virtually everywhere in Wyoming that sheep have been grazed at one time or another. That fact alone is enough to associate them with sheep herding, but there is precious little documentation of their origins or purposes and much of their meaning is cloaked in mystery. There are legends aplenty,

---

[571] Cookson, "The Basques in Wyoming," 107.
[572] Cookson suggests (p. 101) that the Wyoming Basques actually used tramp herding extensively and that the practice was ended only by the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934. This may be accurate in southwest Wyoming, in Sweetwater County and adjacent areas, administered by the General Land Office, but in other areas it appears that tramp herding had declined earlier in the century by both the settling of the public domain by homesteaders and the regulation of grazing on the national forests. Studies of the use of the unregulated grazing (and other use) of the public domain administered by the General Land Office prior to the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act would help resolve some of those issues.
[573] Weidel, *Sheepwagon: Home on the Range*, 107.

but hard evidence is thin. Some clues, however, are suggestive. For example, in northeast Wyoming, some cairns have been identified that bear the distinctive marks of Basque iconography and this is enough to suggest, if not necessarily their origins, then certainly their use in Basque sheepherding activities. In addition, archaeologist Mark Miller conducted a study of an area that included an assortment of sheepherder monuments, herder campsites, and likely sheep bedgrounds. By careful analysis of the artifacts, Miller was able to determine which were winter camps and, further, to identify a pattern in which those winter camps were in close proximity to the sheep herder monuments. This, in turn, seems to confirm one hypothesis that circulates about the origin and purpose of the monuments and Miller comments, "Stories have been handed down that relate the fact that rock cairns were often constructed upon prominences near sheep camps in the winter range so returning herders could more easily find their wagon during a blizzard."[574] This is not conclusive, but it is suggestive and certainly presses forward a relationship to be explored in further studies.

It is also confirmed by some oral history. Tomas Antillon had come to the United States from the Altiplano of South America as a young man, had been a herder in Wyoming for many years, and in the 1930s gave an oral history of his life to WPA interviewers in Douglas where he was living at the time. In that interview Antillon volunteered that "In many instances, when herders become confused or lost in a storm, they can get their bearings from some monument, and so find their way back to camp or to some rancher's house." He went on, too:

> I know that in my own case, I would have frozen to death had I not followed a line of monuments. The blizzard started suddenly and I was far from camp. As I tried to make my way blindly along, the wind and snow grew worse and worse. It is a terrible feeling to know that you are lost, and so cold you can hardly move. Finally, I saw a "hump" of snow that I thought might be a monument I had built. I scraped away some of the loose snow and found the "hump" to be a pile of stones I had put there, weeks before. It may sound absurd to say you can "recognize" such a monument. But actually, it can be done, for you remember some certain stones, where you got them, and how you set them in place. I remembered that this monument was due north of an old, deserted shack, so I began trying to make my way there. For a while it looked as if I was beaten, but I finally did get there, and got a fire built. But some of my fingers were so badly frozen I had to have them taken off. [575]

Tomas Antillon confessed that when, as a boy, he asked older herders the origin of the monuments, the usual response was that nobody knew precisely, and indicated that they had always been there. If the

---

[574] Mark E. Miller, "Draft Final Report of a Cultural Resources Inventory of the Corral Creek Coal Production Project Area in South-Central, Wyoming," December 1979, 102. I wish to thank Dr. Miller for sharing this information with me and for discussing the results of his research into this issue. As time has passed since he made his initial investigation, his conclusion has been confirmed by other inquiries.

[575] Tomas Antillon, "Sheep Herder Monuments," WPA Collections, subject file 1396.

makers of the monuments were obscure in the early twentieth century they are even more remote in the early twenty-first century, so much work remains to be done on this subject. On the other hand, it is clear that sheepherders made use of the monuments and doubtless built or contributed to many of them, and that these cairns—as opposed to prehistoric cairns—bear a strong association with the sheep industry both culturally and occupationally. From expanded farmsteads to sheepherder monuments and from fenced-in-ranges to shearing sheds, the marks on the land left by the sheep industry and by cattle ranching in the transformation of agriculture before World War I are everywhere to be seen in Wyoming.

v. Women, Families, and Farms in the Equality State

However powerful the concept of separate spheres for men and women may have been in defining—and limiting—roles of people in the urban world, especially in the middle class, it did not transfer easily to the rural sections of the nation. There was no room for ideologically and culturally separate spheres in the farm and ranch family where that family was both a social unit and a unit of production. Speaking in the present tense as a boy on his family's ranch in Albany County, Ted Olson glimpsed a small part of this system when he said, "already I am a working member of our small but very nearly self-sufficient community." Olson thoughtfully considered the organization of life on the ranch and he later recalled that the operative principle governing the division of labor and the distribution of rewards was a simple but profound formulation: "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."[576] Whatever one may think of this social principle, Olson observed that it was a simple necessity: "You couldn't run a small family ranch any other way. Everybody has to pitch in."[577]

The interesting point, and one that needs more exploration, is that Ted Olson's observation precisely anticipated the conclusion of recent historical inquiries into the role of gender in small family farms and ranches. Historian Mary Neth goes to the core of the issue when she observes, "the reality of the family labor system often prevented such clear [gender] demarcations in the actual performance of work. Families expected that everyone would help out in whatever venue was most critical at a given moment." Neth goes further too, and her model study of family farms in the Midwest is explicit: "On the family farm, there were no separate spheres for women and men. The industrial division of wage and domestic work, between production for market and production for family use, had less meaning on a family farm. Family space joined economic space. . . . Family farming did not separate the jobs of men, women, and children; it tied them together."[578]

---

[576] Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie*, 32. Olson was quite aware of the origin of this principle and pondered the presence of a copy of *Capital*, which his father had certainly read, in the family bookcase.
[577] Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie*, 32.
[578] Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). See also, her related article, "The Valuation of Women's Work: Gender and the Market in a Dairy Farming Community during the Late Nineteenth Century," *Frontiers*, X (1988): 18-24; Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the*

To say that this unity and integration can be found in Wyoming's farms and ranches in the early twentieth century is not to suggest that all was equal and fair in the Equality State, for it clearly was not and women and men still experienced life in different and unequal ways. It is to recapture, rather, the larger context of the lives of women on the ranches and farms of Wyoming, to go beyond any reductive set of roles for rural women, and, in the formulation used by historian Nancy Grey Osterud, to acknowledge "the complexity of their lives, the mutuality of their marriages, and the changing nature of the larger society and economy."

Gender roles were there, historians are clear, but those gender roles were subordinated to the larger family purpose. Indeed, both the gender roles and the family whole can be seen in the early twentieth century farms and ranches of Wyoming. As in the Midwest farms from which many Wyomingites had moved, as Mary Neth succinctly observes, this "division of adult labor grew from the physical layout of the farm. Women's labor centered on the house, men's work on the fields. The two met in the barnyard, where divisions were less clear."[579] One obvious area was that of food preparation and making (and washing and repairing) clothes for the family. These were time-consuming tasks, filled with heavy labor, and were continuous, not seasonal. Ted Olson recalled of his mother that despite her lack of complaint (beyond "a wistful reference to the years when she had had time to read books") she confessed to him "many years later, that she had never really liked cooking; if she'd had the choice she'd rather do laundry. And that was when laundry meant tubs filled and emptied by hand, washboards, homemade lye soap, hand-rinsing and -wringing, hanging clothes out in weather so cold that in five minutes shirts and pillowcases were boards. She was, incidentally, a superb cook."[580] These were routine chores and sometimes they took on Herculean proportions as at threshing or roundup time when additional help was brought in, either by hiring or by drawing upon neighbors. Elinore Pruitt Stewart near Burntfork in southwest Wyoming wrote, "We had the thresher crew two days. I was busy cooking for them two days before they came, and have been busy ever since cleaning up after them."[581] That the cooking was on some of those occasions done as a cooperative venture with other neighbors in a festive atmosphere may not have necessarily relieved the burdens; if the neighbors were helping in the field, and also in the kitchen, that also meant that their own fields and kitchens would need reciprocation too, and the threshing would last longer and longer.

Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). The literature in this area is quite extensive and while Osterud and Neth are perhaps the most prominent of recent analysts, others should also be consulted. See, for example, Richard W. Rathgoe, "Women's Contribution to the Family Farm," *Great Plains Quarterly*, 9 (Winter 1989): 36-47, and Susan H. Armitage, "Household Work and Childrearing on the Frontier: The Oral History Record," *Sociology and Social Research*, 63 (April 1979): 467-474.

[579] Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940*, 19.

[580] Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie*, 26-27.

[581] Elinore Pruitt Stewart, *Letters of a Woman Homesteader* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914), 133.

Cooking and laundry were constant chores as were the myriad of other duties that awaited them on starting the day. And those duties reached beyond the hearth and outside the house, into the other buildings and areas of the farm or ranch. Women were routinely associated with raising chickens and milking the cows, although there is ample evidence to suggest that these were neither automatic in their assignment nor universal in their acceptance. Cecilia Hennel Hendricks lived with her husband on a small farm in the Garland District of the Shoshone Project, several miles east of Powell. John Hendricks had filed on the place in 1911, the two were married at the end of 1913 (after seeing each other a total of three times before the wedding), and she joined him on their homestead. Cecilia Hendricks left thousands of letters that she wrote her family in Indiana detailing life on the farm over the next seventeen years. In 1914 she wrote her mother describing what some of the routines were, and provided a glimpse into the way some of the women's duties varied from farm to farm, from family to family. "It is now nearly eight o'clock in the morning. I have cooked breakfast, milked the fresh cow, fed the calf, fed the little chickens, and washed the breakfast dishes. I do not usually milk, but John has a cut on one of his fingers that makes it hard for him to milk."[582]

As that reference suggests, the dairy operation and the women on the farm or ranch were not inextricably linked, but some of the dairy functions were often associated with the care of women. Many sources where milking is mentioned make an assumption that milking is work for the women and children, and there was more to it than milking the cows. That was the beginning of a chain of activities that continued through the separation of the cream from the milk and the making of butter or cheese. Curtis Spatz, on the family's homestead near Burns, recalled of his childhood there, "We always had cows to milk. May and Mother usually did this work. It was a treat when Dad bought a Milato cream separator to separate the cream from the milk. We used to have to let the milk set overnight and then skim the cream off. Mother put the separator in the old kitchen."[583]

Milking and raising chickens are important, and need to be kept in mind as such, because they were integral to the operation of the farm or ranch. These were largely self-sufficient operations that consumed what they produced and produced what they consumed. Chickens and eggs and milk and butter contributed substantially to the diet on these farms and ranches and were as vital as other products. In like manner, responsibility for the garden often fell to the women. These gardens, it must be remembered, were not a small plot where some flowers and a few vegetables were grown. They were large. Again, Ted Olson provides a perspective on the size and nature of the garden, and that perspective is from a boy who has to work in it: "We have a big vegetable garden—peas, beans, lettuce, beets, radishes, carrots, parsnips, rutabagas, I don't remember what else. It feeds us abundantly during the latter half of the summer; the surplus, put down in sealed glass jars or otherwise stored, carries us

---

[582] Letter dated May 29, 1914, in Cecilia Hendricks Wahl, compiler and editor, Cecilia Hennel Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill: A Woman's View of Homesteading, 1914-1931* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1986), 65.
[583] Curtis Spatz, "Richard Spatz," in *Calico Hill: Recalling the Early Years, Good Times and Hardships of Homesteaders, Laramie County, Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Pioneer Printing, Co., 1973), 87.

through the winter. . . . To my eyes, looking out morosely from my thirty-six inches of altitude, its expanse seems infinite. Row after row after row after row."[584] There is also the hint in this description of work that follows the tending of the garden—all of the canning and preserving that must take place.

Which also suggests the larger importance of what women were doing on these farms and ranches. The *Wyoming Farm Bulletin* recognized this and reminded farmers of the importance of the garden. In 1913 the *Bulletin* wrote, "I would repeat that no farm home should be without a garden. The land devoted to garden brings better returns than any other piece of ground on the farm. If one were to figure the actual value of the vegetables that may be raised on a half acre garden, it would amount to at least $100—ten or fifteen times what any field on the farm will produce on the same area. Besides this, there is the satisfaction of having vegetables fresh and of much better quality than can be bought in the market or obtained from a neighbor."[585] What is especially revealing about this is that this reminder of the importance of the garden came just at the moment when some small farms and ranchers were moving closer to a market model, producing more of their goods for sale rather than for use, and when the very same farm bulletin was encouraging exactly that direction for them to become more businesslike. The gardens across Wyoming, and the women who tended the gardens, were not only linked together but they were a critical part of maintaining the independence and self-sufficiency of the farm or ranch.

The truth was that there were no clear, bright lines between the chores separating one from another, or separating the people who did those chores. Caring for the dairy cattle was akin to caring for the beef cattle; tending the garden—plowing, cultivating, watering, harvesting—was not that different from tending the crops in the fields, and it was possible to find any member of the family doing any of these jobs on most any farm or ranch. The farm or ranch was, as Ted Olson noted and as many others could have confirmed, an organic unit. It was not a factory, it was not an assembly line, it was not a system of production composed of a finite number of separable and separated tasks; it was a system of production where the whole was greater than the sum of the parts and where the individuals working in that system were expected to be able to do a variety of jobs with varying degrees of skill.

The field work on the farm and ranch confirms that picture of a holistic operation. Everybody worked about every job. Nina Marie Keslar Finley recalled without a trace of irony that on her family's dry farm, "my father broke me in at handling horses, and from then on, I was his right hand man." She continues, "Mother and I usually shocked the grain and also put the hay into cocks. Hundreds of tons of hay was cut and stacked in our valley the first two or three years we were there. Mother stacked all the hay every year which later was baled and hauled to market in Cheyenne."[586] Gladys Gorman Spatz, in the same neighborhood, likewise remembered that as a youth on their dry farm in the 1910s, "We girls and Mama helped plant the grain, then ran the binders and shocked it. We usually milked from 12 to 16 cows twice a day, and had a lot of hogs to care for. In the winter time, we had to keep the barns clean,

---

[584] Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie*, 40.
[585] T.S.P. [T. S. Parsons], "The Home Garden," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 2 (January 1913): 268.
[586] Nina Marie Keslar Finley, "Frank Keslar Family," in *Calico Hill: Recalling the Early Years, Good Times and Hardships of Homesteaders*, 60.

spreading the manure on the fields by pitchfork. Then Papa bought a manure spreader, and we thought it was fun to ride along on the spreader."[587] This was not restricted to that neighborhood. Margaret Dillinger Bowden in Campbell County recalled her own childhood years and the way they cleared the land:

> Dad walked ahead, cutting sagebrush with a mattock—a tool used for loosening soil and cutting roots. It was like a pick-ax with a sharp, curved blade on one end. A swift swing of the mattock would break up the sagebrush enough so that the plow could turn over the soil. The smaller roots would deteriorate and the larger ones were later hauled off in a wagon. . . . Mother came behind with a four-horse team and a sulky plow, which had a seat about 3 ½ feet off the ground. She would sit on the seat with her legs straddling the tongue and the lines firmly grasped in her hands. She worked the lever with her foot and could manage the four horse team nearly as well as Dad.[588]

Elinore Pruitt Stewart in Sweetwater County wrote her friend Mrs. Coney in 1909, "I have done most of my cooking at night, have milked seven cows every day, and have done all the hay-cutting, so you see I have been working." Actually, she had to resort to extraordinary measures to be able to mow. The ranch she and her husband operated was unable to secure help to get in the hay beyond some stackers; Elinore Pruitt Stewart had learned to run a mowing machine (horse-drawn) as a youth "and I almost forgot that I knew how until Mr. Stewart got into such a panic." She was perplexed. "I was afraid to tell him I could mow for fear he would forbid me to do so. But one morning, when he was chasing a last hope of help, I went down to the barn, took out the horses, and went to mowing. I had enough cut before he got back to show him I knew how, and as he came back manless he was delighted as well as surprised. I was glad because I really like to mow . . . ." Elinore Pruitt Stewart was often enigmatic (and sometimes more than that) in her writings and she concludes this incident with a truly cryptic observation with several possible meanings: ". . . I have been said to have almost as much sense as a 'mon,' [man] and that is an honor I never aspired to, even in my wildest dreams."[589]

Elinore Pruitt Stewart's resort to mowing without her husband's permission suggests that the way was not always clear for women to work in the field, especially with horse-drawn equipment. There are doubtless cases where women were, one way or another, "denied" that "opportunity." The experience of women in Wyoming on the farms and ranches varied enormously from farm to farm and from family to family. Plus, there were women ranchers and homesteaders who embarked upon that journey, or whose fate it was to come to them, on their own. Single women form a significant chapter in the history of ranching and homesteading in Wyoming. The 1920 census indicated that 666 farms in Wyoming were

---

[587] Gladys Gorman Spatz, "Robert Gorman," in *Calico Hill: Recalling the Early Years, Good Times and Hardships of Homesteaders*,44.
[588] Margaret Dillinger Bowden, *1916: Wyoming, Here We Come!* (Gillette, Wyoming: privately printed by James H. Bowden and Jessie Outka, 2002), 17.
[589] Stewart, *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*, 17.

owned or operated by women farmers.[590] Since the census did not report the number for 1910, it is not known if this represented a decline or increase; and that number could be subject to considerable fluctuation, more so than other factors, because marital status could change abruptly due to marriage, death, or divorce. What that number reveals is that at the end of the 1910s, at the time that census was taken, about four percent of all the farms and ranches in the state were female owned or operated.

Paula Bauman, using a different resource base, came up with a higher percentage. Bauman examined the land records in Crook, Johnson, Laramie, Lincoln, Natrona, and Sweetwater counties, generally from 1888 to 1943 (though some were significantly shorter periods), and found 772 patents issued under the homestead laws to single women. That was 11.8% of the total homestead patents issued in those counties in the same period.[591] The interpretation of these data remains problematic but several observations can be made. First, it appears that single women were much, much more likely to acquire land in their own name by using the homestead laws than through the ordinary processes of land acquisition—purchase, inheritance, or other transfer. If the 4% of total single woman farms is at all representative of the larger state demographics in these years, the approximate 12% of single women homesteaders suggests that they were three times as likely to come into land ownership using the homestead laws. Second, the numbers varied even within the counties Bauman investigated. Johnson and Natrona counties had the lowest percentages (7.9% and 8.2% respectively) while Laramie County was the highest, with 16.6%, followed by Sweetwater (13.7%) and Crook (13.3%). And of these perhaps Crook County is the most revealing since it had not only the greatest absolute number of single women homestead patents (541) in Bauman's sampling, but it also had the highest number of total homestead patents (4058). So there was a significant range in the distribution of the single women homesteaders.

Possibly of greater significance than the number is the experience of these women in the Equality State and accounts of that experience continue to surface. Those experiences varied hugely, and they varied across the social and cultural landscape as much as they varied across the physical landscape. On the one hand, there was Esther Dollard at age 63, a widow with grown children, who homesteaded near

---

[590] The breakdown is 626 female owners, 2 female managers, and 38 female tenants. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, State Compendium Wyoming*, 39.

[591] Paula M. Bauman, "Single Women Homesteaders in Wyoming, 1880-1930," *Annals of Wyoming*, 58 (Spring 1986): 52. Yet another study should also be consulted, that of Bates Hole by George C. Scott. Scott suggests additional contours that cloud the meaning of the various numbers. Scott discovered that women "account for nearly 37 per cent" of the Desert Land entries in Bates Hole before 1900 and after that almost 44 per cent. In this case, according to Scott, wives of men who had filed homestead claims subsequently filed Desert Land claims to expand their holdings. This attests both to the prevalence of women holding land in their names and the importance of family in establishing and operating farms and ranches under the homestead laws. Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," 31.

Devils Tower in 1908 and who evidently proved up, writing her son from there in 1917.[592] On the other hand there were the Davis sisters—Bertha, Florence, and Millicent Davis—who built their separate cabins near the corners of the property lines separating them so that they would be near each other in their 1908 homesteads not far from Burns, or Luther, as it was originally known; the hill where they lived was called Calico Hill by local cowboys. The sisters and another woman homesteader at the fourth corner—a Mrs. Wilcox—formed the hub of a community in that area especially when they founded a club, the Jolly Dry Farmers, in 1909, a woman's club complete with clubhouse. [593]

Or consider the experience of Louise Richter in the Klondike area of Johnson County. In 1915, Richard Richter died of tick fever, leaving a widow in poor health, Elizabeth, and a daughter, Louise. After two weeks of contemplation the course of the future was clear. A neighbor observed: "Then Louise decided to take over." She would take care of her ailing mother and run the homestead ranch. Louise was fourteen years old. She ran the operation and worked the cattle until her death in 1970, never marrying.[594] And there are others—Dr. Bessie Efner Rehwinkle, a physician who lost all her money, and her medical practice, in the Panic of 1907 and started anew, bringing her three orphaned nieces with her to her homestead near Carpenter the same year;[595] May Morgareidge, who had been widowed and decided to homestead in the middle of sheep range near EK Mountain in the Red Wall country in Johnson County in 1916 or 1917; Mary Culbertson and Helen Coburn Howell who moved in 1905 from Iowa to the Hanover Irrigation Project near Worland, where they shared a cabin with a line down the middle separating the adjoining homestead properties;[596] Geraldine Lucas, forty-seven years old, a former teacher in New York, divorced, and the mother of a grown son, who joined the wave of people immigrating into and homesteading in Jackson Hole in the 1910s, her own parcel being situated on the rugged, even inhospitable, but glorious land at the foot of the Grand Teton;[597] Zay Philbrook, who

---

[592] Marcia Meredith Hensley, *Staking Her Claim: Women Homesteading the West* (Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 2008), 263-266.

[593] *Calico Hill: Recalling the Early Years, Good Times and Hardships of Homesteaders, Laramie County, Wyoming*. This was, of course, not the only example of such an arrangement. Pete Meike in the Pumpkin Buttes area recalled of four women who homesteaded: "Old Maids Corner out here, south of Trabing a ways, there was four of them out there, four sections, and they all got into the corner. They weren't a quarter of a mile away from each other. But they sat right there and proved up on those homesteads." Pete and Naomi Meike, interviewed by Patty Myers, Wyoming State Archives, OH-1147.

[594] I am grateful to Shirley Jacob for sharing her own significant writing and research on Louise Richter, including her essays, "History of Cattle Ranching in Wyoming from a Woman's [Louise Richter's] Perspective," and "Louise Richter, Independent Rancher." The quotation in this excerpt is from Jacob, "Louise Richter, Independent Rancher," 7.

[595] See the selection from Rehwinkle's autobiography in Hensley, *Staking Her Claim: Women Homesteading the West*, 165-179.

[596] Culbertson's oral history, collected by the WPA in the 1930s, and Howell's private account of her experience are reprinted in Hensley, *Staking Her Claim: Women Homesteading the West*, 234-253.

[597] Sherry L. Smith, "A Woman's Life in the Teton Country: Geraldine L. Lucas," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 44 (Summer 1994): 18-33.

purchased a Timber and Stone claim near Tensleep in the Big Horn Mountains, where she planted a garden, grew hay, and raised horses;[598] and Elinore Pruitt Stewart, a single mother who left employment in Denver as a washerwoman, filing on a homestead in Sweetwater County.[599] The single women homesteaders were all over the map and their backgrounds, expectations, and experiences were all over the spectrum.

What these women found on their farms and ranches is equally varied, and many, like their male counterparts, stayed only a short while. But many also remained and made homes and lives on the prairies and in the mountains of Wyoming. Life was unsparing for them, just as it was for their spouses, if they had a husband. Louise Richter, as Shirley Jacob records, did not have a husband and worked the cattle sometimes with the help of a man she hired but often by herself. Richter's experiences reflected some of that demanding life:

> A superb horseman, Louise could do anything with cattle and horses. She once tried to dig a stock reservoir with her work horses. And she could drive a hitch of six horses pulling a heavy hay wagon up out of the steep valley benches of the canyon ranch. And she could pitch sheaves of wheat into a threshing machine faster than anyone else, but she never learned to drive a tractor with expertise. She was not comfortable with motors.[600]

Many of her male counterparts, of course, were just as uncomfortable with motors as Louise Richter was.

They faced the same challenges of growing crops and livestock as the men did, and in addition they had to overcome social and cultural obstacles that men did not, one of which was a lack of support and even resistance from men which complicated their own struggles. Even when they received offers of support, the support would sometimes be viewed as patronizing, no matter how well-meaning in intent. Shirley Jacob records the brief conversation between Louise Richter and a neighbor when he offered to help her chop wood.

> "Let me help you with that wood-cutting, Louise," said Murray Patch, Jr.
> "No, thank you. I can manage by myself. Go in the house and get a cup of coffee and

---

[598] Zay Philbrook's account, "My Wyoming Timber Claim: A Woman Pioneer in the Big Horn Mountains," was originally published in *Sunset*, in December, 1918, and has been reprinted in Hensley, *Staking Her Claim: Women Homesteading the West*, 63-68.

[599] Stewart, *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*, and Stewart, *Letters on an Elk Hunt by a Woman Homesteader* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915; reprinted, University of Nebraska Press, 1979). See Sherry L. Smith, "Single Women Homesteaders: The Perplexing Case of Elinore Pruitt Stewart," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 22 (May 1991): 163-183.

[600] Shirley Jacob, "History of Cattle Ranching in Wyoming from a Woman's [Louise Richter's] Perspective," 21-22.

warm yourself," said Louise.[601]

A simple and innocent enough conversation, but the exact words, and their deeper undercurrent, stuck in the mind of Murray Patch for decades afterwards. Louise Richter did not just decline help with the wood in that conversation; she made a larger statement that went to the heart of gender relations on the homesteads of Wyoming..

And what they found, when they succeeded in one way or another, may have been all that more meaningful given those circumstances. Dr. Bessie Rehwinkle, after going against the advice of her "good father [who] was very unhappy about my plans and tried his utmost to persuade me to change my mind," captured some of it when she described the real reward of her homestead: "The feeling of being a landowner was a new and an exhilarating experience to me. To be able to say that this fine stretch of land is my own, my very own, does something to one's ego. It gives one a sense of security, of stability, of belonging, and of being a part of the land itself. One no longer lives in a community, but has become an integral part of it. Its weal and its woe suddenly become identical with one's own."[602] Florence Blake Smith, a few years later, was homesteading on land south of Gillette, returning to Chicago for the winters but spending the rest of the year developing her homestead, hoping to prove up. In Chicago she talked with a male supervisor at work, who, as it turned out envied her and wished he could do the same. She felt sorry for him, but she felt sorrier for his wife who was saddled with such an unhappy husband and father of her four children. "It was wonderful to be young and free all at the same time, and I could afford to feel sorry for a lot of people. But how many men and women do go through the motions of living with a secret longing locked away in their hearts, only to see daylight for a few chance minutes. I was glad my dream was in the making, and how thrilling it all was!"[603] The economic and political dimensions of the Jeffersonian dream have often been articulated, but here was also a voice expressing some of the psychological dynamics as well.

There was probably never a more ardent advocate of women homesteading than Elinore Pruitt Stewart. Stewart wrote a series of letters to her former employer in Denver describing her life in southwest Wyoming. Stewart was a gifted writer and her letters were published as articles in *The Atlantic Monthly* and then in her two books. While she detailed the challenges and vicissitudes of homesteading, and of being a woman homesteader, she always put a positive turn to those challenges and urged other women to do as she said she had done:

> When I read of the hard times among the Denver poor, I feel like urging them every one to get out and file on land. It really requires less strength and labor to raise plenty to satisfy a large family than it does to go out to wash, with the added satisfaction of

---

[601] Patch related this to Shirley Jacob in 1981. Shirley Jacob, "Louise Richter, Independent Rancher," unpublished manuscript, 8.
[602] Rehwinkle in Hensley, *Staking Her Claim: Women Homesteading the West*, 166, 171.
[603] Florence Blake Smith, *Cow Chips 'N' Cactus: The Homestead in Wyoming* (n.p.: Unity Publications, 1962), 81.

> knowing that their job will not be lost of them if they care to keep it. Even if improving the place does go slowly, it is that much done to stay done. Whatever is raised is the homesteader's own, and there is no house-rent to pay.

After explaining what her six-year-old daughter had accomplished by planting potatoes with a little help, she said, "Any woman strong enough to go out by the day could have done every bit of the work and put in two or three times that much, and it would have been so much more pleasant than to work so hard in the city and then be on starvation rations in the winter."

Possibly her strongest statement is the one that has been most quoted:

> To me, homesteading is the solution of all poverty's problems, but I realize that temperament has much to do with success in any undertaking, and persons afraid of coyotes and work and loneliness had better let ranching alone. At the same time, any woman who can stand her own company, can see the beauty of the sunset, loves growing things, and is willing to put in as much time at careful labor as she does over the washtub, will certainly succeed; will have independence, plenty to eat all the time, and a home of her own in the end.[604]

That dream of independence and freedom was important to Elinore Pruitt Stewart and to others and she was an eloquent advocate. Thus it is all the more perplexing, to use historian Sherry Smith's carefully chosen word, to realize that Stewart herself did not actually prove up on her homestead. In fact, she not only did not prove up, but she did not remain single either, marrying within six weeks of her arrival. She relinquished her homestead and her mother-in-law took it up, although it effectively remained within the family and was sold to Elinore Pruitt Stewart's husband a few years later. Not proving up, of course, is no sin and even puts Stewart into the majority of people who filed on land under the homestead laws, but it is disconcerting since she told so many how it was possible. Sherry Smith's analysis of the gap between the legal reality of the Stewart case and the words that Stewart used to describe her experience offers insight into not just this case but the larger circumstances of homesteaders, men and women, in Wyoming. Smith investigated the land records surrounding the Stewart homesteads (there were actually two, her husband having filed earlier), examined related documents, interviewed Stewart's surviving children, and concluded that the reality is a great deal more complex, more nuanced, and less straight-forward than the cold land record of her filing and relinquishment may suggest. Surely Elinore Pruitt Stewart was not alone in both using the land laws, and having to work around the land laws, to achieve her goal. Plus, family proved to be of critical importance for many people, male and female, in succeeding in their farms and ranches—and homesteads. (Again, George Scott's finding is both relevant and revealing of the importance of family in homesteading and in filing claims: "members of the same family tended to enter land together, even if that meant choosing land of lesser quality."[605]) While Elinore Pruitt Stewart did not actually prove up

---

[604] Stewart, *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*, 214-215.
[605] George C. Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole,

on her claim, she was not exactly a failure either, as Smith carefully notes:

> . . . Although Elinore did not prove up on her own homestead, the property did remain in the family's hands, and that was the important goal for the Stewarts. Elinore was clearly a successful ranchwoman, operating in the framework of her family. True, she did not succeed as an "independent woman homesteader," in Elinore's own narrowly defined sense of that term. However, to the extent that "independent" means more than "alone," to the extent it also means individualistic and self-reliant, the term certainly applies to Mrs. Stewart. She was a free-spirited, forceful personality, working alongside, rather than under the domination of, her husband.[606]

Her case, thus, instead of disproving or diminishing the ability of women to homestead, makes a larger point and suggests the importance of the role of family in the homesteading process and experience. Men and women and children, as Ted Olson expressed it, "Everybody has to pitch in." Indeed, this may be just one more example of how prevalent was the philosophy, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." In this case, of course, it may have been "from each according to her ability, to each according to her needs."

The dreams of the homesteader, in the minds and hearts of males and females alike, was a powerful dream and it was a dream that brought thousands of people to the farms and ranches of Wyoming, using the homestead laws, working around the homestead laws, or proceeding without them to establish an independent piece of land on which to raise a family or just find the freedom and independence at the heart of the Jeffersonian dream. The circumstances limiting the realization of that dream were in part those of the land itself, in part those of the settler him- or herself, and in part those of the vision those people held. But increasingly the challenges and limitations were forces that were already evident and growing, especially the hold that the outside world placed on the ranches and farms as they produced more of their goods for the market. Those forces were growing in power.

The seeds of a new system of agriculture, and even a new social order, had been planted with each acre planted in cash crops, with each sheep shorn in an industrial shed, with each firing up of a steam engine, with each specialization and segmentation of the work process, and with each mortgage taken out. The homesteads, the farms, and the ranches of Wyoming were moving into Modern Times.

6 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC UPHEAVAL IN AGRICULTURE IN THE 1920S

The forces defining the 1920s were very much in evidence a few years before and for several years after the decade. Between 1917 and 1933 (although those years are also soft and general in marking

---

Wyoming, 1880-1940," 22.
[606] Smith, "Single Women Homesteaders: The Perplexing Case of Elinore Pruitt Stewart," 178.

changes), rural Wyoming was being transformed in several ways. In the first place, there were a series of changes in weather, in the economy (in prices, in costs), in technology, and otherwise—in other words, the kinds of changes that can be found in any time with greater or lesser degree of severity and opportunity. The second pattern of changes, however, was more fundamental and gives the period a unifying, defining core. The farms and ranches and homesteads of Wyoming not only experienced good times and hard times, especially the latter, during this decade and a half beginning with World War I; they were also being transformed, their purposes and goals restructured, their methods and assumptions challenged and sometimes replaced. In the social science language of modern America, they were being modernized, and that involved challenges as devastating as an arid climate or a fluctuation in the commodity markets. The farms and ranches would not be the same after enduring this combination of powerful social, economic, and cultural shocks.

i. War and Transformation

The upbeat statistical indexes of growth and expansion in agriculture in the 1910s are misleading in one important respect. The increase in acres planted, the surge in crop yields, the shifts in production from oats to wheat, and the other measures of activity that convey a picture of steady expansion in the decade—those upticks were largely confined to a short period late in the decade, especially 1914 or 1915 to 1918, and those years coincided with something else going on in the world that was moving not just the lines and dots on economic charts in the U.S. but the lives and fates of people on the farms and ranches in Wyoming. World War I not only provided a different economic and social stimulus for changes in farming and ranching in Wyoming but also marked the beginning of a larger transformation of the structure, purpose, and processes of the farms and ranches, and challenged the nature, the meaning, and the future of the homestead.

The war itself seemed distant at first, in 1914, something limited to Europe, and this feeling of safe distance was increased by President Woodrow Wilson as he boldly adopted an official stance of neutrality that the nation cheered. Yet economic forces were unleashed by Europe's mobilization for war that reached all the way into the mountains and valleys and deserts and prairies of Wyoming. As nations on both sides of the war in Europe focused their efforts on war, they needed additional foods and materials; in fact, their own economies were crippled because of the shift to war footing, so they needed even more goods since they were unable to produce for themselves. The United States became the supplier for the war-absorbed nations. Increasingly, however, the U.S. became the supplier especially to the Allies, and commerce with those countries increased while commerce with the Central Powers diminished, and when that happened, as later studies demonstrated, the U.S. also became increasingly invested in the victory of the Allies in the conflict. Woodrow Wilson, after being re-elected on the slogan, “He kept us out of war,” and after being inaugurated into his second term in 1917, promptly reversed himself and led the nation into full-scale war on the side of the Allies. Meanwhile, Wyoming’s farms and ranches had increased production in response to the increased demand, and to the increased

prices for their goods; those who were already producing cash crops, even if those cash crops were livestock, sometimes prospered, and those who had not been producing cash crops were encouraged to switch to the new system.

It was not just a matter of an open market setting prices higher through supply and demand, though; the government was actively involved in the whole process encouraging production by setting wholesale and retail prices through fiat, and managing and regulating agriculture in specific and powerful ways. Wheat prices during the war rose dramatically, from seventy-six cents a bushel in 1912 to $2.49 in June 1917. In August 1917, the government set wheat prices at $2.20 a bushel for the next year's crop, in hopes that this would encourage production and modestly protect the consumer.[607] Statewide, wheat production increased from two and a quarter million bushels in 1913 to more than six and a half million bushels in 1918. Grain elevators were constructed all across Wyoming to hold the vast harvests of wheat and wheat became the cash crop, the dominant crop, and sometimes the only crop being produced on ranches and farms.[608] This meant taking land out of production of other crops that had been used for home consumption, especially, in this case, oats, but the opportunity was in many cases irresistible and people were, at any rate, only doing what their government asked of them.

Likewise, the market in cattle also climbed quickly, pushing up both prices and the number that the ranchers put on the range. Dale A. Poeske, in his master's thesis on Wyoming during the war, concluded that the cattle population of the state "more than doubled" between 1913 and 1919, and that the valuation of the animals trebled.[609] Wyoming ranchers even received a special dispensation from the United States Food Administration partially exempting them from prohibitions on hoarding grain so that they would be able to put up feed for their livestock in the winter. Cattle were in demand—great demand.

So were horses. One possibly unanticipated consequence of the war was the sudden demand for the horses that had been the mainstay of Wyoming's ranches and farms. Purchasing agents came knocking on ranch doors looking for horses. Annie Proulx relates the story of rancher Jim Hansen in the Red Desert who rounded up a thousand wild horses and took them to Rawlins where they would be handed over to the army. When the agents arrived and Hansen asked them if the horses would go into combat, and the answer was that they would, Hansen opened the corral gates, letting the horses free, running back into the desert from which they had been gathered.[610]

Most of those horses acquired, however, were not destined for the cavalry, which as a combat arm in the military was fading generally, on its way to becoming an anachronism in the wake of the development

---

[607] Dale A. Poeske, "Wyoming in World War I," M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1968, 35.
[608] Clearmont Historical Group, *Backward Glance: Ulm, Leiter, Ucross, Clearmont, A Century of History* (Buffalo, Wyoming: The Office, n.d.), 10.
[609] Poeske, "Wyoming in World War I," 31.
[610] Annie Proulx, "Horse Bands of the Red Desert," in Annie Proulx, ed., *Red Desert: History of a Place* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 333-334.

of the modern war machine, and was seldom deployed in the European conflict. Instead, they were used for artillery and supply functions. In fact, these were work horses, draft horses, heavy horses that had been used for pulling plows and even threshing machines and now they would pull other burdens on the battlefield. Only a few, but very large, operations in Wyoming could supply horses in the quantity needed and these included the Mitchener Horse Company and Carey Brothers and Davis, all of Cheyenne. In mid-November 1915, even after the major initial push for purchasing horses by the British, perhaps three thousand horses were gathered at Cheyenne for inspection by French purchasers. The seven hundred horses passed over in this purchase were then herded to range near Medicine Bow in what the *Wyoming Tribune* called "the largest horse drive which has been made in many years if not the largest ever made in the state."[611] The rejected horses were subsequently put up for sale in the spring, but demand had faltered by military purchasers by this point, and apparently the farms of Wyoming were left with something of a paradox—a shortage of work horses on farms at the same time that sellers with horses aplenty could not find buyers; the farms had sold their horses and the military had quit purchasing. So it should come as no surprise, as Dale Poeske reports, that after the war there was another, related, development in the equine industry of the state: "following the Armistice, a horse meat canning factory was built near Riverton, where horses were canned for export and used to help feed the starving people of Europe."[612] This was perhaps not exactly what Wyoming ranchers had in mind when they raised their horses, but it was a sign of the new world of markets in which they operated.

Sheep declined in number during most of the decade but the exact fluctuation in herds from year to year is unclear. The combination of a reduced supply of sheep, however, and an increase in demand (especially overseas, but also domestically) because of the war, meant that prices for wool jumped considerably. In 1915 wool was selling for as much as twenty-seven and a half cents a pound, higher than had been received in over three decades. Almost a year later wool sold for thirty cents and the Douglas *Budget* reported "the prospects for the sheepmen of Wyoming are better this season than ever before in the history of the sheep industry" and in another year, 1917, the same newspaper could say with confidence that, "The future prospect, in view of the sheep feeding industry, is even brighter than in the past, ..." By this time wool prices were around fifty or sixty cents and even at that price some growers were holding onto their wool, hoping for an even higher price.[613] Ultimately the War Industries Board fixed the price for the 1918 wool clip at fifty-five cents a pound, based on 1917 market rates. This, it should be noted, was price control, and the effect of price control was to guarantee the price that woolgrowers would receive—an unprecedented guarantee and an unprecedented price. In February 1919 the president of the Wyoming Wool Growers Association, J. M. Rumsey of Rawlins, announced, "The sheep and wool industry has never enjoyed a more prosperous year. Wyoming this year will receive more direct returns in dollars and cents from this industry than ever before, despite the fact that the sheep industry continues to decline rapidly. The wool growers of the state are receiving the highest

---

[611] "War Horse Reject Herd Being Driven Seven Days Journey," Cheyenne *Wyoming Tribune*, December 3, 1915.
[612] Poeske, "Wyoming in World War I," 34.
[613] *Bill Barlow's Budget* and Douglas *Budget*, for June 3, 1915, May 4, 1916, March 1, 1917, March 8, 1917, June 21, 1917, June 28, 1917.

market price for wool clip. This is due because of the war in Europe and the attending demand for American wool on that continent."[614] Clearly, some woolgrowers increased their herds, even at the higher prices, but the Wyoming flock remained smaller than it had been before the decline began in 1911 and 1912.

Those increased prices, too, were not just prices that other people in other places had to pay. Ted Olson near Laramie described the process: "Little by little the war, far away though it still was, began to affect us. Prices went up. Beef on the hoof at Omaha, oats on the scales at the Gem City or the Star Barn. That was fine. But also groceries, shirts and shoes and overalls, sickle blades, rake teeth, nails and staples. A new phrase came into the language: the High Cost of Living, quickly abbreviated to HCL."[615] T. A. Larson estimated that the cost of living increased by nearly seventy-five percent between 1913 and 1918.[616]

The war brought some level of prosperity to the farmers and ranchers of Wyoming, and usually that came in the form of higher prices for their wool, higher prices for their cattle, and higher prices for their crops. But higher prices did not benefit all equally. Those who benefited most from the highest prices on the wool clip, for example, were those who had the most clips to sell. Those with thousands of fleeces obviously fared better than those with only a few, those with one or two hundred or even less. And the same was true in wheat, oats, cattle, and other commodities. The larger producers stood to gain more than did the smaller operations. This was not a system of from each according to his or her ability and to each according to his or her need; it was a system of to each according to his or her resources, so that those with the greatest resources also benefited the greatest.

Everything cost more—land, sheep, cattle, seed, equipment, and household items—and Wyoming's ranchers, farmers, and homesteaders used their newfound prosperity to acquire goods they had not been able to get before, but they especially used the increased income to expand their operations. One indication of this is the surge to purchase tractors. As it happened, a new kind of tractor was appearing on the market and in the fields about the time of the war and this tractor was lighter in weight, more versatile, requiring only one operator, powered by gasoline instead of steam, and lower in price. It was still a slim minority of operators who owned any kind of tractor, but the entry of the lighter-weight gasoline-powered tractor increased the number of farms and ranches with any kind of a machine and it was especially appropriate for those who were expanding their acreages because of the war. The sale of a tractor was often an event of some local significance all over the state. In Rock Springs, the newspaper announced that R. I. DeNise had ordered and received one of the new tractors "and will use it on his ranch for farm work."[617] In Powell, Otto Schact was described as "doing his farming in double quick time this spring," expecting to have his land "plowed, disced, harrowed and seeded in about four

---

[614] Rumsey is quoted in Poeske, "Wyoming in World War I," 37.
[615] Ted Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 218.
[616] T. A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965, 1978; 2nd edition, revised), 399.
[617] Rock Springs *Rocket*, May 18, 1917.

days" by virtue of a tractor.[618] At Sage, near Kemmerer, "E. W. Smith [was] back on his ranch tearing up the earth with a Case tractor."[619] Hugo Swanstrom at Marbleton was in the middle of threshing "when his big tractor broke down." Instead of repairing the larger machine, he decided to "purchase a Fordson to finish threshing, and next spring will plow about 'steen hundred acres with the little giant."[620] The implication was, as in the last instance, that the owner of the new equipment would also expand the area under cultivation, and actually that was the only way the investment made sense. The tractor and the expanded acreage were two halves of the same package; the larger area to be farmed required a tractor and the tractor required a larger area to pay for itself.

In addition, the government encouraged the purchase of a tractor as part of the war effort. Given the labor shortage everywhere with more and more calls being made on the nation's young men, which also happened to be the core of the agricultural workforce, the call went out for farmers to use machinery, and to use it more. The Wheatland *Times* informed its readers that the Farm Labor Director urged them to use "tractors, improved machinery and larger teams of horses or mules for each driver" to save manpower.[621] That call was echoed by the Cowley *Progress*, which offered this perspective: "Where the farm is large, and it is not possible to procure sufficient labor, it will certainly be more profitable, as well as patriotic, to install machinery which will enable the operator to plant, cultivate and harvest a full acreage of the crops best suited to his land . . . than to let some of the land lie idle."[622]

The federal government went beyond just urging the use of tractors; it provided an incentive to borrow money to purchase them, and in April 1918 the word went out that interest rates on loans to purchase tractors were reduced, the Federal Reserve System rediscounting "tractor paper" loans when issued by member banks.[623] In addition, in 1916 Congress passed the Farm Loan Act, establishing Land Banks in each of the twelve Federal Reserve Bank districts. In a complex arrangement, farmers could secure long-term credit for expanding their operations, using their farms as collateral; the land banks would then use the mortgages as the basis for issuing bonds. The combination of measures was designed to provide credit to farmers so that they could grow themselves as well as their crops.[624]

If some farms and ranchers were able to expand, the largest operators expanded even more. Six weeks after the armistice ending the fighting in World War I, the Sheridan *Post* saw that "from every evil some good must come," and in this case the evil was the war, "cruel, blood wasting, life blasting, demoralizing, unthinkably horrible" though it was, and the good was "the stimulus to agricultural

---

[618] The Powell *Leader*, June 14, 1917.
[619] Kemmerer *Republican*, August 9, 1918.
[620] Kemmerer *Republican*, December 20, 1918.
[621] "Use Machinery and Save Men, Advises Farm Labor Director," Wheatland *Times*, June 26, 1918.
[622] "Use of Larger Implements and More Horses Help to Solve Labor Problem," Cowley *Progress*, August 1, 1918.
[623] Park County *Enterprise*, April 17, 1918.
[624] George E. Putnam, "The Federal Farm Loan System," *American Economic Review*, 9 (March 1919): 57-78.

development." Farming was now not just a matter of loyalty and patriotism but a serious business interest and in that area, the movement "is being led by the big men—men with capital and brains sufficient to handle propositions of gigantic magnitude." Willis Spear was identified as leading this effort, and Spear "for decades past has been known as one of the cattle kings of the northwest, and . . . is now the moving spirit in half a dozen companies." One of his ranches had 680,000 acres but there were others too, and, the newspaper reported, after the crisis of the war he was turning his attention even more to farming. To run just one of his farms he had purchased "thirteen big tractors." Willis Spear was, the Sheridan *Post* said, "Developing Agriculture on an Unheard of Scale."[625]

There were others too. Near Lingle a tract of land that had been abandoned by the government was acquired by "a syndicate composed of Cheyenne and Southern Wyoming businessmen and bankers," with a plan to develop a 5,480-acre farm. The only crop to be grown was wheat, and the purchase of ten more tractors, in addition to "the steam tractors now on the ground," would enable plowing to start in the spring of 1918. The investors in this corporate farm, a new kind of undertaking in Wyoming, although somewhat reminiscent of the corporate ranches that had been active in the 1880s, included the president of the First National Bank of Cheyenne, the president of the Union Trust Company in Cheyenne, a judge, the state auditor, a state senator from Torrington, a vice president of the First National Bank of Torrington, the president of the Torrington State Bank, and two vice presidents of the Lingle bank.[626] Farming had taken a different turn in Wyoming and while neither the Spear operation nor the Lingle syndicate were representative of Wyoming agriculture in any way, they were pointing the direction for the future, and that direction included vast acreages, non-operator owners, heavy banking influence, mechanization of operations, and single-crop production—factories in the field.

If the war had stimulated this general expansion in farms, in an ironic way so also did the end of the war. Where the war had brought a measure of prosperity to the dirt farmers and small ranchers and woolgrowers around the state, the end of the war impacted them just as much, but sometimes now devastating in consequence, especially those who were smallest and most vulnerable. Along with peace in Europe, the farms in those countries that had been idle during the war started producing more, so there were no longer the global shortages that had sent prices climbing during the war; there was even competition from those countries. The resumption of shipping, untrammeled by war, assured global distribution of commodities wherever they were produced. The result was that this new global market in grain, meat, and wool saw domestic supplies increase and prices decline. On top of that, the government price supports—the fixed, guaranteed prices—that had benefited producers during the war were no longer there to protect them; where the government had fixed prices at a high level during the war and for a short while afterwards, those prices disappeared when the downward pressure on prices increased—i.e., when they were most needed.

This would have been a problem anyway, but many of the ranchers had expanded their operations with additional livestock and farmers were planting additional acres in marketable commodities. With

---

[625] "Developing Agriculture on an Unheard of Scale," Sheridan *Post*, December 27, 1918.
[626] "[$]158,000 Wheat Farm Launched," Newcastle *News-Journal*, March 14, 1918.

agricultural production subject to both seasonal and annual cycles, there is always a lag in the speed, and thus also the timeliness, with which operators can respond to markets by either increasing or cutting production. And the only way to get rid of the excess they may find on their hands is to sell it on the market, which, when everybody else does the same, further pushes down the prices in a deepening, downward spiral. Meanwhile, the costs of production remained high, never dropping to the prewar levels. This would be of no, or little, consequence for those homesteaders and farmers and ranchers who simply lived on relatively self-sufficient farms where they grew their own foods and fibers and were not subject to the powerful whims of the market. But those who were producing for the market, who had put more of their land into marketable crops, who had expanded their herds and flocks to take advantage of the market, those were the people who felt the sting of the change in the winds of markets most. And the war had encouraged more farmers, ranchers, and homesteaders to do exactly that.

The end of the war marked the beginning of a long downward spiral in the nation's—and in Wyoming's—farms and ranches that would not end until World War II, and even when the state emerged from that second war, it had become something fundamentally different from what it was earlier in the century. The years immediately following World War I saw some fluctuation in the markets, but generally the prices continued downward, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, but drop they did. Wool, for example, in 1921 was selling in Douglas for twenty-one cents and the growers felt fortunate to get that amount. The Douglas newspaper reported, "Last year there were simply no buyers in the market, except for a very few clips early in the season. That same condition obtained up to very recently."[627] A few months later wool was selling for fifteen cents a pound. This was bad enough, but what of those who had borrowed money, expecting to be able to pay off their loans with the income at the higher prices? The answer was that they would not be able to. One account notes, "There was such a sudden slump in prices that many stockmen of Sheridan county who had been regarded as financially safe lost all their holdings and there was not any of them who did not lose heavily."[628]

On top of this was the short, but severe, drought of 1919. Accounts of the drought are scattered and it is difficult to measure the impact of the dry year. Some, it is clear, avoided the problem by shipping their livestock to other places, but most could not afford that option. Naomi Streeter Meike near Sussex recalled that the previous winter was dry, and the spring brought no grass: "The hay and grain did not grow, and by fall animals were starving."[629] J. Tom Wall in the Pumpkin Buttes area said, about the winter that came without the reserves of feed from the previous season, "it was sickening to see so many stock suffering and dying from cold and hunger."[630] The following year the rains returned, but not the prices.

---

[627] Douglas *Budget*, April 21, 1921.
[628] Ida McPherren, "History of Grazing," p. 20, typescript dated November 15-28, 1940, in WPA Collections, subject file 395.
[629] Naomi Streeter Meike, "History of the Sussex Community," in Powder River Heritage Committee, *Our Powder River Heritage* (Cheyenne: Frontier Printing, Inc., 1982), 60.
[630] J. Tom Wall, *Crossing Old Trails to New in North Central Wyoming* (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Company, 1973), 204.

And involved in all this were the banks, often the same banks that had helped out their distraught debtors after the hard winter of 1912. Since then the Federal Reserve System had been created, the money supply was now regulated and controlled, and during the war a deliberate easy money policy had encouraged lending to stimulate production and economic growth. After the war, however, the Federal Reserve System sought to combat inflation so tightened the money supply.[631] This put pressure on the banks by raising discount rates (interest it charges its member banks), and that translated into tighter operating circumstances for the banks. Not only were they unable to make fewer new loans, but they found themselves with less flexibility with their outstanding loans. This meant that banks closed in what became known as "The Contraction of 1920-21." When the Federal Reserve System began to squeeze the money supply, Wyoming farmers and ranchers felt the pain.

"NOW, THEREFORE, notice is hereby given that by virtue of the power of sale contained in said mortgage deed, duly executed as aforesaid, and in pursuance of the statute in such case made and provided, said mortgage deed will be foreclosed by the sale of the above described real estate at public auction and vendue to the highest and best bidder for cash at the front door of the court house . . . ." With those words, repeated in the legal notices of newspaper after newspaper, all across Wyoming in the years following World War I, the homesteading, farming, and ranching career of many people came to a close. How many people lost their farms is not known, and certainly a great many were able to continue on, although with their operations substantially changed. But those who failed in the several years following World War I usually were not failures because of their own individual shortcomings, their lack of thrift, their unwillingness or inability to do hard work, or their lack of character otherwise. They failed because of their involvement in a system of production and credit over which they had no control.

Consider the case of Elias and Verda Wilson in Jackson Hole. This devout Mormon couple followed other members of their families from Utah and Idaho into Jackson Hole after they were married in 1906, subsequently living in South Park and then farther south where they filed on a homestead in 1909. One account relates, "The first summer they grubbed sage brush and worked to get something together for the winter. Along in the late summer Elias went out with his dudes, a source of income that could always be depended on for a winter grub stake. In those days they bought their supplies for the year and they freighted them from Rexburg." The Wilson family grew and the ranch did well, at least it did so until the end of World War I. Verda Wilson's obituary notes, "In 1918 and 1919 Jackson Hole suffered a terrible drought and the winter of 1920 the Wilsons had to take their stock to Menan, Ida. for feed. Hay sold at $50.00 a ton and the next fall cattle sold at $2.00 a head. What happened to the Wilsons happened to every other rancher, they went broke. Undaunted Elias went to carpentering and Verda started with a few milk cows and together they worked to the top once again."[632] That account leaves out some information. The first part is that there had been droughts before, and while serious, the

---

[631] Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 221-239.
[632] "Elias Wilson," Jackson Hole *Guide*, November 25, 1965; "Verda Barker Wilson Dies at Age 85," Jackson Hole *Guide*, April 9, 1970.

drought was not the worst of their problems; it was not the drought but the downturn in the economy that made the price for their cattle so low. The second piece of information is found in the legal record: In 1920 the couple purchased a small lot in the new town of Jackson and built a barn on it. They left their farm and moved to town, and that is where they did their carpentering and dairying. The small barn still stands at the back of the lot in town, itself something of a touchstone of the way the community evolved.

Or consider the case of Charles Floyd Spencer and his family. Spencer was just a boy when his family emigrated to their homestead near Thornton, between Upton and Moorcroft, loading all their possessions and a few head of livestock in an emigrant car on the railroad, living first in a tent, then a shack, then building their own house. A sister was old enough to file on adjoining land and she and her sister, and the rest of the family, worked to improve both parcels. They raised their chickens, grew their own corn and grain to feed all the livestock, enjoyed the milk and eggs from their own land, consumed the "potatoes, cabbage, carrots, and other vegetables that we raised in the garden" and stored in their cellar, and received an occasional beef from the neighboring cowboys who favored the sisters. In a modest way, in a self-sufficient way, the family did well. Charles Floyd Spencer recalls, "Eventually we fared very well on home-grown things and grocery prices were never much of a problem. Farming tools and livestock took most of the cash that could be accumulated."[633] Step by step, the Spencers increased their livestock from the very few that came with them in the emigrant car from Michigan. They added another horse and then another milk cow "and four bum lambs that were to be my special project" which was the beginning of a small flock that grew when his sisters taught at a ranch and raised orphan lambs on bottles, and brought thirty home, which meant that they then had to buy another milk cow to support the lambs. As a growing young man Spencer worked for others, especially sheep operations, in the area but he and his father especially, after two brothers went off on their own, plowed and fenced the land and grew their crops.

When World War I came, the family needed their son but he joined the army and left for two years; when he returned he was old enough to file on his own homestead, which he did. When he returned the family had his help too so they were able to expand their operation and purchase more sheep. A new bank in Moorcroft knew him and knew that he was experienced and reliable and offered Charles Floyd Spencer five hundred "fine young breeding ewes that were due to lamb the first of May." The price was high, but they were good sheep, soon to increase in number and soon to be shorn too. Spencer's father put up the family homestead as collateral on the mortgage, which was no problem since the initial mortgage that the bank wanted was a short-term loan for six months; in the fall it would be replaced with the long term note. In that six-month period, however, the price dropped on livestock and "We were caught along with many others who could not meet the short-term loans." The Moorcroft bank closed when its parent bank in Cheyenne called in its notes, and "dad's homestead, that he had labored on for ten years, and all the sheep in the newly-purchased band, together with their lambs, were turned

[633] Charles Floyd Spencer, *Wyoming Homestead Heritage* (Hicksville, New York: Exposition Press, 1975), 25.

back to the bank for the cancellation of notes due them."[634] Since Spencer had only recently filed on his own homestead, and did not have title to it, it was not covered in the mortgage; he was thus able to keep it. He started over again there, but his parents moved to Washington, where they too started over again, their homestead dream crushed in the juggernaut of the modern system of agriculture.

Over and over again, the story is repeated. Wes Johnson southwest of Laramie recounted his own misadventure. He went off to war, came back, got married, and then moved to his parents' farm: "Father wanted to restock the place with one hundred head which we did and at rather high prices. This idea would have worked out fine if our economy hadn't gone into a post-war depression. I lost $2,000 on the deal and for a newly married couple we found ourselves financially broke."[635] Johnson's wife, Gail, went to work as a teacher and soon Johnson found employment with Standard Oil of Indiana, where he worked to pay off his ranching debts.

These are individual accounts and, of course, speak to the exact circumstances only of the individuals involved. At the same time, however, none of these people were so remote and isolated that they were beyond reach of the organized economic system, and, in that respect, their stories are the stories of others whose names we do not know. One growing fact seems to emerge from their stories and that is that some kind of threshold, some kind of turning point was being reached. The trend had been since the original inhabitants had been forced from their lands and on to reservations, for white people to migrate to Wyoming in search of homes and opportunities and refuges. For decades they had poured into the territory and the state settling on homesteads and making farms and ranches and building their dreams. At some point after World War I, however, the tide started to turn. People began leaving those farms and ranches and moving elsewhere, to other farms sometimes, but increasingly to the towns and cities of Wyoming and of the nation, where they joined the labor market, hoping to find a job working for someone else. Exactly when that statistical turning point from in-migration to out-migration happened is of little precise meaning. It is clear that at sometime in the 1920s more and more people were making the decision, based on their own circumstances, that they had to leave.

Even though more and more of the farmers and ranchers made those same decisions individually, their circumstances were shared circumstances and their decisions were shared decisions. So it is instructive to note that while the drought played a role in the decision of some, like the Wilson family, to move to town, the fundamental issue facing farmers and ranchers, and making the burden of drought that much heavier, was an increasingly complex and inescapable economic system. Many farmers met their match, not in the dryness of the land, the cold of the winter, or the antagonism of their neighboring ranchers, but at the hands of a system that rewarded them with lower prices the harder they worked and with taking their land and livelihood when they sought to expand their operation. Which then raises the question of whether the greater challenge to the agriculturists of Wyoming was the force of nature or the pressure of the marketplace. This would also be the question of the 1920s and 1930s.

---

[634] Spencer, *Wyoming Homestead Heritage*, 105-107.
[635] Wes Johnson, interviewed by Bob Burns, 1971, Wyoming State Archives, OH-77.

ii. Modernizing the Countryside

While it is true that the nation was moving to the city and the population shift from the countryside was undeniable, powerful, and inexorable, possibly less noticed was that the patterns and systems associated with urban life were at the same time moving into the countryside. Farms, ranches, and homesteads were being modernized. The broad pattern of social change was one in which the relationships characteristic of "modern" forms of social organization were laid upon and transformed older, even archaic, or pre-modern, relationships, purposes, and principles. This is a problematic concept; widely used by historians, in many cases they often assume the pattern instead of articulating it, and even make it appear inevitable, without exploring its conceptual framework—and its limitations. Generally, the process of modernization includes a set of varied but related innovations in social order and private lives, and these include, first of all, people simply being connected with other people outside their traditional networks of social and economic relationships, and those people may now be across town, across the nation, or even around the globe; part of this is the decline of self-sufficient, self-contained communities as modern transportation and communications systems undermine old networks. It was not just access to information and goods, but access to markets, to commerce, which both made more commodities available but also put people into competition; more parts of life in fact became commodities.

But the essence of modernization really flows from this point since it is not just the connections with other people, with outside institutions and forces, but actually the way those new connections change and restructure life that makes it really modernization. For example, a core element is replacing personal, direct relationships (as between purchaser and creator of a good, for example) with impersonal and indirect relationships. The development of layers and layers of processors, transporters, buyers, marketers, suppliers, sellers, and agents of agents in the economy would be an example of this impersonalization. On a slightly different track, modernization would also include the process of specialization of economic activities, a process in which individuals become increasingly focused on a particular part of the production or exchange process and in which the division of labor becomes increasingly minute and intricate; partly this is a reflection of more specialized expertise, but more fundamentally it is the isolation and segmentation of different parts of the production process into increasingly discrete functions whose connection to the whole are incomprehensible sometimes even to the person performing them. The functionaries on an assembly line might represent this part of modernization. And that suggests a related aspect: as the production (and exchange) process becomes increasingly specialized, it also becomes increasingly synchronized, part of a coherent but complex process; again, the assembly line becomes a metaphor for larger processes in society whether they are overtly productive or not.

Yet another part is the growth of a national (or even global) social and economic structure in which social, political, and economic authority is transferred from local levels to central levels (either public or

private, either corporate or governmental or labor union or farm organization or anything else that develops a centralized structure); economists often refer to these agencies and the way they act as imposing "rationality" on otherwise chaotic behavior. The other side of that centralization is the loss of power by the individual, by the neighborhood, by the community. Finally, on yet another level, this process of social change also entails a shift in identity; traditional or parochial loyalties and identities (as a living community member and representative of Bosler or Kelly or Piedmont or Recluse or Otto, or even Wyoming, for that matter) fade in priority and are replaced with more cosmopolitan identities, such as plumber, professor, engineer, merchant, or laborer; someone who feels closer kinship with other plumbers, professors, engineers, merchants, or laborers in other places, even across the country, than with one's neighbors or fellow citizens in a community or even state.

The process of modernization is meant to be a neutral, value-free process, although it often comes to people in a harsh and disruptive way. There is a world of literature surrounding it, and it should not be taken to be explanatory (although often social scientists use it exactly that way), since it obviously leaves much of life out of the equation. In fact, modernization has met considerable resistance and opposition wherever it has appeared, and that in itself has been a form of social crisis. That social crisis was part of the world facing Wyoming's farmers, ranchers, and homesteaders in the 1920s. The reason for this is plain. The elements of modernization, and even the goals and assumptions and purposes of modernization, ran exactly counter to the Jeffersonian dream that many people carried not just on to the homesteads that they claimed, but on to the farms and ranches where they aspired to a life of freedom and independence. For that Jeffersonian dream, as it had perpetuated and grown and worked its way into the subconscious mind of American culture in the century since the death of Jefferson himself, had at its core being free of the claims of others on a person, and that would be assured through ownership of a parcel of land on which he or she could get by, not necessarily get rich, but get by with the choice of entering the market or not.

The basic contours of this process actually were evident in the previous decade. Fundamental in the shift was the need, according to promoters of modernization, for the farmers and ranchers to recognize that they were involved in a business—not a way of life. And they needed to organize not just their operations along that line, but needed to reorient their thinking toward becoming more business-like and profit-oriented. And the leaders, the most articulate spokespeople for the new system of modernization were found at the agricultural college in the state's university. There the gospel of a new kind of farming and ranching was being preached. And it conflicted with the old. The agricultural experts and leaders in the Agricultural Extension Service at the universities and agricultural colleges of the nation, including in Wyoming, filled their bulletins with encomiums for the new era of agriculture which was scientific, systematic, and business-like. One bulletin explained it all as if it had already been accomplished, observing, "Farming of every kind has ceased to be an existence and has become a vast industry run on business principles. A judicious application of the simple principles of arithmetic shows the profits and losses which before were but little known."[636] There were also doubts, though, that the transformation was complete. Another writer in the *Wyoming Farm Bulletin* was more cautious and saw

[636] C.J.O., "Community Interests," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 2 (October 1912): 218.

only the beginning of the change and that was only among some farmers: "Every intelligent farmer is beginning to realize that farming is a business." Even that realization was not enough, the writer said, since the same farmer "persists in trying to run his business without even so much as a scratch of a pen."[637] In one issue of the *Bulletin* a prominent banker scolded the farmers and told them that they needed to be more business-like in their approach to their farming and ranching if they expected banks to offer them credit and to do so at lower rates than those then being charged: "I do not believe that one business man in ten thousand would be able to obtain credit should he run his business as the ordinary farmer does, with the lack of any means of accounting, the waste on the farm and the lack of adequate care of his machinery."[638]

What was happening sometimes seems self-evident from the perspective of the twenty-first century, but it also concealed dimensions that were immensely subtle and powerful. Ted Olson captured some of that when his family sold their ranch in 1918. As it happened, the Olsons had a mortgage on their ranch, and they referred to the First National Bank as "a silent partner." While many other ranches failed at this same time, unable to make their mortgage payments, the Olsons continued to make their payments. Alas, though, Ted Olson's father died. Ironically, the family was able, thereby, to actually own the land: "His life insurance made the last payment."[639] But his father had been vital to operating the ranch and the family soon sold it, receiving a fraction of what they thought they should have: "Twenty thousand dollars. A niggardly return, one might think, for more than a quarter century of toil and frugality. I doubt that Mama applied that arid bookkeeper calculus. A ranch is not merely a capital investment; it is a way of life."[640] That perspective summed up much of what the conflict was about. There was the money, "that arid bookkeeper calculus," yes. But there was more at stake. There was also the life on the ranch, the way of life, the life that could not be reduced to dollars and cents. What was happening was that the goal, structure, and methods of operating a farm or ranch as a way of life were being challenged and often subjugated by the "arid bookkeeper calculus" of farming and ranching as only a capital investment, with farming and ranching as worthwhile endeavors only insofar as they delivered a competitive return on committed capital.

One of the obvious challenges to the traditional system of agriculture came in the matter of mechanization. The technological innovations helped (or forced) a reorientation in thinking about farming and ranching not because there is anything about machines that makes them a problem, but because they are expensive, generally require substantial loans to be able to be paid for, and because those loans and the enhanced production capability generally lead to greater production for the market and often, in the case of specialized implements, to increased production of a single crop (for which the machinery is appropriate) at that. And machinery was becoming more important, and more pervasive, on Wyoming's farms and ranches. In 1920, 969 (6.2%) of Wyoming's farms had a tractor, but during the decade, despite market setbacks (and sometimes because of them) the number of tractors virtually

---

[637] A. E. Bowman, "Practice Better Farming," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 2 (May 1913): 324.
[638] George T. Wells, "The Banker and the Farmer," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 3 (September 1913): 38.
[639] Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie*, 130.
[640] Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie*, 224.

quadrupled so that by 1930, 3,749 farms reported owning tractors. While this was still only twenty-three percent of the farms, the trend was clear. In 1923 the Pioneer Garage in Buffalo reported that in a period of four months it had sold forty Ford cars, two trucks and two tractors, and that it was unable to keep up with orders.[641] In 1922 the Lawer Auto Supply in Riverton provided a free school to teach local residents about the new motor vehicles and their maintenance and fuels and lubricants for the "Tractor, Truck, and Automobile owner."[642] The same year, in a discussion of national trends in Ford motor vehicle purchases, the Torrington *Telegram* reported, "not only are the farmers buying more freely, but . . . the general public is becoming more responsive and receptive."[643] In 1926, J. D. LeBar planted thirty acres of peas west of Douglas near the highway, and he used two Fordson tractors to do the plowing. The local newspaper reported that LeBar's demonstration "will be an advertisement for the successful growing of peas." It could also have said that it would be an advertisement for the use of tractors.[644]

The key to the increase in tractor sales and use was two-fold. As historian Gilbert Fite has observed, tractor technology changed in 1924 when the International Harvester Company introduced its all-purpose gasoline-powered Farmall tractor, and that, says Fite, was when "the tractor age really began in American agriculture."[645] The Farmall and the Fordson eventually became the mainstays of American agriculture but in the 1920s they were starting to catch on. The gasoline engine was part of the attractiveness of the new tractors. Plus, they soon developed a power takeoff to transfer power directly from the tractor to the implement and also developed a hydraulic lift so that the plow could be lifted from the ground more easily before turning.

Despite the advantages of the internal combustion engine, despite the smaller size and lighter weight (still about two and a half tons) and maneuverability, and despite the greater versatility, the tractors of the 1920s were still big (they still had steel wheels rather than rubber tires, which would come in the 1930s), they were still expensive, they were still most appropriate for larger operations, and they were still beyond the reach and the need of most farmers and ranchers. Seventy-five percent of Wyoming's farms and ranches stayed with the horse throughout the 1920s.

In addition to the tractors, there were also the implements being pulled by the tractors; instead of investing in all new plows, rakes, disks, harrows, and other implements, most farmers would simply hitch up their existing horse-drawn implements to the tractor, although this represented less than optimum efficiency, for another person would have to ride on the implement and control it. But more implements, and more of them designed so that they would only work with tractors, were being offered to the farmers.

---

641 "Pioneer Garage Unable to Meet with the Demand to Supply Fords," Buffalo *Bulletin*, August 30, 1923.
642 "Free Two-Day School at Lawer Hall," Riverton *Review*, March 1, 1922.
643 "Ford Retail Sales Go Over Million," Torrington *Telegram*, February 9, 1922.
644 Douglas *Budget*, March 25, 1926.
645 Gilbert C. Fite, "The Transformation of South Dakota Agriculture: The Effects of Mechanization, 1939-1964," *South Dakota History*, 19 (Fall 1989): 281.

The huge steam engines remained and they were still used for threshing in the 1920s, although the combine, already spreading across the southern plains, was just entering the northern plains. The combine integrated several functions into one machine (hence its name) since it had the cutting bar and wheel (to push the grain onto the cutting blade) of a binder and then threshed the cut grain. Cutting and threshing took place in one process as the machine eked its way through a field. Huge machines, they sometimes required twenty or thirty horses or mules to pull them, and were, as historian Paul Conkin writes, "the most intricate and costly farm machine invented in the nineteenth century."[646] They also worked best, not surprisingly, on relatively level terrain. Further, as historian Thomas Isern notes, "the larger combines required too great a capital investment for a region where risk of crop failure was high."[647] As a consequence of these factors, the combine was slow to take off in Wyoming. Between the tractor, the combine, and the truck, however, more farmers were using machinery that had been a novelty just a decade before. And they were investing more in it. In 1910 Wyoming farmers and ranchers reported $3,668,394 in implements and machinery; in 1920 that had jumped to $11,777,949; and in 1930, despite the depressed markets of the decade, the amount invested was $17,617,857.[648] The way this was felt was both in the field and in the account book.

As with the investment in machinery to increase production, the expansion of land holdings brought other consequences as well in the 1920s, or, more exactly, in the years following the enactment of the Stock-raising Homestead Act of 1916. In large measure this was part of the same process by which cultivators expanded their operations—the enticement of higher prices in markets, government price supports, government loans for purchasing land, and the terms of the Stock-raising Homestead Act itself which both enabled and encouraged ranches to acquire more land. There was, however, a subtle aspect to this expansion that intensified other problems. George C. Scott notes that the ranchers in Bates Hole had, in the years since initial settlement, depended on the public domain for their grazing land. That grazing land, however, was being diminished by the increase in homesteads under the various land laws and even by the ranchers themselves as they enlarged their own operations.

> As the country filled up, as more and more homesteaders tried to make it on marginal sites, pressure for available range increased. The passage of the Stock Raising Homestead Act of 1916 exacerbated this problem for the small rancher. It not only

---

[646] Paul Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm: The Transformation of American Agriculture since 1929* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 11.
[647] Thomas D. Isern, *Bull Threshers & Bindlestiffs: Harvesting and Threshing on the North American Plains* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 191.
[648] U.S. Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, Vol. V, *Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 48; Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States [*1920*], State Compendium, Wyoming* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), 48; Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Agriculture, Volume II, Part 3—The Western States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932), 159.

> invited new attempts to establish ranches, thus increasing competition for grass, but it permitted ranches like the Two Bar to acquire and fence large blocks of land thus reducing the amount of land available as common pasture for all. When combined with the poor economic conditions of the 1920s, this signaled hard times for the small ranches.[649]

Scott also notes other contributing features in this process as "the free range resource became depleted through over-grazing and over-crowding."[650] This was, in a sense, one more burden for the small ranchers. In another sense, however, it was the Tragedy of the Commons all over again, only this time the human despair set in with a force every bit as visible and direct as the animal suffering.

The number of farms increased during the 1920s, but it increased only slightly, so that there were a total of 16,011 farms in the state by 1930. Of these, 12,195 were operated by their owners—essentially family farms.[651] Of those 12,195 farms, 4,772 (30%) were reported as free from mortgage debt. This too marked a trend. In 1920, 6,816 farms (out of a total of 13,403 owner-operated farms, or 51%) were free of mortgage debt.[652] Fewer and fewer Wyoming farms and ranches, both in absolute numbers and in percentages of the total, could claim to be unburdened by mortgage debt. And that in turn, had implications for their practices on the land as they had to make payments on equipment and land, both of which expanded as they had to pay off mortgages, and that meant, further, turning increasingly to cash-crop production. For many, in an ironic turn, with each furrow they plowed with their new tractors, with each bushel of grain harvested and threshed with their new combine, the Jeffersonian dream was becoming more remote instead of closer.

The farms and ranches were not only becoming more mechanized; they were also becoming more specialized. This is a difficult matter to quantify, and the census provides only slight assistance. The census for the first time in 1930 separated the agricultural operations, identifying them as either cash-grain farms (which included corn, wheat, oats, barley, rye, buckwheat and other grains), crop-specialty farms (including the specialties of sugar beets, soybeans, peas, beans, potatoes, and other field crops), livestock (mules, horses, cattle, sheep, hogs), animal specialty (distinguished from livestock operations by their emphasis on production of crops and feeding the livestock instead of open range grazing), dairy, or poultry operations.[653] The categories used in the census are plain enough, but they also are far from

---

[649] George C. Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1978, 113.
[650] Scott, "These God Forsaken Dobie Hills: Land Law and the Settlement of Bates Hole, Wyoming, 1880-1940," 52.
[651] That number, however, and significantly, represents a decline. In 1925 Wyoming reported 12,545 owner-operated farms and in 1920 13,403 owner-operated farms. Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Agriculture, Volume II, Part 3—The Western States*, 220.
[652] Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States [*1920*], State Compendium, Wyoming*, 54.
[653] U.S. Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Agriculture, Volume III:*

definitive since a farm is placed into a category determined by "[receiving] 40 per cent or more of its income from a particular source." As the census report indicates, "This percentage is arbitrary."[654] In fact, if anything the 1930 census over-reported the specialization and under-reported the general farms.

By the 1930 tabulation, 4,040 ranches were categorized as stock-ranch operations, the single largest grouping. Unfortunately, that number conceals how many of those "stock-ranch" operations were cattle ranches and how many were sheep outfits, and they were not exactly the same. The next largest group (2,839) were the "crop-specialty" operations, and that too included a variety of crops which, while lumped together for tabulation, may not have always appeared on the same farm, and the total does not indicate, for example, which farms were overwhelmingly focused on particular crops, as they were in the sugar beet and wheat producing sections.[655]

Another way of looking at the statistics, however, is more helpful. Keeping in mind the general limitations of the broad categories and the arbitrary percentages, an examination of particular counties does reveal some specialization. For example, the largest category in Lincoln County in 1930 was made up of dairy operations; there 237 of the 666 farms were dairy farms. In Park County, 362 of the 688 farms were specialty crop farms; in Big Horn County, 527 of the 948 were specialty-crop farms; and 129 of Washakie county's 326 farms were specialty-crop operations. These were primarily sugar beet farms. Likewise with the wheat producing sections in the eastern part of the state where the dominant operations, blandly identified as "specialty crop" operations, can be identified with certain crops. Specialization was increasing, although by how much and in what way is largely left to conjecture or research in sources other than the census tabulations. As with the mechanization of Wyoming agriculture, specialization had not yet become dominant, but it was increasing.

And it is clear that specialization was far from complete, gaining ground though it was. The third largest group in the census was probably under-reported: the "general" farming operations in Wyoming—those farms and ranches where no single category could claim more than forty percent of the total revenue of the farm products probably were more widespread than indicated by the arbitrary 40% cutoff. While the census indicated that 2493 of Wyoming's farms and ranches were "general," probably more were, in spirit and possibly even in production, close to the general category. For that matter, the 537 farms reported as self-sufficing because they used at home more than half of all that they produced, were not that different from the neighboring ranch that happened to sell a few more cattle. On that last group, the self-sufficing farms, perhaps the remarkable thing by 1930 is that there were any left to report. At one time they had not only formed the bulk of the farms and ranches in Wyoming, but had been what homesteading was all about. By 1930, the diversification of agriculture and the self-sufficient farm, at

---

Type of Farm, Part 3—The Western States (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932), 2-8.

[654] Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Agriculture, Volume III: Type of Farm, Part 3—The Western States*, 3.

[655] All of these data on specialization and farm type are taken from Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Agriculture, Volume III: Type of Farm, Part 3—The Western States*, 157-158.

one time the hallmark of the homestead, were no longer the obvious wave of the future as they once had been.

Probably the most specialized of the farms were those where sugar beets were grown and harvested. Generally situated on irrigated land, the sugar beets were key to a whole industry, and the production of the beets in the field was but the first step in their processing at plants, and the industry was both highly organized and carefully controlled. A key element in the production of sugar beets was the labor force. For example, in Lovell, the construction of the beet plant occurred in 1916, just when there was a growing labor shortage in the nation. The beet growers depended upon landless laborers to do the fieldwork, and for a while the Germans from Russia seemed to fill that need, although they frequently settled on land and established their own farms—thereby removing themselves from the labor force for other growers. The Great Western Sugar Company began to recruit systematically Spanish speaking workers from Texas, New Mexico, and southeastern Colorado, doing so usually through labor recruiters. Sometimes these recruiters operated independently on a commission basis and sometimes they worked for the company itself. Three Great Western plants in Wyoming had their own recruiters who not only hired labor but also distributed them to the company's operations.[656]

Initially these laborers were hired on a seasonal basis, but that presented problems—and uncertainties—for the company as it approached each growing season. One study notes, "as early as 1920 Great Western management recognized the need to keep the laborers on the farm, not only to maintain a steady labor supply but to avoid the tremendous costs involved in transporting labor each season."[657] The solution, from the company's perspective, was to establish colonies of workers where they would remain year round. Some time between 1920 and 1924 the company built a colony at Lovell—and possibly at its other plants too (Greeley, Colorado is another example, and this practice probably obtained elsewhere in Wyoming). The colony consisted of a tract of land subdivided; individual workers and their families were furnished building materials to use in building the houses. Those building materials tended to be locally available and in the Lovell instance were adobe bricks. The houses were usually one or two rooms. Once completed the houses were leased to the worker; while some places allowed for a lease until the house was paid for, at Lovell the workers were not charged rent, but they also were not allowed to purchase the houses. The company withheld a portion of the workers' paychecks and then paid it back to the workers during the winter—if they stayed. As Augustin Redwine explained the system, "The effect was a 'credit trap' in which the laborers needed money in order to leave but could not receive any unless they stayed."[658]

One area of specialization can be found by looking in other sources. The trend toward genetic specialization through the development and breeding of strains of livestock gained new importance in

---

[656] Augustin Redwine, "Lovell's Mexican Colony," *Annals of Wyoming*, 51 (Fall 1979): 35; see also Harry Schwartz, *Seasonal Farm Labor in the United States with Special Reference to hired Workers in Fruit and Vegetable and Sugar-Beet Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 103.
[657] Redwine, "Lovell's Mexican Colony," 29-30.
[658] Redwine, "Lovell's Mexican Colony," 32.

the 1920s. Fifty-nine breeders of purebred Herefords operated in the state, fifteen breeders of purebred shorthorns, three breeders of polled Herefords, and one breeder of Aberdeen Angus were listed in a 1923 directory published by the University of Wyoming Agricultural Extension Service. This much is probably not surprising, given the legendary prominence of beef cattle in Wyoming. But the same directory indicates other specializations and purebreds in the state. In dairy cattle, another twenty-six breeders were listed for Holstein-Friesian, four for Guernseys, five for Jerseys, two for Ayrshires, and four for milking Shorthorns. That too may not be surprising, given the dairy industry in the state, although these dairy breeders were all over the state, from Gillette to Grover and from Cheyenne to Garland. And the sheep breeders, with perhaps the King Brothers of Laramie, Carmichael of Riverton, Farlow and Jeffrey of Lander, Quealey of Cokeville, being the most prominent for their Rambouillets; and Farthing at Lander and Thompson at Wheatland for Hampshires; and the King Brothers also for their Corriedales. The horse breeders were important too, and they focused on the heavy draft horses, the Percherons and the Belgians; these were located almost exclusively in the eastern part of the state where farming was especially important—in Buffalo, Sundance, Dwyer, and Wheatland, with Lyman as the outlier. What is more surprising is that in the 1920s no less than seventy-five purebred swine operators were at work in Wyoming producing Poland China, Hampshires, Chester Whites, Berkshires, and Spotted Poland Chinas in the eastern part of the state and in the Big Horn Basin.[659]

The breeding of livestock clearly demonstrates a tendency to specialize, to depart from the old way of raising whatever livestock might be available, selecting it now for its marketability, for its adaptability to Wyoming climate and conditions, and for its relationship to other livestock and crops on the farm. It was, in the language of the day, an effort to make the raising of livestock more scientific. Again, however, there is an irony in all this, for specialized though these breeders were, they were selling the progeny of those breeding activities to farms and ranches that were actually diversified.

Often the process of specialization was so narrowly focused that it amounted to leaving the general activity behind and taking up something different. Breeding operations may have been like that. Thus too the dairy operations that took on a life of their own quite apart from the beef livestock operations. Dairy operations were well established in some parts of Wyoming by the 1920s and in some areas were especially prominent, even dominant. Star Valley and the Big Horn Basin were known for their dairy cow herds and also for the processing plants that emerged locally to serve them. In the 1920s dairy operations in those two areas grew even more. Dairy cattle increased, and while the creation of Teton County from Lincoln County muddies the picture, it appears that the number of farms declined and that they grew larger, suggesting some consolidation. The related development in Star Valley was the continued growth and expansion of the dairy industry in the towns. By 1927 nine of the state's ten cheese factories were located in Star Valley communities and as they grew, so too did the importance of milk production locally. In addition, another dairy center started to emerge in Uinta County, with cheese factories starting in Mountain View and Lyman. The state's creameries, on the other hand, were broadly distributed and even tended to have an urban tropism, locating closer to the consumption of milk

---

[659] A. E. Bowman, *A Directory of Breeders of Purebred Livestock and Poultry in Wyoming* (Laramie: University of Wyoming Extension Service, 1923).

than to its production.[660]

It is clear, though, that in other communities not identified with a dairy tradition, both milch cow dairy farms and city creameries were emerging; dairy production was increasingly commercialized and was left less and less to production on individual farms (and in town too where keeping a milch cow remained common into the 1940s). The seemingly ubiquitous reporter Dan Greenburg reported that the dairy business was taking off in Douglas in the 1920s. The dairy producers of that area organized the Converse County Dairy Association in 1924, Greenburg reported, "when dairying was almost unknown" there, and within three years had its own trucks and was even delivering milk daily as far away as Casper.[661]

As with any other shift to commercial production, the rise of dairy operations likely established market connections in a serious way for those operations that took it up. This was obviously, when they were producing and selling milk and butter for others, part of a self-sufficient operation. On the other hand, neither was it the clear acceptance of the calculus of the market, the eager anticipation of the movement of the invisible hand of the market in setting prices—and returning profits. The Spickerman brothers at Harmony community kept about twenty milch cows and traded butter for goods in the store in Laramie where they bought supplies, but they also delivered butter every two weeks to their neighbors on a regular route. The biological imperatives of the dairy industry, however, were such that production declined during the winter months and increased during the summer; prices in town fluctuated accordingly. But not so at the Spickerman ranch where they set their price at twenty-five cents a pound: "we expected them to pay that in the wintertime and the same, when butter dropped down to 20 cents or maybe 18 cents, why we still expected our 25, but we did not raise in the winter when it went up to 35 and 40 cents a pound."[662] The traditional pre-market system of the "just price" determined the price of their butter rather than the shifting opportunities and pressures of supply and demand.

The implications for the increasing commercialization of dairy activity in the 1920s are difficult to discern, and questions need to be explored. One set of questions involves the industrialization of the processes involved in milk production, so that the milking and separating would be done in a more efficient manner, or at least in a differently organized way, with a different division of labor. In an effort to achieve optimal economies of scale, dairy barns would be expanded and the space inside them sometimes organized differently. The larger the barn, the more critical the need for light and thus also the prevalence in dairy barns of rows of windows along the sides, something usually missing in other

---

[660] See especially the data on dairies in Wyoming State Department of Agriculture (in conjunction with U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agriculture and Economics), *Wyoming Agriculture Statistics, 1927* (Cheyenne, Wyoming: Wyoming State Department of Agriculture, 1927), 73-74. I am grateful to Carl Hallberg of the Wyoming State Archives for providing me this obscure but valuable report listing agricultural production and activity in the state.

[661] Dan W. Greenburg, "Converse County's Magnificent Resources," *The Midwest Review*, VII (August 1926): 14-18. On the organization of the dairy association, see Douglas *Budget*, February 7, 1924.

[662] John and Henry Spickerman, interviewed by Bob Burns, no date, Wyoming State Archives, OH-88.

barns. In addition to barn structure is social structure and another set of issues concerns the impact of commercialization on gender relations. Dairy activity had long been a shared province of males and females even when gender boundaries and roles were strictly separated between house (female) and field (male), the barnyard being located somewhere in between the two realms physically and philosophically. In Wyoming and other rural, agricultural areas, those divisions had not been present, or, if so, had not been strictly enforced. As the production of milk became a commercial operation, however, in some instances (especially New England) the women were forced out as the males claimed that area as their own productive activity, as opposed to the female maintenance activity. In other places the process was not so clear. One curious aspect, with some direct relevance to Wyoming's ethnic makeup, is the tendency of German and Scandinavian immigrants to continue sharing dairy labor across gender lines even when dairy became a commercial activity, the main focus of the farm. Historian Nancy Osterud notes this explicitly: "As Scandinavian farmers expanded their dairy operations, men joined women in the barn but did not displace them."[663]

In a related way, the poultry industry grew but took a slightly different turn. In 1920 the Agricultural Extension Service at the University of Wyoming provided information to farmers on how to construct poultry houses that would be dry, well ventilated, soundly floored, and amply lighted, and six years later the same agency noted that the number of chickens in the state had increased by sixty-three percent and noted, "it has not been until recent years that the production of eggs in Wyoming has been sufficient to meet the home needs of even the farms which produced them."[664] By 1930, eighty-one percent of all the farms and ranches in the state raised some chickens and a handful in each county were even producing as specialized poultry farms.[665]

Even more striking is the number of turkeys raised on farms, or, more precisely, the number of farms and ranches that raised turkeys. One-third (5,320) of all the farms and ranches in the state raised turkeys in 1929.[666] The Extension Service called this increase "phenomenal" and suggested that turkey production had increased in Wyoming while it declined in the rest of the nation.[667] It is instructive to note that this was exactly the same pattern that had previously been noted in sheep production; as the older states had become more settled and more crowded, the costs of sheep production increased there but conditions remained favorable in the Rocky Mountain West where resources were cheaper. Now the

---

[663] Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 284-285.
[664] W. L. Quayle and Axell Christensen, "Feeding and Housing for Laying Hens," University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 149 (January 1927): 19; H. M. Lackie, "A Farm Poultry House," Wyoming Extension Service Circular No. 4 (September 1929): 3-11.
[665] *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930; Agriculture: Chickens and Chicken Eggs and Turkeys, Ducks, and Geese Raised on Farms* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1933), 554-562.
[666] *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930; Agriculture: Chickens and Chicken Eggs and Turkeys, Ducks, and Geese Raised on Farms*, 563.
[667] Oliver N. Summers, "Turkey Raising in Wyoming," Wyoming Extension Service Circular No. 26 (July 1928; revised May 1929, March 1933): 5.

same thing was happening with turkeys. The Extension Service therefore provided farmers information on how to build their brood houses and how to tend to their gobblers.

While there were some instances in which poultry farms—chickens or turkeys either one—became the exclusive or dominant focus of a farm or ranch, those instances were few. Chickens and turkeys were more generally viewed by their promoters as incidental to the main purpose of the farm—growing either crops or livestock. And in that secondary position they remained, and that sometimes produced one distinctive feature: the raising of poultry was women's work, much more so than had been the case with dairy cattle. Although the children in a family were ordinarily expected to help with both dairy and poultry chores, the poultry was more identified with girls and women than with boys and men. In addition to providing farmers advice on how to build chicken coops and brooder sheds, and how to tend to the poultry, making that part of the production more "scientific" too, the Agricultural Extension agents and experts routinely assumed that women do that tending. The *Wyoming Farm Bulletin* suggested that it was important to "Give the Girls and Boys a Chance," but the chances to be given them were different. For the boy, "Consult with him about the farm problems. Nothing makes the boy have confidence in himself like being consulted as an authority. Give him a colt, a calf or a pig, and see that he takes care of it properly. In no other way will he learn to care for stock, and take interest in the stock of the farm so quickly." On the other hand, the same article suggested, "The girls should have their part in the work too. Give them a share in the butter making, a share of the egg money, or better still, give them a flock of poultry of their own to care for."[668]

In 1927, in an effort to promote poultry raising in the Big Horn Basin and elsewhere along the Burlington Railroad, a special six-car train carried an exhibit to the communities encouraging them to take up chicken raising. Put together by the colonization promoters of the Burlington Railroad in cooperation with agricultural college experts, this exhibit provided another instance of modernization: "this exhibit brings out the idea that good hens are egg machines[;] a good type hen is shown with the feed she consumes and the eggs she produces in one year." The industrial age had arrived adorned with feathers. But there was more: "Of course all farmers raise some poultry. Some farm women make good pin-money by it. Others profit handsomely."[669] Not only were farms becoming more specialized, but farm chores were becoming equally specialized. Moreover, there is a subtle tendency, within that specialization, for some of those specialized chores to become assigned on the basis of gender. In this the process is connected to, and corresponds closely with, another development. There is a general correlation between subsistence, production-for-home-use agriculture and blurred gender roles on the one hand, and tightened gender roles and commercial agricultural production on the other hand. The pattern of change is tied not so much to chronology as it is to changing purpose of production. This point is critical for understanding the transformation of gender roles as well as the transformation of the farms and ranches.

Specialization was rampant. Chores were more specialized. Systems of production were more

---

668 "Give the Boys and Girls a Chance," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 3 (January 1914): 151.
669 "The Poultry Special," Cowley *Progress*, October 21, 1927

organized and systematic. Just as poultry production was becoming more organized along industrial lines, the dairy industry, as it became increasingly specialized and industrialized, was moving further from the general livestock operation of which it had once been apart. In some instances, these specializations even took on a life of their own apart from ranching and farming as they moved beyond the realm of agriculture in any meaningful sense.

Dude ranching was such a development. As the beef cattle industry faced serious difficulties during the 1920s, some ranchers sought alternatives. One was dairy cattle and the production of various dairy commodities. Another option was to generate revenue by bringing people from the city to the ranch, enabling people to escape the sterile urban lives that had replaced their country origins, often doing so with a tinge of romance and adventure. The dude ranch enabled city people to retreat to the mountains of Wyoming and enabled former ranchers there to utilize their existing assets (knowledge, ranch facilities, properties, horses, access to mountains), get rid of their liabilities (especially their cattle), and sometimes be paid handsomely in the process. In Jackson Hole, dude rancher Struthers Burt explained the process, saying, "the dude wrangler saved the cattle business and the horse business just when the folly of men had about wrecked them. The dude wrangler brought round hard money into the country. If he was a cattleman, he found himself able to continue in his profession. If he was a horseman, he could do the same."[670] Dude ranching was different from cattle or horse ranching in many ways aside from the fact that, as Burt often noted, dudes wintered much easier than cattle.

Strictly speaking, the dude ranches started in the 1910s, and some even in the 1900s, but these operations really took off and became accepted and successful in the 1920s. It was then that dude ranches flourished not only in Jackson Hole, but elsewhere too. In 1923 Willis Spear founded his Spear-O-Wigwam at the foot of the Big Horn Mountains and others followed that path in the Sheridan – Buffalo area. The Pitchfork Ranch on the upper Greybull River in the western reaches of the Big Horn Basin started its dude ranch operations in 1907, but it was especially in the 1920s, when photographer Charles Belden was at the ranch, that the property became most renowned; the ranch continued to run all three species of livestock—cattle, sheep, and dudes—not always mingling the three, and presumably with different treatment and processes at roundup time.[671] More and more dude ranches emerged in Wyoming so that the state became a leader in the dude ranch industry. By the end of the 1930s the WPA Writers' Guide for Wyoming could say, "more than 100 dude ranches now operate in Wyoming. . . . Accommodations vary from modern resort hotels to cramped ranch houses with kerosene illumination and outside plumbing. At one extreme, the well-paying guest may order his breakfast in bed, and select his food and drink from menus only half translated from French. At the other, he may sleep in a built-in bunk, bathe in the creek, eat in the kitchen with the family and the hired man, and lend a hand at

---

[670] Struthers Burt, *Powder River: Let 'er Buck* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1938), 365. See, too, the chapter, "The Methods and Genesis of Dude-Wrangling," in Burt, *The Diary of a Dude-Wrangler* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), 48-64.

[671] Bob Edgar and Jack Turnell, *Brand of a Legend* (Basin, Wyoming: Wolverine Gallery, 1978), 128, 162.

chores."[672] The hundred dude ranches in Wyoming, it should be noted, represented a major portion of the total of about three hundred fifty dude ranches in the entire United States at their maximum in the 1930s.

Some of the dude ranches were, in a sense, half-way houses in an evolutionary process, a midpoint between working ranches and hotel resorts. The tendency toward specialization, however, encouraged the ranching part of the operation to fall away and the recreational elements to increase, enough so, in fact, that in 1926 the Dude Ranchers Association formed. With the different focus, market, and cycles, this was soon not just a matter of specialization, although it retained a vague kinship to the livestock industry. At some point in their transformation from real ranches to dude ranches, the operations passed beyond the general confines of the livestock industry and into a completely different organization, operation, and culture.

Again, an irony marks the development of the dude ranch since this spin-off of the cattle industry provides an example of the power of modernization and specialization (beyond anything practical), but an example that actually succeeded by embracing the rejection of modernity, attempting to reclaim a lost past, helping dudes pretend to be cowboys and cowgirls (minus the labor), joining in the repudiation (at least for the time at the ranch) of the conventions, rhythms, and priorities of modern society. Many of the dude ranches even spurned the modern convenience that operating ranches yearned for—running water, indoor plumbing, and electric lights—making sure, however, that the comfort level always remained high.

One of the most telling indicators of the specialization of agricultural effort comes in the organization of groups to promote the production and sale of specific commodities, often through cooperative marketing agencies. There was nothing especially new in this effort, for the Wyoming Stock Growers Association had been long active in the state and its power had waxed and waned over the years. Indeed the WSGA led the way as other commodity organizations emerged and entered the political and economic forums, each seeking to provide higher income and a stable market for their members. Some, like the Rock Springs Grazing Association, formed at the beginning of the century, actually consolidated operations and became business entities, engaging in leasing land for their members and providing a range of services for members who purchased shares and received the right to graze a certain number of sheep per share on those leased lands. The leaders of the Rock Springs Grazing Association, the largest such organization in the state and well beyond too, were people like John W. Hay and T. S. Taliaferro, Jr. and their families; those families would continue to be prominent and decisive in the RSGA and also in related businesses like banking and law. They vigorously and carefully carried on the battle against out-of-state herds, offered bounties on predators on their lands, and otherwise acted to defend the interests of members. Moreover, as Wesley Calef has noted in his careful examination of the RSGA, the group worked to both increase the lands available for grazing by members and reduce the number of sheep

---

[672] Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wyoming, *Wyoming: A Guide to Its History, Highways, and People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981; reprint of 1941 Oxford University Press edition), 118.

grazing so that maximum benefit per animal could be obtained and the rangeland protected and preserved.[673] Entering into the economic marketplace usually preceded slightly entry into the political realm too. The Wyoming Wool Growers Association was organized in 1905, seeking especially to increase the number of sheep that could graze on allotments in the national forests.

More followed in this direction, and by the 1920s virtually every commodity had organized at the local level and sometimes at the state level too. Typical would be Goshen County with its Beekeepers Association, Live Stock Shipping Association, Poultry Association, Cooperative Beet Association, and Cooperative Egg Marketing Association. Carbon County had a Wool Growers Association, Cattle & Horse Growers Association, Dairymen's Association, Stock Growers Association (one for Reader Basin and one for Saratoga Valley), a Cooperative Farmers Association, an Agricultural Club (Dixon), and a Potato Growers Association (Encampment). Lincoln County had a Wool Marketing Association (Afton) and a County Wool Growers Association, a Horse & Cattle Association, two Cattle Associations (Little Grays and Smoot-Fairview) and the Star Valley Turkey Marketing Association. Teton County, which, according to the 1930 census statistics, was as little specialized as any county in the state, the stock-ranch category just barely edging out the general category, had but one agricultural commodity organization in 1927: the Jackson Hole Land & Livestock Association.[674]

These organizations flourished among the cattle ranchers of the upper Green River valley. The Big Piney Roundup Association (also known as the Big Piney Livestock Association) had emerged in 1890, taking on responsibility for organizing roundups and eventually moving cattle to summer grazing in the mountains. This body was supplemented in the following years by other organizations like the Black Butte Horse and Cattle Association, and smaller organizations referred to as "wagons," like the Big Piney-Green River Roundup wagon, the New Fork Association, and in 1916 the Upper Green River Cattle and Horse Growers Association which became the preeminent organization in that area. This organization became the bargaining agent for dealing with the Forest Service regarding the summer grazing lands and allotments. Its constitution reflected a common impulse among livestock grazers who were increasingly combining: "the objects of this Association shall be to promote and protect the business of raising cattle and horses; to do any and all things lawful...; to secure equitable and just legislation and grazing regulations; and to work in cooperation with the Forest Service . . ."[675] The association became increasingly sophisticated in its organization and operations, compensating member

---

[673] See, for example, the front page letter by T. S. Taliaferro, Jr., "Tax All Enterprises Says T. S. Talliaferro, [sic] Jr.," Rock Springs *Rocket*, June 23, 1922, urging a tax on all business, so that the non-resident herds would no longer be able to escape taxation—an unfair advantage to the foreign herds and an additional burden on the local citizens. Calef's discussion is based on an examination of the records of the RSGA and also interviews with directors and members. Wesley Calef, *Private Grazing and Public Lands: Studies of the Local Management of the Taylor Grazing Act* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 202-212.

[674] Wyoming State Department of Agriculture, *Wyoming Agriculture Statistics,* 82-83.

[675] Jonita Sommers, *Green River Drift: A History of the Upper Green River Cattle Association* (Pinedale: published by the author, 1994), ix, 21, 22, 43-45.

ranchers for boarding association cowboys and their horses, constructing drift fences, paying for land use and leases of school sections, and purchasing salt for the range. But the general mission of the organization, probably reflecting the purposes of the members too, became narrower and more specialized. In 1925 the association reorganized itself and became the Upper Green River Cattle Association—indicating the "primary goal of raising beef cattle." The body also opposed the Forest Service allowing cattle grazing permits to be switched to cattle grazing permits.[676] This grazing association, like those that existed elsewhere, that gained new importance in the 1920s, were essentially business organizations.

This tendency toward organization along specialized commodity-producer lines is reflective, first, of a growing orientation of farmers and ranchers to cash crop production, and secondly to those agriculturists dividing along their income-producing lines, a division that spread from economic activity to social and political identities so that they often felt they had more in common with other producers of the same commodities elsewhere than they did with their own neighbors and community members who labored and produced differently. The rise of the fragmented society—and its consequences and resistance—forms one of the central themes of American history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and it was underway in Wyoming too, eroding community bonds that had been associated with rural life. In one more of the ironies of this process, the social forces that seemed often to bring people closer together across the miles and across the nation, actually worked to drive them apart even when they were close to each other.

iii. The Perseverance of the Homesteader

Given the powerful pressures toward modernizing and turning farms and ranches into specialized businesses, it seems almost surprising that anybody remained on small farms and ranches, that many homesteaders continued on in a relatively self-sufficient way, and perhaps even more, that more people continued to move onto small farms, to take up land in the 1920s under the various provisions of the homestead laws, or otherwise persist in following farming or ranching as a way of life instead of as a business proposition. In point of fact, however, the homesteading surge of the 1920s was huge. T. A. Larson captured some of that when he wrote, "Private ownership of land in the state was doubled during the twenties, rising to approximately 40 per cent. No other decade compares with that of the twenties in the matter of turning Wyoming land from public to private ownership."[677] The Jeffersonian dream was alive in Wyoming in the 1920s.

The number of farms increased in Wyoming during the 1920s despite the agricultural depression afflicting the nation. The number increased only by a small percentage, from 15,748 to 16,011, and in

[676] Sommers, *Green River Drift,* 65-71.
[677] Larson, *History of Wyoming*, 415.

twelve counties the number actually declined (although two of those fourteen included counties from which the new Sublette and Teton counties were subtracted and formed). The gains came in Albany, Campbell, Carbon, Hot Springs, Natrona, Platte, Sweetwater, Uinta, Washakie, and, of course the new counties of Sublette and Teton. With some counties fluctuating only in minor amounts, the counties that gained most were Albany (+107), Campbell (+238), Carbon (+87), Natrona (+206), and Sweetwater (+119) and the counties that lost most, aside from those that lost because of a reduction in area, were Crook (-140), Johnson (-88), Laramie (-182), Park (-151), and Weston (-105).

Dry farming clearly continued to increase during the decade and those lands, which had been passed over by earlier homesteaders now attracted people. Gladys Hill's parents (Graves) moved to Converse County with their children about 1919 and she remembered growing up on the dry farm homestead they claimed. When asked why they came to Wyoming, her answer was the same as that of many other homesteaders: ". . . to own their own land. Because they were renting in Nebraska and they didn't see the opportunity that they were ever going to be able to buy land. And it . . . seemed like a golden opportunity to come here and own your own land."[678] In point of motivation and goal, and in the way the Graves farm operated, that homestead represented not only others at the same time across Wyoming, especially in the dry land areas, but the larger homestead impulse that had been evident since the 1870s. It was largely a self-sufficient operation.

The Graves family's dry farm, like many others, was a family operation in the large sense, with the mother's and the father's parents on either side, and with an uncle nearby also, so that help was readily available for all involved. They started with a small two-room homestead shack which her father built before the rest of the family arrived, and they brought their implements and starting livestock on an immigrant car on the railroad. The farm was, as much as anyone's, self-sufficient in that they grew mainly what they consumed and there was no real cash crop except some surplus cream that would be sold. Their garden was substantial ("we always had a big garden, since we raised most of our produce") with potatoes, beans (green, navy, and more), pumpkins, turnips, squash, peas, parsnips, and, after they put in a windmill, they added variety including carrots, lettuce, tomatoes, and various green vegetables.[679] Canning was a major chore and the family (two adults, five children) would put up their winter supply of produce in their root cellar and potato bin, with potatoes and navy beans being the staples to get through the winter. The meat they consumed was also produced on their farm, raising a few pigs and butchering one in the fall and then curing the meat. Their cattle herd consisted of fourteen or fifteen animals, including a bull and calves and five milking cows.[680] The machinery on the farm was decidedly basic. They never had a tractor in the 1920s and 1930s and of course did not own a threshing

---

[678] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, October 29, 1999, 14-15; interview conducted by Mark Junge. A transcript of this interview is in the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.
[679] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, 9, 13, 34-36, appendix. When the interviewer interjected, "I just can't imagine crops being grown on that land," Hill responded, "Well, can you imagine the grass being long enough to be waving like a grainfield," and explained how they also grew grain in abundance.
[680] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, 38, 57.

machine. Even a cream separator was late in coming to the farm and they did their separating of cream from milk by pouring the raw milk into crocks and letting it cool in the cellar and then separating it with a special spoon. The grain they grew—wheat, oats, corn—was not for the market; "I think he [her father] mostly used it for feeding his own livestock, the horses and the cattle, through the winter. I believe he also used part of it, maybe traded to the threshing crew for their services and that type of thing . . . . Lotsa times they bartered, traded what they had extra of, to someone else for what they could exchange for."[681]

The harvesting of the grain was a familiar, and a family, routine, one reminiscent of harvests in the nineteenth century, but still very much prevalent in Wyoming until World War II:

> I remember helping shock the wheat after Dad would bind it. They [had] what they called "binders" which cut the grain and put them into bundles we called "shocks" and then we would pick them up and pile 'em into a tepee-shaped pile. That would shed the water way from it and keep 'em from shattering until they had time to haul it in, either to the threshing machine which would come through the area in the fall and thresh our crops or, if they weren't worth threshing, at least to store for feeding the cattle in the wintertime.[682]

Once threshed, the grain would be sacked "or they would run it into wagons that had boxes on them and store them in granaries, a building that would be built for that purpose."[683]

Gladys Hill described the work on the garden in planting and harvesting the potatoes and the beans especially since the family depended on those for winter food. The children would follow their father as he plowed, placing the potato section at the regular intervals measured by their pace, the sections then covered by the plow in another run; they would harvest the new potatoes in the spring, and the full crop in the fall storing bushel after bushel in the potato bin at the back of the root cellar, tending them over the winter to remove the sprouts. During the summer they would remove the potato bugs which deprived the plants of water. And then there was the bean crop, a crop of enormous importance to the family.

> We would plant quite a large spot of beans so that we'd have enough beans to last us all though the winter and when they would get ripe enough we'd pull those beans, root and all, and pile them up on a canvas. And they would dry and then the pods would pop open, and if they didn't we would take laths or slats and beat on them till the beans were all out. Then we had to pick the coarse part of the chaff out until we got down to real fine. And then on a windy day such as it is today we would take two sheets and we'd pick up the beans on one and pour it down, let the wind blow the chaff away till we got

---

[681] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, 54.
[682] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, 52-53.
[683] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, 53.

> the beans comparatively clear of all chaff and then we would store them in the dry area for winter use. They were winter staples.[684]

What is especially striking about this description is that this is a perfect description of the flailing process as an active part of the farm and one very much alive in the 1920s and 1930s. Instead of the actual tool of the flail, however, these people appear to have used simple laths or slats, although they possibly were crafted into flails without calling them such.

And so went the dry farm. Without a creek or spring on the property, with only a well dug in a low area and then later a windmill near the house, without electricity, without machinery beyond that which was hand operated or horse-drawn, the family not only survived, but thrived and, in a modest way, prospered. "We raised fine crops. We had pumpkins and turnips and gardens and good grain." In fact, she repeated this point several times so that it would not be mistaken: "They farmed, and they had enough rain that they farmed and had good crops . . . ." "I can remember real good crops, heaps of them." They had "wonderful crops and if [it] hadn't dried out we would not have worried about the stock market crash."[685] In fact, their independent farm, their homestead, essentially shielded them from much of the brunt of the market forces that brought other farmers, who were dependent on cash crops, who produced for the market, to despair. "Actually," Gladys Hill observed, "the Depression and the stock market crash and all that would not have affected us at all if we had continued to have the rain that we had in early years. It wouldn'ta been any different."[686] Ultimately, in the mid and late 1930s, the Graves family would also face agricultural afflictions and calamity, but those would come from drought, not market forces. They did not feel the hardships of hard times until a good ten years after others did, and that time lag was a result of having their own homestead and practicing a self-sufficient form of agriculture on it.

They grew what they consumed, they sold some cream, and Gladys Hill's father worked for others sometimes during the winter to gain some cash for the necessities they could not produce or barter for. With the cash they purchased a house from a neighbor who left, moved it onto their land and built on for additional room. They proved up on their homestead, making a go of it, and achieving a fundamental goal; proving up itself "was a time when we actually got the title of the land, and we were pleased and excited about it."[687] And they seem to have lived a life of some satisfaction. As for the hardships that seem so clear from the perspective of later years, Gladys Hill recalled, "Well, it wasn't to me. It was a way of life. And looking back on it I don't feel that it was a hardship. We always had enough to eat. Lots of times we didn't have a lot of variety but we always [had] potatoes and beans and garden vegetables. My mother canned and . . . The hardship, I think, maybe was the isolation to the older generation. It didn't affect me any. It was a way of life as far as I was concerned." And as for the older generation's hardships, she added, "my folks loved that homestead till the time they died. And they

---

[684] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, 51.
[685] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, 7, 8, 10, 52.
[686] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, 112.
[687] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, 116.

hung onto it through all the Depression and hard times."[688] It was two parts of the same experience; for some people commercial farming proved the bane of existence and the homestead proved to be their salvation—at least for a while.

This was not as distinctive, or even unique, as it may seem. In Campbell County, where a land rush in settlement to claim homesteads was underway in the 1920s, others had similar experiences. Fortunately, one of the many small communities that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s has been studied, and that study provides, in microcosm, a portrait of the life and history of many dry farm homesteaders. In 1999 William P. Fischer examined the homesteading community of Teckla, Wyoming, and especially the homestead of the Mackey family in that community. In his project he researched land records, local records, family histories, letters, and farm accounts, government reports, and topical academic histories, in addition to interviewing family members from the community. The resulting published article from his study represents a possible model for anyone investigating homesteading sites not only in Campbell County, but elsewhere in Wyoming too. For researchers in the area of Thunder Basin National Grassland, it also shows the potential of the treasure trove of data existing for properties that became part of the Forest Service jurisdiction through the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act.[689]

The basic story of Teckla, as Fischer describes it, was one that conformed to larger trends:

> Homestead entries flourished in the late 1910s and into the early 1920s. Settlers arrived primarily from neighboring states, established homes, and developed a permanent community. They attempted farming with mixed success and failure, and they supplemented their operations with animal husbandry. During the 1920s, a number accomplished their objectives, as is evident in the improvements and subsequent patenting of their homesteads.[690]

Examining their kinship networks and marriage status, Fischer concludes that these people fully intended to stay, to make permanent homes when they filed their claims under the 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act and the 1916 Stock Raising Homestead Act (for the Mackey family this represented claims totaling 640 acres). They developed a diversified agriculture, growing dry-farm crops like corn, oats, cane, rye, millet, flax and wheat, and raising some livestock too. Although the drought of 1919 caused a crop failure, as it did for a broad area of small and large operations alike, their successes in other years can be documented. In addition to the barns and permanent homes they built after their temporary abodes, they also constructed the full array of chicken houses, swine shelters, cellars, granaries, windmills, reservoirs and utility buildings. Some worked for others in the area while building up the homestead; one person hired out as a sheepherder to a nearby large sheep operation. An important theme runs through Fischer's account of the Teckla homesteaders: they succeeded in the

---

[688] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, 8.
[689] William P. Fischer, "Homesteading the Thunder Basin: Teckla, Wyoming, 1917-1938," *Annals of Wyoming*, 71 (Spring 1999): 21-34.
[690] Fischer, "Homesteading the Thunder Basin," 23.

1920s, and that success was based on "diversified cultivation, poultry raising, and animal husbandry."[691] Although Fischer was unable to find records for the Mackey family between 1922 and 1925, he notes that

> Mackey marketed 500 pounds of beans, 10,000 pounds of oats, 310 pounds of potatoes, forty-eight bushels of wheat, 500 bushels of corn, and 151 pounds of dressed turkeys between October and November 10, 1926. In 1927, wheat, oats, and turkeys were sold, while 1928 included the sale of oats, hogs, wheat, cattle, and turkeys. The farm produced 189 bushels of winter wheat, flax, sixty-four bushels of rye, and 716 pounds of live turkeys for sale in 1929.[692]

The Mackeys' daughter "remembered the 1920s as seemingly prosperous years on the homestead, although tempered by the basic hardships of homestead life." They raised their own food ("beans, potatoes, peas, onions, carrots, tomatoes, and, on at least one occasion, even watermelon") in their garden and spent considerable time canning and curing food, storing it in their root cellar. They hauled in water for drinking, although they had a well that produced water not as good as that of the hauled water. Family labor took care of many general farm chores and specialized tasks on the homestead. Although the family used horses to work their fields for most of the 1920s, in 1928 they purchased a "1530 International tractor, combine, plow, and tandem disk," which they then also used to farm nearby land owned by others. In addition to their own entertainment with a battery-powered radio, the community came together at dances and other gatherings. Customarily someone would donate a couple of acres for a school (the return on the gift being the nearness of the school to the homestead), and, at Teckla, "neighbors joined together and collectively purchased a steam tractor to thresh grain, and they commonly acted as midwives at the births of each other's children."[693]

The Graves family and the homesteaders at Teckla and other dry farming communities that endured the difficult times of the 1920s may be exceptions to the general rule. There simply is no way to tell how many, and which, homesteaders, farmers, and ranchers remained on their property throughout the decade. But there is reason to believe that these people were not alone. The numbers of farms in the state, after all, did increase during the 1920s and almost half the counties showed an increase in the number of farms. But one must be careful not to generalize from those numbers to the conditions on the farms and ranches, for the challenges were fundamental and they were pervasive. Many people met their match in the new circumstances of the post war period. This was, in many ways, the Agricultural Depression of the 1920s.

iv. The Agricultural Depression of the 1920s

---

[691] Fischer, "Homesteading the Thunder Basin," 27.
[692] Fischer, "Homesteading the Thunder Basin," 27.

To address homesteading, farming, and ranching in the 1920s is to challenge two pervasive notions. One is the image of the nation in that decade as "roaring," as prosperous, even as exuberant, a time in which the standard of living increased, technology became widespread (as in automobiles and radios), and in which the cities were the magical, and magnetic, hubs of social, economic, and cultural life. The twenties often appear as years with an upbeat tempo and as a delightfully light escape from serious issues of the war in the past, and, unbeknownst to the nation, a bright contrast to the dark years of Depression just ahead. And that leads to the second image—that the Depression of the 1930s began abruptly with the stock market crash of October 1929, an event that signaled massive layoffs, business closures, and reductions in consumer spending and business investment, and a general downward spiral that took the nation to the depths of despair. Obviously there is validity to parts of these images, and certainly there was prosperity in the 1920s, clearly the cities grew and technology became more diffused in and accessible in society, and plainly the Depression ended that prosperity. What those images leave out, however, and quite aside from the huge variations in prosperity even within the cities, is the vast landscape of the nation where people produced food and fiber, and where a rural way of life connected to the soil was struggling to survive in the modern world. What these images leave out is that these people knew intimately the circumstances of despair well before the rest of the nation. Wyoming followed behind the rest of the nation in some trends—like the trend toward urbanization which came to this state much later than to other places. In the 1920s, however, Wyoming and other rural parts of the nation were in the lead, and the rest of the nation would soon follow; Wyoming's farmers and ranchers anticipated the Depression that the rest of the nation would join in 1929.

The several years following the end of World War I were ominous enough, but there was the hope that the fluctuations in commodity prices would soon stabilize. In May 1920 when the government dropped its support for wheat prices, however, agricultural prices in general began to fall. Wheat that sold for $2.34 in 1919 brought $.89 cents a bushel in 1922; oats sold for $.95 a bushel in 1919 and $.38 in 1921; corn sold for $1.83 in 1919 and dropped to $.62 in 1922; potatoes sold for $4.67 per hundred weight in 1919 but by 1922 sold for $.85; sugar beets sold for $10.40 in 1918, rose to $11.78 per ton in 1920, and then plummeted, bringing $6.61 the next year; beef cattle brought as much as $12.20 in the spring of 1919; in the spring of 1921 those cattle were selling for $5.70 and by fall only $4.40. Wool was bringing $.68 a pound in March, but dropped to $.23 cents the next year.[694] Prices recovered slightly in

---

[693] Fischer, "Homesteading the Thunder Basin," 29.

[694] Accurate commodity prices are surprisingly difficult to gather, at least with any precision. National prices do not necessarily reflect what was received in Wyoming. In addition, most tables of data show only information from the last several years. The figures I have used are prices reported by the Montana Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, since price data are not available for Wyoming for these years. This information can be found in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, available on World Wide Web at http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Montana/index.asp and http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Montana/Publications/croptoc.htm. The index for Wyoming does, however, include production output. See:

1923 and 1924, and there continued to be some fluctuation with the usual variables of weather, crop yields, and shifting levels of production—in Wyoming, in the United States, and in the world. But throughout the 1920s, prices remained low, and certainly far below what they had been at their peak.

That in itself is important because when commodity prices were at their peak many farmers, encouraged by the high prices they were receiving, by government incentives to increase production, and by experts advising them how to run their operations in a more business-like way, expanded their operations substantially. This increased investment in the commercial productivity of their agricultural business, then took on a life of its own. By a chain of causation in which one investment led to another, investments continued to increase so that the investment in a tractor, say, almost invariably led to an increase in the amount of land owned and under cultivation; and vice-versa; then both of these led to further investments in additional equipment, seed, labor, and so on. The economies of scale could be realized not with a single component but required a whole cluster of investments—equipment, land, seed, often buildings (barns, sheds, granaries, bunkhouses), sometimes fertilizer, sometimes additional irrigation expenses, sometimes hired labor, often greater transportation costs, and, perversely, greater marketing expenses too.

The mathematics of the enterprise were actually simple since they could calculate the yield per acre and numbers of acres necessary to pay off the new equipment and other enhancements, and then calculate their returns for the current year and project that forward. So they did exactly that. The problem was that their debts increased, their mortgages increased in number and in size, and these debts had to be paid off during the coming years but the income that was anticipated failed to come through. In fact, income fell dramatically. Which then led to a further problem: how to respond to the lower prices they were receiving in the 1920s. For most people the only course of action was simply to produce more to make up for the decline in the return per unit. Some were able even to borrow more to permit them to increase their production and stay afloat—a perilous exercise. Output remained steady during the decade, even climbing, which may have helped slightly, but more importantly it put additional downward pressure on the prices they received. In this way the Agricultural Depression of the 1920s began—and remained.

The way the depression impacted various farmers, ranchers, and homesteaders varied greatly according to how much they were dependent upon the market for their livelihood and for their ability to stay on the land. Obviously, those without a mortgage and those with only an incidental contact with the market where they sold their actual surplus, not their main product, were protected from the freefall of market prices. Others, who depended on annual sales to pay their debts, felt the squeeze most severely and suffered the most. Many fell somewhere between these two extremes. Then it depended on what they were producing and selling and how much they were obligated to others, especially to their banks.

And banks added one more element to the set of forces weighing on the farmers and ranchers of Wyoming. If farmers and ranchers were in trouble during the 1920s, so were the banks. The nation's

---

http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Wyoming/index.asp.

banking system was in crisis throughout the 1920s and the most vulnerable part of that system rested in the small banks in the rural communities. Between 1921 and 1929 nearly 6,000 banks failed in the United States, an amount equal to twenty percent of the total. The leading students of banking in the nation concluded, "A large fraction of all banks that suspended during the period had capital of $25,000 or less and were located in towns of 2,500 or less, largely situated in seven western grain states."[695] Wyoming contributed to this trend as 101 (out of a total of 153) banks closed their doors during the 1920s, thirty of them national banks (chartered by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency) and seventy-one of them state chartered banks; only thirty-two banks opened for business in the decade. Put another way, sixty-seven communities in Wyoming lost banks during that period. The first few years of the decade saw the banking system contract sharply but the failures of the banks shot up dramatically in 1924. In that single year banks closed in Basin, Buffalo, Carpenter, Casper, Cheyenne (2), Clearmont, Cowley, Douglas, Fort Laramie, Glenrock, Guernsey, Hillsdale, Kaycee, Keeline, Lavoye, Lingle, Lusk, Manderson, Newcastle, Osage, Riverton, Powell, Rawlins, Sheridan, Shoshoni, Torrington (2), Upton, Van Tassell, and Worland. The next year, two banks in Sheridan closed their doors and other banks closed in Baggs, Burns, Hudson, Lavoye, Shawnee, and Tensleep.[696] Banks were in trouble in the nation, but banks were in serious, deep trouble in Wyoming. And so were the people who did business with those banks.

The reasons for the banking crisis are complex but discernible. Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz explain the situation in general terms, noting that the bank failures "were primarily explained by improvements in transportation and increase in urbanization, which benefited the large banks at the expense of the small, and by the agricultural difficulties of the twenties."[697] This is no doubt accurate, but those "agricultural difficulties" themselves need to be explained, and also how banks and agriculture connected. To start with, banks had loaned money on what turned out to be unsound investments, namely farm equipment and land that sometimes had inflated value because of the World War I price increases and that also had greater risk than initially appreciated because of the subsequent decline in commodity prices. That meant that not only were the farmers and ranchers invested in the future, but that the banks who had encouraged that investment were also connected to the agricultural market; they were just as or more dependent upon the market than the farms and ranches since farms and ranches actually produced something, and the banks did not. There was a delicate relationship between especially the largest farms and ranches and the banks that had loaned them the money. Thurman Arnold was practicing law in Laramie at the time (in the 1930s he would become Assistant Attorney General of the United States) and he observed that when agricultural prices fell, mortgages were foreclosed, but the banks could not get rid of the land they had acquired, so the banks themselves went under, especially in the agricultural communities. "The only thing they could do was decline to foreclose, keep advancing money to the ranchmen, and hope for the best." He cited the experience of one of his clients:

---

[695] Friedman and Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States*, 249.
[696] Larson, *History of Wyoming*, 413; Peter W. Huntoon, "The National Bank Failures in Wyoming, 1924," *Annals of Wyoming*, 54 (Fall 1982): 35, 37, 42-43.
[697] Friedman and Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States*, 249.

> I recall a conversation of about that time that a client of mine, who ran ten thousand sheep on about a hundred thousand acres of land, had with our local banker, whose bank was still open. He said, "John, I want to buy a new car and have come in to borrow the money." The banker was stupefied. He said, "Fred, you don't need a new car. And besides, you already owe us about a hundred thousand dollars. Go back to your sheep and forget about it." My client replied, "John, have you ever been in the sheep business?" "No," replied the banker. "Well, you're in it now," said Fred, and got up to walk out. Needless to say, he didn't get to the door. The next day he drove back to the ranch in a new car.[698]

Most farmers and ranchers, however, did not have the leverage with their banks that "Fred" did. They were not only denied new loans, or additional loans, but were denied additional time to pay off their existing loans, and were called upon to provide additional security for those loans. In fact, when the operators that were too big to allow to fail were given more loans, or not foreclosed, the banks turned elsewhere for the necessary cash to meet their own obligations; this meant that the smaller operators were more likely to be foreclosed, that the smaller operators were sacrificed to save the big. Most farmers and ranchers in Wyoming were being squeezed by the banks, and if the larger operators were able to press the banks, that pressure was passed on to the smaller. The result was frequently foreclosure or one of its related acts of surrender.

Farm foreclosure or bankruptcy was a national problem and while demonstrably huge, the numbers are generally elusive. Wyoming data are not available, but nationally the rates are suggestive. Between 1921 and 1940, an average of 96,000 farms each year were foreclosed; in 1933, over 200,000 farms were foreclosed.[699] While Wyoming is not tallied separately, all evidence points to Wyoming having its share of foreclosures—or more. Lee J. Alston, in his study of foreclosures, takes a sampling of foreclosures across the nation; the closest state to Wyoming in his calculations is South Dakota. South Dakota experienced a foreclosure rate between 1926 and 1935 that varied from a low of 27.1 per 1000 farms in 1930 to a high of 78.0 per thousand farms in 1933; there is not a linear curve in those foreclosures and the average in that state was 49.2. Wyoming was probably similar, at least in the eastern part of the state.[700] Using the 1920 number of farms of 15,748, that would mean that around 770 farms each year during that period were foreclosed. Even if that number were considerably lower in Wyoming, with around 500 farms each year being foreclosed, that would be over five thousand foreclosures over a decade in a state with fifteen or sixteen thousand total farms.

---

[698] Thurman Arnold, *Fair Fights and Foul: A Dissenting Lawyer's Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1951), 34.

[699] Lee J. Alston, "Farm Foreclosures in the United States During the Interwar Period," *Journal of Economic History*, XLIII (December 1983): 886. Alston argues, "foreclosure rates were positively influenced by several variables—mortgage debt, depressed farm earnings, and *ex post* excessive expansion during the World War I agricultural boom."

[700] Alston, "Farm Foreclosures in the United States during the Interwar Period," 888.

The higher number is probably realistic. Another study of distressed mortgages in that period notes, "the northern and central plains area containing the Dakotas, most of Montana, Nebraska, Kansas, and the eastern parts of Wyoming and Colorado is the most conspicuous of all the trouble spots because of its geographical extent. All the direct evidence heretofore considered—distress transfers, insurance company foreclosures, and foreclosures and losses on land bank and Commissioner loans—points to bad mortgage experience in the Great Plains during the period under review. In addition there is substantial indirect evidence in the form of bank suspensions, decreases in bank deposits, and decreases in land values."[701] Not only eastern Wyoming, but the whole state seems to fit that description of indirect impacts.

At a minimum it is clear that nationally and regionally farm foreclosures were at an unprecedented level and that Wyoming was not exempt from that scourge of the countryside. Moreover, numbers aside, the experience of foreclosure was a searing, devastating, and deeply humbling matter. Historian Van L. Perkins in his study of agriculture policy puts it best: "While it is difficult to measure the seriousness of the impact of particular aspects of the depression with any degree of sureness and precision, there can be no doubt that foreclosure was one of the most dreaded. It meant the relegation of landowners to the status of tenants or farm laborers, or in the depth of the depression, to relief rolls or breadlines."[702] Finally, it is important not to get too focused on the narrow, technical, and legal experience of foreclosure. Foreclosures were just one element of a broader set of dispossessing events. Not shown in any figures anywhere are the losses of farms and ranches in Wyoming as a result of bankruptcy,[703] loss of title because of defaulting on a contract, selling the property to avoid foreclosure, and surrendering the title or otherwise disposing of property to avoid foreclosure. Even those operations that avoided foreclosure were not necessarily prosperous outfits.

Farmers and ranchers and homesteaders experienced the hardship of the Agricultural Depression of the 1920s in different ways and even at different times. Ruth Irwin described her experience as a child growing up on her parents' ranch on the Muddy River near Evanston, actually quite close to Piedmont, in the 1920s. Her father, George Myers, had filed on the homestead and proved up on it 1905, laying out an irrigation system, planting alfalfa, and then borrowing money from the local bank to build a barn three hundred feet long, a house, and several other buildings including a storage shed, large workshop, machine shop, warehouse, bunkhouse, and even a laundry building—all of which she described as "state

---

[701] Lawrence A. Jones and David Durand, *Mortgage Lending Experience in Agriculture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press for the Bureau of Economic Research, 1954), 57.
[702] Van L. Perkins, *Crisis in Agriculture: The Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the New Deal, 1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).
[703] The bankruptcy numbers are even more elusive than the foreclosures and the data in the Stam and Dixon study do not indicate state or region. See Jerome M. Stam and Bruce L. Dixon, *Farmer Bankruptcies and Farm Exits in the United States, 1899-2002* (Washington: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Agriculture Information Bulletin Number 788, 2004), 33.

of the art for that period—1900-1912" before he married and started a family with his wife.[704] Although the ranch had some cattle, it was mostly a sheep ranch, and a very successful one at that. Her own memory as a child includes substantial work: "The work required on a ranch was legion; feeding livestock, fencing, irrigating, haying, shearing, branding, docking lambs, castrating cattle and horses, cleaning stables, watering animals, tending chickens and rounding up livestock. Chickens, sheep and cattle were slaughtered for meat. Ranch equipment needed repairs. Someone had to shoe the horses, tend the coyote trap lines and milk the cows." She separates another group of work from that and notes, "inside the house the work was endless: cooking, laundry, cleaning, mending, sewing, child care and canning. Several times a year the hardwood floors were treated with linseed oil." Her own work was especially that of churning the butter and perhaps separating the cream.[705] Her mother candled the eggs for freshness and fertility and along with a hired woman made laundry soap. On one of her father's trips to Omaha where he sold sheep, he brought a Victrola back so that they could listen to records, and they soon had a series of radios. While her brother's chores "were to help Dad and the hired men with the outside work," her own chores "were mostly in the house—helping Mother with the cooking, washing dishes and cleaning," and gathering eggs and feeding cats, chickens, and orphan lambs. In the summers they put up hay, but shearing was the main event and always involved cooking for a dozen, two dozen, or more people.

The ranch did well despite the difficulties of the sheep business in those years, and about 1919 the family acquired an automobile, thus "among the first in our neighborhood to have a car, and it created considerable excitement when Dad drove it along the country road."[706] But, as Ruth Irwin notes, "about 1924, I began to understand that the good times were turning into hard times." She says, "during World War I, wool and mutton prices were high and the government was a principal buyer. My father acquired more grazing land in Utah for the sheep, and also enlarged our ranch holdings. He found two investors, a doctor and a lawyer in Salt Lake City, who brought more capital into the ranch operation."[707] Noticeably, in her account, Ruth Irwin, when talking about the hard times beginning in 1924 makes clear what was going on: "The Great American Depression was taking its toll on the economy." The stock market crash was still half a decade away:

> Wool and mutton prices were falling, and it became harder and harder for my father to pay the bills and meet a payroll. The vagaries of climate in Wyoming, always a gamble for ranchers and farmers, also had its part in our loss of income. The Bigelow Bank in Ogden, where Dad had his savings account, closed its doors. Only a few cents on the dollar was ever recovered from our account and that over a period of years. The final blow came when Dad couldn't meet payments on his bank loan in Evanston, and they

---

[704] Ruth M. Irwin, "Life on a Wyoming Ranch: Early 20th Century," in Ruth M. Irwin Papers, 1990-1992, in American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, 1-9.
[705] Irwin, "Life on a Wyoming Ranch: Early 20th Century," 16.
[706] Irwin, "Life on a Wyoming Ranch: Early 20th Century," 46.
[707] Irwin, "Life on a Wyoming Ranch: Early 20th Century," 49; see also in that interview, Part 2, "The Great Depression," 1.

> foreclosed on the ranch.
>
> I will never forget that day when Dad received the foreclosure notice. He sat on the front porch with his head bowed. Tearfully, he said, "All I know how to do is work with my hands." He was sixty-three years of age, a time nowadays when most people retire. It was a terribly sad day for all of us, when they came to take most of the livestock, wagons, sheep camps and equipment. They took ownership of all our acreage in Utah, and most of the Wyoming land except the original homestead and the ranch buildings, leaving about 10,000 acres in our ownership.[708]

Obviously the Myers family was not destitute, was not forced from the land, and they even had a small income from some oil leases. Even so, they found themselves needing to accept financial help (from then on) from her father's brother, the prominent cattle rancher Charlie Myers, to pay outstanding bills and also changing their work routines, with her mother taking over the milking and continuing with the chickens. In addition, "Mother assumed the coyote trapping chores that the hired men used to do. . . . Hence, money from eggs and coyote furs supplied Mother with pin money. Occasionally, she sold butter and cottage cheese." Ruth Irwin's brother sold magazine subscriptions and "one summer I picked and washed currants to sell in an Evanston grocery store." All the full-time employees, except one, were laid off.[709]

The Myers family ultimately was able to build back the sheep and cattle herds, and they represent a very much different encounter with the harsh winds of the economy than did many others who lacked their resources. Even so, their experience suggests that even the prosperous, even the landed, even the owners of sprawling ranches with vast herds and substantial payrolls, and comfortable homes and large barns, and even those with mineral leases on their property, were not immune from catastrophe. Even for the well-to-do, it was clear that the Depression was stalking the Wyoming countryside.

Several observations are appropriate. First, there is a striking contrast between the life led by the Myers family with their herds and property and the Graves family or the families at Teckla. That contrast extends not just to their different circumstances in good times, but the very much different way that they experienced the hard times too. The difference was largely shaped by whether they had a self-sufficient farm and remained somewhat independent of the market and also whether they carried a mortgage on their property. Those factors made all the difference in the world. And, it is further important to note that salvation for the Myers family came not in working harder to produce more, and not in the upswing of the market, which had already turned against them in so many ways, but in several other forms outside the market, including the original homestead property, the cooperation of the entire family in rebuilding in ways reminiscent of the blurred gender roles and "pitching-in" characteristic of self-sufficient farm life, and, of course, the aid of a brother, a financial angel in the midst of calamity. The same ill winds blew across Wyoming, but they touched different families differently.

---

[708] Irwin, "Life on a Wyoming Ranch: Early 20th Century," Part 2, 1.
[709] Irwin, "Life on a Wyoming Ranch: Early 20th Century," Part 2, 3.

In the Big Horn Basin another family left documents of their experience as the economy turned sour in the 1920s. The Hendricks family in the Garland Division of the Shoshone Project had a small but eminently viable farm on their homestead. John Hendricks had been wounded in battle in the Spanish American War so he found a focus for his effort that he could manage without the extensive field work that his disability would not allow. When the Hendricks family proved up on their homestead, their main activity was keeping hives of bees and marketing the honey; of course, that also meant growing alfalfa and other field crops as well as keeping a huge garden for their own consumption, but they were tied into the market with their herds of small, six-legged, winged, stinging livestock. As with other ranchers, John Hendricks carefully tended his stock, placing them on optimum ranges, breeding them with pure queens of an Italian line, and harvesting their hives seasonally.

Likewise, Cecilia Hendricks was not your average homesteader, but then, no one was. In fact, the farm women of that division were, like the children of Lake Woebegone, all above average. Cecilia Hendricks wrote that the early settlers of the division "were far above the average of people usually found in rural areas." She recalled a meeting of the East End Club, an organization of neighborhood women in which they would "exercise our brains and not our stomachs," where someone mentioned that she had previously been a teacher. As it turned out, seventeen of the twenty-three women present had taught school, including Cecilia Hendricks. At the homestead at Garland she developed a career writing for local and state newspapers, and on occasion for national magazines too.

John and Cecilia Hendricks, and then their family, in the 1910s developed their homestead and modestly prospered, especially when World War I sent a surge of affluence through the agricultural sector. In 1917 they purchased a car, although neither had ever driven before, and this car had a "Mak-a-Tractor" attachment so that it could be used to pull some farm implements in the field; they were able to justify the purchase only because it would save time in the apiary operation, and allow for an increased number of bees in more and farther fields. John Hendricks was committed to improving his product, and his business, and became the prime mover in the organization of the Bighorn Basin Beekeepers Association, which would share knowledge about the honey business and provide a cooperative marketing structure. He was also active in the water-users' association (serving as secretary and possibly also as president), as secretary-treasurer of the local Farmers' Union and the Garland Federal Farm Loan Association, and was prominent in other organizations too. The Hendrickses expanded the operation, had carpenters come to build more buildings, and in the process gave a hint as to how some aspects of communal cooperation had shifted. The carpenters were all neighbors with farms of their own. Cecilia Hendricks learned that some of the neighbors were expecting her to feed all of them while they were working:

> I look forward with no pleasure to the ordeal, since they will have twelve men and we have three more, or fifteen, to get dinner and supper for. I think it is nonsense for farmers to stay to supper. They all have chores to do, and they had better get home and do them and eat supper at home. It is too hard on a woman to cook dinner and supper both for such crews. There is no reason why everybody shouldn't do that way, and then nobody would need to feel queer about it. Of course where there are men batching, they could be

> invited to supper. But married men ought to go home and eat supper with their families.[710]

There were other kinds of change too. Reading Cecilia Hendricks' letters it is possible to trace the evolution of life on the homestead, from kerosene lamps to gasoline lamps that provided much greater illumination.[711] In 1922 they acquired their own electricity generator, a surplus gasoline engine from Powell sold to them when that city installed power lines and electric lights.[712] In 1930, their neighborhood was itself connected to the local power grid, and they acquired a new radio, although it appears that they had a battery-powered radio the year before.[713]

Along with the changes came significant challenges. Dependent on the railroads for shipping their honey, John Hendricks battled the line that served them—the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy—for charging them exorbitant rates, rates higher than were charged at other points on the line. He led the fight for the Wyoming Beekeepers' Association in 1923 and was able, by marshalling information about the rates elsewhere, to force the CB&Q to rescind the rates.[714] About that time too John Hendricks was appointed to the Wyoming Board of Agriculture and soon was instrumental in getting the university in Laramie to add an entomologist so there would be "a real scientist" to help take "care of all branches of agriculture," not just bees. The Hendrickses began to employ a young woman (several over time) to come into the house to help. In addition to helping keep the house, Cecilia Hendricks wrote, "the outside yard in the bees will soon start and then of course I can put in my time to advantage helping John, and he will need help, for we have more bees this year than we have ever had."[715] Her work kept her busy, especially writing local news columns. Writing for the Cheyenne *Tribune*, she wrote, earned her seventy-five cents to a dollar a week, and "in the course of a year, forty or fifty dollars will come in handy."[716]

As it happened, Cecilia Hendricks was doing more than writing. She also became a popular and appreciated public speaker, and soon found herself in politics. The Non-Partisan League promoted her candidacy in 1922 for state Superintendent of Instruction and she was nominated as a Democrat: "I

---

[710] Cecilia Hendricks Wahl, compiler and editor, Cecilia Hennel Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill: A Woman's View of Homesteading, 1914-1931* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1986), September 26, 1920, 319.
[711] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, November 7, 1917, 246.
[712] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, September 8, 11, 1922, 385, 386.
[713] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, November 25, 1929, 605; November 5, 1930, 636.
[714] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, March 20, 1923, 413.
[715] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, June 5, 1923, 419. See also a subsequent arrangement where they brought a woman into the house to help; at that time she expressed some guilt over hiring a helper, and acknowledged that her husband "always does some of the work in the house" if she got swamped. They both evidently agreed that it was better for her to spend her time doing her writing than the housework. Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, October 2, 1925, 475-476.
[716] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, October 5, 1923, 426.

learned in Indiana University . . . that when one received an education it was for the use of society at large and not a private possession to be used solely for personal ends."[717] Her husband was nominated for state representative the same year, but both were defeated in the elections. Four years later Cecilia was again nominated, and again defeated, and her political career came to a close. At the same time, it was obvious that the Hendricks family had respect and admiration across the state.

Monetary matters began to weigh on the Hendricks family more and more in the 1920s. In 1924, Cecilia Hendricks wrote that the Powell National Bank had closed its doors, "tying up whatever cash we have on deposit." By a stroke of luck, they had recently settled all of their outstanding bills, except for money owed the bank itself, "so we do not have more than a few hundred dollars on deposit." They even had some checks that had not been deposited yet and some additional checks coming in, so they were sheltered some from the failure of the bank. In addition, "we decided we had a cellar full of all sorts of meat, vegetables and fruit, an upstairs full of flour, plenty of lard, honey, milk, and eggs, so that we could get along for quite a while without buying anything from the grocery, and if we did want to, we could get it in trade for eggs."[718] A week later she wrote that they were unusually lucky in the community: "so many farmers have sold all they had to sell this season and have all the money tied up in the bank until things are straightened out there. I guess lots of folk who never asked for credit before are having to ask their grocers to advance groceries for a few weeks."[719]

In some respects accident and calamity seemed to stalk them—either that or they lived closer to systematic loss than they outwardly let on. At one time their workshop burned, completely razed; no sooner had it been rebuilt than lightning struck it; later, the workshop caught fire again, but the blaze was noticed while a women's group was meeting at the house and the women all grabbed buckets, filled them with water and put out the fire. Each time, the loss (or near loss) of the building was more than just the structure since it housed the honey harvest—essentially a full granary. After the women's bucket brigade doused the last fire, Cecilia contemplated how close they had come to disaster: "If we had lost the shop this time, and the honey in it, we would have been completely done for. John says he doesn't know what we would have done then."[720]

There is evidence that in other ways they were always close to their dreams and accomplishments coming unraveled for one reason another—a circumstance they shared with a great many on the farms and ranches of Wyoming in the 1920s. Having dodged disaster with the fires in the workshop, having been spared the loss of their finances in the local bank failure, and having endured political defeat as well, a letter in 1927 hints that times were growing tighter and tighter, even tight beyond what could be endured. In July of that year she wrote her father in Indiana thanking him for sending money to rescue them. She said that her husband was greatly relieved by the gift "because the taxes were overdue, and the notice of sale had come just a few days before we received Cora's letter saying you were sending the

---

[717] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, June 21, 1922, 371.
[718] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, March 21, 1924, 434.
[719] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, March 31, 1924, 435.
[720] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, May 12, 1924, 439; July 9, 1924, 447; April 21, 1926, 490-491.

drafts. We had till July 20 to pay the taxes before the sale was advertised." Then she put this into context: "To be sure, there are so many others here who are delinquent in their taxes that it is not likely there will be much bidding in at the tax sale, and of course one always has a chance later on to redeem the property, but that all costs extra money and means extra worry." Not only were they close to losing their farm in a tax sale, but the truck engine had to be replaced and they "didn't have enough money in the bank to pay for it." Times had changed she said, from what they used to be: "Nowadays it is the folks on the farm who have to have the help, it seems!"[721]

That was 1928. By 1930, the economy was worse, the stock market had reduced the value of investments, and most devastating of all, consumer purchasing in the cities had dried up; the market for honey virtually disappeared. Once again, though, the Hendricks family received another check from Cecilia's father, and once again they were saved from disaster. She wrote her father thanking him:

> . . . We were absolutely strapped for cash. We were overdrawn at the bank and had nothing coming, and had some extra expense. We simply had to use the extra you sent to tide us over. One reason we have been so close run is that for about three or four months we have not had any cream to sell and for several months we have had to buy even butter. We plan to have at least one cow milking all the time, but plans sometimes "gay agley" and this time they certainly did. Now we have two fresh cows almost at once, and the cream will not only furnish us with plenty of butter but more than pay our grocery bills for months to come. All of which makes a good deal of difference when you haven't realized anything on last year's honey crop and don't know when you will. When you have to go twelve or more months without getting any money on your business, it takes just about all you can scrape together to keep things going and business still running.[722]

Part of the problem was that the marketing association that was selling their honey had been unable to sell more than two-thirds of the previous year's crop and would not settle with the honey producers until it was all sold. Part of the problem was that their creditors were hounding them for payments. Part of the problem was that the state Farm Loan Board would loan them money, but not until the first mortgage was released. But these all added up. In December 1930 she wrote her family in Indiana: "do you suppose that you could find some one back there from whom the thousand dollars could be borrowed?" That would help them get by until they received their check from the honey marketers. There was no chance of that either, as it turned out. Then things got worse. "Because of the financial depression in agricultural matters, we are up against it. We have not received all that was supposed to be due on the 1929 honey that we shipped, and we have had practically nothing on the 1930 crop. Now we have learned through the man who represents Wyoming on the board of the honey selling association that probably there will be nothing coming."[723] Nothing. They cashed in their life insurance, and that helped a little, but they watched helplessly as farmers all around them were losing their farms. Meanwhile the

---

[721] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, July 17, 1927, 543.
[722] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, June 16, 1930, 618.
[723] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, June 28, 1931, 661.

unsold honey was accumulating storage charges that they had to pay. On June 28, 1931, Cecilia Hendricks wrote her sister: "we can not get enough to live on from our possibilities here at the present time. I need to earn some money to help along until this depression is over and we can again realize on our crops, farm as well as honey. There is nothing I can do here to earn money, except the news writing, and the papers have cut down on that until it is not worth much any more."[724]

Cecilia Hendricks returned to Indiana in 1931, immediately found a position teaching in the English Department at the University of Indiana, and was able to support her husband at Honeyhill while she and the children lived in Indiana. John Hendricks came to Indiana for a few months in the winter and the family went to Garland in the summer. That arrangement turned into another year and then another, and so they went, her husband dying at the hospital in Billings in 1936 at age sixty-two—she a widow at fifty-three. They did not lose the farm, but they lost almost all else.

By the calculation of some, the Hendricks farm survived the 1920s, survived the Depression, and even demonstrated that the times were not perhaps as hard as they are often made out to be. After all, they were not foreclosed. They did not declare bankruptcy. Likewise the Myers family. And the Graves homesteaders. And the families at Teckla. These experiences are not the stuff of success stories to be emulated, given how close each came to complete disaster, but there is a telling point to them that does bear contemplation. These were not just ranchers and farmers. They were also homesteaders, living on land provided them under the homestead laws of the nation, fulfilling in their own personal ways their private versions of the Jeffersonian dream. Ultimately, it may be that the homestead is what made the difference, what kept them from losing more than they did.

After the stock market crash of 1929, the agricultural depression of the 1920s merged with the economic crisis of the nation that deepened each year until 1933. The banking crisis, already awful, got even worse between 1929 and 1933 as the entire money supply of the nation, already painfully tightened, shrank by more than a third, thus placing additional pressure on the farmers and ranchers. What economists call "the Great Contraction" was the most severe banking crisis in the nation's history although it remains to be seen how the crisis in the national financial system beginning in 2008 compares. Between the stock market crash of 1929, which witnessed the loss in value of investments, and the Roosevelt administration's mandated banking holiday in March 1933, "more than one-fifth of the commercial banks in the United States holding nearly one-tenth of the volume of deposits at the beginning of the contraction suspended operations because of financial difficulties."[725] On top of this were voluntary liquidations, mergers, and consolidations, which resulted in even more banks disappearing. All in all, the banks operating in the United States fell by over a third in those years. In Wyoming, exactly how many banks collapsed during the most severe part of the national banking crisis is unknown. Geologist Peter Huntoon indicates that in 1927 there were fifty-seven active banks in Wyoming. He also says, "by 1936 there were only thirty-two banks doing business in Wyoming." T. A. Larson, however, counted eighty-three banks in the state in 1930, although he notes that the Depression

[724] Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill*, June 28, 1931, 661.
[725] Friedman and Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States*, 299.

"trimmed out twenty-seven more, seven of them in 1932 and seven more in 1933."[726] What is clear, disparities in numbers of banks aside, is that more and more banks in Wyoming were closing their doors, that Wyoming's people who depended on banks were suffering as a result of lost savings and checking accounts, loans that could not be made, loans that could not be renewed or extended, and because their neighbors also suffered as the closings sent shock waves that rippled through local economies and then the whole state.

Commodity prices dropped too and the wheat that sold for seventy-four cents a bushel in 1929 sold for thirty-six cents two years later. The cattle that sold for $6.30 per hundredweight in 1927 sold for $2.70 in 1933. In 1932 wool sold for seven or eight cents a pound, sometimes as much as a dime.[727] In Converse County at the end of June 1932, the local paper reported that there had been no wool sales at all in the county "and buyers have not been making much effort to get clips." And when sales were made later in the summer, the Morton Ranch received a dime a pound, "which is the highest reported locally and probably as high as has been paid in the state."[728]

Again, this crisis was a general crisis and was not a reflection on the lack of hard work by the farmers and ranchers, nor was it even a result of weather; it had to do with the general crisis in the nation's economy and especially with the failure of the banking system. A. L. Brock in Johnson County effectively captured the situation in 1933 when he observed, "Many of the once well-to-do farmers and stockmen have lost their farms and homes, largely on account of the financial conditions of the country. Many of the stockmen in Wyoming are using more or less borrowed money and owing to the present financial conditions of the country many of them have very little equity left."[729]

It is customary, and with good reason and deep appreciation and respect, to consider the effort, the hard work, the difficult circumstances, and the values held by people as they settled on Wyoming's farms and ranches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is, however, a different treatment accorded those same settlers, those farmers and ranchers and homesteaders when they encounter the difficult times of the Agricultural Depression of the 1920s and 1930s. Then, it often seems that their suffering is only abstract, that their removal from the land is somehow inevitable or predictable, and that they probably were not well suited for the demands of farming and ranching in the severe Wyoming climate and topography. But that part, the part closer to our own times, is equally deserving of study and examination. The loss of a farm or ranch, or the near loss of it, or the ways in which loss was avoided—those are as much a part of the story of Wyoming homesteading, ranching, and farming as

---

[726] Huntoon, "The National Bank Failures in Wyoming, 1924," 44; Larson, *History of Wyoming*, 413.
[727] Again these prices were true of Montana and Wyoming prices were doubtless similar: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service Montana data at http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Montana/Publications/economic/prices/woolpr.htm; http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Montana/Publications/economic/prices/allwhtpr.htm; http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Montana/Publications/economic/prices/bfcatlpr.htm.
[728] Douglas *Budget*, June 23, August 11, 1932.
[729] A. L. Brock, "Comparison of Methods of Handling Livestock in 1923 and in 1933," 6.

settlement and growth and good times. Indeed, that anguished part of the story of Wyoming's rural history may be more critical to an understanding of the past than other parts.

Foreclosure, bankruptcy, distress, pressure, penury, loss of dreams, or just suffering, enduring, and surviving—these hit families in different ways, in ways that were unique to each family and to each farm and ranch. Each farm, each family has its own story and those stories can never be completely recaptured, but they can be probed and explored. At a minimum, they should never be reduced to cold numbers as if the thresholds—legal, technical, and numerical formulations—are self-evident and self-explanatory. Moreover, in a very real and profound way, that reduction to an economic unit is what lay behind most of the problems they faced in their own lives; to continue that reduction generations later is to compound the loss and to trivialize the lives they led that were so much more than mere digits in the national economic machine.

7 THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF ECONOMIC CRISIS AND WAR, 1929-1945

The changes launched by the New Deal are often viewed as a watershed in Wyoming history, and, indeed, in American history. Certainly the Franklin Roosevelt administration embarked on an agenda that included restructuring institutions, practices, and relationships in many parts of society and the economy, and that included those involving the farms and ranches of Wyoming, and even the continuing practice of homesteading. It helps, however, to explore the New Deal as part of a larger set of forces at work in the restructuring of society that had their origins well before 1933 and that continued to reverberate, and even increase in power, after the Depression, and, after the New Deal had been replaced by World War II, as a catalyst for change. In the process, and sometimes in unexpected ways, the social, economic, and physical landscape was transformed by those changes, and what Wyoming looked like at the end of the Second World War was a world apart from what it had looked like at the beginning of the Depression.

i. Drought, Depression, and Despair

About five months after the 1929 stock market crash, the Wyoming Extension Service issued its forecast for agriculture for 1930. In that report, the Extension Service indicated that 1929 had been a weak year for farm and ranch products because of the severe winter at the beginning of the year, so "the gross income from farm and ranch products during 1930 will probably be larger than the gross income in 1929." On the other hand, the report did note that purchasing power of consumers had been "somewhat reduced below 1929," and that therefore "farmers need to follow a rather conservative production policy."[730] The economists could not predict how much the economy would fall in the next several

[730] "The 1930 Agricultural Outlook for Wyoming," Wyoming Extension Service Circular No. 28 (March

years and if they had foreseen the dramatic plunge of employment and purchasing power ahead, there is no way to tell what they might have advised Wyoming's farmers and ranchers to do as they went about their operations.

As bad as circumstances were for Wyoming, and for the nation generally, in 1929, they got dramatically worse in the next four years, and they would be a long time getting better. The two driving forces in that decline were a vicious combination of social and natural events. Organized society weighed in powerfully, and disastrously, when the banking system of the nation, already seriously weakened, already thinned of many small, rural banks, virtually collapsed. With deposits in banks—large and small—being invested, directly or indirectly through loans to brokers, in securities in a seemingly-ever rising, endlessly upswinging market, and with rules for such investments only lightly restraining them, the banks were increasingly vulnerable, their soundness resting precariously on continued confidence in the booming stock market. The stock market crash of October 24, 1929 effectively vaporized that faith. In a contagion that quickly spread from bank to bank, from city to city, from state to state, depositors in banks, alarmed that their bank would not have sufficient funds to cover their checks and to pay them their savings when they asked for them, rushed to withdraw their funds. Of course, the banks, already weakened by the diminished value of their assets, did not have funds to pay everyone. So, as one bank, and then another, failed, it confirmed popular suspicions and more banks began to topple under the pressure. The banking panic of 1929-1933, known as The Great Contraction because of the reduction of the supply of money, made the banking crisis of the 1920s pale by comparison, although really it was a continuation of the same process. In those four years, more than one-third of the commercial banks in the nation suspended operations in three separate waves (over 4,000 in the first two months of 1933 alone). The money supply in the nation also dropped by more than a third. Net national product fell by one-half.[731] The entire nation was now, clearly, in a depression—the Great Depression. Even when the Franklin Roosevelt administration took office in 1933 the banking crisis continued as Roosevelt closed all banks for a week in a banking "holiday" designed to allow inspectors to investigate the banks and reopen the solvent institutions, thus, hopefully lending confidence to the system again. Still, some, especially the small, the rural, the weak banks, did not reopen.

There were two consequences of this banking crisis for Wyoming's farmers and ranchers. One was the banking crisis itself, as it spread to the state. Again, numbers are indefinite and this aspect of Wyoming history begs for scholarly attention, but T. A. Larson's computations indicate that at least fourteen banks failed in 1932 and 1933, and more after that.[732] This was a serious loss, around a fourth or a third of the banks then operating in Wyoming, but there was an even larger, indirect impact.

In the collapse of the stock market and in the collapse of Wall Street, the assets of others—businesses,

---

1930): 5.

[731] Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 299 ff.

[732] T. A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965, 1978; 2nd edition, revised), 414.

consumers, governments—were lost either through the closure of banks and their inability to pay or through the loss of value when the markets became glutted with securities. The spiral was downward directed and along the way businesses closed, employment was reduced, spending was slashed, and the economy ground to a slower and slower pace. By 1933 around a fourth of the labor force was out of work and unable to find a job. When workers in the cities could no longer afford to buy groceries, that was a serious hardship for them; it also represented a serious blow to the producers of those groceries—and that included the farmers and ranchers in Wyoming. In February 1933, the Wyoming Extension Service estimated that demand in the economy—as measured by industrial activity and by factory payrolls—had fallen to sixty percent and forty percent, respectively, of what they had been between 1923 and 1925.[733] The economists at the Extension Service hoped that the situation was improving, that the nadir had been reached in the summer of 1932, but even so, there were dark days ahead: "in view of the fact, however, that a large portion of the reserve purchasing power of the consumers has been exhausted, their savings depleted, and an accumulation of indebtedness built up during the last three years of the depression, improvement is not likely to reflect higher prices of agricultural products before the latter half of 1933, and then only in moderate proportions."[734] The lack of consumer purchasing was killing Wyoming farmers and ranchers. When workers in the city were unable to purchase the meat, grains, and produce they needed for their families, farm families were also unable to provide for their own needs.

The drying up of purchasing power in the rest of the nation combined in the early 1930s with another force, a force of nature that dried up the lands that farmers and ranchers used. The years between 1931 and 1936 were dry years—very dry years. Statistical measures of drought are deceptive since drought itself is a dynamic feature, a cumulative phenomenon. The same objective amount of precipitation in the first year of a drought cycle will have less of an impact on crops and livestock than it would the next year when there is less moisture in the ground and in the streams; the need grows greater for more moisture each year of a drought cycle so that it takes more and more to grow less and less. Moreover, the weather cycles in Wyoming can be dramatically different from drainage to drainage, separated by mountains, so that statistical averages over the state or even over a section of the state also wind up being skewed in often invisible ways. This much, however, can be said: the drought cycle from 1931 to 1936 affected virtually the entire state and the drought, or, as it was called then, the "drouth," became progressively worse, with only intermittent relief in some areas.

Pockets here and there were sometimes spared the worst effects of the drought while other places suffered even more than average. The state government and the railroads designated counties as a "drought area," and that designation entitled ranchers in those counties to emergency freight rates on feed and return shipments of livestock. Some counties, though, were also designated "emergency drought areas" and these included Campbell, Converse, Crook, Goshen, Johnson, Laramie, Niobrara, Platte, Sheridan, Sweetwater, Uinta, and Weston counties; the worst part of the drought included

---

[733] A. W. Willis, "Wyoming Agricultural Situation for 1933," Wyoming Agricultural Extension Service Circular No. 45 (February 1933): 5.
[734] Willis, "Wyoming Agricultural Situation for 1933," 6.

especially the eastern part of the state and in the Red Desert area. The list of "secondary drought areas," probably of little consolation to the farmers and ranchers who lived there, included Albany, Big Horn, Carbon, Fremont, Lincoln, Natrona, Park, Sublette, Teton, and Washakie. Hot Springs County was the only county in the state not designated as a drought area, and it was hardly an oasis.

Generally the years of 1933, 1934, and 1936 are considered the most severe in the 1930s drought cycle. The Wyoming State Climate Office places these years into a broader climatological framework, saying, "The most recent statewide drought that began in earnest in the spring of 2000 over Wyoming is considered by many to be the most severe in collective memory. However, some old timers have indicated that they remember streams drying up in the 1930s and 1950s."[735] Streams did, in fact, dry up during the 1930s. Leslie E. Sommer, a rancher in the Sybille country, wrote in 1941, "1934 was a terrible year for the cattlemen. In the Sybille Country there was no water nor feed. Wells that had never been known to dry up, were dry. Even the Main Sybille Creek was dry except for stagnant pools of water, had rotting [words missing]. Meadows were sere and brown, with alfalfa roots sticking up bare of soil where the winds had blown the soil away. Fresh branded, under-nourished cattle were picked at by magpies, sometimes until they died."[736] Reports of the effects of the drought generally reflect the worst conditions, and while those conditions did not prevail universally, they nonetheless convey the severity of the problem. For example, in 1936, the northern part of Campbell County was described as appearing to be "as smooth as cement" and one report indicated, "the southern part of the county, although not hit as hard yet, is beginning to show signs of the severe dry weather. Many residents report the drying up of wells and water holes."[737] In 1934, Lorena Hickok, dispatched by Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes to provide him a first-hand report on the situation in the West, wrote Ickes from eastern Wyoming, "I saw range that looked as though it had been gone over with a safety razor."[738]

Consequences of the drought varied but there were two general problems. The rancher with livestock faced one of these problems. With reduced pasture, either on deeded land or public land, the rancher would have to purchase hay to feed in the summer as well as the winter. Water could not be purchased, so new wells were dug. In July 1934, the New York *Times* reported that fifty emergency water wells had been completed or were under construction in Wyoming in an effort to get water to livestock.[739] Without water, livestock had to be sold, even though it was underweight, poorly nourished, and the market was flooded with cattle—each head of which pushed the price that the stock would bring down further. On the other hand, for farmers producing crops on irrigated land, the waters that seemed to always flow from distant sources also diminished. Charles Fowler was a boy on his family's fifty-six

---

[735] Jan Curtis and Kate Grimes, *Wyoming Climate Atlas*, copy located on the World Wide Web at http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/wsc/climateatlas/drought.html
[736] Leslie E. Sommer, "Cattle Grazing in the Sybille Country," typescript, 1941, WPA Collections, subject file 1367.
[737] "Government Agencies Unite to Alleviate Local Distress," Gillette *News-Record*, July 2, 1936.
[738] Lorena Hickok, Richard Lowitt, and Maurine H. Beasley, eds., *One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 334.
[739] "Record Heat Grips West; Deaths to Date Put at 700," New York *Times*, July 25, 1934.

acre irrigated farm near Torrington. He recalled of the drought, "For a farmer who depended on irrigation, drought meant that he might be denied water to irrigate at a critical time in the growth cycle of his crops." And that was what happened to his family when "the Hill Irrigation Ditch was directed to close down. The closure was for weeks, not for a few days." He continued, with considerable understatement, "Having your water cut off in mid-summer for the rest of the season is an event that gets one's attention."[740]

By January 1935, the condition of the range in Wyoming generally was eighty-three percent of normal and it appears to have declined more over the following year although the winter of 1935-1936 was mild and offered much-needed moisture.[741] Some ranchers in 1934 shipped their livestock to other places where they would have better grazing, and in this they were sometimes able to take advantage of the reduced railroad shipping rates for drought districts in the state, generally set at eighty-five percent of normal rates; yet even this reduction in rates meant that only the ranchers with sufficient numbers of stock to export, with the ability to pay railroad freight rates, with a destination range to ship the cattle and sheep to, and with the ability to manage the livestock in the out-of-state ranges were able to take advantage of the opportunity. In 1936, as the drought of the previous year returned after a respite during the winter, seventeen trucks made nine trips to the area around Midwest, Wyoming where the Padlock Ranch shipped its cattle to Gillette where they were then transported by train to Nebraska. The Gillette newspaper reported, "Every train that leaves the local yards is made up of a great number of stock cars loaded with cattle, horses and sheep consigned to market or to pasture in localities that have not suffered from drouth and insects."[742] Three weeks later, the *News-Record* reported that the out-migration of livestock was continuing, that shipments of cattle out from Gillette "have been heavier than for many years over the same July period, due to the extreme drouth conditions."[743] By November of 1936 an estimated four hundred cars of cattle were shipped out of northeast Wyoming.[744]

The shipment of cattle to other ranges helped those who could do so, but not all could; in fact, those most distressed were the least able to ship their cattle elsewhere. They had few alternatives. One option, to walk away from the land that had been farmed or ranched, was implicit in one report from Gillette in 1936: "With no rain recorded for over four weeks and none in sight, conditions have almost reached the point of hopelessness. Stock is being shipped from the county and many farmers have deserted their places to seek new locations."[745] Exactly how many "deserted their places to seek new locations" can not be determined, nor can it be ascertained how many retained ownership of their property and moved to town to find work, how many turned over their deed to the mortgage holder but

---

[740] Charles A. Fowler, III, *A Wyoming Country Boy in the 1930s: Memoirs of Charles A. Fowler, III* (Bloomington, Indiana: privately printed, 2003), 265-266.
[741] Larry Joseph Krysl, "The Effects of the Great Depression on the State of Wyoming, 1935-1940," M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1960, 18.
[742] "Stock Moving out of County," Gillette *News-Record*, June 13, 1936.
[743] "Cattle Being Moved Rapidly," Gillette *News-Record*, July 7, 1936.
[744] Krysl, "The Effects of the Great Depression on the State of Wyoming, 1935-1940," 19.
[745] "County Known as Drouth Area," Gillette *News-Record*, July 8, 1936.

continued to farm as a tenant or renter, and, for that matter, how many may have even moved on to the farms to pick up where someone else left off. In fact, the statistics show that in the first half of the 1930s the total number of farms in Wyoming actually *increased*. In 1930 there had been 16,011 farms and ranches in the state and by 1935 that number had increased to 17,487, the highest number ever in Wyoming history. Sixteen counties showed growth in farms and ranches and even in those that showed a decline, the falloff was only slight in those five years.[746] What is especially remarkable is that the combination of Depression and Drought did not produce an immediate depopulation of the countryside.

On top of the hard times and on top of the drought was another plague of almost biblical proportions. Joe Watt described the grasshoppers in 1934 as "so thick that on a hot afternoon they would gather on sagebrush and the north side of fence posts until the surface was completely covered." The grasshopper infestation slackened in 1935 but returned with a vengeance in 1936 and Watt says "the grasshoppers hatched out the latter part of May, eating what green feed had started" and they were followed the same summer by Mormon crickets: "They advanced like an army. The ground was completely covered in their march. I can remember moving a herd of cattle, and, when we met the crickets, spending some time forcing the cattle and saddle horses to cross them. The crickets moved in a straight line. When they came to the house they crawled up the side and over the top. The house was completely covered with them." The crickets, however, as Watt explained, "did little damage to feed, as the ground was bare by that time, there was little they could hurt."[747] Ed Langelier at Big Horn saw a similar impact: "the mormon crickets moved in and they finished what the grasshoppers hadn't eaten and then even ate the bark off of trees and they ate the paint off of houses."[748]

In all this grief and hardship, there are a few salient developments that suggest the broader contours of the crisis, and of the transformation underway. One is that the diversified farmer, as opposed to the single-crop or specialized rancher, found some salvation in that diversity. In Hot Springs County, one farmer had developed, in addition to his various crops, a substantial turkey farm with 2,500 birds. This unnamed farmer "herded them out like sheep." Raising also alfalfa, he was subject to the infestation of the grasshoppers, but he had his response: "The turkeys are moved from one location to another over the hay fields, where they feed on grasshoppers until they are brought in to be fattened for market. Thus a pest is turned into a farm asset."[749]

---

[746] The counties showing growth in farms and ranches between 1930 and 1935 were Big Horn, Carbon, Converse, Crook, Fremont, Goshen, Hot Springs, Johnson, Lincoln, Natrona, Park, Sheridan, Sublette, Sweetwater, and Washakie. Albany declined from 548 to 537, Teton from 280 to 259, Uinta from 435 to 432, and Weston from 616 to 611. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940; Agriculture*, Volume 1, Part 6, *Statistics for Counties* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 186-187.

[747] Watt is quoted at length in Maurice Frink, *Cow Country Cavalcade: Eighty Years of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association* (Denver: The Old West Publishing Co., 1954), 160-161.

[748] Mr. and Mrs. Ed Langelier interviewed by Bill Barton, April 1, 1976, Wyoming State Archives, OH-327.

[749] Jessie L. Duhig, "Agriculture: Hot Springs County, Wyoming" typescript, WPA Collections, subject

But more broadly, the small farmers seemed to possess an advantage over the large as they faced the shriveling of purchasing power, the scorching winds of drought, and the scourge of grasshoppers and crickets. A few years later, the WPA Writers' Guide for Wyoming suggested that one group that endured was a group that had suffered already; these were people whose small, diversified, and subsistence operations disqualified them for bank loans and first and second mortgages. Unlike those who in some measure were better off, and who borrowed money and took out mortgages, the smallest operators were not burdened with debts. Even some of the bigger operators followed the lead of the experienced, intensive small farmers. The writers' guide noted that during the 1930s "many Wyoming farmers who were unable to finance the farming of their large acreages made a living by maintaining a small flock of sheep, some turkeys and chickens, and a few milk cows, and cultivated only sufficient land to raise feed for the stock and for a small garden."[750] Without the crushing debt and with the diversity of production, they were able to eke by. As for the ranchers, Agnes Wright Spring noted that the small stock growers often had enough water to make it through the dry spell with their limited number of sheep and cattle.[751] While moisture was slight, their needs were also slight; by the same token, their large counterparts with sizeable herds also had sizeable water needs.

The managing of water, in fact, was the forte of the dry-farmer, and while the drought of 1936 continued unabated that summer, there was a small amount of moisture that season and some of the small operators were able to put it to good use. Between the first of April and near the end of November, Gillette, already parched, received only 3.92 inches of rain. While this was not sufficient to produce a crop of the small grains, "corn and several of the annual forage crops made a crop although the yields were not so good as in years of more nearly normal rain fall. Yet enough feed was produced to be of great value in carrying of livestock through the fall and winter."[752] Likewise in Crook County, reports were, "During the drought of the last few years corn has done pretty well and supplied a big part of the stock feed for winter."[753] People who had made their living on the land without water, people who had chosen to forego debt or who had been refused that opportunity, and people who put their effort into producing for their own needs rather than for distant markets, those people somehow managed to survive, to keep their land, and sometimes they did so while watching their debt-ridden, but erstwhile prosperous, neighbors, wrestle not just with drought but with the debt collectors that seemed to accompany the drought.

Insofar as the drought was simply a result of lack of rainfall, this was a natural calamity, but voices were suggesting that there was more to it than just the absence of rain. Some were suggesting that the real

---

file 1308.

[750] Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wyoming, *Wyoming: A Guide to Its History, Highways, and People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981; reprint of 1941 Oxford University Press edition), 105.

[751] Spring is quoted by Krysl, "The Effects of the Great Depression on the State of Wyoming, 1935-1940," 23.

[752] "State Experiment Farm News Notes," Gillette *News-Record*, November 28, 1936.

[753] Carl Plattner, "Crook County in General," typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 1265.

problem was the treatment of the earth by the humans inhabiting it, making an already fragile resource that much more vulnerable by short-sighted practices. Were the ranchers, for one, destroying the land by overgrazing it? And were the farmers, for another, destroying the land by plowing it up? Journalist T. H. Watkins wrote much later, "in the 1930s, millions of acres on the Great Plains that had not fully recovered from the abuses of the 1880s still lay open to livestock use and intensive agriculture—and it was on these lands that much of the land-wrecking boom of the World War I years had just played out. . . . By the 1930s, then, much of the western land had been broken and exposed by repeated plowing, leached of its nutrients by constant planting and replanting, grazed down to the dirt by cattle and sheep, its topsoil skinned off in sheets or gullied by water erosion during wet years. And it was on these lands that the sun had been doing some of its most devastating work during the drought years."[754]

This was an issue at the time. As for the overgrazing, the Wyoming Stock Growers Association responded categorically that such was not the case, that it was a matter of just not having enough rain. The WSGA circulated a pamphlet produced by the American National Livestock Association, "If and When it Rains: The Stockman's View of the Range Question," rebutting the overgrazing claims, enlisting testimony from ranchers across the West to make their point.[755] The problem was simple, the argument ran; it quit raining in the summer and snowed less in the winter and the lack of moisture caused the serious problems on the range and in the ranching industry, and that was all. If there was blame to be cast, the government, with its misguided policies had to bear its share of the burden: "at fault is government policy—homestead laws—which encouraged breaking up of many a fine cattle and sheep range into what might be called starvation homestead units."

Indeed, the authors of the pamphlet enlisted an impressive array of Wyoming stockgrowers to testify about the extent and origin of the current situation. Thomas Cooper, former president of the Wyoming Wool Growers Association, said flatly, "In my opinion, based on 50 years of practical observation, the range is better today [1936] than 50 years ago." Fred Warren, son of former governor and senator Frances E. Warren, observed, "We have run stock every year. We carry more stock on this range than in the old days. My father came to this very spot shortly before his death, in 1929. That was before this present flare-up about range depletion. He loved the land, and knew it. 'Fred,' he said, 'I believe the grass is better now than it was when I first came.'"[756] Most of the observations on the drought indicated

---

[754] T. H. Watkins, *The Hungry Years: A Narrative History of the Great Depression in America* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1999), 424-25; Watkins, "An Evil in the Season: The Cattleman's Welfare System Begins;" this article is partially taken from Watkins' larger study and published on the world wide web at http://www.publiclandsranching.org/htmlres/PDF/wr_CATTLEMANS_WELFARE.pdf.

[755] "If and When it Rains: The Stockman's View of the Range Question" (Denver: American National Livestock Association, 1938).

[756] Frances E. Warren may not have been the best authority when it came to sensitive stewardship of the range. The elder Warren had revealed his priorities when he wrote his son, in fear that he might be charged too much for grazing rented land, "I hope you will eat every hair off that part of the range, getting it just as close as you can without injury to the sheep, and save our own range accordingly." This quotation is from a May 22, 1914 letter of F. E. Warren to Fred Warren in the Frances Warren

that when the drought was over, the range had returned to normal health. While that may sound obvious, this was a fine point that had to be made: this confirmed, to them, that the problem was not that of overgrazing, which would have produced enduring shortages of forage; the problem was only drought, which was temporary and could be reversed with a simple shift in weather patterns. So testified John Budd of Big Piney:

> Nineteen thirty-four was the driest summer that I can remember here. Nineteen thirty-five was not much better, but we had plenty of snow during the winter of 1935 and 1936, then some rains during the summer, which helped, then more snow last winter and plenty of rains at the proper times this summer, which has resulted in the grass in the Green River Valley, being better than it has been for the last 25 years, which should show that the lack of snow in the winter and of rains during the summers in the western range states is the main reason the ranges have been so short for the past few years.[757]

Charles A. Myers, of Evanston, talked about the "transformation from famine to feast" that had taken place a number of times. "No, the range has not been denuded by private ownership or corporate greed. . . . . In the future, as in the past, our range crops is going to depend almost entirely on humidity." T. D. O'Neil of Big Piney was concise, saying that inevitably things change and "Mother Nature comes to the rescue with moisture in the form of snow or rain or both . . . Water is undoubtedly the solution of all of our forage troubles of the range."[758]

The reality of the situation possibly was both more simple and more complex than some were willing to acknowledge. In 1934, the Wyoming Stock Growers Association's own numbers showed that there were one million, four thousand cattle in the state, the largest number in forty-two years (going back to 1892), with the exception of the brief post-World War I boom in 1919.[759] The number of cattle had not only remained high but had even increased despite the deterioration of the range. In terms of numbers of cattle, there were indications that the carrying capacity of the range had been exceeded.

But there was more to it than just raw numbers, and the circumstance of the drought even caused those numbers to increase the effect of grazing on the range. Some livestock growers saw the situation in more nuanced terms than the official spokespeople of the organizations, seeing it as a combination of problems—that the carrying capacity of the range was not an absolute, fixed number, but something variable. For instance, Dominic Pousche at Diamondville was one of a handful of ranchers interviewed

---

Papers, in the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming; I first encountered it in Debra L. Donahue, *The Western Range Revisited: Removing Livestock from Public Lands to Conserve Native Biodiversity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 34.

[757] John C. Budd in "If and When it Rains: The Stockman's View of the Range Question," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 408.

[758] "If and When it Rains: The Stockman's View of the Range Question," typescript, 12.

[759] Agnes Wright Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association* (n.p.: Wyoming Stock Growers Association, 1942), 134.

in 1941 about their experience grazing on the public domain over the years. Pousche responded, "Drouth and overgrazing work together when the range is short of grass and you have a lot of stock you try to get all you can out of the range. Consequently you overgraze the range. For example this year one could run twice as many stock without hurting the range no more than the regular herds did last year."[760] In this Pousche was doubtless correct, for ranchers and herders would often start a season with more (or less) livestock than the range could handle that year. Harold Vass, at the University of Wyoming, an outspoken advocate of commercial ranching and a favorite of the Wyoming stock growers, framed the discussion with yet more precision: "During drought years, our ranges will always be over-stocked, and the gains and profits will be light, as in 1934. During years of relatively heavy precipitation, ranges will be understocked with heavy gains per animal. At present, there is no known practical method that will correct this situation 100 per cent. . . . If the farmer's crop is a failure, he leaves his harvesting machines in the shed. The rancher cannot leave his harvesting machines (cattle and sheep) in the shed. They have to be fed. The result is a loss on livestock during the drought years, and a loss of range feed during the relatively wet years."[761]

But the issue was basic to the livestock industry, both cattle and sheep, since the way the problem was perceived shaped the solution. The core concern of some grazers was that if overgrazing were perceived as the basis for the calamity on the range, herd reduction or exclusion from parts of the range would be mandated. There were those who thought that the range was overgrazed, that overgrazing was a serious problem, and that something needed to be done to correct that overgrazing. Among those was Henry A. Wallace, and Henry Wallace told the Wyoming Stockgrowers Association his views when they met in Douglas in June 1934. Henry Wallace was not an academic, not a city slicker, and not someone unsympathetic to or not understanding of agriculture. Wallace was, in fact, a prominent farmer from Iowa, one of those people often identified as "progressive farmers" or "scientific farmers" because his family worked to develop hybrid crop strains and offered advice to agriculturists around the nation with their publication, *Wallace's Farmer*. Henry A. Wallace's father, Henry C. Wallace, served as Secretary of Agriculture in the Harding and Coolidge administrations and had been prominent in the Republican Party. Henry A. Wallace changed political affiliation, became a Democrat, and helped gather rural support for Roosevelt in 1932, and Franklin Roosevelt appointed him Secretary of Agriculture in 1933. In his mid-forties, Wallace was described at the time as someone "as earthy as the black loam of the corn belt, as gaunt and grim as a pioneer."[762] His detractors had great respect for him and even those Wyoming ranchers and farmers who disagreed with him also found him honest and sincere, and Charles A. Myers of Evanston, president of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, told his fellow ranchers that Wallace was "working intelligently, honestly, earnestly, to overcome some of the troubles of the

---

[760] Handwritten notes by Bryan (Jack) Archer of interview with Dominic Pousche, August 1, 1941, in "Interviews with Farmers and Ranchers regarding the Taylor Grazing Act," WPA Collections, subject file 409.

[761] Vass is quoted in Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*, 220.

[762] Unofficial Observer [John Franklin Carter], *The New Dealers* (New York: The Literary Guild, 1934), 76-77.

cowmen."[763]

As it happened, however, Wallace's ideas about changing agriculture in the nation, and in the West, had caused some concern among Wyoming ranchers before his appearance before the WSGA in Douglas 1934. Accounts relate that five hundred or so farmers and ranchers gathered to hear the Secretary, that the anticipation was high, that the atmosphere was tense, that "the air was charged with static." Elmer Brock of Kaycee, who was acting chair of the organization at the meeting in the La Bonte Hotel, set aside his usual gavel and instead called the meeting to order "by rapping with the butt end of a six-shooter," making a not-so-subtle statement to the distinguished guest in the process. Henry Wallace was in his element, however, and he responded with candor and bluntness, in language no one could misinterpret, addressing specifically the condition of the range and why it was in such sorry shape:

> For the last five years . . . over most of the mountain states you have been definitely overstocking your ranges, and you glory in your shame. You have been eating off the good pasture grass, and you have eaten it so close in many regions that the water has washed away the soil over large areas, and the wind has blown a lot of it away, until some of the land is almost permanently ruined. It is all right to go ahead if you want to under your rugged individualism and overstock your ranges and eat off your good pastures, it is all right for you to hurt yourselves if you want to, but it is a shame to hurt the land the way you have been doing.[764]

So said the Secretary of Agriculture. If there was any doubt before that ranching and farming in Wyoming faced major changes, those doubts were wiped away at this meeting.

ii. Ranching, Farming, and the New Deal

As the Franklin Roosevelt administration confronted the problems facing farmers and ranchers—and homesteaders—beginning in 1933, it drew upon a general philosophy of social priorities, economic organization, and political structure. It then formulated and implemented a series of programs designed to arrest, cure, or ameliorate those problems. It would be a mistake to seek a fine consistency of action and thought in this—or any—administration since the political process is often messy and leads to compromises and opportunities that are vastly different from what purists and planners may have had in mind. Moreover, Roosevelt was no purist and prided himself on being "pragmatic" in the vernacular, not philosophical, sense of the word. The result was a course of action that followed a meandering path, that frequently lacked coordination with other initiatives taken by other branches of the same government, and that even sometimes was at odds with other programs. Such was the New Deal.

---

[763] Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*, 137, 139.
[764] Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*, 138.

In the broadest terms, however, the fragmentation evident in the New Deal's programs in agriculture itself reflected a pattern of fragmentation of society, a splintering into different interest groups with programs designed to address issues of importance to those varied, and conflicting, interest groups. This was, once again, the ascendancy of a model of social and economic organization associated with modernization—and all of the centralization, planning, specialization, and large-scale organization inherent in that concept. Indeed, this took place on two levels. It was evident in the assumptions and goals of specific programs proposed and implemented. But it was also embodied in the infrastructure emerging in the nation as a result of those programs. The nation was being transformed, agriculture was being transformed, and Wyoming was being transformed in the 1930s and 1940s. This change carried consequences, among them a reorganization of the entire system of production. In addition, however, there was another fundamental aspect that requires attention. As historian Paul Conkin observes, "The human costs of this transition were enormous."[765]

The approach of the Roosevelt administration to the problems facing farmers and ranchers in Wyoming was in part formulated by Secretary Henry Wallace, but Wallace had an entire department to administer, had political battles to fight, had Congress to deal with, had ongoing programs and divisions (such as, in Wyoming, most notably the Forest Service) to administer. Much of the new direction and new initiatives on the agricultural front came from Professor Rexford Tugwell, an economics professor at Columbia University. Tugwell was, in fact, an eminent scholar, widely published in the vanguard of a new wave of economists looking at the practice, organization, and theory of agriculture. Tugwell had advised Roosevelt during the presidential campaign and was a member of what came to be known as Roosevelt's Brains Trust, a set of intellectual advisors who helped FDR formulate policy during the campaign and then helped steer the administration in the months following their candidate's victory in November. Tugwell became Assistant Secretary of Agriculture in the new administration, but that does not mean he was the errand boy for Henry Wallace. Sometimes it even seemed that Tugwell was as close to the president as Wallace was, and Tugwell retained considerable independence in the administration, and in particular had responsibility for developing new programs and new responses to the problems of depression and drought facing farmers and ranchers. Rexford Tugwell was important. The Brains Trust generally emphasized planning in the economy, in the sense of purposeful controls to make it less vulnerable to dramatic swings of supply and demand, and Tugwell shared that perspective. One study cogently describes Tugwell and his chief assistant, the economist Mordecai Ezekiel, as "young prophets of the 'planned' economy who were confidently filled with the theorem that agriculture was suffering chiefly from disorganized and uncontrolled production. In this belief they were joined by Secretary Wallace."[766]

---

[765] Paul Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm: The Transformation of American Agriculture since 1929* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 51.
[766] A. B. Genung, *The Agricultural Depression Following World War I and Its Political Consequences: An Account of the Deflation Episode, 1921-1934* (Ithaca, New York: Northeast Farm Foundation, 1954), 89.

Tugwell generally disavowed earlier views of agriculture, views he considered sentimental or romantic, views that stressed agriculture as a way of life. Agriculture, according to Tugwell, was a business and needed to be operated like a business. Historian Richard Kirkendall writes that Tugwell "insisted that the United States had become fundamentally an industrial nation, and he did not regret the change. In fact, he talked of absorbing 'a very large number of persons from farms into our general industrial and urban life.'"[767] Instead of fighting the industrial trend in modern society, Tugwell argued, farmers should use industrial principles to organize their own activities. As Kirkendall, the preeminent scholar of New Deal agricultural policy, argues, Tugwell "believed that government should promote the consolidation and rationalization of agriculture, reorganizing it along the lines that industry had followed. The area of land in production should be limited so that the system would include only the most efficient farmers operating the best land, and the cities and factories should absorb a very large number of people from the farms."[768]

The goal in all this was a comprehensive planning system for agriculture, and that meant more than farmers planning what to grow. It meant a centralized system of planning how much of what commodities should be produced in the nation and this is exactly what Tugwell had been talking about since the 1920s. In addition, there was a key assumption to the whole process. The fundamental problem facing agriculture in the Depression, according to this approach, was that of overproduction; farmers and ranchers had produced so much that the markets were glutted and the prices they received were thereby pushed down. This perspective was at the core of the new approach although there were other ways of looking at this problem, and some critics argued exactly the opposite: that the agricultural sector was in trouble, not because of overproduction, but because of underconsumption; people in the cities did not have the money to buy food and fiber even at depressed prices. Those critics called for increasing purchasing power and consumption through government spending and wealth redistribution and using anti-trust laws to generate greater competition and lower prices in the processors of agricultural commodities who stood between the producer and the consumer.[769] Those critics notwithstanding, however, the new president and his advisers embarked on a course to achieve the restructuring that they had proposed and the dominant course of the New Deal in agriculture became that of limiting production to create an artificial scarcity of commodities which would then, theoretically, create higher prices in the marketplace.

It should be noted that, despite occasional protests to the contrary, there was nothing particularly socialistic about this approach. In fact, its fundamental goal was to bring private farmers and ranchers higher profits through higher prices. And while ranchers and farmers sometimes opposed this, they were usually more concerned about the planning aspects than anything, because of the centralized decision-making it represented. Of course, people in the cities often opposed it because it meant higher

---

[767] Richard S. Kirkendall, *Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1966), 43.
[768] Kirkendall, *Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt*, 44.
[769] See Michael Cassity, "Huey Long: Barometer of Reform in the New Deal," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 72 (Spring 1973): 255-269.

prices on food, and this at a time when they were already pinched for funds. (The Roosevelt administration's response to them was ultimately for them to join a union to get higher wages for themselves or otherwise increase the price of whatever they were producing or selling—again through creating shortages of those commodities or labor.) This was a new system for the nation—not just for the farmers and ranchers.

Among the dizzying array of alphabet agencies spawned by the New Deal, the AAA—the Agricultural Adjustment Administration—may be the most familiar, at least on some level, and perhaps even the most enduring, at least in the framework for government involvement in agriculture that it bequeathed the nation, a framework that lasted well beyond the Supreme Court decision that declared the 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act unconstitutional. The original law was an omnibus measure that included a host of programs, some specified and some only hinted at in vague authorization language, including enticements for farmers to retire some of their land, allowing agreements between producers (farmers) and processors to set market prices, and subsidizing exports of agricultural products. Keeping in mind the fundamental goal of agricultural policy, to reduce production and create artificial shortages, the law also provided for farmers who produced specified "basic commodities" to voluntarily agree, in actual contracts, to reduce production in exchange for government payments to them; the formula was complex but the goal of the payments—ever since known as farm subsidies—was to generate prices for the farmer close to parity—the ratio of the price of farm goods to other goods that existed during the prosperous years of roughly 1910-1914.[770]

The AAA was slow to get started in Wyoming and, in fact, the main commodities where AAA actions were focused had little to do with Wyoming. Cotton, corn, and pigs were not high on the tables of agricultural production for Wyoming, and cattle and sheep, which were important, were initially left out of the list of basic commodities in the bill that passed. Wheat was on the list, but the wheat crop was already seriously reduced because of the drought-inhibited crop of 1933. Production controls came to Wyoming most systematically and intensively in 1934 when the federal government launched its Drought Relief Program to help farmers and ranchers beset by the clouds of dust, the lack of rain, and the starving condition of their livestock. As with many New Deal programs, this was designed to accomplish several different goals with one action. At its basic level, the Drought Relief Program endeavored to reduce the size of herds of livestock through the purchase of excess amounts and the reduction of crops by taking land out of cultivation. The herd reduction effort would, on the one hand, reduce the stress on the land at the time of severe drought, and it would also provide the rancher who sold the cattle some cash. But there was more since this also fit within the larger framework of production controls, in which the object was to raise prices for agricultural commodities by limiting the amount of those commodities on the market—again, creating an artificial shortage to push prices up. It would thus do no good for the government to purchase cattle and then sell them to the packers in Chicago or Omaha; that would, the theory ran, just glut the market and depress the prices more. So the

---

[770] Van L. Perkins, *Crisis in Agriculture: The Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the New Deal, 1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 43; Paul K. Conkin, *The New Deal* (Arlington Heights, Illinois: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1967, 1975), 39-40.

livestock that were purchased were either killed and buried on the spot or shipped away with some to be used in relief programs or otherwise utilized without going on the market. The actual disposition is unclear. The Sheridan *Post* reported in 1934 that, "Some of these slaughtered animals were canned and distributed among the needy. Some were given to the Indians for jerked meat and some were left where they were slaughtered." The same newspaper also reported that 67,000 sheep per day "were purchased by the government and either slaughtered or shipped to processors."[771] In Sublette County Dr. W. H. Lee, a veterinarian, was chosen to rank the cattle according to classification to determine whether the cattle were to be killed on the spot, to be shipped away for slaughter and feeding the hungry on relief, or to be shipped away to other ranges, and the government issued him a .22 rifle to kill those he determined "hopelessly starved or aged." One report is that in Sublette County the government purchased 14,000 cattle and killed ten percent of them.[772] The actual classification of the cattle determined not only the fate of the individual animal but the amount the rancher received, with "top cows" going for twenty dollars, yearlings for fifteen, calves somewhere between four and eight dollars, "killers" for eight dollars, and diseased for four to six dollars.

The program began in earnest in June 1934 and it presented a stark image of an incongruous situation: the slaughter of beef cattle and sheep in a nation that was hungry. In 1933 a fierce outcry across the nation had accompanied the implementation of AAA production controls in the South when one fourth of the cotton crop was plowed under and millions of pigs were killed, and that was largely avoided in 1934 when publicity was less widespread and when the nation was more accustomed to the images.[773] Even so, the sanitized version of the disparity, the image of "breadlines knee deep in wheat," remained in some eyes, the alternate image of the New Deal and its relief for the hungry.[774] And memories of the killing of cattle in Wyoming endured for some people as the central, searing image of the Depression in the state. In 1990 Mabel Brown, a well-known, admired, and respected figure across Wyoming, recalled the scene in an interview: "Killing the cattle, . . . and just leaving them lay. . . . When we'd drive in from the Osage field to Osage there would be cattle just lying along the road. Bloating in the sun, their legs stiff and up in the air. They'd pay the ranchers $20-$25 and then shoot the cattle and leave them lay there. They wouldn't let anybody go in and butcher them to use for meat because that would be defeating the purpose of the slaughter of the cattle in the first place. It was to try to make the price go up

---

[771] These quotations are from the Sheridan *Post* in undated 1934 news clippings transcribed by Ida McPherren in WPA Collections, subject file 405.
[772] Ethel Van Dorin Jewett, "Dry and Depressed, 1934," in Sublette County Artists' Guild, *Seeds-Ke-Dee Reflections* (Laramie: Modern Printing, 1985), 21-22.
[773] It should be noted that no one took joy in this effort. Henry Wallace himself, though he accepted the theory behind the action, lamented "I hope we shall never have to resort to [plowing under the crops] again. To destroy a standing crop goes against the soundest instincts of human nature." And it was not just human nature. When those crops were plowed under, there was usually the poignant moment where farmers had great trouble getting their mules to walk on the ripening crops. See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958), 61.
[774] See Janet Poppendieck, *Breadlines Knee-Deep in Wheat: Food Assistance in the Great Depression* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

and reduce the supply."[775] Decades later, it was still difficult for her to reconcile the wasteful slaughter with the crying needs, even though she clearly understood the theory behind it.
And so the herd reduction program proceeded in Wyoming. AAA officials, usually the county extension agent, appraised the cattle, set the price (usually between eight and fifteen dollars a head), and paid the owner—and shot the cattle. Sometimes ranchers and farmers were paid a flat amount at the low end of the scale; the Campbell County extension agent appears to have seldom paid more than eight dollars. The Wyoming Stock Growers Association calculated that the average price in the state was "$12.52 per head, or about one-third the cost of producing a weaner calf."[776] Evidently, "one of the officials in Cheyenne," determined that W. H. Lee in Sublette County was paying too much for the cattle. Lee responded, "there are no cattle buyers up here and they are all thieves anyway, but they are not going to make a cattle thief out of me for $15.00 a day."[777]

Reports are scattered and spotty in the state on the progress of the program. In the northeast section of the state, one account quotes extensively from the Moorcroft *Leader* in 1934 about these herd reductions, noting, "the slaughter of these animals was the largest in the history of the livestock industry." The same newspaper reported, "Fifty-five cars of government cattle left Moorcroft's stockyards between July 12-20 1934. By fall of 1934 32,270 head of cattle and 21,058 head of sheep were purchased by the government in Crook County in the emergency livestock purchasing program."[778] By late November 1934, over a quarter-million Wyoming cattle were disposed of to the government under this program, and when the program closed down shortly afterwards, 285,227 head of cattle in the state had been killed or shipped off to non-market uses. The WSGA put the number of cattle killed on the ranches at 36,162.[779] Nationally, the Drought Relief Service purchased 8.3 million cattle and about 18 per cent were condemned and killed.[780]

The crop reduction program was less dramatic than the herd reductions, but it shared the same objectives and assumptions. In 1933 the wheat crop had been so low that nowhere in the nation did the fields of wheat get plowed under like cotton had been. The AAA sought to reduce the next year's harvest of wheat, and keep production down, by offering the wheat producers a three year program; in return for reducing 1934 and 1935 acres in wheat, the farmers would receive a benefit payment.[781] Those

---

[775] Mabel Brown interviewed by Phil Roberts, May 9, 1979, Wyoming State Archives, OH-412.
[776] Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*, 144.
[777] Jewett, "Dry and Depressed, 1934," 23.
[778] "Stock Shipments are Very Heavy," Moorcroft *Leader*, July 20, 1934, quoted in Sundance High School Sophomore Class of 1987, *Triumphs and Tragedies of Crook County* (n.p., n.d.), 65. See also, "Government Will Soon Start Buying Cattle under New Drought Relief Buying Program," Moorcroft *Leader*, June 22, 1934.
[779] Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*, 142-143.
[780] C. Roger Lambert, "The Drought Cattle Purchase, 1934-1935: Problems and Complaints," *Agricultural History*, 45 (January 1971): 85.
[781] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958), 61-62.

contracts specified the minimum and maximum to be planted and also the formula for the benefit payments. Even so, the Wyoming Agricultural Extension Service anticipated that wheat prices would remain low: "the farmer who hasn't a wheat contract as well as the farmer who intends to plant his maximum wheat acreage allowed under his contract may be interested to know that the outlook for wheat as a paying cash crop in 1935-36 is not as bright as for some other crops." The solution? "Improved prices of market livestock should make wheat and feed grains profitable crops for the Wyoming farmer if fed on the farms and marketed as meat."[782]

In some sense, the reduction programs achieved their objective and their net result was to diminish production of livestock and crops. In 1935, the number of cattle in Wyoming was down to the level of 1928; the wool clip and the number of lambs were also reduced substantially—"the smallest in several years"—as a result of the reduction of sheep herds; the number of dairy cattle in Wyoming was declining after years of increase, and more reduction was expected, although milk production increased because of more intensive methods and retention of the best stock; wheat production remained low, as a result of weather and contracts, but wheat prices remained relatively stable because of the world market in wheat.[783] While production could be reduced, it was not quite so clear that prices would then rise; the results were mixed on that aspect.

Moreover, how successfully the program benefited the people it was intended to help is also less than clear. Of paramount importance in this was how big the operation was, for the key determinant of the size of "benefit payment" that would be paid was production, not need. The largest producers received the largest payments. One of the huge farms that spread across thousands of acres that had emerged since World War I could take out of production many more acres than could the small farm nearby that had four hundred or six hundred acres, and so the large operation would receive substantially greater "benefit payments." On top of that, since the large operation had greater resources to fall back on, and since the reduction in production would result in substantial savings in labor and other costs (taking land out of production also meant laying off farm workers or evicting farm tenants), the gain was multiplied. On the other hand, the small farmer with only a small herd of cattle or sheep and no or minimal labor expenses since the family carried the burden of labor, that farm or ranch could make very little money by selling some, or all, of its livestock to the government at eight or ten dollars a head and had nowhere to cut expenses. The result of this set of priorities and formulas was to actually increase the consolidation of farms, to reward and encourage the largest farms and ranches, and to increase the pressure on the smallest operators, already combating Depression and drought.

The Wyoming Stock Growers Association had concerns about the herd reduction program in the

---

[782] A. W. Willis, "Wheat: Price Steady to Lower: Buying Power Lower," in Wyoming Agricultural Extension Service, Circular No. 57 (January 1935): 26-27.
[783] A. F. Vass, "The Beef Cattle Outlook for 1935," 8; A. W. Willis, "Dairy," 14; A. F. Vass, "The Sheep and Wool Outlook," 15; A. W. Willis, "Wheat: Price Steady to Lower: Buying Power Lower," 27. These separate treatments are combined in the special issue of the Wyoming Agricultural Extension Service, Circular No. 57 (January 1935).

Drought Relief effort, even though former WSGA president Elmer Brock and others had been calling for herd reductions for some time. And the WSGA especially was concerned about the contract that owners had to sign when they sold their cattle to the government. When they sold their cattle, the contract had a provision attached to it in which the producer agreed "to cooperate with further general programs pertaining to the adjustment or reduction of production and / or for the support and balance of the market for cattle and / or dairy products which may be proffered by the Secretary, pursuant to the Agricultural Adjustment Act." This, and related provisions requiring the future cooperation of the cattle producers, aroused the ire of the ranchers.[784] The WSGA, however, not only cooperated with the government in the herd reduction, but, as one state newspaper reported, "The Wyoming Stock Growers Association asked the federal government to buy 7,000 head of cattle a day to be slaughtered."[785] In late November 1934, when 271,870 Wyoming cattle had been purchased by the government, the WSGA asked the government, because of the remaining cattle on the range facing winter, "to purchase an additional quota of 64,000 Wyoming cattle."[786] Despite initial misgivings, herd reduction seemed to work well from the perspective of the large operators in the WSGA.

Other people had different experiences. In Gladys Hill's oral history of her family—the Graves family—near Douglas in the 1920s and 1930s, she recalled that since they had their own homestead, since they produced for themselves, rather than for the market, they withstood the economic pressures that beset their neighbors. It was the drought finally, that did them in, as they were unable to grow their crops and feed their fourteen or fifteen cattle, including the five milch cows. But the government came to help them, just as the government came to help the ranchers with their large herds. In this case, though, the results were different. "Sadly, we had to have our cattle killed because you couldn't sell them. The government bought 'em for thirty dollars, something like that, and killed them. And buried them, I guess, someplace." "We were not able to keep our . . . my father had to sell off the cattle because there was not enough forage for them to graze and the crops didn't grow. And so, yes, we were poor." The Graves family moved to Douglas: "Mom went to work in a sewing center sponsored by [the] government to help out and Dad worked on WPA projects."[787]

Although the AAA and the Drought Relief Program theoretically addressed the problems of farmers and ranchers all over Wyoming, some of the New Deal programs were focused and implemented in distinctly different parts of the state. In a curious way, the New Deal approach to agriculture seemed to divide the state into the western part and the eastern part. The programs that most directly affected the western part had to do with the extensive public land, especially the range, on which cattle ranchers and sheep growers grazed their livestock. The programs of most importance in the eastern part of the state,

---

[784] Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*, 142-142.
[785] This is from an undated 1934 news story from the Sheridan *Press* transcribed by Ida McPherren, in WPA Collections, subject file 405.
[786] Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*, 142.
[787] Oral History Interview with Gladys Hill, October 29, 1999, 89-90, 112, and unpaged appendix; interview conducted by Mark Junge. This interview is in the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

however, focused on the homesteads and farms, and also the erosion on those farms that were in private hands.

At the same time that the Department of Agriculture was implementing its Drought Relief Program and bringing the Agricultural Adjustment Administration to full operation, the Department of the Interior addressed similar issues of direct interest to farmers and ranchers in Wyoming, these issues focusing on the use, and misuse, of the public domain. Vast areas in the West, and in Wyoming, had long been owned by the federal government. Some parts had been placed in private hands through homesteading, and some had otherwise been separated out for administration by other agencies (such as the national forests in the Department of Agriculture and projects under the Bureau of Reclamation in the Department of the Interior), but there were still huge swaths of land in some areas, and parcels elsewhere, that remained under the supervision of the General Land Office in the Interior Department. Without a set of policies and priorities for the administration of that land, however, for many years the land was simply used by whoever got to it first and most powerfully, regardless of the damage to the land and regardless of broader social considerations—much as had been the case in the days when cattle barons simply turned loose their cattle on the open range to go where they would, and to consume what they could. One consequence was a general depletion of the public domain.[788]

The New Deal brought into office an attitude toward the use of the public domain that sought to reverse course in the nation's land laws and to regulate and stabilize activity on the domain. The land laws themselves were to blame, the new administration argued, and in so doing echoed the refrain of ranchers over the years who had objected to homesteaders taking up land that they wanted to graze. In fact, the perspective of the new administration combined the livestock rancher's traditional opposition to homesteading with a modern inclination toward planning and regulation. The nation's land laws in history had been broadly and increasingly democratic in their premise and objectives in that they encouraged settlement of public lands among as many people as possible in relatively small holdings through laws allowing for the homesteading process. Those homesteading laws, at least ever since 1820, were progressively generous in their allowance for larger holdings, for shorter periods of residence, and for the way the land was used—ranching as well as farming, for example.

In 1934 the enactment of the Taylor Grazing Act abruptly halted that history. Discussion of the proposal had gone on for some time—by some calculations, for years in the broadest sense—but it was clear that something was going to be enacted in the new administration. The Wyoming Stock Growers Association had expressed its opposition to the federal regulation of the range, preferring instead that the federal government simply turn over the lands to the states for distribution to private hands. In truth, however, the ranchers and the wool growers found provisions to like in the measure, including especially the end of homesteading. Unclaimed land on the public domain was, as of the passage of this law, no longer available for homesteading except in Alaska and in projects that came under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Reclamation. In addition, the Secretary of the Interior was given

---

[788] See the discussion on this thorny issue in Phillip O. Foss, *Politics and Grass: The Administration of Grazing on the Public Domain* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), 8-38.

responsibility "to stop injury to the public grazing lands by preventing overgrazing and soil deterioration, to provide for their orderly use, improvement, and development, and to stabilize the livestock industry dependent upon the public range."[789]

The public domain in each of the western states was accordingly divided into official grazing districts, although those portions of the public domain where there was only a small amount, or scattered parcels, of the land remaining in the public domain were not so organized. In Wyoming, the eastern part of the state had been the most heavily settled, the most homesteaded, and the most privately owned, with the result that only small amounts of the public domain actually remained there, with Johnson County being high with nearly thirteen percent of the county in public land; the other counties had, by the mid-thirties, less than ten percent, and often less than five percent in public land; Sheridan County had only 1.59 percent in public land. On the other hand, in the western part of the state, generally from Carbon County and the Big Horn Basin west, where it was more sparsely populated and where farms and ranches were fewer and farther apart, the percentages were much greater. Sweetwater and Washakie counties each had over half of their lands as public domain and forty percent of Big Horn County was in that category. One fourth of Natrona County's land was in the public domain and Sublette, Lincoln, Fremont, and Carbon counties each had around a third of their land held by the Department of the Interior as public domain.[790] The eastern part of the state had no grazing districts. The western part had seven.

Although the WSGA and the Wyoming Wool Growers Association had both opposed the bill that became the Taylor Grazing Act, their fears were soon assuaged. In August after the bill was signed into law, as reported by the WSGA, U.S. Senator Robert Carey told a Casper meeting held to discuss the act that he was convinced Harold Ickes, the Secretary of the Interior, "intended to administer the act in fairness and justice to the users." Carey had opposed the measure and had wanted the federal government to grant the land to the states, so, as the WSGA further reported, "Senator Carey's remarks did a great deal to allay the misapprehension on the part of the stockgrowers who attended the conference."[791] F. R. Carpenter, the first Director of the Division of Grazing, made clear why the grazers had nothing to fear. In 1934 he articulated the structure of administration: "It is proposed to administrate the Taylor Act with a tiny personnel of Federal officials and a tremendous backing by the personnel of the stockmen as a class and their local advisory committees."[792] The stock growers themselves, through their committees, would be in charge of regulating the land that they grazed. In addition, the established stock growers in a district, the people who had been using the land in that district, were the people who would be given permits and who would be in charge of organizing the

---

[789] Kenneth B. Platt, "The Taylor Grazing Act in Operation," 1940, mimeographed document including outlines for presentations and articles supporting the law and its objectives, to be presented to public groups. WPA Collections, subject file 382. Although the document does not indicate, it appears to have been published by the Grazing Service, as the Division of Grazing became known in 1939.
[790] Wyoming State Planning Board, *A Survey of Public Domain in Wyoming* (Cheyenne: 1937), mimeographed publication available in University of Wyoming libraries and Wyoming State Archives.
[791] Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*, 144.
[792] Carpenter is quoted in Foss, *Politics and Grass*, 90.

local districts.[793] With minimal paid staff in the Division of Grazing, the authority exercised by the local "advisory boards" was substantial.

The way the new system worked could be seen in the Big Horn Basin. When Wyoming Grazing District No. 1, with its office in Worland, was officially established on March 23, 1935, this was the first grazing district in the United States, and it indicated the emerging pattern of administering the public lands. Two weeks earlier qualified applicants for grazing the range in that district (generally the Big Horn Basin) met and elected an advisory board from among their own number. Then the advisory committee met at Basin with the regional grazier from the Division of Grazing and determined the rules that would apply (such as who would be qualified to apply for permits), how many animal units per month (AUM) a specific range could prudently carry, and who would receive the permits for how many AUMs. This "advisory board" eliminated tramp livestock which had no base property—i.e., property on which it was assured of grazing in those months when it was not on the public domain—and also ruled out applications that had no priority of use of the range, that had not been using that range previously. It also determined that some growers had applied for more AUMs than they possessed; the board, in addition, reduced the number of months that livestock could be grazed. Then they issued permits to keep grazing within the limits they established. In this instance, because of the appearance of a possible conflict of interest in which the established users divvied up the range among themselves to the exclusion of others, their own applications (and qualifications) were investigated by the Division of Grazing: "The applications of the Advisory Board members were always acted upon in light of the information shown by the reports of these investigations."[794]

If there was any tension or conflict in this process at the district based in Worland, that was not reflected in the Division of Grazing files. There was tension at other places, however, and it was reported in the press. In southwest Wyoming, the formation of a new district in 1935 exposed long standing issues that had been sometimes just under the surface and sometimes vigorously contested. In November 1935 the Kemmerer *Gazette* reported, "the stockmen of the Ham's Fork, La Barge and Fontenelle sections as well as upper Green River," were complaining about the formation of the district under the Taylor Grazing Act:

> One of the reasons much comment is made by stock growers of the districts is the fact that little publicity has attended these meetings. The Sweetwater Grazing Association and the Lincoln County Wool Growers, are the ones most interested and these two organizations are more or less correlated because the membership is intermingled. For this reason, stockmen to the north of Kemmerer believe the large outfits represented by these two organizations will see that the newly created grazing districts yet remain in

[793] Foss, *Politics and Grass*, 82.
[794] Florence Wardell, "Grazing," a typescript manuscript that was prepared from records in the Worland office of the Division of Grazing, probably in 1939 or 1940 since it makes reference to the Grazing Service, as the Division of Grazing became known in 1939. This typescript is in the WPA Collections, subject file 1216. Ms. Wardell was from Byron.

> their favor, such as the 20-mile strips on both sides of U.P., the checkerboard section and the triangle district. In other words these ranchers to the north, two-thirds of whom are cattle raisers, will be unable to better themselves as to grazing territory, expansion being impossible. Those individuals who have spoken their beliefs, think the complexion of grazing in western Wyoming will be little changed, except to open new territory.[795]

Exactly how the process for administering the grazing districts through locally empowered advisory boards turned out is far from clear on a statewide basis given the subtlety of the issues and the variety of the districts and their composition. In addition, the process was ongoing, not one that came to a stop at any given moment. The general pattern, however, likely is similar to that in Wyoming District 4. In that case, the general configuration of the district advisory board seems to have remained fairly constant and in the late 1950s Wesley Calef observed that the Rock Springs Grazing Association was in a "strong position with respect to its Taylor grazing lease." In that district, Calef noted, "The president of the association is also president of the Grazing Advisory Board of Wyoming District 4. Four of the six sheep ranchers' representatives on the local advisory board are also shareholders in the association."[796] This was not altogether a government take-over of private prerogatives and more nearly was a situation in which the most powerful and prominent bodies—the producer groups organized earlier—exercised power both on their own and in their newly acquired governmental authority.[797]

About five years after the public domain was regulated under the Taylor Act, a small number of stock growers in southwest Wyoming—especially around Kemmerer—were asked to assess the impact and operation of the new system. These people were asked what they thought of the Taylor Act itself and also asked who benefited most from the administration of the public domain under that law. How

---

[795] This is from a transcription of a series of newspaper articles from the Kemmerer *Gazette* dated November 1935, although the day date is missing in the transcription. The documents can be found in the WPA Collections, subject file 408. See also the report by Mike Mackey that the Rock Springs Cattlemen's Association, through their attorney, R. L. Denise, "accused the Department of the Interior of favoring the large sheep operations," in 1937. Mike Mackey, "Wyoming Stock Growers and the Taylor Grazing Act," *Journal of the West*, XXXV (July 1996): 22.

[796] Wesley Calef, *Private Grazing and Public Lands: Studies of the Local Management of the Taylor Grazing Act* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 206.

[797] Consider the example Calef uses in discussing an alternate method of managing grazing lands in the district. Although in some instances specific allotments were assigned, the RSGA had declined to divide its public land lease into individual allotments. Calef contemplated the possibility of a government district manager concluding "that it was necessary and desirable to subdivide the lease into allotments; even persons biased against the idea will concede that it would have some merit in this case. Suppose he were to approach the association with the idea, and the association board of directors decided against it. Could the district manager then go to the grazing district advisory board for independent judgment and support? Perhaps. But four members of the board including the board president would be the same persons he had talked with at the association meeting." Calef, *Private Grazing and Public Lands*, 211.

representative their responses were can only be guessed and one should avoid attaching too much weight to them. At the same time, however, there is a pattern to the perceptions, in light of the larger structural context, that can not lightly be dismissed.

Responses of Dominic Pousche, Diamondville, August 1, 1941:

> *I think the law itself is OK; it keeps the Range Hog in his place as far as the law is concerned. But through the administration preference is shown, take our meetings for instance. Through these meetings the little man is supposed to have as much say as the big man but he is never heard by the men administrating the act, [and] that's the reason I don't belong to any of the associations and I never attend any more meetings there's no use. I don't talk English very plain so they don't pay much attention to me when I do say something.*
>
> "*The big man always has preferance over the little user.*[798]

Responses of Mrs. Robert Krall, July 31, 1941, Diamondville:

> *Plenty wrong with the administration of the act. But I think the law is OK. The people administering the law are Easterners as a rule and they don't know the Westerner nor do they know anything about raising sheep and very little about the range and nothing about how to get along with Western people. My idea is we have plenty of people right here in Wyo who should be holding these jobs.*
>
> *I would say the big man benefits most. . . . . The big man because he is in a position to use prestiage and influence with the administration of the act. Why the other day I saw a big man trail his sheep right through private owned property. Priority rights has also been a disadvantage to the little man; it retards his chances for advancement in the stock business. No one can run less than 500 head of breeding stock and make a success out of the sheep business due to overhead. 500 head of Breeding stock can be handled with but little more help for equipment and labor than 250 or 300 head. I think the law should be changed so the little man can run more stock.*

Interview of Matt Bertagnolli, July 21, 1941, Diamondville:

> *The big man under the present administration. He is steadily crowding the little man off the public domaine. The expenses of raising sheep has increased to such an extent that it's almost impossible for the little man to stay in business. His income per sheep is so small its impossible to make it on a small flock of sheep.*

---

[798] "Taylor Grazing Act Interviews," handwritten and typed notes in WPA Collections, subject file 409. These interview notes are clearly faithful representations of the answers of the people queried, but they are problematic documents in their transcriptions since they were hurriedly written and without close attention to stylistic concerns. I have emended these excerpts only by silently altering their punctuation for clarity.

Responses of Theodore Duthie, July 18, 1941, Diamondville:

> *Some of the things I think may happen under the present set up are due to volume of the sheep business the big man can make it where the little man with a small volume of sheep can't begin to pay his expenses, because one can run several thousand sheep say 6 or 8 thousand for a very little more than one can run 3 or 4 thousand head this gives the big man an advantage over the little fellow under the act as it now stands the big man is slowly but surely gobbling up the little fellow forcing him out on account of overhead.*

Interview of John A. Reed, Kemmerer, July 14, 1941:

> *It would seem to me that the "little man" benefits most by the operation of the act because of his designated "free use," none of which the larger operator is privileged to enjoy. By "free use" I mean the designated area of public range without charge, for sheep, cattle and horses.*

The people grazing the public domain in that pocket of Wyoming near Kemmerer showed some diversity in their judgments, although there seemed to be a reasonable consistency on the view that different grazers were treated differently, with most thinking that the large grazers benefited more because of the economies of scale, because of priority of use, and because of their general influence that helped them get their way on the range.[799] Generally, however, it appears that the administration of the range that the government had in mind, an administration in which those growers who had been using the range, who could demonstrate their ownership of sufficient resources outside the public domain, and who were the most successful commercial operators continued to shape and control the use once it was regulated. To turn it around, there is every appearance that the Division of Grazing in the Department of the Interior, like the Agricultural Adjustment Administration in the Department of Agriculture, shared a common perception of the need to encourage large operators—on private land, on national forest land, and on the land that was often referred to as Taylor Grazing Land or just the public land. One rancher in the Sybille country took the long view of the process of change and summed it up thus in the late 1930s:

> History only repeats itself. In the old days it was the big outfits or companies against the individual settlers. Today the same thing is repeated, the big outfits and the companies hold the upper hand over the smaller ranchers in the Taylor Grazing Act. The law takes the precedence of course; but like a mole working beneath the ground little annoying, underhand methods can wear down a man's courage and resistance until from sheer discouragement he lays down the gauntlet and accepts the inevitable—submission to the

[799] With a slightly different emphasis, Mike Mackey observes that "By 1938, Wyoming's ranchers for the most part had accepted the provisions, rules, and administration of the Taylor Grazing Act, although there were a few complaints by ranchers who believed they understood the carrying capacity of the land better than did the Grazing Commission." Mackey, "Wyoming Stock Growers and the Taylor Grazing Act," 23.

> demands of the more powerful because of money behind that power that talks louder than justice or fair dealing; or, else![800]

There were ultimately a congeries of diverse programs and agencies in the Roosevelt administration with the common goal of assisting and restructuring crop and livestock production. A multitude of new agencies joined the fold and some agencies were dropped, some were revised, and some became larger and permanent. The Agricultural Adjustment Act was declared unconstitutional in 1936 by the Supreme Court, although the Agricultural Adjustment Administration continued on for a while in a different form without the system of taxing processors—the offending provision. Later, its functions were taken over by other agencies, especially by the Soil Conservation Service. And the government offered credit and loans to help farmers and ranchers. While the credit was much needed, and much appreciated, it had its limits. The administrator of the program in Gillette in 1935, according to the local news reports, reminded hopeful recipients of the loans, "the idea is to take care of a few clients well, rather than try to get out unsound plans for a large number of people and [he] asserted that the work would be slow."[801]

And the county agent there dampened some of the enthusiasm surrounding the loan programs; farmers would not be eligible for loans if they could borrow money from any other source including from "an individual, production credit association, bank, or other concern." If they were eligible, they had to have collateral, and "the security for an emergency crop loan will consist of a first lien on the crop financed. Landlord[s] or others having an interest in the crop to be financed will be required to waive their claims in favor of a lien to the Governor of the Farm Credit Administration until the emergency crop loan is repaid." In an ironic way, this was the crop-lien system of the plantation South applied to rural relief efforts in Wyoming. Even then, the loans were limited "and in no instance may exceed $200 to one farmer."[802] It is not known how many people were able to keep their farms and ranches because of this assistance.

Beyond the important and fundamental programs designed to reduce agricultural production and to regulate grazing on the public domain, the Roosevelt administration launched a series of efforts to restructure both agricultural operations and life on the farms and ranches, and to restore the land from what it saw as decades of deleterious practices and abuse. From the very beginning of the New Deal, the new administration embarked upon what would ultimately be termed range improvement programs but was often referred to as range conservation, and these projects were undertaken by a variety of agencies. As early as 1934 Emergency Relief Administration funds were used to drill wells and make small reservoirs to help combat the drought. The Works Progress Administration, created in 1935, is usually, and correctly, identified with construction projects and a whole array of buildings, roads, and utility projects around the state remain as monuments to the WPA. But the WPA also assisted in the countryside with drilling wells and building reservoirs for stock-watering (it had replaced the Federal Emergence Relief Administration). The state administrator of the WPA, Will G. Metz, made his own

---

[800] Maude Sommer, "Sybille Country, Part II," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1367.
[801] "Relief Farmers in County to Benefit," Gillette *News-Record*, October 31, 1935.
[802] "Farmers May Apply for Crop Loans Now," Gillette *News-Record*, March 25, 1936

preferences clear when he told a conference on the drought, "too much emphasis has been placed at this conference by other speakers on the plight of the small stockmen, whereas, to my personal knowledge, there are many hundreds of so-called 'big stockmen' who are equally, if not worse, affected by the drought, and for whom measures should be provided at once."[803] There were limits on what Metz and the WPA could do for agriculture, given the general nature of the projects within the WPA vision, but some of their projects spilled over from the cities onto farm and ranch precincts.

Other agencies participated too. A review of project reports submitted from Wyoming for the National Resources Committee, which attempted to coordinate work between the WPA and the PWA (Public Works Administration, an agency in the Department of the Interior that focused on only the largest of projects) and also the state and county governments, reveals the predictable public buildings, parks, dams, and other construction projects but also scattered projects like stock wells ("conditions from drought cause need for these wells"), small reservoirs ("these reservoirs are absolutely necessary to the growth of crops in this county to supplement the irrigation system, now in use, but wholly inadequate"), and an occasional irrigation system ("to save process of rehabilitation of 25,000 to 30,000 acres of land that could be very productive if supplied with irrigation"), and some of the projects bore this endorsement: "Recommended by Wyoming Stockgrowers Association and Wyoming Woolgrowers Association."[804]

The Division of Grazing launched its own program for improving the range, and while these projects seldom attracted much attention, the effort was comprehensive and focused. Naturally, part of the rehabilitation of the range involved just getting some of the livestock off it, and the issuing of permits for certain numbers of animals to restrict the usage to the carrying capacity of particular sections was one of the largest steps. But there was more. The federal government also set about improving the range, not just regulating its use. The projects generally involved building trail and camping areas for herders and their sheep, but they also included more substantial construction. In 1939 one newspaper reported that the "Taylor Grazing Division" was planning to build a bridge over the Green River for the sheep to cross twice a year going to and from their winter and summer ranges. In addition, the account noted, "The bridge will be on a recognized trail now being developed." Other projects included constructing driveways, developing springs, and building truck trails.[805] In 1940 the Grazing Service (as the Division of Grazing had been renamed the previous year), in coordination with the Lincoln County wool growers, planned a new trail from Sage to the Wyoming National Forest, a project that reflected cooperation between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior; indeed, the Forest Service was doing exactly the same thing within the forests and trails for livestock were a prominent

---

[803] Spring, *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*, 154.
[804] Wyoming State Planning Board, "Public Works Program," undated mimeographed publication available in University of Wyoming libraries and Wyoming State Archives. An odd volume, the material gathered, including copies of individual project reports, seems to have been gathered by the National Resources Committee in Wyoming but published by the State Planning Board. By context, the date of preparation is probably 1936 or 1937.
[805] Undated newsclipping (1939) transcribed in WPA Collections, subject file 408.

feature on their lists of projects.[806]

The Division of Grazing initially had very few employees on the payroll and any range improvement activity the division undertook actually had to come from outside sources. The primary source was the Civilian Conservation Corps. This program, created soon after Franklin Roosevelt became president, was designed to provide work in conservation-oriented projects for unemployed young men. This was a popular program because it struck at the problem of unemployment and also attempted the healing of the earth, not to mention providing opportunities for urban youths to see (and contribute to) a part of the nation they otherwise would have missed, and the bulk of the pay for the young men was sent directly to their families, thus providing additional support for the needy in the cities. The institutional mechanics of the CCC were such that units, or camps, were assigned to other government agencies, such as the Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Division of Grazing, or the General Land Office. Then they became for all practical purposes employees of that agency to which they were attached. These camps were not permanent, and the enrollment period was six months, after which the camp might continue to work on projects for the same agency in the same location or might be moved. The six month enrollment allowed for considerable rotation among the people who signed up, and this meant that more people would be able to be employed, if for a shorter time.

Because of the integration of CCC units with other agencies, because of the absence of a central, unified CCC structure in which a simple roster of units can be organized, and because of the frequently changing locations and assignments of units, tracking CCC activity is a more complex task than with other agencies. In Wyoming, a good many CCC camps were assigned to the national parks, especially Yellowstone and Grand Teton, but there were others too. Some were attached to the Division of Grazing, some to the Bureau of Reclamation, some to the Forest Service, some operating even on private land (for example, as part of the Soil Conservation Service in the Department of Agriculture), and some assigned to state parks. The largest group of CCC units included those assigned to the Forest Service, with camps located from Esterbrook to Alpine, from Basin to Ryan Park, from Jenny Lake to Saratoga, and from Ranchester and Dayton to Cokeville. Bureau of Reclamation CCC camps were in the predictable irrigation sections like Corbett, Deaver, Riverton, and Powell, but also at Alcova and Guernsey and Veteran, and in the Eden Valley at Farson.

The CCC camps attached to the Division of Grazing (and then the Grazing Service) were located at Big Piney, Baggs, Worland, Split Rock, Green River, Rawlins, Kemmerer, Shoshone, Basin, Worland, and perhaps a few other places too. Exactly what these CCC units were doing varied from place to place and from season to season, but a report from Fremont County listed typical activities for the CCC in the Division of Grazing. That report ticked off a substantial agenda for the CCC, which, it said, was responsible for

- Increased water development to permit more even distribution of livestock on the range.

[806] See, for example, the transcriptions of newsclippings in WPA Collections, subject file 408.

- Eradication of rodents to reduce their consumption of the feed resources.
- Drift fences to permit more effective range management.
- Trails to make the present unaccessable feed supplies available for use.
- Small sample lots rodent proof, to indicate the rate of restoration obtainable by natural processes and the character of the natural vegetation.
- Erosion control, "eradication of poison plants, plus limitation of livestock population to accord with the feed resources actually available, as well as to proper seasons of use will comprise the initial activities toward restoration of normal range condition."[807]

To this list could have been added forest fire fighting and other emergency duties not in their ordinary job description. And projects like "increased water development" included everything from improving and stabilizing springs and wells to building dams to putting rip-rap on embankments. From 1934 or 1935 until 1943 the young men in the CCC camps worked to improve the range administered by the Division of Grazing. There are two key points in this: (1) As the Fremont County report indicated, "Emergency Conservation work program of the Division [is] carried on by the CCC." Or, as Philip Foss observed nation-wide in his history of the administration of the Taylor Grazing Act, "Very likely most of the range improvements constructed since the inception of the act were accomplished by the C.C.C."[808] (2) The range improvement work of the CCC was widespread, was systematic, and was thorough, but it was also focused on a very practical, commercial goal: increase the productivity of the range for livestock.

This perception of conservation in terms of sustained yield and practical production, as opposed to preservation of nature, was an important element in the Franklin Roosevelt administration just as it had been in the Theodore Roosevelt approach. Kenneth B. Platt, of the Grazing Service put this work into perspective in his discussion of the organization, aims and methods of the service: "Everyone concerned looks forward to the time when the range will take care of increased, not decreased, numbers of livestock. That is the ultimate aim of the Grazing Service, just as it is the hope of every stockman."[809]

Thus went the rehabilitation of the range. In the western part of the state, that rehabilitation of the range generally involved reducing the numbers of cattle and sheep grazing it to manageable proportions using the AAA and the Taylor Grazing Act. Over much of the state, another push for rehabilitation involved a variety of agencies (Forest Service, Division of Grazing, CCC) in the administration of lands for which they were responsible, developing range improvement programs and work projects to facilitate and manage grazing over a period of years. A third effort, though, was perhaps the most delicate: to reduce

---

[807] Cora Marcy, "Agricultural Facts," WPA Collections, subject file 375. this fact sheet both summarizes CCC activities and quotes from an unidentified report of the CCC or Division of Grazing on those activities. For the history of one CCC camp in Wyoming, see Ann Noble, "Civilian Conservation Corps," http://www.sublette.com/history/ccc/#photos

[808] Foss, *Politics and Grass*, 82.

[809] Kenneth B. Platt, "The Taylor Grazing Act in Operation, Article 11."

the human habitation on the land, and even to remove some of the people who lived there, even people who had homesteaded in high hopes and good faith. This was especially important in the eastern part of the state. The critical perception here was that just as the range had been overgrazed by cattle and sheep, so also had parts of the public domain been farmed to the point of destruction. Defining farming as a commercial enterprise that had to turn a profit to be successful, government and business agreed increasingly that much of this land on the Great Plains, including in Wyoming, was just no good for farming. They also concluded that farming had ruined it, destroyed its nutrients, and left it vulnerable to erosion. The only hope was to remove the people who farmed large swaths of the land and restore it to its proper use—pasture lands for grazing.

This reasoning sounds perfectly obvious to many people from the perspective of the twenty-first century, and even makes those who did not grasp its truth earlier seem naïve or stupid. But it is important to remember that this represented a complete revolution in thinking, in assumptions, and in values. It is an oversimplification to say that the belief that "rain follows the plow" was suddenly replaced with "deserts follow the plow," although that line of thinking emerged almost triumphant in the 1930s. The Roosevelt administration even produced a motion-picture documentary that still stands as iconic, "The Plow that Broke the Plains," ("broke" having more than one meaning) in which the sodbuster pioneer became not the hero of American democracy but a chief culprit in the sequence of events leading up to the dust storms. Pare Lorentz's famous film made no distinction between the modest homesteader with a team of horses and a plow on a small self-sufficient unit and the large corporate enterprises with their rows of tractors churning the fields into clouds of dust. Especially since Lorentz also saw technology as the salvation of agriculture and thereby blurred the truth that he hoped to present, the sodbuster bore that much more of the brunt for the ills facing the nation.[810] Homesteading, once a national virtue, was now, at the very least, subject to question.

This approach to the problems of the plains also revealed a different set of values regarding farming. For many people who took up homesteads, the object was not to get rich, but to have a piece of land on which they could get by, with which they could be independent and free of the external compulsions and forces that moved other people from place to place, from job to job, from rental to rental, ever fleeing one temporary refuge in search of another because of their dependence on others for survival and prosperity. Farming had stressed an organic connection to the earth with roots as firmly embedded in the notion of freehold democracy as in the tilth of the earth. But these homesteaders had it wrong, according to the new approach. Farming was not a way of life, the experts at the agricultural colleges taught. It was a business. And farmers needed to think of themselves as businesspeople. They needed to keep records like other businesses, so the Agricultural Extension Service distributed account books

[810] Historian Donald Worster has a different perspective that traces the origin of the Dust Bowl to an impulse characteristic of *both* Jeffersonian democracy and twentieth century capitalist agriculture: "both were expressions of the same self-minded, individualistic dynamism that ignored complex ecological realities." Thus the failure of Pare Lorentz's film, to Worster, was the fact that it "did not begin to deal with the cultural sources of autonomy and aggression that lay behind the dust storms." Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 96.

for the farmers to use and so did the farm implement manufacturers.[811] This message had been sung as a familiar refrain to the farmers since at the least the 1910s in Wyoming, and often with a lament that the people on the farms still don't get it.[812] Still, the homesteaders, the irrigation farmers, the dry-land farmers, the small rancher or family with a small flock of sheep, continued on, clinging to the land as if their identity depended on it, oblivious to the larger economic opportunities and circumstances and their role in the economy as businesspeople. These people may even have been in the majority of farmers and ranchers. One intriguing study of Goshen County (and only Goshen County) produced by the Resettlement Administration noted this explicitly: "In the dry-land farming areas of southern Goshen County, the majority of the farmers keep enough cows, hogs, and poultry to supply the family needs, but comparatively few produce livestock or livestock products on a large commercial scale." Moreover, in the irrigated sections of the county, the farmers, of course, raised mainly crops, "but practically all farmers keep enough livestock to supply the family needs and provide some surplus to sell."[813]

The problem was not that the farmer could not make ends meet; obviously farmers could, and did, and *that* was the problem according to those who wanted them to shift to commercial, business-like operations.[814] If they kept books like any other business they would realize that they were not making a

---

[811] Some of the more useful examples include "Profitable Systems of Farm and Ranch Organizations for Certain Areas in Wyoming," Wyoming Agricultural Extension Service Circular No. 60 (June 1935) and A. F. Vass, *Account Book for Poultry Production and Costs* ([Laramie]: 1936).

[812] Richard S. Kirkendall, "The Agricultural Colleges: Between Tradition and Modernization," *Agricultural History*, 60 (Spring 1986): 3-21; William L. Hewitt, "Education for Agribusiness: Public Agricultural Education in Wyoming before World War I," *Midwest Review*, 9 (1987): 30-45.

[813] Resettlement Administration, "Research Bulletin: Natural and Economic Factors Affecting Rural Rehabilitation in Southeastern Wyoming (as typified by Goshen County):" [1937] 10. This important document has an unusual provenance, having been created *by* the Resettlement Administration as a part of a survey of thirteen sample counties in the Great Plains but was produced *for* the Rural Section, Division of Social Research of the Works Progress Administration. As a result, the thirteen studies do not appear in inventories of documents for either agency. Moreover, because the counties are scattered over multiple states, with only one county in Wyoming, they are not to be found in the usual state archival collections. A two volume set of the thirteen county surveys, however, can be located in the research collections of the New York Public Library. Even there, however, the collection is cataloged in part, erroneously, as a report of the Reclamation Service.

[814] See in this regard a column in the *Wyoming Farm Bulletin* as early as 1912 lamenting that farmers who were not businesslike in their operations actually managed to continue operating, even though their records would show them operating at a loss, "for generations": "Farming differs in one particular essential from any other business, in that a farm may give a living to a man and his family and at the same time be operated at a continual loss. This may go on for generations, and that without mortgaging the farm. In figuring profits the merchant subtracts from the gross profits depreciation upon equipment and stock, rent upon buildings, providing he owns them, and interest upon money invested in his business. If his own labors are given to the business, he figures a salary for himself. How many farms are there in the country that will give a profit after figuring as does the business man? It is quite the

profit, but since they did not keep those ledgers, they just continued farming. If only they would keep records, (a) they would become more profit-oriented and more efficient in the operation of their farms and ranches; and (b) the business-like behavior would replace the romance of farming and ranching. If, on the other hand, those records showed that they were not actually making a profit, which was doubtless true of most of them, they would be able to get out of the business and pursue some other calling in town. But fundamentally, they would not realize these truths unless they viewed their life on the farm as just another business—like the merchant in town. The farmer, it seemed, was not sufficiently business-oriented and profit-motivated to organize the farm as a business investment. Of course, once the farm operation was thus organized, however, and once the farmer began to calculate each of the factors of production and consider the money invested in the operation each year, often it turned out that that money could have been invested otherwise and earned more. In the midst of Depression and drought, the bottom line was all the more likely to be in the red.

As if the perception that farming was a business and not a way of life were not enough to doom those out on the homestead, another set of circumstances seemed to clinch the argument that more of them should leave and go to town. In the view of some, farming had even destroyed the earth; where there had once been fields of grain, now there were gullies and washes of exposed dirt and clay and sand, the topsoil removed by wind and downpours. In the 1930s, the official view was that the areas of the state where that erosion had taken place were extensive and included the area with most farms: "The farm land areas in Wyoming which are considered problem areas are chiefly centered in the eastern half of Wyoming. These areas include portions of Campbell, Weston, Niobrara, Converse, Goshen, Platte and Johnson counties. In most of these areas erosion is prevalent."[815] This took in a substantial part of the state geographically and even more in terms of the number of farms and people located there.

The solution increasingly was to "retire" the land that, in the views of the policy makers, should never have been farmed in the first place. The first step in this course of treatment was to stop people from taking up homesteads on the public domain. This was achieved with one swift stroke—the Taylor Grazing Act's withdrawal of almost all public land from homesteading. The next step was more difficult. In 1935 the State of Wyoming created a State Planning Board to gather information and guide the state in establishing priorities for the coming years, especially in its coordination with the federal government's various programs.

As with the discussion over whether the drought was the problem in the livestock industry, or whether it was something deeper, like overgrazing, a similar debate emerged in farming. The Planning Board's

---

usual thing for a farmer to figure that he has made so much money during the past year. He does not figure in what his own labor would have cost if he had hired out to someone else, nor does he consider his wife's labor as being commercially valuable. "Profits from the Farm," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, I (March 1912): 122.

[815] State Planning Board, Wyoming, *Land Utilization: Preliminary Studies (Revised),* February 1936, mimeographed document widely available including copies at Wyoming State Archives and Coe Library, University of Wyoming, 16.

consultants viewed the problem as caused by a defective set of laws: According to the Planning Board, "in some of these areas, conditions are due to very small farms rather than to natural disadvantages."[816] The solution followed naturally: "modification of ranch setups," a process that included the following fundamental measures:

1. Elimination of crop farming except in good areas.
2. Assistance to farmers in order that they can find more favorable locations.
3. Increase of land holdings of stockmen who are now trying to make livelihoods on areas which are too small.
4. Regrouping of population.
5. Prevention of resettlement by direct methods and by zoning regulations.
6. Consolidation of tax delinquent land.
7. Sound program for private and public land.
8. Revision of institutional organization.[817]

The fundamental recommendation of this analysis was to protect soil from wastage when possible, but the other soils "should be withdrawn from cultivation and rededicated to permanent vegetative cover, such as pasture or forests. . . . Correct farming methods should be practiced. The land owners who do not wish to remain in these problem areas should be given an opportunity relocate upon productive farms. The stable farmers in these regions could then be assisted and their holdings increased to allow the introduction of pasture and to prevent the serious wind erosion occurring in many places in the problem areas."[818] When this view in Wyoming government converged with a national apparatus with the same objectives, the future was set. If the homesteaders and owners of small farms and ranches were already in trouble, an even more devastating wind was beginning to blow them from the land.

The creation of the Resettlement Administration in May 1935 sprang from a sincere and compassionate impulse to help people on the farm who had been left out of the benefits reaped by the rest of society when times were good and who had been injured that much more when times were bad, and specifically those who had been left out by the government's own programs that had been biased in favor of helping the biggest operators. Drawing upon existing appropriations under the 1935 Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, President Roosevelt created the Resettlement Administration with an executive order and named his close advisor, Rexford Tugwell, at that time Under Secretary of Agriculture and whose brainchild the Resettlement Administration was, also to serve as its director.[819]

---

[816] State Planning Board, Wyoming, *Land Utilization: Preliminary Studies (Revised),* 13.
[817] State Planning Board, Wyoming, *Land Utilization: Preliminary Studies*, 13-14.
[818] State Planning Board, Wyoming, *Land Utilization: Preliminary Studies*, 16-17.
[819] The text of this executive order, unusual in the brevity of its text and the breadth of its scope, can be found at John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project [online]. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California (hosted), Gerhard Peters (database). Available on World Wide Web at http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid =15048.

In his plans for the industrialization of agriculture, Rexford Tugwell had foreseen the major social adjustments involved but he was chagrined at some of the results that actually were taking place. While he accepted and encouraged the consolidation of the small farms and ranches into larger operations, he was dismayed at what he perceived to be the domination of the AAA and the new system of agriculture by big farmers and by the Farm Bureau, their voice. In addition, Tugwell was deeply distressed over the continuing neglect of the rural poor. So he sketched out the idea of the Resettlement Administration and the president accepted it. The mission of the Resettlement Administration was to provide assistance to the impoverished farmers by removing them from their farms and ranches and resettling them elsewhere. In New Jersey, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Maryland, new, planned communities were created on which the destitute were relocated in an experiment that was probably one of the boldest and most visionary projects of the New Deal. But it operated on a more modest scale elsewhere, including in Wyoming. As early as 1933 the AAA had occasionally purchased tracts of land from farmers and this practice appears to have increased the following year.[820] In the summer of 1935 the Resettlement Administration had quickly organized its program in Wyoming, focusing on the eastern counties where erosion was especially endemic. Within a few months it had formulated its major goals and brought its focus to bear on the Thunder Basin area of Converse, Campbell, Niobrara, and Weston counties and had secured options to purchase land in those counties. This plan proposed to provide "relief of a permanent nature" for people situated on "unproductive land," and on "land beaten by dust storms, drouth and cultivation abuse," by purchasing the land from its owners and reseeding it with native grasses so that it could be used for grazing.[821]

The Resettlement Administration thereby undertook a major project of relocating people and rehabilitating the land. The necessary work, after buying out the residents, included "restoration of land that should never have been plowed, by reseeding with native grass," and "conservation and better usage, stabilization of grass resources through water development and controlled grazing practices." The RA regional director in Denver, E. A. Starch, waxed grandly about the opportunity for range improvement in the area and presented the plan: "Considerable run-off water will be stored in stock reservoirs. Additional livestock water will be developed by the opening-up of seep springs and piping water thus collected in stock tanks or small earth reservoirs. In a few instances, additional water will be obtained by drilling wells in strategic places." All of this was essentially what the Resettlement Administration and the Department of Agriculture were already doing. What was new, though, was the removal of the people who had been farming the land. The agency would "remove farm families from waste land and transfer them to more productive sites where they can maintain life on an economic

---

[820] Francis Moul and Georg Joutras, *The National Grasslands: A Guide to America's Undiscovered Treasures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 38. Agnes Wright Spring writes that the Resettlement Administration launched this process in November 1934, but the Resettlement Administration was not created until 1935; quite possibly the AAA purchases continued in 1934, and the project was taken over as part of the effort of the Resettlement Administration in 1935. Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wyoming, *Wyoming: A Guide to Its History, Highways, and People*, 40.

[821] "Thunder Basin Project OK'ed," Gillette *News-Record*, October 16, 1935.

basis." And the farm land those people would leave behind "will revert to grazing, with consequent conservation for vast areas now damaged by overgrazing, wind and water erosion."[822]

At its inception, William Fischer notes in his research on the area, 309 families (not 309 individuals) resided in the Thunder Basin area planned for restoration. In February 1936, payments began to those who had indicated a willingness to sell to the government, and by July 1940, 172 families had left. Fischer notes that the schools in the community had been pronounced "far from desirable," and they too were removed.[823] Once again the U.S. government became the owner of this land.[824] The Campbell County Rehabilitation Committee, which advised the county agent in the process, saw the benefits of the program and, as Fischer quotes the committee, endorsed the idea that the residents "be allowed to trade their land to the government for irrigated tracts." County livestock operators in particular worked to see the project realized, including Ernest P. Spaeth who was also chair of the Rehabilitation Committee and Thomas A. Nicholas who saw this project as important in "stabilizing the livestock industry." The only nervousness on the part of the ranchers stemmed from their fear that "outside livestock owners will be able to take advantage of government purchased lands to unfairly compete with us."[825]

The range improvement work proceeded in the Thunder Basin project with dams being built, seeps and springs improved, and other alterations. And land was purchased—lots of land. The Land Utilization Project, as it was officially termed, ultimately took in nearly two and a half million acres. Agnes Wright Spring described the area as consisting "primarily of three types: small, dry-land farms, unsuited for cultivation and too small to produce a satisfactory living, owned by families who wished to find other locations; abandoned homesteads over which no satisfactory management could be exercised without Government purchase; and selected tracts located at strategic points through the project area on which water facilities could be developed for the improvement of the range."[826]

The critical point came when people were moved off the land they had been farming, and this was truly

---

[822] "Work Program Outlined Will Employ Many," Gillette *News-Record*, November 8, 1935.
[823] William P. Fischer, "Homesteading the Thunder Basin: Teckla, Wyoming, 1917-1938," *Annals of Wyoming*, 71 (Spring 1999): 31-32.
[824] I want to note once again, in hopes of directing researchers to them, the records for the government's purchase of these properties from the homesteaders. Those materials represent an exceptional body of information including transfer papers, land use and condition documents, itemization of improvements on the land, and income, assets, and financial records of the landholders who sold. The lands were acquired and managed by the Resettlement Administration, then the Soil Conservation Service, and then were transferred to the Forest Service in the 1960s and are part of Thunder Basin National Grassland. The documents are located at Douglas Ranger District of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests in Douglas, Wyoming. I am grateful to Judy Wolf and Ian Ritchie who have explored this vast source for this information.
[825] Fischer, "Homesteading the Thunder Basin," 32.
[826] Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wyoming, *Wyoming: A Guide to Its History, Highways, and People*, 40.

the ultimate decision. The pivotal issue of staying or leaving was profound, but the criteria may have been subtle, and there is scant evidence about how decisions were made regarding who could stay on the land and who needed to move. In this regard, the only clear threshold, or at least as clear as anything in those tangled processes, was that of who qualified for loans from the Resettlement Administration. Larry Krysl, in his master's thesis examining the Depression in Wyoming, observes that the RA loans were made to qualifying families "in order to build up their holdings to a profit-making level, thereby preventing abandonment of their farms." Drawing upon records from the Resettlement Administration, Krysl notes that the RA officials examined the farms and got out their ledgers to chart their income and expenses. The new system of bookkeeping that farmers had been encouraged to use was now part of the calculus in determining who stayed on the land: "The size and use of individual loans granted by the RRA [Rural Resettlement Administration] were determined by a farm and home management plan. These plans took into consideration all possible sources of income and all possible expenditures of the farm family, and, in order for the farm to have been truly rehabilitated, these two had to balance."[827] The 1937 Resettlement Administration study of Goshen County put it slightly differently. In that study, the report measured the farms and ranches in Goshen County by their ability to increase their operating capital, a concept as foreign as another language to many in the county.[828]

So those people who could not demonstrate in this system of ledgers and accounts that their farm was profitable in the strictest technical sense, those people were bought out and moved out. One homesteader in the Dry Creek area of Converse County described the situation: "Now on account of the great depression following the World War the larger numbers of pioneers are selling their claims to the Government for a very small price and quitting our part of Converse County. The land thus sold is being enclosed in immense pastures to be leased to stockmen."[829] Again, Agnes Wright Spring observed how the area was then turned over to local ranchers who grazed their cattle where formerly homesteads were dominant, and in so doing they emulated their fellow ranchers in the western part of the state; they "organized co-operative grazing associations, and proceeded to lease privately owned land, State land, and public domain in addition to tracts purchased in the land-use program."[830] What the ranchers had failed at in the Johnson County War and in subsequent efforts, they had finally achieved with the New Deal.

While it is clear that the New Deal was able to remove many people from the farms in the eastern part of the state, the fate of whose people who were moved off the land is less clear. "Resettlement," after all, was a central goal of the project and of the agency named for its grand promise. Those people whose

---

[827] Krysl, "The Effects of the Great Depression on the State of Wyoming, 1935-1940," 38.
[828] Resettlement Administration, "Research Bulletin: Natural and Economic Factors Affecting Rural Rehabilitation in Southeastern Wyoming (as typified by Goshen County)," 15-19.
[829] Mrs. Rhue M. Lynch, Mrs. C. B. Dickson, and Mrs. R. L. Featherston, the Committee for Historical Facts for the Dry Creek Community, "Notes on Pioneering in Dry Creek Community, Converse County," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1390.
[830] Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wyoming, *Wyoming: A Guide to Its History, Highways, and People*, 41.

farms were purchased, however, appear not to have been relocated on other lands that were more productive. When William Fischer examined the history of the Thunder Basin project he determined that "Wyoming's funding dwindled and the project ended with only the land purchases and subsequent reclamation work. Although several families were relocated, a large scale resettlement community for displaced farmers was never fully realized in Wyoming."[831] Programs in neighboring states were slightly more successful in this effort. Nebraska had eight resettlement farmstead locations and Montana had several where relocated residents were provided a new or refurbished house, various farm buildings, and about a hundred acres of land.[832] In Wyoming, however, there appear to have been some individual cases where people were located onto other lands, and there are even scattered, but opaque, references to a small Resettlement Administration project a few miles west of Lingle, but generally the government had greater success in moving people off the land than in helping them find new homes, especially helping them find new farms.

What is clear is that the families were not relocated to "government owned irrigated tracts" or any other government land and that most (145 of the 172 in Fischer's count) requested and received no assistance in relocation. (Nationally, about three-fourths of the people removed from their homes received no assistance and only about nine percent were resettled onto government land.[833]) When that last group was monitored by the project, "loosely" as William Fischer writes, most were found to be living "more or less on a 'shoe string basis.'"[834] The ability of farm families to relocate on their own depended on the usual range of factors, including how much they had in assets, what debts they had to settle, and how quickly they could find a farm better situated than the one they left (knowing also that their ability to secure a grazing allotment was nonexistent).

At the same time that the Resettlement Administration was mobilizing this project, the general goal of removing farms from the Great Plains became a central feature of policy in multiple agencies. In July 1936, President Roosevelt appointed a Great Plains Drought Area Committee to address the problems of the entire Great Plains, the committee to be chaired by Morris L. Cooke, the head of the Rural Electrification Administration. Other members included Henry Wallace, Rexford Tugwell, Hugh Bennett (head of the Soil Conservation Service), and others representing the Bureau of Reclamation, the WPA, and the National Resources Committee. The committee even embarked on a two-week tour of drought areas in the Great Plains, from Amarillo, Texas to Rapid City, South Dakota, and in August, as

---

[831] Fischer, "Homesteading the Thunder Basin," 31.
[832] Moul and Joutras, *The National Grasslands*, 39; Mary Murphy, *Hope in Hard Times: New Deal Photographs of Montana, 1936-1942* (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 2003), 66-67. Jonathan Raban provides a grand overstatement of the success of resettlement in the Powder River area of Montana in *Bad Land: An American Romance* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996), 318: "People who managed to hold out until 1937 were rescued by the New Deal, when Rexford Tugwell's Resettlement Administration offered them the chance to move, on easy terms, to small farms on irrigated land."
[833] Mary W. M. Hargreaves, *Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains: Years of Readjustment, 1920-1990* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 124.
[834] Fischer, "Homesteading the Thunder Basin," 33.

they neared the end of their journey, the committee met with local ranchers in Gillette and went to some of the outlying parts of Campbell County to inspect dams and wells that had been constructed with federal funds.

They returned to Washington and had their report ready by the end of August. That report placed blame for the "present situation" on the Great Plains not so much on the weather as on the historic agricultural practices there. The cause of it all, the committee argued, lay in the "attempt to impose upon the region a system of agriculture to which the Plains are not adapted to bring into a semi arid region methods which, on the whole, are suitable only for a humid region." Then the committee charted the future of agriculture in the Great Plains, including this area, and urged the president to follow a course that would include major changes:

> The region should be divided into sub-areas according to the types of use to which each portion of it may be best and most safely devoted; and, in addition, to determine the kinds of agricultural practice and engineering treatment required to fit each portion to its indicated use. Certain sub-marginal lands should be taken permanently out of commercial production. On arable farms such soil conserving practices as re-grassing, contour plowing, listing, terracing, strip cropping and the planting of shelter trees should be followed. Grasses of demonstrated fitness to local conditions should be developed and used.
>
> * * *
>
> The regional agriculture must rest on the development of holdings which will actually support a family in independence and comfort. Undoubtedly these holdings must be larger than those now prevailing in many parts of the Plains. They can be made more adequate in some instances by reclamation, in others by the combination of smaller units. State and county governments may expedite this process by making available to grazing and other cooperative agencies the chronically tax delinquent lands which it is not to be expected will again be cultivated by their nominal owners. Such lands may be developed under a work relief program during the period of transition which must follow the drought and the development of new land policies.[835]

The road to the future was clear. Grazing, not farming, was to be the use of the non-irrigated lands in the eastern part of the state. And this meant that the range improvement programs gained new strength and breadth; they were no longer restricted to national forests or to Taylor Grazing land, and the Department of Agriculture was even contracting with private ranch owners to undertake improvements on their own land. In November 1936, the newspaper in Douglas could report, "the range improvement

---

[835] The full text of the report, taken from the papers of Harry Hopkins at the Roosevelt Library, can be found online at http://newdeal.feri.org/hopkins/hop27.htm, and a discussion of the origins and evolution of the report can be located in Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, 192-197.

program started in this county in September has grown until there are 170 ranches signed up with approximately one and one-half million acres of range land listed for improvements, or about one-half of the entire area of the county." In that county about seventy-five reservoirs were being built, a hundred miles of fence were being "rebuilt," and "possibly 80 or 90 springs are being developed and considerable water spreading and contouring is being done."[836] In Campbell County, in November, County Extension Agent Floyd Dominy (who would later become head of the Bureau of Reclamation) announced that the Range Improvement Program was moving fast and widely as "Four hundred and seventy-eight applications covering a total of 1,750,000 acres of range land are now on file in the county office with additional applications being received daily."[837] In Niobrara County, the local extension agent reported 253 ranchers indicated that they were going to participate in the Range Improvement Program, representing about 650,000 acres, building fifty stock-watering reservoirs, about twenty wells, developing about fifty springs and seeps, and constructing about 120 miles of fence.[838] Each one of these projects had to start after September 9 and had to be completed by the end of the calendar year. The program paid "range operators" to undertake the following activities:

> Construction of earthen dams or reservoirs.
> Development of springs or seeps
> Drilling or digging of wells.
> Construction of contour furrows to hold back run-off and prevent erosion.
> Construction of dikes and ditches to spread water and prevent erosion.
> Re-seeding of depleted range land.
> The construction of range division fences.[839]

With an emphasis on regulating grazing on the public domain in the western part of the state and an emphasis on discouraging farming in the non-irrigated lands of the eastern part of the state, and a willingness to use the resources of any and every agency available to improve the range all over the state, the landscape of Wyoming's farms and ranches was being dramatically altered in the 1930s.

Agnes Wright Spring captured a little of this transformation when she wrote of the whole state in 1941:

> Since 1933 much work has been done by Civilian Conservation Corps forces and others engaged under relief programs, to improve forage conditions and to facilitate the management of livestock on the ranges. Areas only partially utilized heretofore, because of lack of water, have been made suitable for sheep and cattle by construction of livestock watering ponds and reservoirs. Range fences have been constructed to separate

---

[836] "Range Program is Under way in Converse Co.," Douglas *Budget*, November 19, 1936.
[837] "478 Campbell Farmers Apply in Range Plan," Gillette *News-Record*, November 6, 1936.
[838] "1936 Annual Narrative Report, Niobrara County, Wyoming, for Extension Work in Agriculture & Home Economics," J. Melvin Stephenson, County Extension Agent, p. 47. I thank Carl Hallberg once again for locating this county extension agent report in the Wyoming State Archives.
[839] "478 Campbell Farmers Apply in Range Plan," Gillette *News-Record*, November 6, 1936.

> range allotments and to reduce drift of cattle. Stock driveways, trails and bridges, corrals, and cattle guards that have been built will facilitate the use of approximately 5,000,000 acres of livestock ranges in the national forests in Wyoming.[840]

If Ms. Spring neglected the changes to farms in these years and focused only on the ranches, it was largely because others, including the government agencies, showed some of the same bias as they approached the problems of farms and ranches. But the expansion of grazing land and the improvement of the range were only some of the signs of the transformation underway. There were other forces at work reshaping the environment in which those ranches and farms operated.

iii. Factories in the Field

The fundamental forces reshaping Wyoming's farms and ranches transcended the Depression and included more than the drought. The course of change adopted by the government, for that matter, was neither brand new nor subversive. At its most basic, the farms, ranches, and homesteads of Wyoming were being brought into a modern form of social, political, and economic organization—and modern is used here in its most technical sense, in the sense of modernization. Wyoming's farms and ranches that survived the winds of social and natural calamity that blew during the 1930s emerged more specialized, larger, more centralized, more mechanized, more integrated into the market, and less and less of a locally self-sufficient, subsistence based agriculture. The homestead, which had expressed and nurtured other values, was not dead, but it was increasingly the exception, and its very existence went against the grain of the modern form of economic and agricultural organization.

Outward signs of the transformation of the landscape and social fabric were everywhere, and they were sometimes so subtle that they blended seamlessly into daily life and sometimes were so striking that they stood out like a beacon in the night. Indeed, in 1930, when daylight ended in Wyoming, the countryside was dark—very dark—unless the bright moon illuminated the landscape. Electrical lighting was a rarity and a combination of coal oil lamps, candles, and gasoline powered lanterns (Coleman style) provided most of the indoor lighting for homes and barns. Only a miniscule portion of the farms and ranches had electricity and indications are that most of these obtained their power not from the electrical grid, which was generally unavailable outside the cities with very few exceptions, but from home power plants. The 1930 census reported that 7.2% (1,145) of all farms in Wyoming had dwellings lighted by electricity. Of that number, however, only a minority, 454, paid a power company for electricity. Most got their electricity elsewhere. Looking at the power grid customers in the countryside, T. A. Larson reports that by 1935 still only 527 farms in the state had electricity from powerlines.[841] As much as the seasons

---

[840] Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wyoming, *Wyoming: A Guide to Its History, Highways, and People*, 104.

[841] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930; Agriculture*, Volume II, Part 3, *The Western States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932), 242; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United*

regulated activity on the farm and ranch, so too did night and day govern the kind of work being done and the time available for doing it. The night still was a primeval darkness and that darkness restricted some field work and forced other chores, like repair and sharpening, indoors where at least some light was available.

The pockets of electric light, here and there, as the census figures obliquely indicated, came from home power plants. Previous census returns also included people who illuminated their homes with gas, but that was no longer reported by 1930. The main alternative to the electric power grid was the use of a gasoline engine or windcharger for domestic electrical needs. These power plants were sometimes substantial. In the early 1920s, when the Powell high school acquired a new power plant, the school board sold its old plant to John and Cecilia Hendricks. The gasoline engine generator would run about two hours a week, store the electricity in batteries, and thus provide electricity using about a gallon of gasoline a week.[842]

In addition to the gasoline generators, it appears that a significant, though indeterminate, number used small wind generators—similar to the ubiquitous windmills—to create electricity that was then stored in batteries, from which the electric lights and small appliances operated. Although precise data on the use of wind chargers do not exist, historian Robert Righter has noted their presence in Wyoming in the period marked at the beginning by World War I and at the end by the expansion of the Rural Electrification Administration into the countryside, a time that ranged between the late 1930s and mid-1950s. "Numerous ranchers," Righter has found through oral history accounts, "simply desired to have enough electricity to operate a few 40-watt lights and a radio."[843] Naomi Meike, in southern Johnson County, was one of these. She recalled, "my husband and brother built us a windcharger so I had electricity probably longer than anybody else in this end of the county."[844]

Thus went the makeshift electrical devices in the countryside with different systems sometimes near to each other. For example, in Jackson Hole, the Chambers homestead on Mormon Row used a "Wincharger" (the proprietary name of a modestly priced windcharger), several ranches within a dozen miles had recycled automobile or tractor engines, or smaller gasoline generators, mounted on blocks in sheds feeding current to a series of six-volt batteries, and the Snake River Ranch even developed a canal with a headgate diverting water from the Snake River to operate first a waterwheel and later a

---

States: 1940; Agriculture, Volume 1, Part 6, *Statistics for Counties*, 204; Larson, *History of Wyoming*, 445.

[842] Cecilia Hendricks Wahl, compiler and editor, Cecilia Hennel Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill: A Woman's View of Homesteading, 1914-1931* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1986), September 8, 11, 1922, 385-386.

[843] Robert W. Righter, "The Wind at Work in Wyoming," *Annals of Wyoming*, 61 (Spring 1989): 35-36; see also, Righter, *Wind Energy in America: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

[844] Peter and Naomi Meike, interviewed by Patty Myers, September 29, 1983, Wyoming State Archives, OH-11447.

substantial water turbine.[845]

Those systems, however, and the independence and autonomy they sometimes signified, faded with the other development that finally lifted some of the shroud of darkness. The expansion of electric power lines was the chief obstacle to getting electricity in the countryside. The creation of the Rural Electrification Administration in 1935 brought into being an institution that did not extend power lines but provided loans to private companies, public agencies, or cooperatives to construct power lines. By the end of the 1930s, the countryside had not been lit, but inroads had been made. In 1940 3,474 farms and ranches received power from the grid, substantially more than a decade earlier, but still only twice as many as received it from their own power plants (1,710). Those electrified farms and ranches, of course, were not evenly distributed across the state. Many remained without electricity and others had their power plants. At the end of the decade one observer boasted of the advances on farms in Sheridan County:

> The ranch home on these ranches is generally built of logs and is western in design—low, rambling and with wide, long porches. It is built with a view to convenience and health, often standing on an elevation where the drainage runs away from the building instead of toward it. Water is piped into the house from a nearby stream or a well; electricity is furnished by means of some form of gasoline operated motor power and many of the homes have installed furnaces for heating purposes.[846]

In Sheridan County, it appears that the electric grid had not reached far into the countryside. At the same time, however, in the Big Horn Basin, and especially near the Shoshone River irrigation projects (and related power generating capacity) another observer remarked on the change of the previous several years that included the combination of rural electrification and paved roads:

> A drive by day on paved highways through the central valleys, reveals for the most part a continuous vista of irrigated farms, large and small, particularly the latter in the Government project around Powell. At night, to view these ranches with their rural electrification, is astounding.[847]

The trend for the future in this regard was, first, that more and more of the countryside would receive electricity via the extension of power lines and, second, that the independent power plants would decline when the grid came near. One side of this electrification of the countryside, which paused during World

---

[845] For that matter, the town of Jackson had its early power system provided by Ed Benson who constructed a diversion of Cache Creek to pass under his house and turn two water turbine generators in his basement. The town was not much different from the surrounding ranches and farms in its utility infrastructure.

[846] Ida McPherren, "Ranches of Sheridan Valley," 2, typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 394.

[847] Marvin B. Rhodes, "Date with Destiny: A Brief History of the Livestock Industry in the Big Horn Basin," 19-20, typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 393

War II and then resumed afterwards, reaching some parts of the state only in the 1950s, was the growing ability of rural Wyomingites to use electric lights and electrical appliances, a change that can not be overestimated either in terms of household convenience or farm work. (As important as providing light and radio in the house, the electricity also made it easier to milk after dark and for either a main or backup pump to provide well water to field and garden.) Another side, however, was that rural America was becoming increasingly integrated into the urban world that it served but from which, in some senses, it stood apart.

The transformation of the Wyoming countryside is often attributed to the Depression, first of all, which devastated the farms and ranches, and then to the New Deal, which redeemed or rescued them. That characterization, however, oversimplifies the processes at work. In fact, it was not just the Depression and the drought that wrought despair on Wyoming farms and ranches; it was also the years of economic growth. The Depression essentially hit its lowest point in 1933 and then began a slow—very slow—process of growth. The growth continued until 1937 when the government, pleased with the progress so far, shifted course and cut spending, unconvinced that it had been the massive spending that had stimulated purchasing power. When the economic indicators also abruptly reversed course as a result and the country went into a recession—*within the Depression*—spending on government programs was restored and the economic growth resumed. And while it is true that the economic growth between 1933 and 1941 was not sufficient to bring the country out of the Depression, it is also true that these were years when the economy was picking up, when spending was increasing, and when farm prices and farm incomes also increased.

The paradox is this: the number of farms and ranches in Wyoming actually increased in the most severe years of the Depression. Between 1930 and 1935 the number of farms in Wyoming increased from 16,011 to 17,487—an all time record number for Wyoming. But then the paradox continues and takes a twist: the number of farms and ranches in Wyoming seriously declined in the years of recovery. Between 1935 and 1940, as the economy improved, the number of farms in Wyoming dropped from 17,487 to 15,018, a number that is below the level of 1930 and even below what it had been in 1920. In the second half of the 1930s the number of farms increased only in four counties—in Park and Fremont, where new irrigation projects continued to attract settlers, in Sheridan, where hobby ranches and "ranchettes" were starting to catch on as Sheridan became a trendy tourist vacation area, and in Lincoln County where the many small farms of Star Valley, somewhat protected by relative isolation, appear to have offset declines in other parts of the county.

The other side of this decline in farms and ranches is the change in size of those that remained. Averages are sometimes misleading, given the ability of a few extreme cases to skew the picture, but over a number of years, with enough units in the tally, a general trend can often be seen. That is the case with the size of Wyoming's farms. In 1920, the average size of farms and ranches in the state was 749.9 acres. Ten years later, after enduring the agricultural depression of that decade, the average had climbed to 1469—almost doubling in those years of hard times. By 1935 the average farm had grown yet again, this time to 1610 acres, and five years later, in 1940, had grown still more to 1866 acres. During the challenges of the 1920s and the 1930s, the average farm size in Wyoming had grown, and grown some

more.[848]

Moreover, the farms and ranches were no longer operated by their owners as they had been in the past. There had been a time when the prevailing practice was that of an owner and family operating the farm on which they lived. Of the 16,011 farms in the state in 1930, 12,195 were operated by their owners. Ten years later, of the 15,018 farms, 11,125 were operated by their owners. In fact, the total number of owner-operated farms dropped below the 1930 level and below the 1920 level too; one has to go back to 1910 to find fewer owner-operated farms, and that year there were only 10,987 farms in the state. More and more of the farms were owned not by the family that lived on them and operated by them, but by someone else, somewhere else. The same pattern is evident with mortgages. In 1910 19.7 percent of the farms had been mortgaged. That percentage increased during the teens, especially during the war and postwar years, so that by 1920 41.1 percent were mortgaged. That climbed again during the twenties so that by 1930 53.2 percent were mortgaged. By 1940, 57.9 percent were mortgaged. To put together both of these factors—owner-operator and mortgage obligation—is to see that the once prevalent, independent, locally self-sufficient farm was being pushed aside by the bigger, outside-owner, market-oriented agribusiness operation. The Taylor Grazing Act may have ended the practice of homesteading in law, but the essentials of the practice were already under assault from every direction.

Farms and ranches were also more likely to be mechanized by 1940. In the 1930s, with the advent of smaller and more affordable tractors, and especially with tractors with rubber tires, tractors were catching on. They remained in the minority of farms and horse and mule power still predominated, but tractors were gaining hold. In 1930 3,749 of the 16,011 farms had at least one tractor, about twenty-three percent. In 1940, 5,601 of the state's 15,018 farms had tractors; the percentage had grown to thirty-seven. At a time when farm and ranch families struggled to keep food on their own tables and to pay a growing mortgage, who was buying the tractors? Not surprisingly, there is a direct correlation with the size of the farm and the ownership of a tractor—and also a truck. As the operations grew in acreage, the benefit of tractors became more tangible; and these were also the farms and ranches that could afford to purchase tractors. Moreover, the situation is slightly more complex than just who could afford a tractor. Studies in other states nearby have demonstrated that the growth in tractor ownership derived from two general forces. Farmers and ranchers were receiving progressively higher prices during the 1930s and this helped them afford to mechanize. The other force had to do with government assistance. Agricultural historian Gilbert Fite is most succinct on this point: "Federal government benefit payments received for reducing acreage contributed considerably to their increased income," and Fite argues that this increase went into investments in machinery.[849]

This mechanization had additional consequences. The acquisition of labor-saving machinery on the

[848] These figures are all drawn from the county statistics provided in U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 Agriculture*, Volume I, Part 6, 186-191.
[849] Gilbert C. Fite, "The Transformation of South Dakota Agriculture: The Effects of Mechanization, 1939-1964," *South Dakota History*, 19 (Fall 1989): 283.

larger farms immediately meant that the operations no longer needed so many hired hands as previously. The prosperity and mechanization of the farms and ranches meant, in yet one more paradox, that rural unemployment increased. Further, while the consequences for farm labor were clear, the impact of mechanization on farm owners worked with a differential that depended on the kind and size of farm. One recent study of farming in the Great Plains during the Depression found that farm mechanization "squeezed out the smaller, aspiring farmer who desired the savings that running a larger mechanized enterprise afforded." While the large farm operations increased and put the tractors to good use, and while the smallest of farms could not afford tractors and would not be able to use them, the middle-sized farmer with somewhere between fifty and a thousand acres could not afford the tractors and could not compete with the larger operations that could.[850] Those middle-sized farms especially declined in these years.

The mechanization was by no means restricted to the operations that just farmed. It also worked its effects among the ranches, changing the practices there as well. First of all, it needs to be recognized that ranches were mainly integrated operations that now fed their livestock in the winter and that grew the feed that they needed. This meant that they were plowing, disking, mowing, and raking as well and that they acquired tractors for their work too. And they also acquired trucks, mainly small, general purpose trucks for hauling materials and an occasional head of livestock. But the bigger trucks emerged too, and their use was obvious but nonetheless profound; instead of trailing their cattle to market, increasingly ranchers were transporting them by truck. In 1940 Kenneth Platt of the Grazing Service described the use of trucks in the sheep industry, noting, "Modern truck transportation is increasingly important in placing the range stockman on a more nearly equal footing with operators located near railway loading stations. Market lambs, in particular, now are trucked to railways, rather than trailed as in former times. Sheepmen are more and more convinced that the saving in weight and bloom more than pays the cost of trucking." Platt also saw cattle ranchers "turning to trucks to avoid long overland drives that take serious toll in weight and sale appearance of their beaves."[851] An example of those cattle ranchers turning to trucks can be seen in the upper Green River Valley in the 1930s. Between 1929 and 1938 those ranchers made the switch. Previously, for around fifty years, the various ranchers had joined together to drive their cattle to the loading pens north of Rock Springs, but starting in 1929, they hauled some cattle on trucks and trailers.

> Nine years ago, the first cattle were sent by truck and trailer to market. Men argued that the plan wouldn't work. There were some accidents. …. The truckers have persisted, and each year more cattle were trucked to town. . . . The trucks and trailers have grown in size till now, cattle enough to load a railroad car are hauled at one time. The truck makes the trip in about three hours, whereas it used to take from four to six days to trail a herd the one hundred miles to town. The trail herds have grown smaller in number and

---

[850] Michael Johnston Grant, *Down and Out on the Family Farm: Rural Rehabilitation in the Great Plains, 1929-1945* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 15.
[851] Platt, "The Taylor Grazing Act in Operation." This mimeographed document is generally unpaginated, but this page is titled, "Trucks, Highways, Key to Modern Production Trends."

size till this year there is no trail herd.[852]

The significance of this shift was also clear: "The year 1938 marks the passing of the trail herd, and ushers in a new era in the cattle industry of western Wyoming." About the same time, Ludwig Lanchmichl in Fremont County reported that trucks in the Riverton area had largely replaced the railroad for shipping most agricultural commodities; "Practically all potatoes now going to outside markets are being hauled by truck, and all the live stock—sheep, cattle, hogs, turkeys, and other farm produce, in the smaller quantities—are sent out via truck."[853] What was going on was not terribly complex. During the 1930s the nation's railroads cut back service on many routes, stopped serving many communities, and otherwise reduced their scheduled runs and train capacities to save money. As the nation's highways became increasingly paved in the 1930s, though, the fledgling trucking industry stepped in to pick up the slack and the railroads would never again catch up.

But it was more than highway transportation that the trucks served. Kenneth Platt in the Grazing Service was explicit that trucks were moving onto the range itself:

> This turn toward trucking pays the stockman in conservation of the range as well as in the advantage it gives him in marketing his stock. The driveways that formerly carried a burden of hundreds of thousands of pounding hooves each year have suffered severely from this use. While the Grazing Service, in administration of the Taylor Act, is preserving most of these driveways, and in some cases setting up new ones, at the same time every effort is being turned toward developing truck trails which will permit trucks to load the stock directly on the ranges.[854]

Thus it was that loading ramps and related corrals and pens were being constructed in the 1930s and 1940s on the public domain, on private ranches, and on leased land since the trucks were coming to the livestock, instead of the livestock trailing to either near or distant points for loading.

Implicit in this discussion of trucks and ranching is another element that was not new but was intensified and reinforced by the changes of the 1930s. The Midwest system of ranching had generally replaced the Texas system, and the trend was toward intensive management of the herds. In 1933 A. L. Brock of Johnson County compared cattle ranching methods of that year with what they had been just ten years before. He maintained then, "What is termed open range on Government Lands in Johnson County, is practically something of the past. It is at present practically an inside proposition on owned and leased lands."[855] By the end of the decade, this was even more the case. In 1940 one WPA writer described

---

[852] "The Passing of the Trail Herd," Saratoga *Sun*, October 20, 1938, and Denver *Post*, October 29, 1938. This was probably originally published in the Rock Springs newspaper.
[853] Ludwig Landmichl, "Fruits and Vegetables," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1439.
[854] Platt, "The Taylor Grazing Act in Operation."
[855] A. L. Brock, "Comparison of Methods of Handling Livestock in 1923 and in 1933," 6, typescript document in WPA Collections, subject file 394.

cattle ranching in Weston County. The numbers of livestock were down, he said, as a result of the general reduction of the 1930s, and intensive management of cattle was the rule. The ranches now farmed large areas so as to have sufficient feed for their cattle, and those cattle were generally full blood Herefords, but also dairy cattle. The cattle were no longer turned loose to raise themselves; "now all stock is herded closely within the boundaries of fenced pastures. As a rule, the owner keeps his herds around his home ranch in winter where it is convenient to feed them, and in the summer takes his flocks to the hills . . . ."[856] In Sheridan County, by the end of the 1930s, another account noted, "most of the ranchers practice scientific ranching which is similar to crop rotation. Fences are built on a ranch so that cattle are excluded from a section where hay is being raised, one year, and the next year the process is reversed."[857] Cattle ranching, at one time a romantic adventure, was now a science.

Probably the clearest indication of the specialization and fine tuning of the business and science of beef cattle production can be seen in the movement toward feeding livestock in Wyoming. By "feeding" was not just meant winter feeding, but the fattening of cattle prior to market, and this practice emerged especially in the Big Horn Basin and in the irrigated areas in the lower reaches of the North Platte River before that stream left the state. In 1937, E. J. Maynard of Lovell wrote, "It has only been during the past few years . . . that a systematic live stock feeding program has been developed in this garden spot of northern Wyoming." That year, he noted, "live stock on feed in the Lovell-Powell district includes 2,114 dairy cattle, 7,462 beef cattle, 25,958 breeding ewes, 61,745 lambs and 3,357 ewes being fattened for market." The key to the operation, and the key to its location, was the use of sugar beet tops, along with alfalfa, to fatten the cattle. This was not an incidental activity, and it was growing. That year, Maynard noted, two hundred fifty farmers and feeders went on a feed lot tour "to inspect the live stock on feed and rations and equipment in use." Maynard went on the tour and described the lots visited and also explained how they worked: "A noticeable feature in all lots visited was the variety of feeds used and the scientific blending of limited amounts of beet by-product feeds to attain greatest efficiency. The trend toward this more efficient use of sugar beet by-products is destined to result in a much increased volume of feeding as time goes on and should result in more efficient crop production and greater general prosperity for the entire area."[858] Significantly, the same tour included a discussion by the superintendent of the Agricultural Experiment Farm at Worland who explained to the farmers, "every farm should have adequate equipment for live stock feeding and gave examples to indicate the low cost of providing simple but efficient feeding troughs, panels, corrals, and shelter."[859] The feeding of cattle and sheep was becoming an exact science and the organization of the farm and its corrals and shelters reflected that science.

If mechanization and science were becoming essential elements of cattle ranching, then the wool and

---

[856] Kongslie, "History of Grazing," 7.
[857] Ida McPherren, "Ranches of Sheridan Valley," 2, typescript, WPA Collections, subject file 394.
[858] E. J. Maynard, "Feeding Increased in Big Horn," Lovell *Chronicle*, January 28, 1937.
[859] Maynard, "Feeding Increased in Big Horn." See also the typescript of an undated (1938) news clipping in the Powell area, "Fattening Profitable," WPA Collections, subject file 1216; and the account of the "annual feed lot tour" the following year in Lovell *Chronicle*, January 20, 1938.

sheep industry, which had early adopted modern processes, became all the more industrial in organization and operation. Feed lots for sheep had been pioneered in Converse County in the 1920s and the practice had evidently spread to most other sheep growing districts in Wyoming by the late 1930s. And the shearing and docking process had become thoroughly systematized and often mechanized. Manual shearing continued, but it had become more routinized and even mechanized. Minnie Williamson in Sheridan indicated that as of 1938, "most of the sheep are sheared with machine shears, but some sheepmen think they take the wool off too close and expose the sheep to the danger of storms and for that reason have them hand sheared."[860] The process for mechanical shearing impacted the physical arrangement of the shearing sheds. The mechanical shears were similar to hair clippers "only they are larger and are fastened to flexible shafts that lead from a gasoline engine. Some ranchers have a line shaft that runs along the shearing pens and the flexible shafts lead from this." John Niland at Rawlins described the organization of the shearing pens along the lines of a factory, exactly as it had developed in the 1910s minus the short-lived Australian system of grading and skirting the fleeces:

> Each shearing pen had a "sweat shed", a shearing room, a weight room, and an engine room to power the conveyor. Since sheep were never sheared wet, the sweating shed held around a thousand head, which hopefully were enough to keep the shearers busy until 10 o'clock in the morning if there was a frost or heavy shower the night before. We'd fill the sweat shed up every evening after shearing had stopped and then in the morning while the shearers were eating breakfast, we would load the individual pens in the shearing room so each shearer would have eight to ten head of sheep ready for shearing. Hopefully, the sheep outside would remain dry; if not we would keep the sweat shed full all the time. If everything went according to plan and if we didn't have a rain shower or a mechanical breakdown, the shearing crew could shear between 2,500 and 4,000 head a day, which meant that the average herd could get through the shearing pens in one-and-a-half to two days at the most.[861]

One Carbon County description of ranching in the late 1930s made the revealing comment that "the raising of sheep should more probably come under the heading of Industry."[862] There were the holdouts, there were the exceptions, and these tended to be the small, often very small, operations where the shearing of sheep was done on an individual basis, with the family as the unit of production, without the division of labor, and with only the simplest of tools.

The increasing specialization, mechanization, consolidation, and industrial organization of the system of agricultural production characterized the farms and ranches of Wyoming to an unprecedented degree by the end of the 1930s. This also included the increasing tendency toward single crop production on

---

[860] Minnie M. Williamson, "How Sheep are Sheared," handwritten manuscript, WPA Collections, subject file 403.
[861] John Niland, *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Lagumo Corp., 1994), 94-85.
[862] E. Blydenburgh, "Upper Platte Basin," typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1416.

farms, with the most obvious examples being wheat and sugar beets. In the case of sugar beets, even some who had been advocates of planting sugar beets as a path to prosperity had second thoughts on the matter. Val Kruska, the colonization agent for the CB&Q Railroad, had been a long-standing promoter of immigration into the Big Horn Basin and the development of farms growing sugar beets, and by the 1930s was certainly a respected authority on agricultural issues in the area. He was still enamored of the potential of sugar beets in 1937 and he consistently urged more planting of beets. At the same time, however, Kruska saw perils ahead and issued a warning to beet growers. Writing in the Lovell *Chronicle*, Kruska said, "there is danger in the lure of one or two high-priced commodities because of the tendency to overplant. If a [surplus] is produced and the price is not guaranteed, or the crop is perishable, the farmer is likely to be disappointed in his attempt to recoup the losses of recent years." He also pointed to the soil-depletion of single crop farming. "The wise farmer will not disregard the fundamentals of wise farming. He knows that diversification is the only safe way to stabilize farm earnings and will follow a rotation plan that maintains both soil and farm productivity."[863]

But the beet farmers now lived in a world far removed from the independent, self-sufficient farms of their predecessors in the Big Horn Basin and elsewhere, everywhere that beet farming had taken hold. They lived in a world of contracted sales to the local beet processing plant and a world of benefit payments from the government's agricultural programs. And those forces encouraged single-crop production. The benefit payments for beet farmers usually required a mix of alfalfa and beets so that the necessary rotation of the two would be maintained. And they generally limited the acreage planted as well. But this changed in 1938 when the Lovell newspaper announced modifications in the program:

> Changes recently in the requirements for qualifying for the beet benefit payments are more lenient. It will not be necessary for growers to have any alfalfa on their farm, and by the use of eight ton of barnyard manure or 167 pounds of super-phosphate they can readily qualify for the payment which should be in excess of $2.00 per ton based on an average sugar content in this district.
>
> There are no restrictions on the acres of beets to be grown in 1938 which is welcome news to new growers wanting to increase their beet acreage. A large increase in acreage of beets has been contracted for in all territories this year.[864]

The new system of agriculture weighed heavily as farmers made their decisions about planting. The contracts were enticing. The government both allowed and encouraged expanded planting of the single crop. And the new system also encouraged farmers to substitute the use of chemical fertilizer for the traditional system of crop rotation.

Yet one other element accompanied the single crop system of beet sugar production wherever it took root in the state. The labor system associated with the production of sugar beets relied heavily on

---

[863] Val Kruska, "Advise Against One-Crop Idea," Lovell *Chronicle*, June 3, 1937.
[864] "Beets Appear Most Profitable Crop," Lovell *Chronicle*, April 14, 1938.

migrants. In the Big Horn Basin, one contemporary account referred to the population as "practically all native Americans, almost exclusively from the Mississippi valley." In that case, native Americans meant people born in the United States, and those people were different from the exceptions that the author noted: "There are sixty families or a total of 260 Mexican people here, who were sent here by the Great Western Sugar Co. to work in the sugar beet fields. Also a few Japanese families are included in the population."[865] As it turned out, the distinction that the writer was making was less one of foreign birth, since the Mexicans he referred to were primarily from Colorado and New Mexico and immigration from Japan had been drastically limited since 1907 and completely closed since 1924, than it was of ethnicity. The same situation prevailed in Converse County. In 1938 one account described the farm labor situation there: "A large part of the labor in the beet fields of the county is done by contract labor, usually Japanese or Mexicans. The Japanese rent small farms, which they plant to vegetables and tend while working in the neighboring beet fields. The Mexicans usually contract several fields, rent a house in town where they and their family live, and travel from field to field, returning home when a field is finished."[866] Likewise in Sheridan County:

> As a large amount of hand labor is required in the thinning, cultivation, and harvesting of sugar beets, there are shipped annually from Mexico a great number of workers to be employed in the sugar beet fields. Each laborer and his family tend about ten acres of beets from the planting to the harvesting. They live in small houses, usually one or two rooms and are satisfied with cheap living conditions. Their chief food is beans and chile peppers and therefore they work for a small wage. They work hard through the beet harvest but most of them are idle during the winter months, unless they are kept over on one [of] the farms to help out with the farm work. In some localities the sugar factories keep them in company houses. Not being a progressive class of people they seem to be satisfied with the work in the beet fields.[867]

The Jeffersonian vision of a freehold democracy had taken a strange turn to arrive at this juncture of dependency, prejudice, class and ethnic inequalities, factory labor in the field, and a blighted promise of the future.

iv. The Dynamics of War

When World War II came to Europe in September 1939, it unleashed a set of forces that would ultimately work a transformation in Wyoming. In the United States the economy surged forward and the effects of war were felt on the home front well before American soldiers entered combat. In

---

[865] Ernest J. Honnebeck, "History" typescript in WPA Collections, subject file 1221.
[866] "The Sugar Beet," manuscript in WPA Collections, subject file 1399.
[867] Minnie M. Williamson, "The Sugar Beet Industry," handwritten manuscript, WPA Collections, subject file 1468.

retrospect, it is common to look back on the war not just as a heroic effort, which it was, and not just as a turning point in American history, which it also was, but also as the vital force that brought the nation out of the Depression—which it also did. Usually the return of prosperous times is associated with ranching and farming in Wyoming during the war. But these triumphal associations often obscure the more complex reality of the impact of the war; along with victory, progress, and redemption, the quality of transformation must also be explored to adequately convey the ways that the war shaped American society and the way that it changed the people and institutions of Wyoming, and that holds true of ranching and farming in the state. Not all was on an upward tilting curve of gain. Two salient facts generally define the contours of the transformation that took place in Wyoming farming and ranching during the war. One was that the prosperity of the war translated into increased purchasing power, even if a substantial chunk of that public purchasing power was in the aggregate with government purchases for the war effort; as farmers and ranchers received higher prices for their goods they were able to make changes in their farm and ranch practices. The second was the World War II labor shortage; as farmers and ranchers found laborers hard to come by, they made adjustments. The combination of these two factors went far in reshaping agriculture in Wyoming during the war. These were the dynamics of war, played out on the farms and ranches of Wyoming.

Prosperity was the first thing that occurred to some when the war started. In 1939, within two weeks of the German invasion of Poland, commodity prices were climbing and climbing, well beyond the wildest expectations, just on the news of war and before any actual shortages could be realized. A local columnist in the Big Horn Basin remarked how dramatically bean prices "shot up to somewhere between $4 and $5" and that no one knew how high they would go: "At this writing, however, this much is true. Bean growers are going to get a much better price for their beans than they have received for several years past. In fact, it looks like Big Horn Basin farmers once more are sitting on top of the world. We hope it proves even better than has been hoped for during the past few days. The prosperity of the farmers will mean some degree of prosperity for the rest of us. It's too bad we had to have a war to bring us this measure of prosperity, but since war is at hand and prices are advancing all along the line, we hope the Big Horn Basin will get its share."[868]

During the war, farm and ranch income did increase, not as much as some wanted, but it did represent a significant departure from the previous years of Depression. In his study of the war in Wyoming (and Wyoming in the war), T. A. Larson compiled statistics on agricultural prices during the war and he concluded that farm commodity prices increased 131 percent between the summer of 1939 and the summer of 1945; by contrast, hourly earnings of workers increased sixty-one percent in the same period, although workers also benefited in other ways during the war that are not reflected in those numbers.[869] Wyoming ranchers received thirty-nine million dollars for their livestock (mostly beef) in 1939, which was itself a high year, but in 1945, they received over seventy-six million dollars.[870] In addition to higher prices for their produce and livestock, the farmers and ranchers also received the benefit

---

[868] "Coons Comments," Basin *Republican-Rustler*, September 14, 1939.
[869] T. A. Larson, *Wyoming's War Years: 1941-1945* (Laramie: The University of Wyoming, 1954), 233.
[870] Larson, *Wyoming's War Years*, 236.

payments—the subsidies—that had been instituted by the government during the 1930s as part of the effort to promote agricultural stabilization, although generally the stockgrowers (sheep and cattle) preferred lifting price ceilings and encouraging greater production over receiving subsidies. The Wyoming Stock Growers Association's publication, *Cow Country*, even complained about the government's efforts to encourage meatless days.[871]

Production was every bit as important as prices, and the U.S. government sought increased production on many commodities to supply the war effort, usually attaching their appeals to patriotism, and the patriotism part was widely accepted. The production part was not so eagerly adopted. Or, in the case of cattle, production increased, but the marketing of the cattle on hand sometimes was done with a conservative bent. The government asked for more cattle to be marketed, but the rising numbers of cattle indicated the herds were growing, not diminishing. Larson notes that despite a request for twenty percent greater marketing of cattle in 1942, in 1943 there were ninety thousand more cattle on hand; the next year, despite another appeal for more cattle on the market, the cattle on hand increased by sixty-eight thousand head. In fact, marketing of cattle was increasing, but not by the target amounts, and at the end of the war Wyoming had over a million cattle; this compared to 827,000 in 1941. Larson's conclusion in this matter is eminently reasonable: "A comparison of production goals with actual achievements illustrates that farmers and ranchers, like most people, are influenced more by profit calculations than they are by government suggestions."[872] In the various crops, production generally increased, except for corn and sugar beets, and so did prices. Wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, and beans showed dramatic increases, and receipts for all crops increased by about 150 percent between 1939 and 1945.

Clearly the war brought a measure of agricultural prosperity to Wyoming, but it also brought other changes, and the prosperity itself was less than universal. In the first place, some commodities fared better than others. Sugar beets suffered because of the labor shortage while other foods, like small grains, boomed and especially the government encouraged the planting of dry, edible beans as an essential food during the war; as subsidies increased for beans and potatoes, farmers shifted their production accordingly, and bean and potato crops increased. And while cattle prices increased and beef production also increased, both quite dramatically, the same could not be said for sheep. As T. A. Larson concludes, despite a hefty protective tariff on wool, "with ceilings on lamb, mutton, and wool [prices] the sheepman found intolerable the rising wartime costs of labor and feed, and the extraordinary difficulty of getting any satisfactory labor."[873] Labor was a genuine and abiding problem for the sheep owners and they resorted to various devices to help. John Niland remembered the labor shortage and how his father met the need: "During World War II, help was hard to come by, so my father made a deal with the school districts, allowing those [students] who wished to help with lambing to get out of school for summer break two weeks early. There were a lot of takers, of course."[874]

---

[871] Larson, *Wyoming's War Years*, 235.
[872] Larson, *Wyoming's War Years*, 223.
[873] Larson, *Wyoming's War Years*, 236.
[874] Niland, *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming*, 80.

The labor shortage was real and it was widespread. As had happened in virtually every other war that the nation had fought, the demand for the goods produced on farms and ranches increased at the same time that the labor force available to work on those operations declined. The draft took its share of workers on the farms, including members of farm families operating farms. So did higher-paying jobs in defense plants. Sometimes it was the eternal problem of technology, where the young people in the family knew better how to work the new machinery than the parents did, so when sons were drafted, this created a major hardship in more ways than one, and certainly made a huge difference on those farms that were family operated. And the problem was acute in those farming operations that required temporary but dramatic surges in the workforce at particular times and seasons, like planting and harvesting. Likewise, any agricultural operation that required skilled labor—from cowboys to haystackers to herders—suffered when the call of armed service or defense industries sounded. Farmers and ranchers complained about the lack of good help and then the lack of any help and there were even proposals (not accepted) to draft people for work on farms and ranches, even wearing special uniforms.[875] It was only late in 1942 before the Selective Service stopped drafting workers "essential for livestock, dairy, and poultry production." By that point, many had already left the farm. In an ironic twist, however, the enforcement of the draft exemption meant that a farm or ranch worker could not move from the exempted job to a non-exempt, but higher paying, job; as historian Douglas Hurt notes, this meant that their employers requested deferments for the agricultural workers instead of the workers who feared being trapped in a low-paying position.[876]

The critical problem for Wyoming's farmers and ranchers during the war was how to cope with this labor shortage. One way was to use more machinery to replace the workers (or the more expensive workers). It is easy to forget how recent the shift to tractors and trucks actually took place in the nation and in Wyoming. At the beginning of the war, horses were still the dominant motive power on the farms and ranches. Even at the University of Wyoming agricultural experiment farm just south of Sheridan, they used horses. Future attorney Gerry Spence, then just eleven years old, was sent by his parents to work at the experiment farm during the summer:

> The resident farmer grew different varieties of wheat and oats and barley, the rows with their little stakes and white tags, all scientific like. And we tended the gardens with their varieties of tomatoes and peppers and cabbages and potatoes. I drove teams of horses, put the grain with horse-drawn binders, and, by hand, the other hands and I piled the bundles of grain into shocks. After the grain was dried, with three-pronged forks we flung the shocks up onto horse-drawn flatbed wagons. Then the loads were hauled to the thrasher where, with the same three-pronged forks, we threw the bundles into the thrashing machine, which ate them up like a hungry steel dragon.[877]

---

[875] R. Douglas Hurt, *The Great Plains during World War II* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 193, 200-201.
[876] Hurt, *The Great Plains during World War II*, 196.
[877] Gerry Spence, *The Making of a Country Lawyer* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 112.

This was changing, however. During the war Wyoming's farms and ranches, like those elsewhere in the nation, often switched from horse and mule to tractor and truck. This happened, it needs to be remembered, despite the fact that production of tractors (like automobiles) was sharply curtailed during the war. In 1940 5,601 of Wyoming's 15,018 farms and ranches had a tractor; in 1945 7,444 of the state's 13,076 farms and ranches had at least one tractor. While that figure represents a growth of under two thousand farms, it also is an increase of a third. Put another way, at the beginning of the war 37 percent of the farms had tractors; at the end of the war over half of them (57%) had tractors. What is more, for the first time there were farms that indicated that they had tractors but had no horses or mules, some 855 of them in 1945.[878] (An often unnoticed corollary of this shift to tractors and trucks was toward greater dependence on fossil fuels.) The balance had shifted to the side of mechanization.

Probably many farms and ranches used a combination of technologies, selectively assigning different technologies to different tasks. Robert L. Buenger recalls his experience as a boy, too young for the draft, spending summers on a ranch near Saratoga during the war where he did the work of an adult helping with the haying operation. The hay was first cut with a sickle-bar mower attached to a tractor. Then it was raked into windrows using a horse drawn team. From the windrows the hay was picked up by a sweep which, in this case, was "an ingenious device made from an early vintage auto with a wooden box for a seat (running backwards so that the weight of the engine offset the weight of the hay)," and would pick up the hay in its teeth and move it to the stack. There Buenger would drive the team of horses that pushed the stacker—a long lodgepole pine that connected to the pusher (or plunger), which pushed the hay up the ramp and over onto the stack.[879]

Possibly one more sign of the labor shortage was, in addition to the change in technology on the farms, the tales of it by the adolescent boys who were working on the farms. That is because the demographics of labor shifted. Tharon Greenwood was away at college, but returned home in the summers to the ranch near Big Piney. She recalled, "only the very young and older men were available to do ranch work. My sister, Bette, and I were among those who became needed cowgirls. When haying time started, we joined the crews in harvesting the hay."[880] In her study of Louise Richter, Shirley Jacob observed the changes wrought by World War II: "At Klondike wives, daughters, and sisters were driving tractors and raising crops and cattle just as Louise had done since 1915." Rosie the Riveter could also be Rosie the Rancher—even more than before.

---

[878] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1950*, *Volume I, Counties and State Economic Areas*, Part 29 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952), 3.
[879] Robert L. Buenger, *An Old Kid from Wyoming* (n.p.: iUniverse, 2005),7-9.
[880] Tharon Greenwood, "World War II Memories," in *Seeds-Ke-Dee Revisited: Land of Blue Granite and Silver Sage*, edited by Sublette County Artists' Guild (Pinedale: Sublette County Artists' Guild, 1998), 383.

Probably nowhere was the labor shortage felt as much as in the sugar beet fields; there the farms used a variety of labor sources to make up for the shortage. The sugar beet farms were labor intensive to the extreme, requiring what was conventionally called "stoop labor" because it was performed on hands and knees or bent over. Once planted, each beet seed sends up multiple shoots so the plants have to be "blocked." This amounts to separating the plants into clusters several inches apart (blocking) and then the clusters have to be thinned. As the plants then grow, they have to be weeded and the earth loosened with a hoe several times. Then, at harvest in the autumn, the only mechanical part of the process was introduced when a "lifter" would go through the field to loosen the beets; then workers would harvest the beets and cut off their tops, at which point they could be taken to the nearby processing plant.[881] It was, both literally and metaphorically, backbreaking work.

One study notes an additional factor in this work process. This was not something to be done leisurely:

> All these hand operations must usually be done under pressure, thus often necessitating fourteen or fifteen hours of work daily. In the spring blocking and thinning must be done quickly, before the plants are too large and crowded. In the fall, since maximum sugar content depends on keeping beets in the ground as long as possible, farmers usually attempt to compress harvesting into the shortest period possible before the first freeze.[882]

Thus in the spring and summer of 1942, after the exodus began from the farms to the armed service and the defense plants, the sugar beet fields faced a desperate shortage at a critical time, and because of the dependence of the factories on the beet harvest, much was at stake. Every available person was recruited for this work in the beet precincts. Students were excused from school and were actively recruited in several areas; merchants in Worland and Sheridan closed their doors and joined the emergency effort, and women were noticeable in the numbers of new field workers.[883] For some reason, although these people enthusiastically went into the fields, their enthusiasm soon waned and the crisis in the beet fields emerged again in the fall harvest and more, new, people had to be recruited. Thus planting for 1943 was drastically reduced because of the labor shortage and sugar factories at Sheridan, Lovell, and Wheatland closed that year. Still, the fields needed workers.

In addition, the traditional labor supply that the sugar industry had depended on in the fields seems to have thinned out as well. Some of the Mexican Americans who had made up an increasing number of the field workers tending sugar beets left Wyoming during the war and went to the West Coast, especially to Washington. One study of a Washington community to which a contingent of Wyoming's Mexican Americans removed notes this exodus:

---

[881] Harry Schwartz, *Seasonal Farm Labor in the United States with Special Reference to hired Workers in Fruit and Vegetable and Sugar-Beet Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 103.
[882] Schwartz, *Seasonal Farm Labor in the United States*, 104.
[883] William L. Hewitt, "Mexican Workers in Wyoming during World War II: Necessity, Discrimination and Protest," *Annals of Wyoming*, 54 (Fall 1982): 21.

> The Mexican American migrants who left the mountain states, in particular, Wyoming, were more than eager to leave. The Chicano experience in Wyoming, specifically Worland, Torrington, Rock Springs, and Laramie was one of racial discrimination. Worland and Torrington stood among the towns with the worst anti-Mexican discrimination. Worland even had separate schools for Mexicans.[884]

With traditional labor supplies drying up, and with the fields needing to be worked, the sugar industry and the state turned to Mexico. In the summer of 1942 the United States and Mexico agreed on the procedures by which workers from Mexico, called braceros, might be imported to the United States temporarily under the Farm Labor Transportation Program—or, the Bracero Program. The Mexican government was especially concerned about treatment of the workers and refused to send workers to Texas where discrimination had been particularly abusive and flagrant. In the spring of 1943 Wyoming's Emergency Farm Labor supervisor began the process to bring some of these Mexican workers so that they could work the state's beet fields. Only a few hundred joined the fall harvest in Goshen, Washakie, Platte, and Sheridan counties (most of them having been diverted to California). Moreover, one study concludes that by 1944 "the farmers, the sugar beet companies, and others in Wyoming were subjecting the braceros to the same discrimination and racist practices that they had experienced in Texas." Another demonstrates, "a persistent pattern of discrimination within the state came to the attention of the Mexican government."[885] Moreover, the stockgrowers, historian William Hewitt notes, refused to hire Mexican workers in hay harvesting because ranchers believed the Mexican nationals were only suited to "stoop labor" and sheep operators declined to hire Mexicans as herders because they thought them unsatisfactory, an inexplicable response given the widespread use of Mexican Americans as herders and shearers for decades.[886]

The situation remained complicated and unsatisfactory throughout the war. Because the treatment of workers was monitored by the Mexican government, although quite modestly and by a small and overwhelmed staff, and because of the distinct possibility that the recruiting and importing of Mexican labor to Wyoming would be stopped by the Mexican government, the governor, the state director of farm labor, and the sugar industry leaned hard on local merchants and officials who discriminated. Because of their intervention, community officials and civic organizations at Basin, Sheridan, and

---

[884] This account is from a study, gathered from oral histories and other sources, that documents the Mexican American migration to Wapato, Washington, especially from Wyoming, in 1942. "Wapato -- Its History and Hispanic Heritage," at HistoryLink.org, an online dictionary of Washington State history, is available on the world wide web at http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=7937. In addition, see the discussion by Harry Schwartz, in which he notes, "A 1937 survey of Wyoming beet families in the Torrington area found that more than half earned less than $300 annually, exclusive of relief, 41 percent of these families having no other source of income than beet work." Schwartz, *Seasonal Farm Labor in the United States*, 131-132.

[885] Hurt, *The Great Plains during World War II*, 221; Hewitt, "Mexican Workers in Wyoming during World War II," 25.

[886] See Hewitt, "Mexican Workers in Wyoming during World War II," 25.

Wheatland sought to ameliorate the discriminatory practices in the businesses and to take a more positive attitude to the cultural and material circumstances of the guest workers, and sometimes those efforts were successful. But in 1944 discrimination cases, especially in Torrington and Basin, threatened to undo the arrangement. The persistent problem, treatment in the businesses in the neighboring communities aside, was the discriminatory pay that the Mexicans received. In January 1945 the Mexican government was sufficiently alarmed at the discriminatory practices that word reached Wyoming that workers would not be sent north that year. It is unclear if more workers were actually available, or not, from Mexico for Wyoming work in 1945, but, as historian Hewitt observes, "The state's labor shortage in agriculture at the end of the war was what it had been at the beginning."[887]

The state's farms and ranches turned to other sources outside the conventional supply. One source happened to be located in the middle of the beet country of the Big Horn Basin as a result of the war. Heart Mountain Relocation Center opened in August 1942, a barbed-wire and guardhouse-enclosed compound in which soon more than ten thousand people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast had been "relocated." As the beet harvest approached and the labor shortage deepened into crisis, some of the evacuees at Heart Mountain volunteered to help with the harvest. The growers were willing to pay them the required wage set by the War Relocation Authority, but Governor Nels Smith, who did not want people of Japanese ancestry in Wyoming in the first place, insisted that Wyoming control the workers, not the WRA; since the federal government would not relinquish control, historian Mike Mackey writes, "the internees stayed in the camp." Finally, though, after the beet companies pressed the governor, Smith yielded, "and internees, under the control of the WRA, harvested the crops of the grateful farmers."[888] In the meantime, some of the volunteers had gone to Montana's nearby beet fields to work since they had not been allowed to help the harvest in Wyoming.

The two neighboring communities, Cody and Powell, officially opposed the Heart Mountain evacuees leaving the compound and visiting their towns, but again in 1943, made an exception so that workers could harvest the beet crop. In 1944, T. A. Larson calculates, only one hundred people from Heart Mountain worked in the harvest, a considerably smaller number than previously.[889] A common misperception, with tragic consequences, was that the people interned at Heart Mountain were prisoners of war and could be forced into labor, itself a problematic notion.

There is an irony in this situation too. The commercial, single-crop agricultural system associated with the beet industry was in serious trouble during the war as the dynamics of war combined with the forces of the market to produce one crisis and then another. On the other hand, the architects of the Heart Mountain experience, in their attempt to make sure that the camp did not drain resources from the war

---

[887] Hewitt, "Mexican Workers in Wyoming during World War II," 28.
[888] Mike Mackey, "A Brief History of the Heart Mountain Relocation Center and the Japanese American Experience," World Wide Web at: http://www.northwestcollege.edu/library/special/hmdpp/history.dot; Mike Mackey, *Heart Mountain: Life in Wyoming's Concentration Camp* (Powell, Wyoming: Western History Publications, 2000), 30-33.
[889] Larson, *Wyoming's War Years*, 226.

effort, required this community of people to be largely self-sufficient, to grow their own food. This they did, and did with stunning success. The nomination of the Heart Mountain site as a National Historic Landmark recites just a small part of the farming success of the center:

> Internees farmed 1,753.5 acres of land at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center and also had hog and poultry operations. They produced myriad crops including: green beans, peas, carrots, spinach, beets, corn, tomatoes, potatoes, barley and wheat, and other crops, such as Chinese cabbage, *daikon*, *takana*, *misuna,* and *nappa*, which reflected Japanese tastes. In 1943 and 1944 a total of 2,762 acres were used to plant crops and 2,395 acres were harvested. These crops were valued at an estimate of $309,585 by the farm superintendent. All crops and livestock were produced for consumption at Heart Mountain, with any surplus being sent to the other nine camps.[890]

Heart Mountain was the third largest community in Wyoming during its existence and, while food was never abundant there, and while there were shortages there just like everywhere else, this community, ironically, had a distinctive cushion from some of the severe wartime shortages of food and that protection was not that of hoarding or receiving generous treatment by the government. These people were subject to rationing and they received limited supplies, just like others, but they produced what they consumed instead of producing for the market, and in so doing followed a model of agricultural production that was being eliminated in the rest of the state.[891]

Heart Mountain was not a prisoner-of-war camp, although it could easily have been mistaken for one, except for the fact that (1) all of its residents had resided in the United States before being rounded up and relocated, (2) a great many were American citizens, and (3) none of them was at war with the United States. There were prisoner-of-war camps in Wyoming during World War II, though, and these too performed a role on Wyoming's farms and ranches. The major POW camp in Wyoming was located at Douglas, and this served as the central camp from which smaller camps, satellite camps, were dispersed. Its first occupants were Italian prisoners in 1943, and these men were promptly put to work in fields near and far, with two hundred sent to help with the beet harvest at Worland and also at Veteran and Wheatland. Local farmers had come to depend on this labor force and Italy's armistice in 1943 alarmed them, but the Italian prisoners were replaced with German prisoners and the work relationship continued—even deepened. In 1944 German prisoners were sent to a number of subordinate camps from the main camp at Douglas and also from Scottsbluff, so that they were able to work in the beet

---

[890] Kara M. Miyagishima, National Historic Landmark Nomination, Heart Mountain Relocation Center (September 20, 2006), 26. The total list of crops produced at the center is lengthy and diverse. It was not a single-crop system of agriculture.

[891] In the spring of 1943, before the crops were planted, exactly this charge of hoarding was leveled at the camp by the Denver *Post* and by Wyoming U.S. Senator E. V. Robertson. Subsequent investigation proved this wrong, that the supplies believed to be hoarded were actually for distribution to other camps. "Says We 'Pamper' Internees in West," New York *Times*, May 7, 1943; "Asserts WRA Camp Coddles Japanese," New York *Times*, May 12, 1943.

fields near Basin, Clearmont, Deaver, Lovell, Riverton, Wheatland, Worland, Basin, Huntley, Lingle, Veteran, Pine Bluffs, and Torrington. The best study of these camps, by Lowell Bangerter, notes that they "supplied labor for the beet and potato fields and for miscellaneous farm work."[892] This work was of more than incidental importance and one Wyoming newspaper tallied the accomplishments of the work in 1944 alone, which amounted to about 80,000 days in agriculture; their achievements included:

> 1,604.59 acres of beets thinned, 1,455.02 acres of beets hoed, 416.90 acres of beets weeded, 78,380.2 tons of beets topped, 2,106.75 acres of beet tops piled, 1,861.45 acres of beans and corn hoed, 642 acres of beans piled, 132,464 hours of miscellaneous labor, 6,745 turkeys picked, 14,486 bushels of potato seed cut, 669,515 bushels of potatoes picked, 1,041 acres of grain shocked, 19,877 bushels of potatoes sorted, 59.6 acres of beet tops siloed, 5,769 bushels of corn picked, 171,219 pounds of green beans picked, and 1,605 bushels of apples and plums picked.[893]

The German prisoners and the farmers for whom they worked often developed close bonds, the families sometimes inviting the prisoners into their homes for meals, and stories still circulate about how the farmers would occasionally, and against regulations, sneak pies and other treats to their workers, and how the farmers and the ex-prisoners after the war would write each other and sometimes the prisoners would return to visit the people whose beet fields they had blocked and thinned and whose grain they had put up. The contrast with the other groups of bound laborers, the Americans of Japanese ancestry, and with the braceros from Mexico, was stark. On the one hand, there were the close relationships developed between the Americans and the prisoners, in the case of the German POWs, and on the other hand there was the isolation and prejudice experienced by the Heart Mountain laborers and those from Mexico. This was all the more poignant because of the fact that the close relationship was actually with people who were literally the enemy at the time, as opposed to the others—fellow Americans and recruited foreign nationals—whom they actively resisted, shunned, and abused.[894]

In November 1945, Heart Mountain camp was closed, all its occupants gone back to the west coast to try to put together their lives and start anew. The prisoners of war had long since been repatriated. Wyoming's sons and daughters who had been in the service were trickling back home after being released from active duty, at least some of them; some, of course, had seen the world and chose to make their homes elsewhere. The defense industries had caused some to break their ties to Wyoming, and some of them also did not return to the farms and ranches. Those who did return, of course, came back to a different Wyoming from the one they had left. For that matter, Wyoming entered a post-war world

---

[892] Lowell A. Bangerter, "German Prisoners of War in Wyoming," *Journal of German - American Studies*, 14 (1979): 70.
[893] "Prisoner of War Labor Used in State," *Wyoming Eagle*, July 24-27, 1945; this paragraph is reproduced in Bangerter, "German Prisoners of War in Wyoming," 72.
[894] See a discussion of this issue and the memories of people who compared both the Heart Mountain experience and the relationships with Prisoners of War in Michael Cassity, "History and the Public Purpose," *Journal of American History*, 81 (December 1994): 972-973.

different from what it had been before the war and before the Depression.

Wyoming's farms and ranches had been transformed not just by the war but by the Depression, by the droughts, by the new government programs, by the technology, by the shift in demographics, by a combination of forces of social and economic change like the state had never seen before. The farms and ranches were fewer and they were bigger, they were mechanized, and they were commercial operations. There were exceptions, a great many of them, but these were noticeably the exceptions to the mainstream of American agriculture now. The autonomous homesteads were fewer, and they were anachronisms now in the deepest sense of their purpose and organization, just as much in their essence as in their structure; the self-sufficient, small agricultural operation was as much in keeping with American agriculture after the war as the dugouts and small cabins that they had often been associated with were—which is to say not at all. They were relics, artifacts, and fragments of forsaken dreams. And the structures were, on the one hand, the complex of buildings associated with the modern, mechanized, vertically integrated, agribusiness operations that had emerged, and, on the other hand, the surviving, enduring family farms and ranches that struggled as much against the tides of social change as they did against the elements of Wyoming's climate and topography. In between were the other structures, the abandoned farms, the isolated ranches that had been absorbed by others, the tenant quarters, some of them still in use, and increasingly the derelict buildings dotting the countryside, reminders of former lives and hopes, symbols of broken dreams.

8 WYOMING AGRICULTURE AT MID-CENTURY, 1945-1960

In the same way that their predecessors in the nineteenth century came onto the land as both inheritors of history and as shapers of history, the cattle ranchers, crop farmers, sheep growers, and homesteaders in Wyoming at the middle of the twentieth century also inherited a past that helped them define their lives and purposes and chart their own courses in life and on the land. In the years after World War II the steady stream of books, films, and other cultural expressions that lamented the passing of the West, as it was usually known, did not often pause to think that people on the land at the time were themselves not only observers but also participants in history. These people, as it turned out, were not only reaping the harvests of years past but were planting the seeds of the future with their own practices, goals, and dreams—working with what was passed on to them and building for the future. As it had ever been on the inspiring, powerful, and also unforgiving Wyoming landscape, life on the farm and ranch would face formidable obstacles in modern society. Chief among these would be the transformation in the structure of ranching and farming, and also in the practices of the people who made their livings on the land. Perhaps in many instances it was mainly the dreams that endured, the dreams that were similar to those brought by the homesteaders and ranchers who settled Wyoming in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

i. Dreams of the Future and Dreams of the Past at Midcentury

A great many people believed the day of the homesteader was gone. Probably most thought homesteading was buried once and for all when Congress passed the Taylor Grazing Act. By the end of World War II the Taylor Grazing Act's withdrawal of land from the public domain so that it could no longer be homesteaded had become a fixture and few people expected to be able to turn their heads and their dreams to the west with visions fulfilling the Jeffersonian dream in the age of global war, advanced industrial society, corporate agriculture, economic integration, and instantaneous communication. Those surviving homesteads seemed almost like fossils, curious remnants of the past, and those fossils were few. There were still people living on homesteads they had claimed—or that their parents or *their* parents had claimed—in earlier years, and there were still people who somehow held on to a piece of land that had been homesteaded, although they had long since moved to town to find work and then to live. In addition, there were lands in Alaska which, theoretically, could still be homesteaded, although the prospect of building an independent family farm in the tundra perhaps made the Wyoming experience look absolutely balmy. But, as it turned out, there were also areas in Wyoming where a person could, in some circumstances, take out a homestead, doing so a half century after historians had proclaimed the end of the frontier.

The two areas of Wyoming where post World War II homesteading provided opportunities were located in the Big Horn Basin, west of Powell, and in the Wind River Basin around Riverton. The Bureau of Reclamation controlled these lands which were adjacent to lands that had been opened for settlement in the years 1907-1938, and after World War II it made plans for opening up new divisions for irrigation and settlement as homesteads. Plans had been drawn and some contracts had been let in the late 1930s for the construction of a new irrigation system in the Heart Mountain area between Powell and Cody but the war interfered with actual development of the project and, of course, that area became the location of the Heart Mountain Relocation Center. With the departure of the internees in 1945, the last leaving in November of that year, the deserted camp reverted to the Bureau of Reclamation and project headquarters for the Veteran Settlement Program were located there. Those headquarters took about seventy-four acres, but most of the land in this project specifically targeted soldiers and sailors being released from the armed services, the point being to provide them opportunities similar to those provided earlier homesteaders who followed their own dreams. Distribution of the lands was made by drawing, the first in 1947 and over the next two years 217 farm units were separated and turned over to the new homesteaders. Buildings from the Heart Mountain Relocation Center were auctioned off, as was some of the equipment, and local farmers, and new homesteaders took advantage of those facilities, being able to purchase two barracks (20 by 120 feet each buildings) for a dollar each, and more than seven hundred barracks were so sold. A count in June 2003 indicated that twenty-three of these barracks either partially or completely remained.[895]

---

[895] Brian Q. Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier: Homesteading in the Modern West* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas), 39-46; Karl Lillquist, "Imprisoned in the Desert: The Geography of World War II-Era Japanese American Relocation Centers in the Western United States," 124-125, on world

The homesteading experience in the middle of the twentieth century perhaps defies expectations, but then many people expect homesteading to be restricted to the nineteenth century anyway. Consider just one example. One of the 217 homesteaders on the Heart Mountain project was Forrest Allen. After Allen had been discharged from the army and was living in Montana with his parents, he heard the radio advertisements of the Bureau of Reclamation for this homesteading opportunity and submitted an application. Allen's name was one of the thirty-one drawn from 391 applicants in 1947; he had also submitted an application for the drawing at Riverton for lands in that project. Upon settling his land he received two barracks from the Heart Mountain Relocation Center and Allen sawed his in halves to make four buildings; one of those four buildings then provided a home for him until 1955 or 1956 when he went to Montana and sawed wood with his brother. "He returned with the wood and with the exception of a foundation poured by someone else, completely built the home he lives in today."[896] He then also married and the couple, and then their family, lived in the new house. Allen initially raised a commercial crop of seed peas since one of the requirements for homesteading was to raise "a satisfactory crop on at least 50 percent of his land." The first crops were indeed successful and produced substantial yields of up to forty bags an acre, but subsequent crops declined and soon each acre was yielding only eighteen or twenty bags—a not uncommon feature of new lands where the stored nutrients of the soil are quickly depleted. This generated problems not only because of the smaller yield, but because Allen (and others on the project) had contracts with the purchasers who were only interested in greater yields. "The seed companies found a more favorable source of seed peas in Idaho and the crop wasn't raised much in the area after the late 1950's."

Allen then did as many others did. At some point in the 1950s he switched from peas to small grains and hay, but he also started working for other farmers in the area and also working for his parents in Montana. All the while, the Allen family, like others on irrigation projects, had to pay the government the costs of the irrigation too as an essential part of the cost of running the farm. Plus, there were the usual hazards and calamities—and then some. One of his barracks burned in 1951 (The fire was on a Sunday and the local fire department could not find anyone with a key so the volunteers could get the pump; adding a cruel twist to the episode, this was the same day that the department received its first fire truck). This was not a life of ease. While some pointed out that in earlier times the homesteaders got nowhere near the support and assistance from the government that the Heart Mountain Irrigation Project homesteaders received, that criticism unfairly minimizes the commitment of the homesteaders and the circumstances under which they labored. At a minimum, there was probably zero chance for developing a self-sufficient haven from the modern world; when they moved onto the land they were locked into an obligation of annual payments that had to be met. Years later Forrest Allen reflected on the experience and focused on the point that most concerned him: "Most people think this is a government hand-out. . .

---

wide web at
https://www.cwu.edu/~geograph/faculty/lillquist_files/pubs/ja_relocation/chapter4heartmountain.pdf

[896] K. T. Roes, "Homesteading Runs in this Heart Mountain Family," undated clipping from Powell *Tribune*, Park County Archives, Cody, Wyoming.

. But we pay back everything they put into the project."[897] The Veteran Settlement Program at Heart Mountain was finally closed in 1951, but the homesteaders continued—and continue on.

Even more land than had been distributed at the Heart Mountain project was distributed near Riverton in the Midvale Irrigation District after World War II. Around twenty thousand acres there were distributed, again by lottery, to veterans, making 159 homesteads between 1947 and 1950. This started off grandly with eager homesteaders staking their claims, making their new starts. But one of the persistent problems of irrigation lands just about everywhere came to plague this project. A land that was dry as a bone prior to irrigation often suffered from the opposite problem after irrigation—it would not drain properly. In addition to turning, in the vernacular of the irrigation farmers, "boggy," the water would often leave a salty (alkali) residue as it evaporated so that the land actually deteriorated more the more it was used. This is relevant here. As historian Brian Cannon writes, "Problems with drainage and alkali existed on every reclamation project, but they particularly plagued farmers on the Riverton Project."[898] As a consequence, though always indirect and subject to the unpredictable contortions of the legislative process, Congress ultimately passed legislation enabling homesteaders on "inadequate farm units," with exactly the Riverton Project as its target, to add land where they were or to exchange those claims for land on reclamation projects elsewhere. Many took advantage of the opportunity and moved to Washington, Idaho, or Arizona while those who remained enlarged their holdings with those abandoned.[899] Even so, by 1957, the operating expenses of the homesteaders—since they had to repay the cost of irrigation development—on that land continued to consume their income from crops and livestock and within a few years, by 1961, most farmers on the project appeared to be in favor of abolishing it and in 1964 new legislation authorized the Bureau of Reclamation to purchase those lands from the homesteaders, the land then being leased to other farmers in the district.[900]

Homesteading on the irrigated lands of the Shoshone Project, homesteading in the Wind River valley, and homesteading in America was coming to an end in more ways than one. Since the buy-out of the Riverton homesteaders in the 1960s was so expensive, and since, according to historian Cannon, the homesteaders had shifted the risks of homesteading to the federal government, "the homesteaders at Riverton made the costs of future reclamation homesteading too great for the Bureau to bear."[901] Whether or not Cannon harbors within that judgment the conventional disdain with which many historians, politicians, and economists have viewed homesteading, the result is much the same: this sorry conclusion was fitting and perhaps predictable. From the perspective of many, these homesteading efforts were last sputters of a dying engine, indeed, the last gasps of a system for which the death rattle sounded in the 1930s, if not earlier.

---

[897] Roes, "Homesteading Runs in this Heart Mountain Family."
[898] Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 134.
[899] Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 134-148.
[900] Robert Autobee, "Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program: the Riverton Unit," Third Draft, Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1996, on World Wide Web at http://www.usbr.gov/dataweb/html/rvrton2.html#N_39_.
[901] Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier*, 134.

Yet there is a different meaning that can be gleaned from the experience of these post-World War II homesteaders. These homesteaders were people who entered homestead land in the middle of the twentieth century, just as others had in earlier years, because they carried hopes of a new start and a future that could not be claimed in the mainstream of the American economy. It might even be argued that they saw in the homestead the promise of an alternative to the mainstream American economy. Nowhere did the homestead promise riches and abundance, comfort and ease. Instead, it promised hard work, long hours, spartan living conditions, and modest returns. But it also offered an opportunity to start with minimal cash, a chance at an honest living largely dependent on one's own energies, and a shot at some degree of independence from the powerful forces of modernization, urbanization, centralization, and standardization shaping and limiting life in the cities—and in the countryside too. While the opportunities for that alternative were declining, the dreams themselves, as ancient as the nation, were still very much alive.

One other lesson emerges from the experience of these homesteaders and that is that life on the land in the twentieth century was intimately connected with and tied to the policies and actions of the federal government. Wyoming's ranching community in the middle of the century witnessed that connection, and the ranchers did not care for it. They offered frequent testimony rejecting that "interference," and yearning for days without it. Sometimes it seemed as if the ranchers' dreams were now dreams of the past rather than the future. In the 1920s George L. Cross, a prominent cattle rancher from Converse County, probably spoke the sentiments of many when he offered a heart-felt eulogy for the days that were no more: "The free open, unlimited range and with it the big hearted cowman, whose latch was ever open to friend and stranger, and the fearless, hard-working, generous cowboy, are gone forever. The pioneer sheds tears for his lost Eden."[902] The world had changed even more in the intervening twenty years and the frustrations of the ranchers had only increased. The hand of the federal government weighed heavily, from the perspective of some of the ranchers, on their business, and resentments against the government were many and loud, generally in the name of "rugged individualism." The 1954 history of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association observed that the cattle ranchers' struggle in recent years was "to protect themselves and their land against what they looked upon as governmental encroachment."[903] They were, in fact, operating increasingly in an environment of price supports and production quotas and regulated grazing when they used the public land. On the other hand, the open range of the 1880s was long gone, never to return.

Some of that resentment came to a head in a struggle where they saw the government actually taking away private land. In Jackson Hole during the early 1930s John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s Snake River Land Company had quietly (even surreptitiously) purchased farm and ranch lands—and also commercial properties—in the valley at the foot of the Tetons for the purpose of turning them over to the federal

---

[902] George H. Cross, "The First Cattle Ranches," *Wyoming Historical Department Quarterly Bulletin*, August 15, 1924.
[903] Maurice Frink, *Cow Country Cavalcade: Eighty Years of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association* (Denver: The Old West Publishing Co., 1954), 173.

government to add to the small Grand Teton National Park, created in 1929 and which included mainly the mountains west of the valley. The ranchers saw this as a blatant land grab and protested loudly, but investigations showed that there was nothing improper, that there was no profiteering, and that in fact this was a magnanimous act on the part of Rockefeller to benefit the American public by preserving lands from commercial development. That did not dampen the opposition in Jackson Hole and Wyoming to the accumulation of properties, or to their potential removal from the tax rolls, and something of an impasse was reached where the land was ready to be turned over, but the public agencies were not ready to accept it. Finally in 1943 President Roosevelt created the Jackson Hole National Monument with an executive order transferring to the National Park Service over two hundred thousand acres of land that had previously been administered by the Forest Service, land that had been withdrawn from homesteading, land owned by the state of Wyoming, and almost fifty thousand acres of private land, including some that Rockefeller had purchased.[904]

The outcry was immediate and pointed. Maurice Frink, in his history of the Stock Growers Association, observed of the creation of the national monument in this way: "this, the cowmen thought, was the sort of things their sons had gone abroad to fight against." Frink also observed, however, "They were aware of the value of public parks and playgrounds, but they were too close to Jackson Hole to be able to see that area as anything but a part of their economic life."[905] So they protested. Historian Robert Righter describes the most publicized event, noting that the issue became nationally prominent

> . . . on the morning of May 2, 1943, when a group of heavily armed ranchers met near the border of the Jackson Hole National Monument. In the vanguard was the flamboyant movie star and erstwhile cowboy Wallace Beery. During the day the group defiantly trailed some 550 yearlings across the monument to their summer range without a permit. The scene might have been a Hollywood set for any one of the many cowboy-genre films of the decade. One could almost expect Indians to sweep down from the surrounding mountains at any moment. However, this was not make-believe, and the enemy was not Amerinds but the rangers of the National Park Service. Wisely the monument superintendent, Charles Smith, ignored this trespass, and direct confrontation was avoided.[906]

The outrage mounted and focused more on the method of the creation of the monument than on the purpose and nature of it, and for four years Wyoming's lone congressman tried to secure legislation abolishing the monument. But increasingly the histrionics of ranchers carrying their rifles to preserve their grazing rights in the national monument faded, and with them any public outrage. At the same time, the cause of conservation and preservation gained public favor, and the public was national, not

---

[904] The developments leading up to this action, and the consequences of it are part of a significant and complex story related in Robert W. Righter, *Crucible for Conservation: The Struggle for Grand Teton National Park* (n.p.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1982).
[905] Frink, *Cow Country Cavalcade*, 174.
[906] Righter, *Crucible for Conservation*, 114.

just local. When finally, in 1950, modern Grand Teton National Park was created, combining the national monument lands with the old national park and forest service lands and additional private lands, the ranchers still complained loudly and bemoaned their loss, but actually had achieved two very significant victories. One was the proviso in the legislation that no other national monument would be created in Wyoming without express authorization by Congress—a requirement that applied to no other state in the union. Second was the stipulation that permitted ranchers who currently grazed on that land to continue to graze for twenty-five years, and then after that the ranchers' heirs who were living in 1950 could graze.[907] In 2010, only a few of those ranching families continue to graze in Grand Teton National Park. And Clifford Hansen, one of the leaders of the infamous cattle drive of 1943, and who became prominent statewide thereby, and who went on to become governor and U.S. senator, by the 1960s, as Robert Righter observes, "did accept the necessity of the enlarged park. He freely admitted that Grand Teton National Park was an asset to the community and the state."[908] In fact, Governor Hansen is often quoted, since he was a county commissioner in Teton County who opposed the creation of Grand Teton National Monument and was a leader of the group carrying rifles in their horse scabbards to fight the federal government, saying just two decades later, "I want you all to know that I'm glad I lost, because I now know I was wrong. . . . Grand Teton National Park is one of the greatest natural heritages of Wyoming and the nation and one of our great assets."[909]

In some ways the struggle over grazing lands in Jackson Hole reflected the larger course of history in Wyoming, a history in which Wyoming was becoming more integrated, for better or worse, with the modern world. In this case it demonstrated that even lands that were tucked away, far away, and largely hidden from public view and access and sometimes concern, were actually still of interest to the public and the public saw uses for that land other than grazing cattle. And, as it turned out, the ranchers themselves decided that there were occasions when the government could be of benefit to them.

Sometimes, the talk of "rugged individualism" seemed to subside and the role of government was accepted, encouraged, and applauded. The blizzard of 1949 was probably as bad as any winter storm had been in Wyoming history since the disastrous, killing winter of 1886-1887. Starting shortly after New Year's Day in 1949, a blizzard pummeled the area between Nevada and the Dakotas, dumping record snowfalls in many places and Wyoming was at the vortex of the storm which was then followed by a series of additional storms which ultimately continued for about six weeks, merging together in both experience and memory as a single, prolonged arctic onslaught. Highway and rail traffic was halted, often leaving travelers stranded and imperiled and by the middle of January, twenty-two people in a six-state area, some of them in Wyoming, had died as a direct result of the severe cold, the lack of transportation, and the inability to secure food and shelter.[910] Thousands were stranded generally in

---

[907] Righter, *Crucible for Conservation*, 140.
[908] Righter, *Crucible for Conservation*, 143.
[909] Jeremy Pelzer, "Hansen Fought Grand Teton Expansion, then Became Supporter," Casper *Star-Tribune*, October 22, 2009.
[910] "Big Blizzard," *Time*, January 17, 1949.

places they had no desire to be and always unable to attend to pressing needs generated by the storm.[911] While the storms covered the entire state, they were most severe and the consequences were greatest in the eastern part of the state, from Pine Bluffs to Douglas, Buffalo, Gillette, and Moorcroft, and in the southern part of the state from Laramie to Rock Springs. In addition, Fremont County was hit very hard.

Subsequently the Wyoming Stock Growers Association reprinted stories gathered by Louise Love regarding the storm as it affected ranchers. Dean Prosser, a rancher southeast of Cheyenne, for example, felt the storm hard: "His stables drifted over. He had to tunnel to get to his horses. But the snow had drifted in and nearly buried the animals, in a normally tight stable. It was that kind of storm." Another rancher at Antelope Hill Ranch wrote, "The cattle could hardly take it. We had one bunch, calves and older cows, that were out of the corrals but once in forty-six days, and that one day we were damn glad to get them back. Some of the younger cows just did not have the will to live after looking into those storms and winds for forty days. We had shelter for everything, but five of the corrals were so drifted over that the stock could walk out. It was tough enough to last me the rest of my life."[912] Fred Warren's ranch hands, as with cowboys elsewhere, tied rope to themselves to travel from the bunkhouse to the ranch house and other buildings. It was that kind of a storm.

In many ways the storm was reminiscent of the winter of 1886 – 1887 and comparisons followed easily. The big difference, however, was that few livestock were actually lost in 1949. In the first place, the State Emergency Relief Board mobilized with Russell Thorp directing its operations. Thorp had served as Executive Secretary of the WSGA from 1932 until 1949; in 1950 he became Field Secretary for the American National Cattlemen's Association. The resources of the state government went to work to aid not only stranded travelers but stranded livestock and ranchers in need. As part of the emergency relief apparatus, a board in each county was organized that included a county commissioner, a Red Cross representative, the local agricultural agent, and a stock grower—chosen jointly by the WSGA and the Wool Growers Association. With this organization of resources, roads were soon plowed. Railroad tracks were opened. Trains were diverted through Colorado to Salt Lake City and then back into Wyoming to take feed to starving sheep in the Red Desert. The U.S. Air Force dropped tons of hay to stranded cattle and sheep in "Operation Haylift." As the WSGA reports, "medicine and food for humans, and other necessary supplies, were also dropped, but the main object of Operation Haylift was to get hay to the stock on the snow-covered ranges before the animals died of starvation."[913] When Russell Thorp died in 1968, his obituary included this relief effort as one of his large accomplishments: "He and the board were given credit for saving thousands of head of livestock and perhaps some human lives."[914]

---

[911] See, for example, the accounts by Amy Lawrence, James Ehrenberger, and Lucille Dumbrill in "Blizzard of 1949," *Annals of Wyoming*, 76 (Winter 2004): 31-37.
[912] The stories gathered by Louise Love were printed in a small publication, widely available in Wyoming, *Report of Wyoming's "Operation Snowbound" 1949* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Emergency Relief Board, 1949). Frink, *Cow Country Cavalcade*, 193-95.
[913] Frink, *Cow Country Cavalcade*, 197.
[914] "Era Ends as Russell Thorp, 91, Dies; Funeral in Lusk Thursday," Lusk *Herald*, October 31, 1968.

The substantial relief effort was crucial in saving the ranchers' livestock. But the ranchers themselves were important too, for ranching was not at all what it had been in 1886. The cattle were no longer on the open range. They were not left to fend for themselves. The ranchers had changed their practice and the Midwestern system of fenced-in ranching generally prevailed in the winter, and the stockpiles of feed that those ranchers had grown the previous summer helped them avert disaster. The combination of different ranching practices and government assistance—for the ranchers were also no longer just left to fend for themselves—proved critical, and made all the difference in the world. The truth was that these were signs that ranching in Wyoming at mid-century had changed enormously from what it had been in the 1880s. For that matter, the world in which Wyoming's ranches and farms operated had changed—and continued to change.

ii. Thinning the Herd at Midcentury

As Wyoming's farmers and ranchers and homesteaders entered the second half of the twentieth century, they entered the world of modern America, a world characterized by pressures to change, to adapt, or to die, as Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson sometimes expressed them, and those pressures were powerful. It sometimes seemed that government policy, technology, equipment, even science, all promised to help, but somehow, no matter how much the farmers and ranchers adapted, the pressure just increased. What happened was that not only was the outside world in which they operated very much different, much more complex, and generally unyielding, but their own operations were increasingly conforming to the priorities and principles of a modernized economic, political, and social structure whether they wished to or not. A revolution was taking place and they were caught up in it, and the result was a thinning of the herd—the herd of ranchers, farmers, and homesteaders.

By midcentury two world wars and the Depression had changed the world of agriculture in Wyoming, intensifying in myriad ways the pressure on farming and ranching to transform, to modernize, to increase production. If farmers and herders in the 1860s and 1870s were still using implements and following practices recognizable or quickly comprehensible to a time traveler visiting from two thousand years earlier, the changes in the same neighborhood in the 1940s would have completely baffled that time traveler.

Several patterns of change can be discerned in the 1950s but probably the most conspicuous, and by some lights the most alarming, change was that Wyoming was increasingly conforming to the pattern dominant in the rest of the nation. It was not a matter of resisting change, and not a matter of lagging behind change; Wyoming agriculture, in the aggregate, and with significant numbers of exceptions, was part and parcel of the system of agricultural production in the United States. This is eminently understandable given the power and pervasiveness of modernization as a framework in which farmers and ranchers operated, whether it appealed to them or not. The system of government supports and

subsidies and priorities converged with private structures of organization and these were abetted by the influence of scientific development—public and private—that emphasized greater production over other values.

In general terms, the nation during the decade and a half following the war found a prosperity that had been absent for perhaps a couple of decades (and often more) and the constraints of Depression and war fell aside while economic growth surged (with significant dips in 1953-4 and also a downturn in employment in 1958). Consumer spending, a key to agricultural prosperity, finally returned and farm commodity prices in the 1950s generally increased. Yet the picture for farmers and ranchers in Wyoming was more complex, as indeed it was everywhere in the nation, than just higher prices and thus higher incomes. Along with the quantitative growth, the postwar economy generated changes throughout the structure of agriculture, and Wyoming's ranchers and farmers, many of them deeply immersed in a system of commercial production, experienced this unevenly. And these changes were reflected in the built environment of the rural landscape.

The signal development of the postwar years was a dramatic increase in production. Crop yields per acre increased significantly, milk yields per dairy cow jumped, and even beef cattle grew bigger and faster. About the only part of the livestock and farming operation that did not see production rise was the sheep industry. Sheep and lamb numbers had peaked in 1910 and, after dropping in the following decade, were slow to recover. But the numbers climbed during the early years of the Depression (with producers possibly holding on to sheep instead of marketing them, waiting for better prices) so that there were nearly four million sheep in Wyoming by 1932; the numbers dipped again, slightly, in the 1930s but resumed during the war so that by 1943 the sheep population came close to the 1932 mark. After that, however, numbers declined, and then declined some more, and then declined even more. By 1950 fewer than two million sheep grazed Wyoming's forests and deserts, and while the number fluctuated over the following decade, the numbers had generally stabilized, not recovered.[915] Prices did not precisely follow numbers of sheep, and John Niland, who ran sheep in the Red Desert, recalled that wool prices were good during and after the Korean War (1950-1953), and because the prices were so good his family's operation was able to afford to hire specialized commercial crews to shear the eye wool from the sheep, something they usually did themselves since the small amount of wool would seldom pay for itself.[916] On the other hand, Niland also counted the end of the Korean War as a turning point: "The sheep business as I knew it in the Rawlins area ended after the Korean War."[917]

Even this demise is instructive. Various reasons have been totted up for the decline (and it did not really die) of the sheep industry in Wyoming. Daniel Hartley, in his 1976 master's thesis on the decline of the

---

[915] See the compelling graph showing the decline of sheep numbers through the year 2000 in Thomas Foulke, Roger H. Coupal, and David T. Taylor, "Trends in Wyoming Agriculture: Level of Production," University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, MP-107 (December 2000): 3.
[916] John Niland, *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Lagumo Corp., 1994), 67.
[917] Niland, *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming*, 235.

sheep industry, especially attributed the drop to predators, low wool prices, and labor problems.[918] John Niland largely concurred, citing the difficulty of getting good help. He said, "As sources close to home dried up, the use of foreign labor became more and more prevalent. We used hands from Old Mexico and Peru. This worked for a time, but they weren't available in the numbers needed to sustain the large open range operations."[919] Predators were also a problem, but Niland indicated that the decline in sheep numbers actually contributed to the predator losses, because the ratio of sheep to predators changed to the predators' favor; as cattle took up more of the grazing land that the sheep were not using, the predators focused on the dwindling number of sheep. But Niland also offered another insight into what happened to the sheep industry, and that had to do with mechanization, in particular, the increasing use of trucks: "As the trucking industry grew, the large shearing operations disappeared. Shearing crews could come directly to the lambing grounds, shear, and be gone to the next location. Trucks then hauled the product, whether wool or livestock, directly to market. The railroad eventually did away with the shipping points and we were forced to adapt, whether we liked it or not."[920] What is especially important to note in the expansion of the cattle industry (and many sheep operators turned to cattle) and the expansion of motorized vehicles is that the sheep industry was being transformed by the same forces of technology and modernization that operated elsewhere on the ranges and fields of Wyoming and that at one time had contributed to the rise of the sheep industry itself.

In the case of those other commodities, however, production increased, and increased possibly more than ever before. Agricultural historian David Danbom has called this general dynamic process "the productivity revolution."[921] Historian Wayne Rasmussen called this "tremendous increase in agricultural production," a Second Agricultural Revolution.[922] Whatever it is called, there is no doubt about its historical significance and power, even though some, like Paul Conkin, with good reason, argue that from 1950 to 1970, "change was so rapid that almost no one was able to measure, or comprehend, what was happening."[923] Begun in the circumstances of World War II, this revolution took on full velocity and strength in the ensuing years, stimulated and encouraged by higher prices and government regulation of production. As a result of acreage limitations for a particular crop, for example, producers focused on ways to maximize yields from each acre and thus shifted, in perhaps an ironic way, from extensive to intensive agriculture. Instead of intensive agriculture being practiced to supply independent, self-sufficient, sustainable home consumption on the farm, it was now grafted onto a system of modernized and commercialized agriculture that endeavored to increase yields, increase

---

[918] Daniel R. Hartley, "Factors Contributing to the Decline of the Wyoming Sheep Industry," M.S. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1976.
[919] Niland, *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming*, 235.
[920] Niland, *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming*, 236-237.
[921] David Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 234-244.
[922] Wayne D. Rasmussen, "A Postscript: Twenty-five Years of Change in Farm Productivity," *Agricultural History*, 49 (January 1975): 84-86.
[923] Paul Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm: The Transformation of American Agriculture since 1929* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 97.

prices, and increase profits. This was an intensified form of market production and it led to different practices on the farms and ranches of Wyoming, and these practices can best be understood within the framework of modernization already evident.[924]

Mechanization had already taken firm hold in Wyoming's farms and ranches and that mechanization increased dramatically between 1945 and 1960. At the end of World War II, 7,444 Wyoming farms had tractors in operation and five years later that number had climbed to 9,250, and those farms had a total of 15,610 tractors—more than one and a half each. During the 1950s the herd of tractors increased dramatically. The numbers are deceptive. At first glance it appears that the number of tractors declined between 1950 and 1959 since the number of farms with tractors dropped; that mainly reflects the decline in the total number of farms and ranches during the decade. The more revealing statistic is that 8,333 (out of 9,705) farms had 21,591 tractors in 1959. Eighty-six percent of the farms and ranches now had tractors and the number of tractors had increased by around a third. Obviously there were some who still did not have a tractor, but they were not only the minority but were a slim and fading minority; they were clearly holding onto past agricultural methods, and, perhaps, past goals and purposes too.

Moreover, the tractors were bigger and more powerful; in 1951 only eight percent of the tractors sold in the nation had more than thirty-five horsepower, but thirteen years later the figures were reversed and only eight percent had less than thirty-five horsepower.[925] This meant that they were capable of pulling heavier loads and doing heavier work with larger plows, cultivators, and even front-end lifters—all of which meant that traditional systems of performing those same tasks without gasoline-powered machines, and using horse or hand power, were made obsolete, or at least archaic. By 1950, just five years after the end of the war, fewer than a thousand (980) Wyoming farms and ranches had no tractor and just used horses or mules, whereas 2,281 of them had at least one tractor and *no* horses or mules.[926]

The farms and ranches had not only tractors, but trucks too, and those increased as well. Trucks became as ubiquitous as horse-drawn wagons had been, but offered much more power and mobility and even shifted the epicenter of some agricultural operations—enabling the loading of livestock, for example, to take place at scattered points instead of using cattle drives; the sheep industry became more decentralized physically as shearers could now go to the sheep instead of having the sheep brought to

---

[924] An intriguing comparator to the transformation of Wyoming agriculture in mountains and plains is a study of the same processes at work in the Midwest: Mark Friedberger, "The Transformation of the Rural Midwest, 1945-1985," *Old Northwest*, 16 (1992): 13-36. The similarities in the transformation are so compelling that it raises a further consequence to be evaluated—the loss of distinctive regional identities in the rise of a national, homogenized set of agricultural practices.

[925] Gilbert Fite, "The Transformation of South Dakota Agriculture: The Effects of Mechanization, 1939-1964," *South Dakota History*, 19 (Fall 1989): 296.

[926] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1950*, *Volume I, Counties and State Economic Areas*, Part 29 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952), 6; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture: 1959, Final Report*, Vol. I, Part 40, Counties (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1961), 7.

them at huge sheds. And on those operations that produced small grains, the threshing machine—the stationary separator—had been replaced by a combination harvester and separator, the combine, either during World War II or shortly afterwards. Figures for Wyoming are elusive and the combine's use at first was largely restricted to the eastern counties, but studies have demonstrated that in adjacent states the combine had displaced the threshing machine. As Thomas Isern explains, "at war's end, farmers quickly invested their wartime profits in combines. Once resumed, then, the conversion to combines was rapid. In most of the northern plains it was substantially complete by 1950 . . . ." Isern notes that in North Dakota seventy percent of the small grains "were combined from the windrow, with additional acres being straight-cut. Thereafter, attrition eliminated the last few advocates of the binder."[927] Gilbert Fite noted that half of South Dakota's farms had self-propelled combines by 1954.[928] In Wyoming, the number of combines doubled in the decade following World War II, and in 1954 a third of all farms and ranches in Wyoming had a combine.[929]

The combine is one of the easier machines to follow in history, but there were other, smaller, mechanical devices that found their ways on to the farms and ranches of Wyoming in ever-greater numbers in the years after World War II. These are deceptive in their appearance as just another tool or implement; but they held within their engineering serious implications; they were not single implements but parts of entire systems, and this systematization was a part of the technological transformation as much as any one part. Hay balers, for example, were widespread following the war, and, pulled by tractors, these not only displaced the horses in the cutting and the raking, which was done by a mower blade and rake pulled probably by the same tractor, but meant a different system for stacking and storing hay that also no longer depended on horses. The chain of changes stretches far beyond the device being pulled by the tractor. In the wake of the adoption of the tractor and the combine and the baler and other machines, not only the herd of draft horses and mules was being thinned, but the herd of people who had done this work previously was also being thinned.

In addition, dairy operations had more vacuum-driven milking machines. In 1945 there were 598 milking machines in the state and five years later there were 1082 such machines and in the following decade they were augmented by electric milk coolers. This increase in milking machines took place at the same time that the number of farms selling dairy products declined; this was not an anomaly, but a direct relationship in which the larger operations grew and became more mechanized while the smaller ones withered and disappeared.[930] The number of milking machines increased in Wyoming in the 1950s although the number of dairy operations continued to decline. On those same intensive dairy operations,

---

[927] Thomas D. Isern, *Bull Threshers & Bindlestiffs: Harvesting & Threshing on the North American Plains* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 206.
[928] Fite, "The Transformation of South Dakota Agriculture: The Effects of Mechanization, 1939-1964," 296.
[929] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture: 1959, Final Report*, Vol. I, Part 40, Counties (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1961), 7.
[930] Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1950*, *Volume I, Counties and State Economic Areas*, Part 29, 10.

in addition, feeding was done differently, using the techniques of drylot feeding where the dairy herds were confined in lots where the feed was delivered instead of grazing in pastures. Alfalfa became the prime dairy food instead of grass. Of course, those small dairy operations that could not afford the new equipment and techniques were the ones that declined while the more capital intensive operations grew.

A concurrent development, and one often related to the mechanization taking place, as in the example of the milking machines and milk coolers, was the increase in electricity available to Wyoming's farms and ranches. In 1940, 5,184 of the state's 15,018 farms and ranches had electricity, and of that number 1,710 got it from their own power plants, meaning that only 3,474 (23%) were connected to the power grid. During the war, there was only slight growth with 6,794 farms having electric power, 4,780 (37%) on the grid in 1945. By 1950, though, the number receiving power from the powerlines had grown dramatically to 9,437 total, with 7,931 of them on the grid. Sixty-three percent of the state's farms and ranches were connected to the powerlines within five years of the end of the war. By the end of the 1950s, the agricultural census reported only this: " . . . the use of electricity is now so widespread that there is no longer any need for obtaining a count of the farms having it."[931] Electricity carried with it a host of other changes. The machinery in the system of production and having power in the barn to operate the machinery was a profound change, but the domestic aspects were equally significant. Using electricity to pump water meant that indoor plumbing and bathrooms became much more common, that outdoor privies could be consigned to a welcome oblivion, and that kitchens could become more hospitable. It also meant that freezers and refrigerators could be put into use more, and this contributed to the demise or reduction of gardens—and milk cows. Moreover, with an electric freezer installed, it was no longer necessary to rotate butchering around the neighbors. The electric power certainly brightened life on farms and ranches; it also changed that life.

New technology seemed to be virtually everywhere after the war. In the sugar beet industry, which had long involved onerous labor, the revolution came there too. Every step of the beet producing process—planting, blocking, thinning, harvesting, topping, and loading the beets onto a truck—had been performed by hand for years. Some developments had promised modification of the process in the 1920s and 1930s, but they remained more promise than reality. During World War II, however, technologies came together as a result of research at agricultural experiment stations in other states to create a mechanical beet topper that could top (remove the beet top) beets of all sizes, and this breakthrough provided a key to putting together the other steps in the harvesting process. At the same time, other developments altered the cultivation process. The development of segmented seed (instead of the monogerm seed, which grew plants in bunches that then had to be thinned and blocked) in the 1930s meant that seeds could be planted by machine at evenly spaced intervals with industrial regularity and precision, and the use of one machine encouraged the use of other machines, and then the use of fertilizers and herbicides to increase the efficiency of the beet plantings. By 1943 sixty percent of the beets planted were from segmented seeds. In 1944 seven percent of the beets in the nation were

---

[931] Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1950*, *Volume I, Counties and State Economic Areas*, Part 29, 6; Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture: 1959, Final Report*, Vol. I, Part 40, Counties, xviii.

harvested mechanically, and in 1945 twelve percent were; but change was pushing forward. In 1958 one hundred percent of the nation's beet crop was harvested mechanically.[932] The consequence of this reflected exactly its origins. Developed to reduce what was euphemistically called "the labor problem," and to displace the hand labor long associated with the beet fields, the mechanization of the sugar beet fields did just that. As Douglas Hurt explains, "this technology freed [the growers] from the bother of securing migrant labor crews and providing them with rudimentary shelter and care."[933] The workers were reduced in number, but not completely replaced. In 1954 the buildings that had been constructed in the colony of Mexican Americans near the beet fields at Lovell were demolished. The small number of workers remaining found quarters elsewhere.[934] Those workers were being thinned, just as the beets had been thinned, and now the machines were doing the thinning.

One innovation that literally reconfigured the appearance of the countryside was the development of the center-pivot irrigation system, starting in 1954, so that more and different land could be made productive by the addition of water. The now familiar lateral pipes, stretching out hundreds of feet with sprinklers attached and the whole device turning on huge wheels, capable of watering acres of cropland or pastures, began to spread across Wyoming. They held important advantages. For one thing, they did not have to be adjacent to a prominent stream; wells to an aquifer could provide the water instead, making it possible to irrigate new lands, lands that were higher than normally susceptible to irrigation. Second, that also meant that they were not vulnerable to the droughts that dried up the streams (although the depletion of the aquifer became a new problem). Third, they could irrigate uneven terrain and soils that could absorb moisture quickly—places where ditch (surface) irrigation is less effective. They also required less labor than ditch irrigation. On the other hand, they required more capital.[935] They also required energy, and either an electric or gasoline motor, to pump the water and drive the apparatuses across the fields.

---

[932] Wayne D. Rasmussen, "Technological Change in Western Sugar Beet Production," *Agricultural History*, 41 (January 1967): 31-35. A qualifying comment is in order. The notion of 100% replacement is absolute, but some, perhaps a very small amount, hoe and hand labor in the sugar beet fields continued beyond the 1960s. The family of Jose Aijala in 1976 made its eighth annual trip to Powell from Texas to work in the sugar beet fields in the basin, working twelve hours a day by the middle of May "hand thinning beets." Nor was this family alone; Aijala said, "he knew three other families who came to Powell with jobs and housing arranged, only to find that the housing was unavailable." The accompanying photograph shows the family at work in the fields on the Shumway farm, west of Powell: "They work methodically in an unbroken rhythm of hoeing, up and down the long rows of young plants." "Texas Family back in Powell for Eighth Year," Powell *Tribune*, May 25, 1976.
[933] R. Douglas Hurt, *Agricultural Technology in the Twentieth Century* (Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1991), 86. This useful book is a reprint of the April 1991 issue of *Journal of the West*, with an epilogue added.
[934] Augustin Redwine, "Lovell's Mexican Colony," *Annals of Wyoming*, 51 (Fall 1979): 35.
[935] David E. Kromm, "Irrigation," in David J. Wishart, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 854.

The change was not always welcome. Even in the sheep industry, where the major changes had been evident in the 1910s and 1920s with the adoption of the large shearing pens, the postwar changes were nonetheless jolting and some resisted, or at least were ready to offer last rites to the valued and proven systems of the past. As John Niland recalled, in an elegiac mood, "I always felt that when we shifted from the herder, camp mover concept with wooden-wheeled wagons and pack animals, to the rubber-tired wagons pulled by trucks on new roads, that we had reached the beginning of the end of the business."[936] People noticed the revolution underway, and sometimes they did not applaud.

There was more. New machinery had always made something of a sensation, sometimes conjuring visions of an effortless future, sometimes frightening people who saw and heard the mammoth machines crawling across the countryside (or watched the trucks moving down the roads), but now much of the new technology was relatively silent and even unseen. Science was playing an ever-greater role in agricultural production, whether it was crops or livestock. The excitement was in the research laboratory, in the technology think tanks, and in the corporate headquarters. Research in the food processing, agricultural equipment, and chemical industries and research in the agricultural colleges have often converged on ways to increase production, something some see as a deviation from the original mission of the agricultural extension operations, to improve the rural home and rural life and to promote the welfare of the consumer.[937] Post World War II developments in this area revolutionized agricultural systems in a kind of silent revolution in the fields.

One simple and obvious development is the increased use of fertilizer. Ammonia-based fertilizers became much more readily available after World War II because of the vastly increased production of nitrogen (the U.S. built ten new nitrogen plants) for explosives during the war. Those nitrogen production facilities could also supply, in the proverbial sense of beating swords into plowshares, the agricultural market, packaging the nitrogen as fertilizer. After the war the plants shifted to producing anhydrous ammonia pellets that could be dropped on the ground where the chemicals would thus leach into the soil, thus resupplying the valuable nutrients that plants had removed from the soil. (In the late 1950s and 1960s the ammonia would be injected into the ground instead of using pellets.) This stimulated farm production vastly, but it had other effects too. It significantly reduced the necessity of rotating crops since the purpose of that rotation had been to retain the tilth of the soil by offsetting the depleting effects of different crops with each other in different years and seasons. That, in turn, encouraged moving away from those alternate crops, the nitrogen restoring legumes, for example, and shifting to a focus on producing the crop with the more substantial market yield—sugar beets or corn, for example, and doing so consistently instead of alternately. In fact, that trend was encouraged by another consequence of the fertilizer, which was to diminish the role of different soils.

Crop diversity had once been a natural result of different soils, suitable to different crops. But the

---

[936] Niland, *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming*, 118.
[937] There is a vast literature on this issue, some of it addressed in its Wyoming specifics in the chapters above, but see also, Jim Hightower, *Hard Times, Hard Tomatoes: The Failure of the Land Grant College Complex* (Washington, D.C.: Agribusiness Accountability Project, 1972).

modern fertilizers meant that soil conditions could often be compensated for by the addition of the right chemicals, thus making it possible, again, to focus production on the single most marketable crop. As economist Mary Eschelbach Gregson summarizes her own research in this area in the neutral terms of a statistician, "After World War II, specialization was concurrent with a rise in the widespread use of chemical fertilizer."[938] Moreover, fertilizers were enhanced by the addition of new and more powerful pesticides and herbicides. All of which depended on the new tractors for their application, unless they were even more sophisticated and used aerial applicators. The fertilizers were then supplemented increasingly by two other chemicals developed and used during the war. Information is not readily available on the extent of use of the insecticide DDT and the herbicide 2,4D but nationally they became routine applications in agricultural operations and the more they were used the less expensive they became. Moreover, as historian Judith Fabry, who has studied the issue, notes, "rapid adoption of these two products gave rise to an industry that created an endless stream of chemical solutions to the problems of agriculture."[939] Again, the systematization of each technological innovation holds implications that keep churning beyond their particular use.

The development of hybrids in both crops and livestock also increased and those new varieties—and fewer of them—became the norm, which led to dramatic production increases. University of Wyoming experimentation with different varieties of wheat has been prominent for nearly a century (and winter wheat largely replaced spring wheat in Wyoming between 1940 and 1960), but the range of genetic differentiation through selective breeding in the years after World War II—before modern biotechnology and DNA manipulation (since 1980 generally)—is also impressive. Nationally speaking, historian Danbom observes, ". . . selective breeding changed virtually every crop and animal produced commercially," and that applied to Wyoming as well as other parts of the U.S.[940] One recent Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service analysis observes the way some of this hybridization has worked, noting, "In Wyoming, new varieties of alfalfa and corn have extended the distribution of these crops by shortening time to maturation, allowing them to be grown in most regions where sufficient water is available. Most other crops have had new varieties developed that are more disease resistant and drought or cold tolerant."[941] It was in the postwar years that this hybridization especially took off.

It was not just plants where new varieties were developed, for livestock also changed as new hybrids and engineered breeding programs developed greater producers. Previously, the main emphasis was in the

---

[938] Mary Eschelbach Gregson, "Long-Term Trends in Agricultural Specialization in the United States: Some Preliminary Results," *Agricultural History*, 70, (Winter 1996): 90. See also Dana G. Dalrymple, "Changes in Wheat Varieties and Yields in the United States, 1919-1984," *Agricultural History*, 62 (Autumn, 1988): 20-36 and Elizabeth Law-Evans and Paul A. Kay, "Quantifying the Effect of Technology and Management on Wheat Yields in the Western Great Plains," *Great Plains Research*, 4 (1994): 133-146.

[939] Judith Fabry, "Agricultural Science and Technology in the West," in R. Douglas Hurt, ed., *The Rural West Since World War II* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 184.

[940] Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 235.

[941] Foulke, Coupal, and Taylor, "Trends in Wyoming Agriculture," 44.

purity of breeding; accordingly, the number and kind of registered bulls in the grazing allotments was carefully regulated by the ranchers themselves. In 1950, one analysis concluded that "most of the cattle are Herefords though there are some herds of Aberdeen-Angus and a few shorthorns."[942] This adherence to the stability of traditional purebreds was about to change and new breeds and different systems emerged that promoted greater productivity—more marketable animals and their products. In the 1950s, the development of artificial insemination techniques (semen collection, storage, and freezing) contributed hugely to the revolution. It can probably best be seen in the dairy industry where genetic diversity in the individual herds was always a critical and demanding factor, given customary small herds of milch cows; with artificial insemination it was no longer necessary to maintain a bull in addition to the milch cows and then to exchange the bull's services with the neighbors' bulls periodically. At the same time, however, the genetic engineering actually reduced and homogenized the number of breeds used in dairy operations (by the 1980s ninety percent of the dairy herds would be Holsteins).[943] The result was that the cattle produced dramatically larger amounts of milk, literally doubling their capacity between 1940 and 1980. At the Snake River Ranch in Jackson Hole, and probably elsewhere in the state too, stanchions built in the dairy barn in the 1930s could no longer be used by the 1960s because the new breeds of cattle simply were too large to fit.[944]

Beef livestock were equally bred carefully so that the cattle would possess exactly the right marketable qualities—again with artificial insemination making its contribution in the 1950s—and the new carefully engineered livestock were enhanced by the development of new chemicals. Although these were applied mainly to the controlled feeding environments of the feedlot and dairy operation, and the majority of Wyoming beef cattle were sold and taken to feedlots outside the state,[945] the increased use of antibiotics, another wartime breakthrough, and vitamins and proteins found increasing use. Along with the proliferation of antibiotics and dietary enhancements came an increasingly common facility on many ranches, although often just a room in an existing structure: a veterinary supply room.

Change was everywhere. Ranchers were feeding their cattle more and marketing them differently. Ted Olson, writing in 1973, was actually a little behind when he described how ranchers sold their cattle: "Marketing beef-on-the-hoof is different now. Buyers come to the ranch and make offers. When a deal is struck they load the cattle into trucks and drive off—to the stockyards in Denver or to feedlots in northern Colorado, where they will be fattened on beet pulp before being shipped farther for slaughter."[946] As early as 1950, Eugene Mather noted that "Feeders from irrigated districts of the West or from eastern Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois may come to the ranch and buy the cattle either for immediate or later delivery."[947] For that matter, a small number of Wyoming ranchers were feeding

---

[942] Eugene Mather, "The Production and Marketing of Wyoming Beef Cattle," *Economic Geography*, 26 (April 1950): 82.
[943] See Fabry, "Agricultural Science and Technology in the West," 172.
[944] Author interview with William Resor, Snake River Ranch, July 2, 2003.
[945] Mather, "The Production and Marketing of Wyoming Beef Cattle," 91-93.
[946] Ted Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 190.
[947] Mather, "The Production and Marketing of Wyoming Beef Cattle," 90.

their cattle to finish them instead of shipping them off for finishing elsewhere prior to slaughter and those who were not, like their ranching counterparts in other states, were keeping their cattle for shorter periods of time. And feedlots, which made their first appearance before World War II, were evident in the Big Horn Basin and in the lower reaches of the North Platte River, but these were never very many; the major feedlots for finishing Wyoming cattle were out of state. The shift in this regard was that more and more Wyoming cattle were being shipped to California instead of exclusively to eastern or Midwestern markets.

Sometimes newcomers to Wyoming, after spending an evening at a rodeo, conclude that ranching in Wyoming is the only thing that has not changed in the state. They can see the growth and modern development in farming and in the mineral industry, but ranching is still ranching, after all the years, and is a remnant of nineteenth century organization, culture, and priorities. But ranching had changed enormously too. In 1953, Oda Mason, who raised registered and commercial Hereford cattle near Laramie, summed up the changes: "I have been a cowpuncher and cowman for the past fifty-five years, and the only thing that remains the same over those years is that we still use cows." But then he went on: "Even they are different critters, due to changes in breeding, feeding and methods of handling."[948] It was a different operation entirely.

There was one other change, though, and that was that there were fewer ranchers and farmers around to work with the other changes. The development and use of new technologies, the utilization of scientific research, and the greater specialization of activity on the farms and ranches often appear as a manifestation of progress, as an inevitable process of improvement, increased efficiency, and greater convenience for the farmer and rancher. But the displacement of traditional methods and the proliferation of heavy machinery, whether it was in the adoption of the combine or acquiring a tractor and truck, had a number of other equally important consequences. And so did the acquisition of better-bred livestock and fertilizers and feed supplements. In the first place, the acquisition of a tractor or combine or milking machine meant that more land and more livestock could be worked by fewer people. The corollary of that factor, however, was that usually more acres and more cattle *had* to be worked to justify the investment in the machinery.

And that led to yet another corollary: capital investment in land and machinery and technology had replaced labor as the primary factor of production. The social consequences of mechanization and specialization were as important as the measurement of the process in terms of increased production. As historian Gilbert Fite observed approvingly, "Farmers who managed well and had capital for land and the proper machines could operate large acreages. The gap between bigger, more prosperous farmers and those who were just getting by was widening perceptively."[949] More and more farmers and ranchers were being squeezed out in this effort which ultimately relied on how much capital one could deploy. A recent assessment by the Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service could have been offered with the same measure of truth in 1960: "agriculture is now more capital intensive than ever, and operators are

[948] Frink, *Cow Country Cavalcade*, 221-222.
[949] Fite, "The Transformation of South Dakota Agriculture," 297.

more dependent on capital markets for cash flow and more sensitive to interest rates."[950] That dependence was certainly more intense and involved more dollars in 2002, but the dependence was just as decisive.

In fact, during the decade and a half following World War II, two overwhelming patterns dominated the farming and ranching economy in Wyoming. One pattern was that there were fewer and fewer farms and ranches in the state. In 1940 there had been a total of 15,018 farms in the state but by the end of World War II that had dropped to 13,076. At the end of the 1950s, in the agricultural census of 1959, the number had fallen to 9,744—a loss of one out of every four farms and ranches in just fourteen years. The other side of this pattern was another: the farms and ranches that survived were bigger and bigger. In 1940 the average farm size in Wyoming was 1,866.2 acres, and that increased substantially during the war so that the average was then 2,532.6 acres, just five years later. Jump forward fourteen years to the 1959 census and the average farm in Wyoming was 3,715 acres, an increase of almost fifty percent. It should be noted too that the remaining farms and ranches looked different and functioned differently than they had. Even up to and during World War II a great many Wyoming farms and ranches had some chickens, several pigs, a couple of milk cows, and a substantial garden to provide for the family's table. That diverse production had been, not long before the war, almost a defining element of Wyoming's farms and ranches. But this changed. In 1945 10,743 of the state's 13,076 farms (82%) had chickens; by 1959 5,655 (58%) of the state's 9,744 farms had any chickens. In 1940, 11,656 (78%) had milk cows; nineteen years later, that number had dropped to 5,521 (57%). In 1940, 6,610 of the state's 15,016, (44%) farms had some hogs (and this was down from 8,619 in 1920); in 1959 2,462 (25%) had any pigs. In 1959 3,902 (40%) farms reported harvesting vegetables for home use; in 1945 8,954 (68%) had reported growing their own vegetables.[951] A decade and a half after the end of World War II, more and more of the farms and ranches were buying their food, and more of it, at the grocery store in town. In the following decades, the numbers would drop even more and the diversity would decline with them, reflecting a greater specialization and trend toward monoculture in the state, the same as the rest of the nation.

The small farms and ranches, the family farms and ranches, were in trouble in the years after World War II, pretty much as they always had been in the twentieth century, but the pressures were even more powerful now and the options fewer, short of moving to town to find a job. Those that thrived in the new system, those that continued to show a profit, were the larger operations that continued to get larger, that had access to capital, that could invest in the innovations at hand and take advantages of the benefits of machinery, the new systems of irrigation, the rush of scientific enhancements to production, the acute specialization in operation and production, and the ones who could exercise the political leverage to keep those benefits coming. They consolidated their control by acquiring the properties of their neighbors who could not survive in that system.

---

[950] Foulke, Coupal, and Taylor, "Trends in Wyoming Agriculture," 20.
[951] The most convenient source for these and other data is the *Census of Agriculture: 1959, Final Report*, Vol. I, Part 40, Counties, 9-13.

Government policy in the postwar years encouraged this new system of agriculture with the support it provided in research and in its price support program, which was still, as it had been during the New Deal, based on productive capacity rather than need or other circumstances. The Farm Act of 1949 made permanent that policy which had been parceled together during years of Depression and war and it established price supports, marketing quotas, and acreage allotments as permanent features not just of agricultural policy but of American life. Those policies generally benefited the largest operators who could operate on the scale that the industrial agriculture government model was designed for. Moreover, those policies also encouraged, as did much of the technology and science, a single crop form of agriculture and the production quotas and acreage allotments did this almost explicitly. Even in the Eisenhower administration, when Ezra Taft Benson, from neighboring Utah, became Secretary of Agriculture, the policy changes did not alter the fundamental course. Benson deplored the government regulation of agriculture as a form of socialism and for his entire term he fought to restore farmers and ranchers to a free market. When he ultimately partially succeeded, by lifting production controls and price supports in the 1958 farm bill, commodity production jumped much more than he expected, thereby glutting the market with farm produce, bringing the prices down, and, without the price supports, even more farmers lost their farms. When the administration restored price supports and production controls, they once again were designed to reward the successful producers, not to rescue those family farms in trouble.[952]

The further consequence of this was yet more thinning of the herd, only this herd was the ranchers and farmers and their families. Some, as Secretary Benson hoped and expected they would, moved to town to find work. Some went to work on the farms and ranches for others. Some managed to stay on their land by shifting, as had an earlier generation of ranchers, to herding city folk instead of cattle. Novelist Mary O'Hara had a ranch on Pole Mountain, between Laramie and Cheyenne, and she eventually chose the dude ranch option: "Of all the crops we have raised—sheep, milk, horses, boys—only the boy crop has carried itself."[953] In Jackson Hole, where in 1951 the new Grand Teton National Park promised to be an even greater magnet for tourists than it had been already, a new wave of dude ranches, sometimes converted operations, provided a more modern and less rustic form of tourism than the old dude ranches, and they often were somewhere between ranches and tourist courts. These, in turn, were rivaled by an increase in hobby ranches as wealthy Easterners acquired troubled cattle ranches or built their new ones.

In order to remain on the ranch or the farm the solution for some people was not especially new, but it was sometimes successful. Homesteaders from the very beginning had often resorted to finding work nearby to help generate some income to pay for food, seed, tools, and general provisions while they were trying to prove up, waiting for their first crop, or supplementing the funds they had brought with them. When they ran into hard patches they would once again seek out sources of income in town. In

---

[952] See on this issue generally, Willard Wesley Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 145-46; John P. Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and in Peace, 1941-1960* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 132-32; and "Ezra Benson's Harvest," *Time*, November 23, 1959.

[953] Mary O'Hara, *Wyoming Summer* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), 28.

the middle of the twentieth century it became commonplace—almost a standard feature—on family farms for one or more member of the family to find employment elsewhere, often driving to town, to support the family's farming or ranching habit. Increasingly this family member would be the wife and mother while the husband / father worked the fields; such was the modern division of labor. Originally the idea had been that the homestead would be self-sufficient and would thereby provide a base of independence for the family to live a free, if not always sumptuous, life. And it worked that way for many people. But in a society organized around the marketplace, and where routine ranch and farm operations required debt and mortgage obligations, that option was seldom available. But finding employment, or partial employment, elsewhere did enable many to remain on their property, even, ironically, if it had been a homestead.

In addition, there have been, and remain, many who have retained traditional methods of farming and ranching, who have minimized their dependence on markets for their livelihood, who continue to grow much of their livestock and garden produce for their own table. There remain families in the upper Green River valley, in the Platte River valley, in the Big Horn Basin, in the Powder River Basin, in southwest Wyoming—everywhere in the state—who still put up their hay with a beaverslide and horses, who feed their livestock on frigid February mornings by loading some of that hay on a wagon pulled by stout Percherons, and fork it off to the cattle. There are ranch and farm people all across Wyoming who struggle to have their small herds of livestock pay their bills each year, who herd their animals to summer grazing in the high country and back again in the fall, who know their sheep and cattle like individuals and who know when one is missing, who watch in dismay as their schools, medical services, and stores migrate to the larger cities along with their neighbors, and who see themselves as part of a dwindling, but proud, community closely linked to the past despite the compromises that have been necessary to remain on the land. And these people are the ones close to the land, these are the people who, no matter their income level, are closest to the Jeffersonian vision, and who, perhaps, are closest to living their own dreams as a matter of choice and resolve. They follow this traditional way of life, but it is not easy.

Not everyone who wants to has been able to stay on the ranches and farms of Wyoming. Thus the modern exodus from the rural quarters to the urban concentrations. The migration from the countryside to the cities was a national phenomenon after World War II, and represented a continuation of the process of urbanization underway nationally since at least the Civil War. But in Wyoming it held a slightly different meaning. There had been a continuing flow onto the land in Wyoming from the earliest days, even before territorial status in 1868, and that had grown even while people in other parts of the country were abandoning farms and moving to the city looking for work. Homesteads had increased during the 1910s and 1920s, even though an agricultural depression was forcing some people from the land in part of that time. The flow of people onto the land forged ahead even in the circumstances of the Depression of the 1930s (and possibly *because* of those circumstances) with the number of farms growing until at least 1935. After that, however, the number of farms and ranches began to decline. A turning point had been reached in Wyoming history. The cowboy state was losing its cowboys—and its ranchers and farmers and settlers and homesteaders and nesters and herders. In the years after World War II that migration accelerated as each subsequent census showed fewer and fewer

farms—and farm families—in the state until the farm recession of the 1970s.

On a national scale, historian David Danbom has offered a concise summary of the impact of this migration on rural America:

> At the local level, migration made it difficult and often impossible to maintain institutions and communities. Churches and local lodges and clubs died for lack of membership, and even consolidated schools became too small to be sustained as independent entities. Depopulation meant that fewer taxpayers had to shoulder the burden for essential public services. Small towns that were dependent on the business of farmers from the local area declined when increasing numbers of merchants and professionals found that demand for the goods and services they offered was insufficient to sustain them. All of these results can be charted or quantified. Less easy to measure was the effect of migration on rural morale, the degree to which it heightened rural people's sense of isolation, and the impact it had on neighborhood and kinship groups that had been so important in sustaining farm people, especially women.[954]

For connecting the national trend with the local, the most articulate perspective in Wyoming is that of Teresa Jordan in her memoir, *Riding the White Horse Home*, about life on a ranch in the Iron Mountain area. She and her family, finally, moved off the ranch in the 1970s because they could no longer afford to keep it, and the sense of loss was palpable, but it was also linked to a broader pattern: "When I turned around I had to confront not only the loss of people I loved and land that had defined my family for nearly a century but also a way of life. My family was not alone when we left ranching. We were part of an exodus of around 13 million people who have left the land during my lifetime."[955] When they left the ranch, these people also left a way of life, and usually, but not always, with a sense of compulsion more than a sense of escape. The homesteads, the ranches, and the farms proved powerful, as Teresa Jordan implies, in the shaping of identities, and the grieving over the various levels of loss has been both deeply personal and profoundly social.

iii. Requiem for a Rancher

In the autumn of 1995 Viola Jessie Krejci died in Lusk. Ms. Krejci was not a leader in the halls of power nor did she gain fame for her extraordinary talent, although she was known as a champion haystacker and she was widely respected and appreciated, and even admired, for sharing with others—

---

[954] Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 246
[955] Teresa Jordan, *Riding the White Horse Home: A Western Family Album* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 15.

from her prize quilts to her nursing skills. There is one thing that she did that is worthy of special note, however, and that brings her a degree of distinction and that should give us pause for reflection. Viola Jessie Krejci was the last person to file on a homestead on the public domain in Wyoming. Her death in 1995, a century and a third after the passage of the Homestead Act, serves as a reminder that homesteading was not something from the remote past, not something restricted to the shallow caricatures of movies and some streams of folklore, and not something to be lightly dismissed.

The road to becoming a rancher and a homesteader was not a direct one for Ms. Krejci. She was born in western Nebraska in 1910, was raised on a farm in that area, went off to nursing school, and then worked as a nurse, and from all appearances she did well in that training and she pursued her profession. But this was in the Depression, and times were hard. What her circumstances were is not known, but in 1935 she learned of a homestead near Lance Creek, in Niobrara County, Wyoming, that was open. In April of 1935, just before the Taylor Grazing Act went into effect, she filed on what was reported as the last homestead in Wyoming, doing so by using the 1916 Stock Raising Homestead Act. There would be other people after 1935 who could claim homesteader status in Wyoming with ample justification—the World War II veterans who managed to file on Bureau of Reclamation lands in the late 1940s—and certainly they labored as hard and sacrificed as much for their own dreams too. But Ms. Krejci was the last of a wave of people using the laws designed to distribute the public domain to the American people broadly to file in the state.

Ms. Coffman, as she was before her 1937 marriage to Louis Krejci, a homesteader five miles away, proved up on her homestead on October 31, 1941, and then the couple, and their family, worked both homesteads raising crops and cattle. Her responsibilities were familiar to her gender and included home-schooling the children just because they were far from a public school, and raising chickens and a garden. By all indications the couple shared much of the work, though, and her obituary notes, "the couple proved up on the homestead by building sheds, a house and a well." But there was more:

> She was champion hay stacker for Louis until he purchased a baler, then she became very good at stacking bales. She rode the dump rake with him until failing eyesight cause[d] him to quit; then she rode it for [daughter] Maryevelyn. She enjoyed the activity so much that she did not retire until she was 81, when failing health forced her to stop. She also loved cattle work and was actively involved in livestock work until recent years.[956]

In the life of Viola Jessie Krejci there are many elements of the larger story of ranching and farming in Wyoming in the years since the Depression. There is homesteading, and homesteading a farm that

---

[956] "Viola Jessie (Coffman) Krejci," Lusk *Herald*, November 8, 1995; "Land Patent for Viola Coffman Krejci, formerly Viola Coffman," Patent Number 1112410, dated October 23, 1941, in Bureau of Land Management, Land Patents Records, Document number 057509. The initial filing date of April 1935 is slightly at variance with the withdrawal of lands in Wyoming from homesteading on November 26, 1934 and February 5, 1935, but presumably the mechanism of homesteading, if not the actual filing, had been started by the deadline.

raised both crops and livestock, plus the matter of gender and gender roles, something that she seemed to handle with the agility and skill of someone whose talent stacking hay was admired, and then there was also the transformation of technology. In each of these elements, Ms. Krejci seems broadly representative of an important phase of Wyoming history. She even personalizes the thousands of men and women before her who filed their claims on homesteads, who settled Wyoming's ranches and farms, and who made their lives on the mountains and plains and drainages of the territory and then the state, stretching over a century or more up to 1960—and beyond. And it could be that with her passing it is possible to look back and see the passing of an important element of Wyoming's ranching, farming, and homesteading history. A requiem is due not just for this rancher, but for the world of ranching and farming that she lived in, a requiem for traditional life on the Wyoming land, a requiem for all those who came to Wyoming to find their new home on a ranch, on a farm, on a homestead.

For, if Wyoming ranching and homesteading and farming had not disappeared—and it assuredly had not—it had nonetheless changed fundamentally. Some will not mourn the passing of earlier structures and practices of ranching and farming, and that view may even be the modern consensus. The remnants of the past associated with those practices and objectives, however, deserve acknowledgement for their historic role and beg for understanding of why and how they came into existence in the first place, and then also, what happened to them. Consider Teresa Jordan's tribute, a form of requiem, for the buildings of her family's ranch when she left: "When I turned around to look at Iron Mountain, I saw hundreds of examples of the particular genius required by a life tied to land and animals and seasons: the house I grew up in was built into the hill for insulation and shelter from the wind; the barn, too, was built into the hill so that hay could be unloaded directly into its loft. The design of each building, each corral, each ditch, was tied directly to the creative act of staying alive. So was the interdependence of the people who lived there, the design of the community itself."[957] The buildings and structures are clues to the lives of the people. When they left behind the buildings, they left behind a part of themselves, something of their values and purposes.

Leaving behind the buildings, as often happened, also involved leaving behind the traditional methods of ranching and farming, and of homesteading. Leaving behind all the dreams that these buildings harbored often came with the retirement or death of the residents. Sometimes it came in the forced sale of property. Sometimes the people moved off the land and into the city—following either sparkling opportunities or heavy forces of compulsion. Once they left, however, there was seldom any turning back, rarely any real opportunity to start anew in the calling that had defined their lives earlier. Ted Olson, for example, summed up his own experience and that of his brother, after they had left their family's ranch on the Laramie River: "Even before we were too old to undertake new ventures Oscar and I realized that our dream of becoming ranchers again was unrealistic. Our kind of ranching was obsolete. We knew horses; we didn't know tractors. I suppose we could have learned—Oscar at least, if not I. Everything now is mechanized—plowing, cultivating, fertilizing, irrigating, harvesting. The gain in time and efficiency and the saving in manpower are obvious. But the capital investment is

[957] Jordan, *Riding the White Horse Home*, 16.

correspondingly heavy."[958]

It was more than mechanization, though, that represented an obstacle, and that made "our kind of ranching" obsolete. The purpose of claiming a homestead, and of ranching and farming, had changed dramatically from what it had been earlier; ranching was increasingly, as Olson and others lamented, strictly a business proposition, not a way of life, not the bedrock of democracy, not the birthright of free Americans. It became, as Wyoming's farmers and ranchers perhaps tire of hearing, the same as operating a business on Main Street— no more and no less. It was known now by the more urbane name of agribusiness. While that transformation plainly opens up opportunities for some commercial aspirations, it also just as surely closes the door on other, personal, cultural, ancient, and even sacred dreams for others.

The history of ranching and farming and homesteading in Wyoming is a rich and vibrant history. It is also a history filled with people proudly carrying traditions from the past alongside bright visions for the future, with dreams fulfilled and with crushing disappointments, with moments of grand celebration at some moments and quiet despair at others. It is a history in which people built their homesteads, shaped their ranches, and plowed their fields because that particular piece of land held the key to the meaning of life. And on those thousands of pieces of land they built small monuments, not to themselves, but to their values, their goals, their priorities, and their way of life, a way of life that was constantly challenged by powerful forces of social and economic change, forces that proclaimed progress through specialization, consolidation, centralization, depersonalization, and the business-like organization of life, but somehow wound up leaving out those who saw farming and ranching and homesteading as ends in themselves rather than as means to a narrower and more quantifiable end. The remnants those people left on the land all across Wyoming as indications of the way they went about living their lives are monuments, often quite humble monuments to be sure, to those dreams and values and labors. One need not share the commitments that those monuments often represent, but it is important to understand why they are there—what the vision was behind their creation, what the circumstances were behind their being left behind. For those monuments are not just context-less artifacts, randomly distributed in time and space; they are keys to understanding the past, and thereby also the present.

---

[958] Olson, *Ranch on the Laramie*, 233.

F. Associated Property Types

Ranches, homesteads, and farmsteads—which are really quite similar and overlapping—are complex physical and historical resources that require careful analysis and evaluation as properties of potential historic significance. At first blush, one often thinks of ranches, farms, and homesteads as conceptually separate entities and that the physical separation of one property from another is as easy as looking at a fenceline. The reality is different. If anything, that perspective distorts the past by forcing it into a pattern of specialization of production associated with modern, not historic, ranches, farms, and homesteads.

Ranches, farms, and homesteads are not as conceptually separate and discrete as they sometimes are made out to be and many of the state's ranches and farms today can trace their origins to claims made under the various homesteading laws of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At what point a homestead became a ranch or a farm is a matter that cannot, and need not, be resolved in any technical way; they were ranches and farms from the very beginning as a requirement for proving up and they remained homesteads in the eyes of those who operated them for generations beyond their initial filing. Moreover, people who purchased a property from others who had made the original claims, or who themselves may have purchased it from the government, often referred to their properties as homesteads. There is no clear boundary separating a homestead from other kinds of farm and ranch properties.

And many ranches routinely produced crops for themselves and their livestock after the early efforts of the 1880s demonstrated the perils of doing otherwise, to the extent that they actively cultivated not just gardens but extensive fields of forage feeds, and even grains, rotating the fields and crops just as their neighboring farmers did. And likewise the farmers kept their own livestock, sometimes to the extent that ranchers complained that farmers' herds mingled with their own. While the U.S. Census has on occasion arbitrarily drawn a line separating farmers from ranchers, so that the ranch that had one head less was technically a farm and the farm that had one head more was technically a ranch, the overarching and consistent categorization of the Bureau of the Census has been simply to call any agricultural operation that produces a minimal amount of food or fiber a farm. Some farms raise crops. Some farms raise livestock. Many farms do both. There is enormous common sense in this approach when it comes to examining these operations historically and that broad view is strongly encouraged.

Evaluating properties for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places involves a series of specific professional judgments based on the National Register requirements, the resources on the ground, and the historical information related to those resources. The researcher needs to identify what it is that the property represents (theme, place, and time) and then determine how that theme (in this case one of the themes associated with the historic context of ranching, farming, and homesteading in Wyoming listed below) is important within a given time period—an identified period of significance—in a particular part of Wyoming. At that point, it is possible to use the National Register criteria to determine if the property represents the historic context through specific important associations under Criteria A and B, through the values evident under Criterion C, or through the information they can potentially yield under Criterion D. The period of significance can then be determined and the property types of the evaluated resources can be identified. The property types, and the criteria under which they are evaluated, will determine what aspects of integrity are necessary to convey the significance of the properties; then the resources can be evaluated for their integrity. The final step is to establish boundaries for the resources.

In this evaluation process, several cautions must be kept in mind. The first is simply that not all properties associated with homesteading, ranching, and farming, or with agriculture more broadly, in the state are eligible for listing on the National Register either individually or as a contributing feature of a complex of features. Some will not qualify for listing because they lack demonstrable significance and others will not be eligible because they lack necessary integrity. Second, the evaluator must also recognize that some ranches / farms / homesteads will have fewer historic features, not because they are less significant, but because they just were historically smaller operations. Size, scale, and expectations combined to help define and distinguish different kinds of operations with self-sufficiency prevailing in the smaller units and market practices in the larger. In fact, one important pattern identified in this study is that often properties were abandoned or taken over or otherwise were altered in their ownership and usage simply *because* they were small. They have been vulnerable to the forces of modernization for more than a century and a third at this point, and it is vital that they not become further vulnerable in the eyes of the evaluator because of the very conditions that have given them, and continue to give them, historical significance. Finally, it needs to be remembered, partly because it can be so easily taken for granted, that the properties must be evaluated within a historic context—in this case, ranching, farming, and homesteading in Wyoming between the 1860s and 1960. There are other properties in the state, even in the rural sectors of the state, that are not related to this context that may still qualify for

listing on the National Register, but not as part of this context. They could be schoolhouses, energy-related structures, or other non-farm, non-ranch, or non-homestead features. Ranching, farming, and homesteading covers a lot of territory, both geographic and historical, in Wyoming, but it does not cover everything.

Identification of Appropriate Historic Context

This historic context study explores the historical forces, patterns, and events important to understanding Wyoming's homesteading, farming, and ranching history, but many, even most, properties that are related to homesteading, farming, and ranching will be evaluated for their local significance and, at the local level, for their relationship to specific patterns of agriculture and settlement. For example, properties may be evaluated within the contexts of cattle ranching in the Green River valley in the 1880s and 1890s, sugar beet farming in the Big Horn Basin from 1900 to 1960, dry farming in the Powder River Basin from 1909 to World War II, or wool growing in southwest Wyoming from 1890 to 1960, or women homesteaders in southeast Wyoming between 1880 and 1940. For that matter, they could be considered within the context of something like the shift from general farming operations to specialized economic activities in a particular part of the state. In all those cases it will be essential for the evaluator to identify, using this document and additional local research materials (without actually preparing another context document), how that particular context developed within that section of Wyoming in that time period and what the major developmental thresholds were (in the broadest sense of development to include not just the growth and flourishing of farms, ranches, and homesteads, but also the destructive and corrosive forces that led to their demise or transformation). Moreover, it is essential that the evaluator demonstrate the importance of the theme explored (see the list below) to the particular geographic area in which the resources are located. In practice, the formulations of the theme, the geographic area, and the time period converge to define the parameters of the historic context that will provide the framework for evaluation. Once the appropriate theme, geographic area, and time period are articulated, the evaluator can carefully and professionally place the property into a meaningful historical context and evaluate its significance.

Significance of the Property and Historic Themes

Establishing significance of a property is a critical, perhaps even the most important, step in determining whether a property qualifies for listing on the National Register. A property is eligible, or is considered a contributing feature to eligible properties, not just

because it is old, or even, in this context, because it can be generally demonstrated to have been associated with a ranch, farm, or homestead operation. The narrative of this document explores specific themes—historic patterns, events, and cultural values associated with ranching, farming, and homesteading in Wyoming—that can serve as tools for establishing the more precise significance of a property—even when properties are exceptions to the prevailing patterns. For example, it may be that a specific property demonstrates the shift in technologies of ranching and farming (or the reluctance to accept emerging technologies), or the development of greater specialization of farming activities (or the persistence of traditional, general farming and ranching activities when everybody else was becoming specialized), or the impact of government agricultural programs, or the power of swings in the economy and alterations in the social structure of American ranching and farming life. Again, it also needs to be remembered that a rural property in Wyoming may be significant for associations other than with ranching and homesteading activities, but any such properties need to be pursued and evaluated outside the historic context presented in this document.

The themes identified and explored, and to which individual properties can be associated in important ways, include the following:

Commercialization (Market System) of Agriculture

Conservation

Crop Production

Dairy Farming

Diversified Agriculture

Dry farming

Economic / Market Forces of Depression, War, Banking System

Ethnicity

Gender and Women and Homesteading, Farming, and Ranching

Homesteading

In-Migration

Industrialization of Agriculture

Irrigation

Land Policy

Midwest (Enclosed) System of Cattle Raising

Migrant Labor

Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Life (including specialization, consolidation, centralization of decision-making, and other features)

Monoculture Agriculture

Open Range (Texas System) Cattle Raising

Out-Migration

Race Relations and Homesteading (and Agriculture)

Settlement

Subsistence and Self-Sufficient Agriculture

Technology

Wool Growing

It is sometimes tempting to evaluate any and every property associated with agriculture in Wyoming as eligible. That temptation, however, needs to be avoided assiduously. National Register Bulletin 15 explains that the event or trends with which a property is associated "must clearly be important within the associated context." It also is explicit that "the property must have an important association with the event or historic trends."[959] To say that a property was associated with ranching, farming, or homesteading is, in itself, not sufficient to demonstrate its significance. It will be more helpful and persuasive to associate the resources with the themes articulated in the historic context study, to explore particular properties, for example, in their relationships to patterns of settlement (and, conversely, to patterns of depopulation), changing practices of livestock raising, technologies, gender and ethnic relations, demographic shifts, economic cycles, and other patterns of history listed above. By making a focused analysis of the property, it will be evident exactly how important the association is. And using those patterns and themes in the evaluation of a property, an informed professional judgment can be rendered on the significance of a particular feature or set of features.

Criteria for Evaluation

Eligible (and contributing) properties must be associated with one or more area(s) of significance and each area of significance needs to be identified. The areas of significance developed in this context include Agriculture, Conservation, Ethnic Heritage, Exploration / Settlement, and Social History under Criterion A and Criterion B and Architecture and Engineering under Criterion C. Under Criterion D, the area of significance would most likely be Archaeology with the Subcategory Historic-Non-Aboriginal, although the categories of Agriculture, Ethnic Heritage, Exploration / Settlement, or Social History will also be relevant.

The actual eligibility (or contributing status) of a property is ultimately established by determining how a property represents the context, and this is done by the application of criteria used in the National Register of Historic Places. Thus, the question becomes whether a property represents the context through specific important historic associations (Criteria A and B), architectural or engineering values (Criterion C), or information potential (Criterion D). The vast bulk of Wyoming ranching, farming, and homesteading context-related properties nominated to, or eligible for, the National Register will be under Criterion A and this criterion is the primary focus of this historic context study. Some properties, however, may also be eligible under another criterion.

> *Criterion A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.*

---

[959] National Register Bulletin: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (n.p.: 1990, 1997), Section VI, "How to Identify the Significance of a Property," 12.

The events that make up history at one time were viewed as restricted to those that were associated with the nation's leaders, with activities in the halls of power, or with other kinds of activities that exhibited singular talent, or, at least, social, political, or financial eminence, a sort of "Kings and Battles" conceptualization of the past. The study of history in the last several decades, however, has been far more inclusive of the American people in all their activities, classes, ethnicities, genders, ages, and beliefs and historians have mined their lives and cultures assiduously—and the historical profession continues to generate new perspectives, conclusions, and evidence. The social history of the nation, as a result, is a much more complex picture than it once was, and also much richer and more vibrant too, and it includes a great many more people than it once did. The "events" in the history of the American people, as a result, may include acts of Congress, Presidential decrees, treaties signed, and battles fought, but they also include those aspects of life that reflect and shape the values, institutions, work, priorities, discipline, and goals of the broad American public and its many parts on national, state, and local levels. It is with that broader formulation in mind that the evaluator can inquire into those patterns of history relevant to ranching, farming, and homesteading in Wyoming and establish the historical significance—or lack thereof—for individual properties.

The question must be asked, Why is a property significant under Criterion A? Probably the best way to answer that question is with a more focused inquiry: What does the property reveal about ranching, homesteading, and farming in Wyoming? Do the resources reflect in a tangible way the important historical associations? How was the property used historically? What were the forces that shaped its evolution over time? For it is not enough that the property be associated with ranching, homesteading, and farming; that association must be important within the specified level of significance. Generally, that importance can be demonstrated by indicating explicitly how the property is a product of its time functionally and illustrates aspects of farming, ranching, and homesteading history in Wyoming that may be unique, representative, or pivotal.

Criterion B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Criterion B is, by almost all accounts, a demanding criterion to apply in the evaluation of properties for their eligibility to the National Register because it includes two major tests that the property must pass. The first is the significance of the individual. Usually that significance can be measured in some form of recognition that the person attained, either during or after his or her life, for accomplishments during the period of historic significance. Broadly considered beyond the confines of the historic context of Wyoming ranching, farming, and homesteading, that person's achievement can be intellectual, economic, artistic, political, social, or otherwise. Often it has to do with leadership in some form or another, but it can also be more subtle. A schoolteacher, for example, may have left an enduring mark on a neighborhood over a period of years, or a rancher or farmer may have taken a stand that was symbolic against large forces of change that earned the person some acclaim and respect from people in the community. There is no clear and automatic qualification as a significant individual; it is the duty of the evaluator to demonstrate that significance, but it is important to note that within this specific historic context the individual's significance must be related to the varied aspects of ranching, farming, and

homesteading. Other individuals (for example the teacher or business person) may well be significant in other contexts, but they may not be appropriately identified under Criterion B in properties eligible or contributing within this context. The significance of the individual, in other words, must be approached with great caution.

The second test, once the significance of the individual within this context has been established and documented, is that the property being evaluated, when compared to other properties associated with the individual, is the most appropriate one for demonstrating that person's contribution. Being born at a place usually does not suffice. A place where that person, however, formulated a strategy or prepared a plan or worked with others on a project linked to the person's significance will confirm this important linkage.

For a property associated with an individual person, it is necessary to demonstrate that the specific property directly reflected or shaped her or his influence—that it was not peripheral or tangential to the activities for which the person became significant. This was the place that was important in making him or her significant. Several considerations are relevant: (1) size of the property alone does not make a ranch or homestead or farm significant nor does it make the person who developed it significant; (2) the specific property and the specific features must be related in specific ways to the significance of the person in history; (3) an individual auxiliary building or structure is unlikely to qualify under Criterion B, but the complex of buildings of which it is a part might.

> *Criterion C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.*

The distinctive architectural features of a building, the eminence of the person who designed it, or the engineering features involved in a specific piece of construction such as a windmill, dipping vat, or shearing arrangement may make a resource eligible for the National Register under Criterion C. It is essential to note, however, that the National Register requires the feature's association with the construction type, method, or design be *important* and that the design or construction features be *important* to make the property important. Documenting the property's eligibility (or contributing status) generally requires attention to the features that are distinctive including the type, period, and method of construction. As National Register Bulletin 15 notes, "A structure is eligible as a specimen of its type or period of construction if it is an important example (within its context) of building practices of a particular time in history."[960] Thus a particular method of construction that once was common, but has largely faded from use, as, for example, piece-sur-piece log construction, would be a type of construction that could qualify a barn or a house or other building under Criterion C. Or, some of the grand showcase ranches that emerged early in the twentieth century were sometimes designed by

[960] National Register Bulletin: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,*18.

leading architects and their buildings serve as enduring legacies of their craft. The existence of a wind generator for the production of electricity would similarly fall under Criterion C as an example of engineering put to use on the isolated farms and ranches. Because the structure, building, or object is important for its own architectural or engineering features, integrity of materials, workmanship, and design will be much more critical than they would, say, under Criterion A. And because the workmanship that goes into an architectural or engineering property is sometimes what gives the resource its significance, the period of significance for Criterion C properties will generally be confined to the year, or period, in which it was built. Of course, many of these properties may be eligible under both Criterion A and Criterion C. Finally, it should also be noted that historic rural landscapes may also be significant under Criterion C.

Criterion D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

The ability of a property's physical resources to yield important information represents an invitation for archaeological investigation. As always, the value of any investigation depends on the questions asked, and a focused, clearly articulated research design must identify the potential significance of the findings anticipated. It is not sufficient to issue a blanket statement that any and all properties will yield important information; what kind of information and how this site may reasonably be expected to yield that information are essential to establishing the property as eligible under Criterion D.
In the historic context of Wyoming ranching, farming, and homesteading, archaeological investigation is best seen as complementing the historical research rather than duplicating or replacing it, for the two fields draw upon different source materials with different potentials although they often address the same historical questions and issues. If archaeologists approach the issues of this context with an eye to addressing the questions of historical significance, the fruits can be profound. Many of those questions have to do with the forces of modernization that reshaped the countryside of Wyoming in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In that regard two particular archaeological perspectives are relevant to the task of determining the eligibility of properties under Criterion D. One is the position articulated by Margaret Purser regarding archaeology on western ranches. As noted above, Purser suggests that in locations like those found across Wyoming, the sheer geographic scale can be daunting, but also informative. While elsewhere a system of production may be enclosed in a small area, in the West the economic unit may literally cover an expanse of miles and miles, beyond the horizons even, its different components widely scattered, physically nowhere near the functionally adjacent unit. But that is only part of her insight. Even more fundamental is her observation that the activity over that vast expanse is, in fact, a *system*, not just an assortment of different activities. It would be an oversimplification to suggest that this is just a matter of not seeing the forest for the trees or vice versa, but Purser encourages the evaluator to put the individual artifact or site into the context of the larger operation which may not be immediately visible. And the aggregate of those sites will lead to a closer appreciation of the system itself. Moreover, she notes:

> Visibility in western ranching sites is also an archaeological visibility: preservation here is dramatic, and it pushes excavators to radically expand what counts as material data. For instance, you can see the entire valley settlement system because, in the arid environment, the presence of trees means the presence of people, at least at some point in the past. So the cottonwoods and imported Italian poplars that ring old homestead sites are artifacts, as are the relic fence posts, the trampled bare ground of abandoned corrals, the rutted scars of old wagon roads, and the myriad ditches, gates, dams, and flumes that channeled the western rancher's most prized possession: water. Trash from a camp tossed into the brush over a hundred years ago looks like it could have come from last week's meal. Even in the fire-prone areas, standing structures of a wide variety of functions can still be present, at least as scattered spars of lumber, crumbling stone walls, or dusty mounds of old adobe melting slowly into the sagebrush. So although the archaeological record of ranching can often be sparse, it is equally often marked by radically wide ranges of artifact types, and equally broad spatial scales.[961]

This, of course, goes directly, once again, to the notion of a "feature system" discussed above. Donald L. Hardesty and Barbara J. Little have focused explicitly on "feature systems" as ways of looking at resources and they emphasize the way in which artifacts and structures fit together to make a sense that is greater than the individual components are capable of suggesting separately.[962] This is not a difficult concept, is one that social historians often use, and is one familiar in other areas of inquiry where it often takes the simple, but holistic, form of "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts." System is key. Relationships between component parts say as much as the parts themselves.

For the purpose of this study, with its focus on the process of historical change in a rural environment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, another study offers assistance from a slightly different angle. Drawing upon the same broad pattern of modernization that this context statement employs, Melanie A. Cabak, Mark D. Groover, and Mary M. Inkrot have shed light on rural life in the twentieth century in the American South. Examining dwelling types, midden size and contents, and other aspects of the farmsteads of the Aiken Plateau of South Carolina, these archaeologists have concluded that "20th-century resources, contrary to popular attitudes, possess archaeologically useful information" and that, in particular, "rural modernization occurred differently among southern households."[963] Of special attention in that study were areas of inquiry where conventional historical documentation provides scant information. Thus consumption patterns reveal the extent of subsistence agriculture for home use as opposed to commercial purchasing of foods and supplies, while the prevalence of indoor plumbing and

---

[961] Margaret Purser, "Archaeology on Western Ranches," on World Wide Web, "Unlocking the Past: Celebrating Historical Archaeology in North America," located on the World Wide Web at http://www.cr.nps.gov/seac/unlocking-web/archofwork/index.htm.

[962] Donald L. Hardesty and Barbara J. Little, *Assessing Site Significance: A Guide for Archaeologists and Historians* (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2000), 119.

[963] Melanie A. Cabak, Mark D. Groover, and Mary M. Inkrot, "Rural Modernization during the Recent Past: Farmstead Archaeology in the Aiken Plateau," *Historical Archaeology*, 33 (1999): 38.

electricity and their impact on the location of family activities shed light on other aspects of life. Most suggestively, that study demonstrated that "households were gradually transformed from producers to consumers," and that "at the same time that households were becoming acclimated to consumerism, traditional material elements in the built environment, particularly domestic architecture and household level technology, remained relatively static in rural settings."[964] The study's reference to "consumerism" unsatisfactorily blurs a host of issues relating to twentieth-century consumer awareness and political action, gender roles, and commercial marketing, but at its most fundamental level the analysis does connect consumption patterns with the integration of previously isolated farm families into a larger market structure, not just for the goods they produce but for the goods they consume.

Perhaps of greater importance than the particular conclusions of that single study, however, are the questions asked, and those questions directly parallel those that this context study of farming and ranching and homesteading attempts to raise. Instead of listing specific questions that are pertinent to today's research and that will be revised in the light of tomorrow's findings, this study hopes that the issues presented in the narrative will guide historians and archaeologists alike in their future investigations. Those issues range across a wide horizon of inquiry, from the development of poultry and dairy farming and their impact on gender relations, to levels of subsistence agriculture practiced in different areas, by different classes of people, and differences between those agriculturists who adopted monoculture, extensive farming practices, compared with those who retained traditional diversified, intensive practices, and the technologies used—and the impact of those technologies—on different sizes and kinds of operations. It is the object of this study to raise these questions and hopefully the investigators will use them to frame their own research designs.

This points once again to the necessity in archaeological investigation of a well-considered research design. Just because information is available in a potential site is not sufficient to make it significant. Instead, the questions that the information can answer are just as or more important. Plus, not all archaeological sites will provide information in understanding history or patterns of history; they may yield information in other areas, but in this context that information must illuminate the historical issues and patterns relevant to homesteading, ranching, and farming in Wyoming. That further means that not all ranches that have archaeological deposits should be considered eligible. In every instance research design is the determining factor.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for properties significant for their association with farming, cattle and sheep ranching, and homesteading is not an open-ended time framework; instead, it is a discrete period with a defined and meaningful beginning and end. The period of significance generally will begin at the date at which activity of historic significance is begun and to which the existing resources are associated. This

[964] Cabak, Groover, and Inkrot, "Rural Modernization during the Recent Past: Farmstead Archaeology in the Aiken Plateau," 39.

may be the date when a house or a barn was built, when a well was dug or drilled, when a fence was constructed, or other such constructive activity was undertaken; if, however, the date at which that barn, well, or fence achieved historical significance is later than the date of construction, the later date must be used. The point is that the beginning date is the date at which the activities began that mark the existing resources' historical significance. The end of the period of significance must be approached just as carefully. If the beginning marks the start of the historic significance of a resource, the end must mark the date at which that significance concluded, at which the association with the historic events or patterns can no longer be demonstrated. If the property was abandoned or put to another use, that would often mark the end of the property's period of significance. The property could have, and often did have, a series of owners, but the property's significance will continue just so long as the important association with the historic patterns of ranching, farming, and homesteading discussed in the context statement that gave it significance can be demonstrated. The significance thus ends not with a change in property ownership but when the property no longer, in the words of the National Register Bulletin, "made the contributions or achieved the character on which significance is based."[965] This means that many properties will retain their historic significance up to (or beyond) the fifty-year threshold used by the National Register of Historic Places. Some, in fact, may continue beyond the 1960 concluding date of this study. The period of significance will depend on the period during which each property was associated with specific patterns of homesteading, ranching, or farming and the beginning and end will need to be justified.

General Integrity Requirements

The issue of integrity is both complex and important. National Register bulletins variously define this as "the ability of a property to convey its significance"[966] and "authenticity of a property's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic or prehistoric period."[967]

The integrity requirements for these ranching, farming, and homesteading resources emphasize primarily their historic function and appearance—the ability of an individual building or structure to convey a sense of past time and place by providing evidence of the specific function or role it served during the period of historic significance (not its ability to perform that function today) and the relationship of that function to the larger homestead / ranch / farm operation. In this, the evaluator must be careful in two broad areas that sometimes perplex the person who examines historic resources. *One is the need to avoid confusing condition with integrity.* Integrity refers to the authenticity of a property

[965] National Register Bulletin: *Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms, Part A: How to Complete the National Register Form* (1997 Revision), 42.
[966] National Register Bulletin: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, Section VIII, "How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property," 44.
[967] National Register Bulletin: *Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms,* Appendix IV, Glossary, Integrity, p. 2.

and depends especially on evidence of, again, the "physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic or prehistoric period." Since a property with historic integrity permits it to illustrate significant aspects of the past, the essential characteristics of that property must be authentic. The property may have deteriorated over the years, it may be in need of repair, and its condition may be such as to render it unlivable or otherwise unusable for its historic purpose, but it can still possess integrity. The property needs to be examined for the standard seven qualities of integrity indicated in National Register guidelines.[968] Those aspects of historic integrity include:

- Location: The building or other object must be in the location it occupied during the period of historic significance, although it may have been moved prior to or during the period of historic significance. It was not uncommon, for example, for all but the largest of buildings to be moved around as needs changed on a ranch or farm. If that relocation took place during the period of historic significance the integrity would not be compromised and the move may even be an indication of the larger evolution of the property, thereby suggesting additional historic significance. Relocations of buildings or structures since the end of the period of significance would need to be evaluated according to the extent and purpose of the relocation. Moving a small structure a small distance to permit it to perform its (or a related building's) function more efficiently would not be a problem; moving the same building a greater distance or to a location where it could not perform its intended function and using relocation to allow the operation of a non-contributing feature in its original location, however, would compromise the integrity of location.

- Design: The organization of a property and its subordinate components (whether it is a single unit or a cluster of related resources) constitutes, in the words of the National Register, "the form, plan, space, structure, and style" of a property. The important factor here is not whether the design is especially artistic or even attractive, but whether it is authentic. In dealing with the modest abodes and utility structures of small ranches and homesteads, it is important not to hold the design of a structure up to an outside standard, but to compare it to the building's own historic design. And it is important to recognize that those buildings often evolved over time, in which case it becomes important to identify which changes came during, and which changes came after, the end of the period of historic significance.

- Setting: Setting is a subtle aspect and has as much to do with the environment surrounding a property as with the property itself. Farm or ranch properties that are surrounded by developments inconsistent with the historic character of the property will probably have been compromised if they are significant under Criterion A. On the other hand, the integrity of setting for a property significant under Criterion C for its design or construction qualities would not be so vulnerable to changes in surrounding development.

- Materials: The historic materials from which a resource was constructed will be a fundamental

[968] Again, refer to National Register Bulletin: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, Section VIII, "How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property."

aspect of integrity. A windmill with plastic vanes, for example, would raise serious questions of integrity. Of course, changes in materials during the period of significance, as with other elements of integrity, will continue to have integrity.

- Workmanship: Workmanship may or may not be of exceptional quality in the construction of a particular resource, but it must be authentic. To take a common, but inverted, example, a log building constructed in a crude, but effective and time-situated manner, would retain integrity of workmanship if the evidence of that construction survives; if, on the other hand, that crude workmanship had been improved and refined after the period of significance, the workmanship would have been compromised.

- Feeling: Feeling is an intangible aspect of a property that is all but impossible to define, and all but impossible to miss if in the presence of the property. If that property conveys the feelings of the past period of time and its associations, it retains integrity of feeling.

- Association: Does the property carry a direct and important link to the person, theme, or event that makes it significant? Again, that association can be established by drawing upon the various themes and issues developed in the historic context study of Wyoming ranching, farming, and homesteading.

As the guidelines explicitly state, "All seven qualities do not need to be present for eligibility as long as the overall sense of past time and place is evident." And very, very few properties will possess one hundred percent integrity. This places a critical burden on the evaluator to exercise careful and considered professional historical judgment in the evaluation. Two steps are involved in this evaluation of integrity and both should be accomplished explicitly. First, the evaluator should determine what features must be present for a property to represent its significance, and which aspects of integrity are especially vital in conveying that significance. A ranch house evaluated under Criterion C, for example, will require greater integrity of workmanship and design than a ranch house evaluated under Criterion A. Next, the evaluator should address the seven elements of integrity, one at a time, indicating where possible weaknesses or outright compromises in integrity exist and what general circumstances cause those compromises to disqualify a property as eligible for the National Register, or, conversely, to be insufficient to disqualify the property. Does the property retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance? Either it does or it does not.

Boundaries

If the conceptual boundaries of agricultural operations are sometimes problematic, the physical bounds are equally so. Ranches and farms vary in size, from a very small acreage to a 160 acre homestead to a 640 acre homestead to a giant operation covering hundreds of square miles that could be fingered on a globe by an owner on another continent. In the nineteenth century the boundaries of these mammoth ranches were as vague as the tally of the cattle grazing them and it was expected that the cattle of the

different ranches would share the giant commons and would be sorted out only at roundup. For that matter, a good many cattle ranchers, and some sheep growers too, did not own land beyond the barest parcel where they might have their headquarters, and sometimes they did not even own that. Carefully defined boundaries were not one of the finer points of the livestock operations.

Even when modern property boundaries have been developed and marked with the assistance of legal counsel and surveyors, the historical boundaries often remain more than a little foggy. The properties reviewed for the National Register of Historic Places, however, require carefully defined boundaries. In turn, those boundaries depend on whether the subject property is a building, object, site, structure, district, or cultural landscape. The boundaries of these properties must conform to National Register guidelines. The National Register bulletin *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, offers helpful guidelines in drawing the boundaries of properties and explicitly spells out the steps, and these steps are further amplified in another bulletin, *Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties*. That bulletin states:

> *• Select boundaries to encompass but not exceed the extent of the significant resources and land areas comprising the property.*
> *• Include all historic features of the property, but do not include buffer zones or acreage not directly contributing to the significance of the property.*
> *• Exclude peripheral areas that no longer retain integrity due to alterations in physical conditions or setting caused by human forces, such as development, or natural forces, such as erosion.*
> *• Include small areas that are disturbed or lack significance when they are completely surrounded by eligible resources. "Donut holes" are not allowed.*
> *• Define a discontiguous property when large areas lacking eligible resources separate portions of the eligible resource.*[969]

District and landscape designations require the same careful attention as small areas and the boundaries always must be justified, and that justification has to do with historic usage, historic property lines, and natural features alike. The features contained in these larger properties likewise need justification and explanation so that they are not just the "buffer zones" that the National Register proscribes. Moreover, the fact that cattle or sheep once grazed on land distant from the ranch or homestead headquarters is not sufficient to warrant inclusion of those distant pastures. In Wyoming, at one time or another, cattle and sheep grazed virtually every foot of land; the Swan Ranch grazed its cattle over most of the southeastern part of Wyoming territory and some ranches could claim, with varying degrees of legitimacy, major portions of entire counties. Yet that land is not significant because their cattle roamed and grazed there; there must be something particular and something demonstrable about the use and role of that land historically that makes it a contributing feature.

---

[969] Donna J. Seifert and Barbara J. Little, Beth L. Savage, and John H. Sprinkle, Jr., *National Register Bulletin: Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties* (n.p.: National Park Service, 1995, 1997), 2.

The fundamental consideration is that the boundaries include everything that is significant and no more. In many instances it will be sufficient simply to define the resource as the cluster of buildings and structures comprising the ranch headquarters and the adjacent areas where the rancher or farmer (and families) worked and otherwise engaged in activities associated with the property. Often there will be some kind of boundary associated with that cluster—perhaps an adjacent road or fence or line of trees—that will visibly (and often functionally) set it apart from adjacent property and that will serve as an important limiting reference for the property. As problematic as fences are when remote from other resources, they can serve a valuable purpose for the evaluator if they tie other resources together and define the flow of work and traffic. A nearby property line—either current or historic—may also serve to establish a boundary. Other natural features such as streams, wooded edges of clearings, and sudden changes in elevations also can be useful determinants of boundaries. The boundaries may be a combination of legal, natural, cultural features, but that combination will draw the line between what is of historic significance and what is not.

Some resources are especially challenging because they are remote from any other resources with which they might be associated. This raises questions of significance as well as of boundaries. Remote features may be associated with other features and may, in fact, have a historic significance that derives from that association. It also needs to be emphasized, however, that just because a remote feature can be associated with a ranch headquarters complex, for example, that does not mean that the landscape between them is also a contributing feature. Often these isolated features, if in fact they can be demonstrated to be associated with other features, are parts of a discontiguous historic district; in that case the features are related by significance but separated by geography. The distance between them remains separate and outside the eligible / contributing property. This does not apply to resources that are separated or isolated because of demolition or new construction.

Categories of Properties

Generally, five different categories of historic resources can be identified in the National Register framework and historic farming, ranching, and homesteading properties need to be recorded according to those types:

Building. Buildings are primarily constructed to shelter any form of human activity. This would include not only houses but also barns, sheds, and stables.

Site. The National Register is succinct on what constitutes a site: "the location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural, or archaeological value regardless of the value of any existing structure."

Structure. Structures are those functional resources that were constructed and used for purposes other than human shelter. This would include silos, windmills, cairns, vats, stock tanks, corrals, and similar

practical constructions.

Object. Objects consist of constructions that are not buildings or structures, and this generally means that they are either artistic in nature or are small and simple. While they may be (or may have been) movable to some degree, "an object is associated with a specific setting or environment." This could include, for example, an official survey marker; or, it could be a large, immobile threshing machine permanently situated in a field where it was once used or stored.

District. A historic district "possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development."[970]

Historic Districts.

Farm, ranch, and homestead properties may be considered as historic districts and sometimes also as a historic landscape. Historic districts and historic landscapes are important tools in the kit of the cultural resource professional, and the National Register recognizes this. As with any other element of the National Register evaluation process, careful judgment and analysis is important to make sure that district is appropriate for the group of resources. The National Register bulletin *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, offers useful guidance: "District applies to properties having: [1] a number of resources that are relatively equal in importance such as a *neighborhood*, or [2] large acreage with a variety of resources, such as a *large farm*, *estate*, or *parkway*."[971] Districts are appropriate when there is a mix of resources or just when there are multiple buildings and structures. Districts may be small or large and they can consist of a single farm or of multiple farms. They can be small and well-contained or they can be expansive. In all events, however, the boundaries need to be carefully defined. While the boundaries need not follow modern legal boundaries because the patterns of historic usage may not conform to current boundaries, those usages need to be established and documented and current landowners and land managers will often be able to provide important information and guidance and should be consulted. Some historic districts may be discontiguous and this kind of district will likely be of value when considering elements of a farm or ranch beyond the immediate farmstead (farm or ranch headquarters complex) since it allows the association of those elements but does not include the intervening space between the main cluster and the remote element.

Rural Historic Landscapes

Cultural landscapes are a more recent tool and their potential and limits are still being explored, especially in regard to the different treatments appropriate for designed, vernacular, and ethnographic

---

[970] National Register Bulletin: *Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms, Part A: How to Complete the National Register Form*, 15.
[971] National Register Bulletin: *Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms, Part A: How to Complete the National Register Form*, 15. Emphasis is in the original. In this quotation, bracketed numbers replace the bullets in the original.

landscapes. A rural historic landscape consists of features other than scenery, buffer zones, and the broad expanses surrounding areas where historic activity took place. The National Register defines a rural historic landscape as "a geographical area that historically has been used by people, or shaped or modified by human activity, occupancy, or intervention, and that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features."[972] That definition, however, remains broad, and the approach to evaluating historic landscapes is not easily structured into a step-by-step process that applies to the many different kinds of landscapes. But the National Register uses a framework for analyzing the natural and cultural forces shaping a rural landscape that includes both the *processes* that shape the land and the *physical components* on the land. The processes include: (1) land uses and activities; (2) patterns of spatial organization; (3) responses to the natural environment; and (4) cultural traditions. Generally, these processes show the way humans on the land have used, responded to, adapted to, and / or shaped its features, or have otherwise made an imprint on the land. In the context of ranching, farming, and homesteading, these processes will often include changing, or competing, patterns of land use. The physical components on the land are those features of the landscape that allow it to be examined in relation to human activities. These components include: (1) circulation networks, such as trails or roads; (2) boundary demarcations that define the limits of land uses, including interior separations or protections; (3) vegetation related to land use—a category which includes natural as well as cultivated types and the patterns in which they appear; (4) buildings, structures, and objects; (5) clusters, a classification that includes groupings of features that reflect historical activities; (6) archaeological sites; and (7) small-scale elements, such as a foot bridge or road sign, abandoned machinery or even scattered fenceposts that mark the location of historic activity.

The analysis of the landscape is not a casual matter. Again, the National Register Bulletin covering rural historic landscapes is explicit: "An in-depth study is necessary to identify the significant historic properties of a rural area or to determine if the area as a whole is a historic district." It also requires significant expertise: "Examination of a rural area frequently requires the combined efforts of historians, landscape historians, architectural historians, architects, landscape architects, archeologists, and anthropologists. Depending on the area, the specialized knowledge of cultural geographers, plant ecologists, folklorists, and specialists in the history of agriculture, forestry, mining, transportation, and other types of land use may also be of assistance."[973]

Finally, as Susan Calafate Boyle, who has studied the issue closely, observes, "The complexity and fluidity of the processes that influence the nature of landscapes are likely to preclude the development of rigid easily applied guidelines. Continuous dialogue with land management agencies can assist in making decisions that take into consideration costs, political reality, and the nature of the resources in

---

[972] Linda Flint McClelland and J. Timothy Keller, Genevieve P. Keller, Robert Z. Melnick, *National Register Bulletin: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes* (n.p.: National Park Service, 1989, 1999), 1-2.
[973] McClelland *et al*., *National Register Bulletin: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*, 7.

need of protection."[974]
An example of a Wyoming historic landscape is the nomination of the JO Ranch, northeast of Baggs.[975] This property, taking in a total of 353 acres, reflects the evolution of sheep ranching and the impact of that form of husbandry on the landscape itself, something that nomination of the individual buildings probably would not demonstrate. This is also an excellent example of demonstrating the historic interaction between the stock-raising activity and the landscape, not just assuming that the open spaces should be included because they were grazed by animals. That nomination was also prepared with the full cooperation of the managing agency, in this case the Bureau of Land Management.

A Word on Professional Responsibility

The evaluation of properties for their eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places is not a mechanical operation, is not a matter of filling in the blanks on a form, and is not a process whereby resources are simply inventoried, categorized, and filed away. It is an active process, even an intellectual process, where questions are asked and answers are sought. It draws upon the body of historical knowledge which is more than the narratives contained in general textbooks or local chronologies. It is also an exciting and challenging effort and one that carries profound responsibilities—to the past, to the present, and to the future.

Ultimately the determination is one of yes or no: does this property qualify for listing on the National Register either individually or as part of a larger group? Not every property will be eligible for the National Register, some because they lack historic significance and some because they lack integrity. Some will present special challenges, such as those lonely, isolated, and even mysterious remnants that someone put on the ground at an unknown time. Despite careful investigation into the ways they may have been connected with the larger course of social, economic, and agricultural processes, there are features that will ultimately stand as isolated in history as they are on the plains. That such features may not be eligible, however, should be a determination that comes *after* investigation, not as a matter of convenience, not as a way to avoid historical research. There are also those instances in which specific properties (such as stock tanks and dams constructed after 1930) that have been excluded from requirements for formal documentation in a programmatic agreement between the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office and the Bureau of Land Management. Even in those cases, however, a professional may conclude that specific examples of those property types are appropriately considered as resources and should develop an argument to that effect. Moreover, it is important to note, if those features possess architectural or engineering significance or are associated with an eligible site or district, "they should be recorded on a Wyoming Cultural Properties Form. Professional judgment and

---

[974] Susan Calafate Boyle in her "Natural and Cultural Resources: The Protection of Vernacular Landscapes," in Richard W. Longstreth, Susan Calafate Boyle, Susan Buggey, Michael Caratzas, *Cultural Landscapes: Balancing Nature and Heritage in Preservation Practice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 160.
[975] Robert Rosenberg, "JO Ranch Rural Historic Landscape," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, March 7, 2008.

common sense should be applied."[976]

The evaluation of historic resources related to ranching, farming, and homesteading in Wyoming relies at each step on professional historical analysis and judgment. The evaluation of a property will invariably combine careful examination of the resources in the field and research in the historical record to understand the significance of those extant resources. Ultimately, the evaluator of a property, using an open mind, carefully drawn boundaries, professional historical judgment, critical thought processes, and the National Register framework, will be able to determine the historic significance of that property in a way that is consistent with historical knowledge, with National Register standards and criteria, and with their historic values. In that way, the ranching, farming, and homesteading historic resources of Wyoming will be managed appropriately, responsibly, and consistently.

Property Types and Registration Requirements

The procedure for evaluating the various kinds of ranching, farming, and homesteading properties likely to be encountered in the field follows an established path with the same general steps, although the specific property types will be considered differently. The procedure bears repeating since the order in which those steps are taken makes a difference. It is necessary first to determine the theme, the geographic limits, and the chronological period represented by the property. Then, the evaluator must determine how that theme is important at that place and time. Next, the significance of the property must be understood; in this step the evaluator explains how the property represents the context through specific important associations, values, or information potential, drawing upon the National Register criteria. Then the evaluator can specify (and justify) the years defining the period of significance for the property. At that point, the different property types can be considered and with them the essential aspects of their integrity. Once this process is complete, the evaluator can establish the boundaries for the property. There is obviously some overlap in the steps in this procedure and there will likely be some revisiting of earlier questions as information is gathered, but the sequence needs to be followed and the priority of establishing significance before examining integrity remains essential.

The resources on the ground are uneven in their associational and integrity values, so some guidance is appropriate for evaluating different property types. There will be, almost literally, an infinite array of resources in the field, ranging from the obscure and incomprehensible and small to the grandest and most sophisticated architectural features. The following list is not intended to be exclusive but it should indicate the considerations when evaluating different kinds of properties and applying different criteria to them.

A Note on Programmatic Agreement. The Bureau of Land Management manages 18.4 million surface

[976] State Protocol Between the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management State Director and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer, March 8, 2006, Appendix D, "Defined Non-Sites and Property Types Requiring No Formal Documentation."

acres of public land in Wyoming and is a significant partner in the management of cultural resources in the state. In 2006 the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer and the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management State Director, along with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, developed a programmatic agreement regarding the manner in which the BLM in Wyoming will meet its responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act. That programmatic agreement, among other provisions, defines how some of the property types included in this listing will be addressed by cultural resource managers on BLM authorized undertakings. These provisions will be noted in the discussions of the requirements for evaluating the various property types, but it also needs to be recognized that the provisions of that agreement may be amended over time and those changes will serve as operative guidance for evaluators. In addition, while in some instances the current agreement requires no formal documentation of specific property types, it also stipulates, "If any of these property types exhibit significant architectural or engineering features, or are associated with a National Register-eligible site or district, they should be recorded on a Wyoming Cultural Properties Form."[977]

Property Types

1. Ranch / Farm Houses
2. Auxiliary Ranch / Farm Buildings and Structures
3. Vegetative Features
4. Watering Facilities and Windmills
5. Fences
6. Livestock Trails and Driveways
7. Herder Camps
8. Cemeteries and Graves
9. Sheepherder Monuments
10. Privies and Dumps

1. Ranch / Farm Houses

Description:

[977] State Protocol Between the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management State Director and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer, March 8, 2006, Appendix D, "Defined Non-Sites and Property Types Requiring No Formal Documentation." A copy of the protocol can be seen at http://wyoshpo.state.wy.us/Section106/Protocol.asp. It is important to note that this document applies only to BLM authorized undertakings

Ranch houses and farm houses are important elements of the Wyoming countryside, but they do not form, as a group, a readily identifiable and distinctive type of building. Houses in the country can be quite as varied as houses in the city. There are, however a few broad generalizations that can be safely considered. First, as Eileen Starr reported in her *Architecture in the Cowboy State: A Guide*, "economically, Wyoming's agriculture has seen a range of extremes—from the hand-to-mouth survival of homesteaders living in dugouts to the courtly lifestyle of British 'cattle barons' with many levels in between. This has created widely varied architectural resources."[978] Second, while there are exceptions, and very important exceptions at that, many of these will be vernacular buildings. Third, cattle ranching was often, but not always, different from sheep growing in that the sheep operators tended to have their residences in town. Again, there were exceptions, and the case of John Galloway Love, a sheep operator who homesteaded on Muskrat Creek and built and lived in his house there, provides an indication that in sheep ranching, as in cattle ranching and farming, there was often a class division that shaped lives and buildings both.[979]

The ranch / farm house can consist of a single building or multiple buildings (for example in a multiple generation ranch or farm family) that provided the base of operations for the ranch or farm. The primary element is a residential building of some kind, ranging from a modest dugout or sod house to a palatial residence. This residence reflects the integration of economic activities and domestic habitation with ranching or farming as a way of life. In the sometimes complex and sprawling ranches and farms, the house served both as residence and as ranch headquarters, the center of gravity for the ranch or farm operation. It was not always the largest structure on the ranch, and was often dwarfed by barns and other functional buildings. Sometimes the other buildings even showed greater attention to style and workmanship than the ranch house, a telling indicator of ranch and farm family priorities. Many of the ranch / farm houses are built in a vernacular style with simple lines and design; some are more elaborate and a few are even opulent. They will ordinarily be categorized as National Register historic function: DOMESTIC, single family, but there are exceptions.

Significance:

These ranch / farm houses are associated primarily with the context of cattle and sheep ranching and dry farming and homestead activity in Wyoming and they must relate in a significant way to these activities. They will be considered significant under Criterion A if they have an important association with the specific patterns of stock growing and grazing, farming, and homesteading (which includes crop production as well as livestock grazing) during the period of significance. Under Criterion A, they may,

---

[978] Eileen F. Starr, *Architecture in the Cowboy State: A Guide* (Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 1992), 65.

[979] Love made a sketch of his cabin in 1909 which included an indication of the location of the adjacent lake which "should make a fine place for mosquitoes." Barbara Love and Frances Love Froidevaux, eds., *Lady's Choice: Ethel Waxham's Journals & Letters, 1905-1910* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 276.

according to the nature of the ranch / farm house and its associations, be eligible in the area of significance Agriculture, although other Areas of Significance to consider are Exploration / Settlement, Conservation, Social History, and Ethnic Heritage. Some properties might be considered eligible under Criterion B for their association with an individual important in the history of ranching and farming in the area, although the requirements for Criterion B eligibility can prove demanding (see above discussion of Criterion B). A ranch or farm house can also be considered significant under Criterion C because it is either an important typical and representative example of domestic architecture and design, or, conversely, because it is an exceptional instance. Finally, the ranch or farm house can be significant under Criterion D if the property has yielded or has the potential to yield important information about homesteading, cattle and sheep ranching, and farming, including construction techniques associated with these activities, provided they can be shown to yield potentially important information with the use of a specific research design.

Registration Requirements:

1. Significance

The requirements for registration for ranch / farm houses vary according to the criterion under which the resource is considered. In order to be significant under Criteria A and B, the ranch / farm house must have been used as a house in homesteading, stock-growing, and farming activities within the period of significance. The significance of the property under Criterion A and B will generally be established through research in historical materials so that the important association with the contextual themes is precise and clear, and not speculative. An old house in a predominantly ranching district is not sufficient; as with any judgment, this determination of significance (or lack of significance) must be based on historical evidence.

To be eligible under Criterion C in the area of significance Architecture, the ranch / farm house must demonstrate the association with homesteading / ranching / farming in the period of significance, but must additionally retain those distinctive elements of workmanship, design, and materials that give the building stylistic integrity. The property has to possess distinctive characteristics, be a true representative of a particular type, and be an important example. It may qualify as a particular style listed in the National Register guidelines, or it may be vernacular, which most will be, but it must retain the general form, floor plan, and materials that evoke the time of construction and agricultural life of the period of significance and it must do so in important ways—not incidentally.

While Criterion D ordinarily will apply to the area of significance, Archaeology, in the assessment of livestock grazing, ranching and farming properties in Wyoming, and in the subcategory Historic: Non-Aboriginal, it can also be applied to the other areas of significance like Agriculture, Conservation, and Architecture, especially when employed in conjunction with professional historical research to document and evaluate these ranch / farm house properties. The major requirements for Criterion D resources are, first, the general requirement that the homestead / ranch house must have been used as a house in homesteading, stock-growing, and farming activities within the period of significance and that

it should retain its rural setting and evoke the agricultural life associated with Wyoming's past. In addition, it is necessary that the resource retain its location and hold the potential to yield information. The determination of eligibility of these sites under Criterion D must specifically demonstrate what kinds of data are contained in the site and explain how that information might be used to answer important research questions. The importance of the information to be gained should be established by discussing the site as it relates to the current knowledge of historic agricultural and homesteading practices and related issues. For sites consisting largely of buried deposits, demonstration of the potential to yield important information may involve subsurface testing. The necessity for, and scope of, subsurface testing must be decided on a property specific basis.

2. Integrity

The house also must retain integrity. Under Criteria A and B, it must especially convey a feeling of operation as an agricultural activity (Agriculture) and / or homesteading (Exploration / Settlement). It should retain its rural setting and evoke the rural life associated with the area of significance. The general appearance of the building needs to remain much as it was during the period of significance although it is expected that some deterioration and / or modification will often have taken place both during the period of significance and afterwards. If it is associated with other features (property types listed below) that confirm its homesteading / farming / ranching role, the building's integrity is enhanced.

In assessing the integrity of buildings under Criterion A and Criterion B, consideration needs to be given to the factor that if abandoned and deteriorated, there is the likelihood that deterioration began even while it was occupied, and that the neglect of the property passed through several stages before the final departure of the residents / operators that left the building permanently vacated, and this decline is as relevant to the association with homesteading and ranching as the building's initial construction. Farm and ranch buildings are seldom abandoned at the peak of their productive period. On the other hand, if buildings are currently in use they will often have been modified over the years, a natural part of the evolution of use and enlargement of the operation, which, again, does not automatically compromise the integrity of the properties but is a factor that needs to be addressed (for example to show how the modifications in the building reflected changes in the ranch / farm operation or agricultural market forces).

Under Criterion C, the integrity of the building's design, workmanship, and materials is especially important. Integrity of association and feeling is enhanced by the presence of related buildings and features nearby. Under Criterion D, the property, as observed by Donald L. Hardesty and Barbara J. Little, "must be a significant and focused or interpretable repository of information needed to answer one or more of the questions in the research design."[980] The specific elements of integrity necessary will depend on the research questions, but generally relatively undisturbed archaeological deposits are the first consideration.

---

[980] Hardesty and Little, *Assessing Site Significance: A Guide for Archaeologists and Historians*, 46.

2. Auxiliary Ranch / Farm Buildings and Structures

Description:

A wide variety of other buildings typically emerged on a homestead / ranch / farm in Wyoming to supplement the house that served as headquarters. Depending on the size of the operation, the ranch or farm would often include buildings that were specific to the agricultural operation such as bunkhouses, sheds, granaries, barns, dairy barns, stables, mess halls, corrals, loading pens and ramps, dipping vats, scale houses, shearing sheds, silos, trench silos, poultry houses, and buildings that were related to the domestic life on those farms and ranches such as root cellars / storage cellars, icehouses, and also the more broadly social structures such as school buildings and post offices that sometimes appeared on larger ranches.

These buildings and structures provided working and living spaces for ranch families and employees and served specialized functions within the ranch / farm operation. The same caveats apply to these buildings that have been noted for the farm / ranch houses, in that they are often utilitarian in design rather than stylish or decorative in appearance. The materials used in their construction will usually be of reasonably local origin and the methods of construction will tend to the homespun. They may be in a serious state of disrepair and deteriorated condition although their integrity remains solid. In addition to their similarity to the ranch / farm houses, however, these buildings, aside from reflecting particular parts of the agricultural process, are important because they demonstrate that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and spatial arrangement is an important element of the complex in establishing the way the ranch or farm worked. Usually, the greater the number of specialized auxiliary buildings and structures near the ranch headquarters, the more extensive the holdings and operation of the ranch or farm. Plus, it is unlikely that all of the buildings will have been constructed at the same time, so the evolution of the ranch or farm can often be discerned in developing a timeline of construction and modification. If multiple resources are included, not all contributing resources must meet the requirements of an individual building.

The following list of property subtype descriptions is not intended to be exhaustive since there is no standard list of buildings that all operations have followed. But it should provide an indication of the most common buildings and structures and should also provide guidance in the evaluation of other buildings that are not identified. Moreover, there are additional buildings and structures that could occasionally be found on farms / homesteads / ranches that were not exclusively related to agriculture but were essential for the domestic life and social arrangement of an agricultural community, including schools and post offices, many of which were initially located on the property of a ranch / homestead owner before taking on an independent existence elsewhere. Those buildings would also be considered contributing resources if they can be documented to have been importantly associated with the homestead, ranching, and farming themes in this context and if they otherwise meet registration

eligibility requirements consistent with those enumerated below.

Significance:

The auxiliary ranch / farm buildings and structures, and their remnants, that can be found in Wyoming's agricultural areas are important artifacts of an earlier time that serve to chart the changing dynamics of agricultural production and rural land tenure. They are potentially significant when they provide important associations with those historical forces and circumstances. Bearing in mind that each building or structure that emerged on the landscape served a particular need in the production and harvesting of crops and livestock, these artifacts can often be traced to the circumstances of initial settlement, enlargement and specialization of the farm or ranch, and ultimately to the transfer or abandonment of the holding. The adaptive reuse of buildings from one purpose to another also can reflect the historical evolution of the farm or ranch, as a building that once held a poultry house may be refitted to serve as a shed for shearing, storage, or other use. The movement of buildings from one part of the operation to another (within the period of historic significance) also reveals elements of the significance of the larger complex.

Registration Requirements:

1. Significance

The registration requirements for auxiliary ranch / farm buildings and structures under each of the National Register criteria are generally the same as for the ranch / farm houses, with important exceptions. Those resources that are eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of significance Agriculture or Exploration / Settlement must have been used in the broad pattern of homesteading, farming, and livestock ranching in Wyoming within the period of significance. Because they will seldom be significant as an individual building or structure, their significance under Criterion A will be tied to the significance of the complex of which they are a part. Yet it is vital to understand the significance of both the individual building or structure and the larger farm / ranch / homestead. The critical key question to ask in establishing significance of the components of this group of resources is: What functions did they serve and how were those functions historically significant? A combination of historical research in relevant documents and careful site analysis will establish the importance of the association and significance of the buildings and structures.

Under Criterion B, the property subtypes must meet the requirements for association with an important individual discussed under Ranch / Farm Houses. An individual auxiliary building or structure is unlikely to qualify under Criterion B, but the complex of buildings, the larger "feature system," that includes a coherent set of buildings and structures could qualify. Under Criterion C, the elements of design, workmanship, and materials will be the critical factors that determine contributing status, although additionally the spatial arrangement may be an important ingredient. In this last consideration, it is important to note that while the transfer of a building or structure from one location to another usually entails a certain loss of integrity, if that removal takes place within the period of significance and

if that building continues to serve the larger ranch / farm function, it will be considered a contributing element. In Criterion D, a greater opportunity may exist for establishing significance since some of these auxiliary buildings tend to be among the most fragile, and ephemeral, of the ranch's built environment. Again, however, to be eligible under Criterion D, the research design for the data to be acquired is an essential ingredient. As in the ranch / farm house, the determination of eligibility of auxiliary buildings and structures under Criterion D must specifically demonstrate what kinds of data are contained in the site and explain how that information might be used to answer definite research questions. The importance of the information to be gained should be established by discussing the site as it relates to the current knowledge of agricultural practices, social history, and related issues.

2. Integrity

The integrity requirements for this group of resources (and others in this context as well) under Criterion A and Criterion B emphasize primarily their historic function and appearance—the ability of an individual building or structure to convey a sense of past time and place by providing evidence of the specific function or role it served during the period of historic significance (not its ability to perform that function today) and the relationship of that function to the larger homestead / ranch operation. In this, the evaluator, it can be repeated, must be careful to avoid confusing condition with integrity and to recognize that some ranches / farms / homesteads will have fewer historic features, not because they are not significant or less significant, but because that was the kind of operation they were. Each property needs to be evaluated with regard to what existed during the period of historic significance, and the period of historic significance usually terminated when the property no longer had an active association with the historic patterns of ranching / farming / and homesteading discussed in the context statement, or fifty years before the present.

Property Subtype: Bunkhouses

Description

It is important to separate popular mythology from fact in identifying bunkhouses. Contrary to cinematic portrayals, bunkhouses were often quite small and accommodated only a few hired hands. They would, however, usually be characterized by an open, one- or two-cell interior and with an outhouse not far away. There were exceptions, of course, and some of the largest livestock operations included substantial bunkhouses.

Requirement

To meet the requirement for association with the themes of the historic context, the bunkhouse must reflect, in a tangible way, the important historical associations previously discussed and be related to a ranch / farm / homestead operation that required additional hired help for which a bunkhouse would be appropriate. The bunkhouse must retain its historic location, usually (but not always) near the center of

the ranch / farm / homestead complex (but also not equal in location to the ranch house) and its use as a bunkhouse must be clearly indicated either by configuration / design (often the interior of the building being one or two open areas), or circumstances of arrangement with other buildings. In addition to association, location and design, setting and feeling also are important aspects of integrity for bunkhouses under Criterion A. Under Criterion C, design, workmanship, and materials will be more important than under A. It should be kept in mind that with the mechanization of agriculture smaller numbers of workers were employed and bunkhouses were often put to use for other purposes, uses that would not necessarily compromise the integrity of the building and could reflect the evolution of the operation.

Property Subtype: Tenant Quarters

Description

There is a fine line between bunkhouses and tenant quarters and there are doubtless instances where the two overlap both in function and in time. One difference is that the bunkhouse will customarily, but not exclusively, serve the cattle ranch or sheep operation while tenant quarters will more likely be found in a crop-raising situation. In addition, the bunkhouse will ordinarily house individuals, and groups of individuals, who work on the operation, where the tenant quarters will at least theoretically accommodate families.

Tenant quarters reflected a very much different kind of land tenure than the free-hold ranch or farm and was at a pole opposite the homestead. Tenant farming was usually associated with the rise of commercial agricultural operations oriented primarily to the market and also with single-crop systems of production. They will often also be associated with distinct patterns of ethnic occupation and migration.

Requirement

The resources must be demonstrated to be tenant quarters, and their use as tenant quarters by their configuration, by records, or by other assessment must be clear. The tenant quarters must retain their historic location, which could be either centrally grouped or broadly dispersed on individually assigned acreages. Tenant quarters may have been moved to the historic location from other places, they may have begun as homesteader cabins, and they may have been subsequently put to use for other purposes (such as bunkhouses or storage), and it will not be uncommon for those quarters to follow a pattern of evolution beyond their life as tenant quarters. Thus location is an important aspect of integrity for tenant quarters, but it must be considered within the specific context of the ranch / farm operation. In rare instances, multiples will be found but it is not a requirement that all tenant units be intact. Since tenant quarters sometimes were dispersed, in share-cropper fashion, so that they actually constituted miniature farm units, a single unit with integrity can be eligible. In addition to association and location, which are critical aspects of integrity under all criteria, setting and feeling are also important. When evaluated under Criterion C, design, workmanship, and materials will become more important than under Criterion

A.

Property Subtype: Sheds

Description

Sheds—as a vernacular ranch term, and not as an architectural feature—for storage or other use were notoriously individualistic, or even idiosyncratic, in appearance and design and sometimes their dimensions and configuration actually depended on the available materials; they would, however, ordinarily have walls and a roof as opposed to being open-air shelters. Sheds are to be found virtually everywhere on farms and ranches and homesteads and they served a range of uses, frequently for storage, either general or specialized. They thereby filled an unsung but important function on the ranches and farms of Wyoming. The significance of sheds depends on their particular uses as parts of a larger complex which may have significance.

Requirement

The function of the shed needs to be clear and this will establish its association. As with other auxiliary buildings and structures, as individual buildings they will almost never have significance unto themselves and will only exhibit significance as operative elements in a larger complex. As contributing features of a larger complex, sheds will retain integrity if they remain reasonably intact and their integrity will be enhanced if the particular use (storage, blacksmithing, equipment repair, etc.) to which they were put can be suggested by the existing structure. Specifically, under Criterion A, they must retain integrity of association, feeling, and setting; design will be important in that it will help establish the function of the shed. Under Criterion C, the shed will also need to demonstrate integrity of workmanship, materials, and distinctive design. Location is a necessary element under A and C, with the qualification that small buildings were sometimes almost portable, being moved around the farmstead to meet changing needs.

Property Subtype: Granaries

Description

The granary on a farm / ranch / homestead, when not contained in a barn, was a simple rectangular building without windows in which the owner / operator would store harvested grains usually for domestic consumption through the following winter. One panel or section of wall would commonly be removable to provide access to the interior supply of grain. One common identifying feature of a granary is that which is ordinarily associated with Mormon agriculture in Utah, but that also spread to Wyoming early in the twentieth century, which is an "inside-out" design of the walls. By placing the planks on the inside of the wall studs, a worker inside the building would be able to use a shovel to

scoop up grain without the interference of the studs and without the additional expense of a second layer of siding.

The granary, a modest structure, emerged just about everywhere grain was grown and that included livestock operations. Its importance and significance derived from its ability to help a farm / ranch family through the winter and its indication of diversified agricultural production.

Requirement

The important historic function and association must be demonstrable—for example, the storage of wheat or oats that has been produced on the farm / ranch. While granaries were sometimes adapted for general storage use after grain was no longer produced on the homestead / farm / ranch, or once the grain became a staple of commercial production and was transported to a local elevator until it could be shipped to other markets, this modification would not disqualify the structure and could be further evidence of the historic evolution of the operation. The character defining element of granaries must be present, i.e., generally a rectangular configuration with windowless walls and with an opening that will allow access to the interior. Under all criteria, association, setting, location, materials, and feeling are necessary elements of integrity. Design is necessary, under A, to establish historic function and association, and under C, to demonstrate distinctive construction.

Property Subtype: Barns

Description

Barns, which seldom conform to a standard design but frequently have two stories and entrances on multiple levels, a gambrel or gabled roof, and shed-roofed wings, are places for sheltering or treating livestock and / or storing equipment and hay or grain. The variety of barns in Wyoming is rich with different construction materials, different design features, and different purposes. The great majority of barns in the state, however, were multi-purpose structures that accommodated a combination of livestock sheltering and crop-related activities. The more specialized barns (dairy, horse, bull, calving) are themselves indications of historic processes of specialization in which commercial operations replaced subsistence homesteads and ranches; the specialized barns, moreover, are keys to other specialized activities on the same property. Often equal (or superior) to farm / ranch houses in importance to the operation of the ranch / farm, the design, style, and materials of the barn can be pursued with quite as much attention to architectural features as their residential counterparts nearby in evaluation and description under Criterion C. Under Criterion A, however, the larger historical context of their functional evolution is the key indicator of their significance.[981] The literature detailing barns in

[981] For a brief view of the myriad of barn types, materials, and functions, as well as the complex and personal ways that they reflected the needs and personalities of their builders, see "A Gallery of Eden Valley Barns," in Sweetwater County Historical Museum, *Eden Valley Voices: A Centennial*

history is especially impressive (and sometimes even elegant) on design and description and often provides fascinating glimpses into function, although the strength of this literature is classification and architectural taxonomy rather than the social and historic processes in which barns document the evolutionary (and even revolutionary) process by which the landscape was transformed.[982]

Because of their near universal appearance in Wyoming, barns are easily taken for granted, accepted as a given, an assumed and automatic feature on the farm or ranch, and sometimes are thereby also viewed as lacking historic significance except for their design, style, workmanship, and materials. They may indeed be significant for their architectural features under Criterion C, but most in Wyoming will be significant because of their association with the farming and ranching that took place in and around them. The barn almost invariably suggests the reliance on horses for the power that operated the equipment and moved the workers on the farm and ranch. When horse-powered equipment was replaced by tractors, barns proved less a necessity, and when more goods were purchased rather than produced on the farm / ranch, the construction of new barns, already slowed by the agricultural crisis of the 1920s and 1930s, dropped even more. Not many barns were built in Wyoming during World War II and after, and those that were tended increasingly to be of a modular un-barn-like configuration with an evolution from the Quonset hut to the Morton or Butler buildings. The barn can provide a general indicator of the significance of the farm or ranch: the larger the barn, the more extensive was the farm or ranch; the more complex the barn, the more complex the farm or ranch; the more the barn changed over time, the more the farm or ranch changed over time; the more specialized the barn, the more specialized were the activities on the farm or ranch. This is not to say that the more complex, the greater in size, the more specialized, and the more changes the barn exhibits, the more significant it was. Rather this suggests that it had different significance according to those variables, not more or less.

Requirement

Because barns both reflect and substantially shape the significance of the farmstead or ranch complex, the barn functions (such as sheltering or treating livestock and / or storing equipment and hay or grain) that give the farm, ranch, or homestead its important association with the themes of this historic context must be clear. Barns are notorious for falling into disuse and disrepair, but those circumstances alone will not compromise their integrity. If the barn shows through integrity of association, location, setting, and design that it was used for sheltering or treating livestock and / or storing equipment and hay or grain, or for a more specialized barn function, it will retain integrity. Usually this can be demonstrated by the existence of stalls, lofts, hoists, feed bins, and equipment service bays in the interior and wagon and equipment-size entrances and livestock-appropriate fenestration and doorways on the exterior.

Celebration of Stories (Cheyenne: Pioneer Printing & Stationery, 2008), 251-266.

[982] See especially Allen G. Noble, *Wood, Brick, and Stone: The North American Settlement Landscape*, vol. 2: *Barns and Farm Structures* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Allen G. Noble and Hubert G. H. Wilhelm, eds., *Barns of the Midwest* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995); and Allen G. Noble and Richard K. Cleek, *The Old Barn Book: A Field Guide to North American Barns and other Farm Structures* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

Under Criterion C, barns must also retain original materials.

Property Subtype: Dairy Barns

Description

Dairy barns are sufficiently different from other general purpose barns that they merit separate consideration as a property subtype. Dairy barns were buildings constructed for the purpose of providing shelter for dairy cattle at night and in inclement weather, a shelter that worked as much to the convenience of the human handlers as the livestock, since this is the place where the cows would be milked. They varied in size, although even the small dairy barns were often two stories. Sometimes the dairy barn was situated on a slope so that the basement portion opened onto pasture while feed and bedding would be stored in the upper story. Although not all dairy barns were polygonal (especially octagonal) or round, most round or polygonal barns were dairy barns because of the functional efficiencies that they allowed. Commercial operations—and size was a strong indicator of production for the market—developed very large buildings.

In the instances where a family had just several milch cows, the same barn that housed other livestock and utility functions also provided a protected environment for the milking of dairy cattle. When there were more than a handful of these cows, however, a specialized building was generally constructed. There were two different kinds of dairy barns, one with stalls for the individual cow to be milked and one with an open area in which the cows were milked. Often equipped with stanchions to hold the cow during milking, the stall barn, or stanchion barn, was the common form of dairy barn. The alternative, the pen barn with an open area in which the livestock milled around, was less efficient while not saving space; in fact, generally that building was subsequently expanded with an addition known as a milk house where the milking would take place. Both types generally were two stories, or one and a half, and included a hay loft (or, in Midwestern terminology, a hay mow) on the upper level. Indeed, an almost defining element of the dairy barn was its ability to house feed, bedding, and animals in one building. The dairy barns were usually positioned at a location that was convenient for carrying the milk and dairy products to the house but not so close that odors would be a problem. The barn, for obvious reasons, had to be near pastures or paths (and corrals) leading to pastures. An equally significant consideration was the placement of the dairy barn on well-drained ground to retain a healthy environment; for that reason abundant and conspicuous ventilation also was a necessary feature of the dairy barn. When the dairy barn was used for commercial production, as opposed to household consumption, the location had to be such that wagons or trucks could be loaded easily. It was not uncommon for a few horses to share the dairy barn.

Although dairy cattle have never been as important as beef cattle in Wyoming, parts of the state have developed locally significant dairy industries and at various times in the past dairy cattle served important domestic functions on farms and ranches throughout the state. In addition, in the 1920s most communities in the state were able to draw upon at least one commercial dairy operation in the vicinity

(and distance was an important aspect given the transportation and storage of the perishable milk and cream). Neither farmers nor ranchers (except for the largest commercial operations) would purchase milk for their families until, generally, the post World War II period when specialization of agricultural operations of all kinds forced to the margins all but the main commercial productive commodity.

A more subtle feature of the dairy barn that gives it added significance was its association with gender. Initial study indicates that when a family had one or a few milch cows, the milking chore was assigned to females; when the operations grew larger, with more cattle, the activity was no longer domestic, no longer gendered, and virtually every member of the family participated; when it grew still larger, with more livestock, hired help was the primary source of labor, although often the hired "milk maid" was a person permanently associated with the dairy barn.

Requirement

The dairy barn was significant—and carried that significance to the larger operation—both when it was part of a general, diversified farm or ranch system and when it was a specialized, commercial activity. In either case that significance needs to be demonstrated, not speculated. In commercial dairy operations where the primary activity of the farm is producing milk, the importance of the dairy barn increases while the role of some other features (such as sheds and blacksmith shops) may diminish.

Dairy barns must retain their historic location, positioned in a location that confirms their functional use (such as between pasture and house or bunkhouse, and not in a remote corner of the operation) and must also retain their configuration that clearly indicates use for milking and sheltering dairy cattle. Integrity is enhanced by the presence of stalls and stanchions and loft and the ability to define the use of the different parts of the building (feed storage, animal bedding, milking). Silos located adjacent to the dairy barn may even be attached and, if so, enhance the integrity of the dairy barn.

Property Subtype: Loafing Shed

Description

The loafing shed, also called a pen barn, is a simple building, usually one story in height and generally enclosed on three sides, and occasionally enclosed on the fourth elevation except for a wide entry for livestock. The object of this building is to allow shelter for livestock and thus it would ordinarily face south unless the topography made another orientation suitable. If located in a corral (as in a dairy operation where livestock might be kept near the main barn), it sometimes would also have feeding and bedding supplies, but not separate stalls. The loafing shed will generally derive its significance as a contributing feature in the larger complex of which it is a part, not as a significant feature by itself.

Requirement

Loafing sheds must plainly indicate their use as shelter for livestock and this will be evident from location and orientation, a wide opening, or completely open elevation, on the sheltered side. Feeding and bedding arrangements, an occasional feature, need not be present.

Property Subtype: Stables

Description

Stables are structures for the purpose of providing shelter and feeding for (usually) horses but could also be used for other livestock, almost invariably with separate stalls or pens for individual animals or groups of animals. Historically, stables have tended to follow one of two configurations, one with an outdoor entrance / exit to each stall and the other with the stalls opening in the interior onto a throughway usually in the center of the structure, running lengthwise. Sometimes stables would be the most elaborate building on the ranch, with careful decoration and ornamentation presumably reflecting the quality of the horses housed there. Although not exclusively the case, often the existence of stables, rather than (or in addition to) a multiple purpose barn, reflected a substantial size and a level of commercial prosperity. Some stables, of course, were located on operations that specialized in horse breeding.

The significance of these buildings derives from the importance of horses in nineteenth and early twentieth century agriculture. The horses that were housed in stables provided much of the power for transportation, for plowing, for threshing, for working other livestock, and for other forms of work. They were seldom kept for ornamentation or companion purposes and were integral to the way the farm, ranch, or homestead operated until, with exceptions, at least World War II.

Requirement

Stables must have been associated with an agricultural operation, either livestock or crop producing, in an important, not incidental, way to be historically significant. Stables must retain clear evidence of their use by livestock and also retain at least some signs of the historic organization of the interior and configuration of the stalls. The presence of storage facilities and related elements (for example, saddle racks, tack rooms, blacksmith equipment, oat bins, etc.) enhances the integrity of the stable.

Property Subtype: Machine / Equipment Shed

Description

The role of technology on the farm and ranch was powerful and the machine or equipment shed was developed to house that technology which sometimes took on a very substantial size. Moreover, the tractors and steam engines that had to be housed, or more accurately, sheltered, were associated with other equipment that they powered or pulled—or both. Thus the machine shed could house initially

wagons and horse-drawn implements but later, traction engines, tractors, implements, threshing machines, and ultimately combines.

Requirement

To be significant as part of the larger complex, Machine / Equipment Sheds must have been used for sheltering the larger pieces (non-hand held) of technology. Ordinarily, there will be clear indications of their historic use for that storage. Because of their similarity to the loafing sheds, distinguishing features such as location near the main buildings of the farm or ranch, access (drive paths and roads), and configuration become important.

Property Subtype: Mess / Dining Halls

Description

At roundup (both during the period of the open range and afterwards) / shearing / harvest times, even moderate-sized ranch / farm operations found themselves with additional, temporary hired help on the premises that had to be fed. Some operations had to feed those workers on a year-round basis. A dining / mess hall was often a feature of those operations. The dining / mess hall could be put to other use, such as recreation or indoor work / repair projects. It would usually be constructed of materials and in a design consistent with other buildings, including the residence. In some instances a kitchen would be attached, and in others separate. When used for the seasonal gatherings at harvest or roundup, the dining hall often carried distinct gender associations as well because of the cooperative effort of women in the neighborhood to feed the workers.

Requirement

The use of the building for feeding crews of workers on either a temporary or permanent basis is essential for significance and will be evident by size, open interior space, proximity to a kitchen (which may or may not be attached), and sometimes proximity to a bunkhouse.

Property Subtype: Corrals

Description

Corrals are pens for the temporary enclosure of livestock and are usually arranged in a configuration that allows the transfer of stock from one enclosure to another in various processes such as calving, branding, castrating, vaccination, weighing, and shipping. Sometimes the corrals would be simple affairs, but on the large operations they would even take on a maze-like configuration. They almost never used barbed wire because of the presence of horses and humans in the corrals while working the

other stock, and they generally used planks or poles.

Requirement

Corrals need not be complete and usable, but the perimeter, design, and materials of the corral must be consistent with its historic use. As with buildings, so especially with the less-permanently constructed corrals: when they are not used, they deteriorate quickly. The deterioration is often a reflection of their condition, not their lack of integrity, so careful examination is essential. Moreover, corrals that are part of a ranch headquarters complex have often fallen into disuse as a result of the mechanization, consolidation, and specialization of agriculture; they can sometimes provide valuable insights into the evolution (and sometimes decline) of the property. And while the arrangement of corrals may appear to be a maze or a haphazard jumble of fenced areas, it is important to remember that that particular design was used for a purpose and that purpose—the association with the themes of ranching, farming, and homesteading—is what makes corrals historically significant.

Property Subtype: Loading Pens and Chutes

Description

These loading pens and chutes (ramps) facilitated the transfer of livestock to awaiting trucks for transportation to markets, and thus were a sign of the movement of the ranch operation from the practice of herding to market on a trail or road to the use of motorized transportation. The loading ramps, which were enclosed on either side with plank or pole fences, usually were associated with corrals and chutes to control and direct a certain number of head of livestock in a systematic fashion. A key element to their historical significance is location at a place where access is available for both livestock and trucks.

Requirement

Loading pens and ramps need not be complete and serviceable, but the contour and operation of the ramps and pens must be clearly discernible.

Property Subtype: Dipping Vats

Description

With the development of the livestock industry, sheep and cattle ranchers came to use various chemical formulas (mainly nicotine sulphate or lime and sulphur, and occasionally creosote) to treat their livestock and prevent disease or kill parasites. The most effective way of applying these chemicals was to mix them in a bath in which the livestock would be submerged. The vats containing the dip solution were substantial troughs, deep enough that the livestock would be completely submerged at first and

then would have to swim through to leave. These vats were, like other parts of the livestock management process, associated with a configuration of corral fences and chutes to direct the flow of livestock, one at a time, into and out of the dipping vat. The vats were important, and while not on every ranch, they were located sporadically and sometimes used cooperatively by neighboring ranches. A description of a cattle dipping vat near Powder River as it looked in 1923 indicates their general configuration. Alan Seager recalled how he helped dip a herd of cattle: "At last, we had all the cattle penned in the corrals, objecting. By government order, we had to immerse each in a concrete vat full of a solution of warm water and nicotine sulphate, to kill the ticks. The vat was about thirty feet long, eight feet deep, and the width of a cow. A chute of cottonwood logs ran up to one end of it, and a ramp led down into the fluid."[983]

On occasion the vats would be constructed in the field, especially for sheep, and at some points in time (depending on the years and the prevalence of scabbies among the sheep), sheep were required to be dipped at least once within a year before they were admitted onto national forest land or before they could be shipped out of the state. As William Thompson explained in 1968, when the practice had long since been abandoned, "that's why all these dipping vats were around the country."[984] With advances in technology, the dipping vats were not vats at all, but spray systems. Leonard Hay described one that his father, also in the sheep business, used: "it was a pen possibly 12 to 15 feet wide by 20 to 25 feet long and had sprayers on the side and overhead and coming up from the bottom with lattice floors and it was drained back into the concrete vat and would be resprayed."[985]

Requirement

While dipping vats vary in sophistication and permanence, the entrances ordinarily employed a sharp drop-off at the entrance to the vat forcing the livestock to plunge completely into the dipping solution as they enter and, at the other end of the vat, a gradually inclined ramp for the animals to clamber out under their own power, and this, or a similar system of operation, must be discernible. The presence of entrance and exit chutes and corrals for waiting enhances the integrity of dipping vats.

Property Subtype: Scale Houses

Description

---

[983] Allan Seager, "Powder River in the Old Days," *The New Yorker*, August 17, 1957, 33.
[984] U.S. Forest Service, interview of James Jacobs (USFS) with Leonard Hay and William D. Thompson, Rock Springs, June 1968. Transcript of interview located in Hegewald-Thompson family papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.
[985] U.S. Forest Service, interview of James Jacobs (USFS) with Leonard Hay and William D. Thompson, Rock Springs, June 1968. See also the discussion of a similar spraying system used on cattle in the interview of Jim Hardman by Bob Burns in 1971, Wyoming State Archives OH-90. The spray system Hardman describes was used as early as 1907.

The presence of scale houses—where livestock would be weighed prior to shipping to market—represents the advent of a more "scientific" or at least more careful approach to commercial livestock production since it would enable the owner to have an accurate awareness of the live-weight shipping out. Previously, the rancher had depended on estimates and on the scales of the purchaser. Sometimes the scales would be located in or adjacent to another structure—an appendage to a barn, for example—but would usually be a small, single room (or stall) enclosure with scales between two doors. The livestock would be forced by the narrowness of the passageway to stand on the scale platform and the weight would be read and recorded by an attendant. In some instances, the scale house would not be a house at all, or any kind of enclosure, for that matter. In those instances the scales would be open-air facilities. The difference is important since the scale house would accommodate multiple head of livestock at once for a bulk weight and would do so in a continuous flow—an arrangement appropriate for commercial sales of, generally, beef cattle. The open air scale, however, would generally be appropriate for weighing only a single, or very few, animal at a time, reflecting a more individualistic orientation to the livestock operation, appropriate for small ranches or breeding operations.

Requirement

The scales in scale houses have sometimes been removed and are not necessary for the structure to be considered intact. Since a defining characteristic of the scale house is the presence of entrances opposite each other for the livestock to be channeled completely through (and thus not turning around to leave by the same opening through which they entered), these entrances must still be visible, even if they are currently sealed. The existence of fences and chutes and nearby loading pens and ramps to facilitate the movement of the cattle into and out of the scale house enhances integrity. By contrast, the presence of scales outside a scale house may indicate a different kind of historical operation and thus those scales carry a different set of historical associations and purposes.

Property Subtype: Shearing Sheds

Description

Despite their common name, shearing sheds were often not small sheds at all. They ranged from modest outdoor operations to factory-type structures. Although in the early years shearing took place in the open, or under a canopy for protection from the sun, by the late 1910s and 1920s the sheep industry largely moved to indoor shearing facilities to secure cleaner fleeces and also to incorporate industrial organization into the fleecing process. These were often, and quite accurately referred to as shearing plants, although still generically referred to as shearing sheds. In some instances, as at the shearing shed on the Bishop Ranch in Campbell County, these shearing sheds were elaborate facilities with multiple stories so that the fleece would drop through a chute into a bag that hung through a portal onto the lower story, where the bags would be stuffed tightly and then moved—assembly line fashion—to a waiting wagon for transport to the railroad. The classic "Australian" style shed was located near a railroad,

contained an internal spatial organization such that possibly twenty shearers would work on as many sheep who were channeled through the building and whose sheared wool was subsequently processed by others. Although originally constructed to house the distinctive Australian system of shearing, those unique features were soon dropped and the buildings were the location of traditional shearing and sacking (not baling) processes. In a good many other instances, especially on small family farms and ranches with small flocks, the shearing shed was much more basic, was similar to the outdoor shearing pens of earlier years, and simply provided a protected or organized working space.

Requirement

The nature of the shearing shed will reveal much about the kind of operations that used it—how many sheep it could handle, at what time in history, and with what technology. This will indicate its historic significance. Thus the organization of the shearing process must be discernible from the building design. Ideally, in the large operations, this will consist of two building entrances and at least one holding pen and one shearing pen in the interior, but the existence of any combination of relevant exterior and interior features in such a way as to define it as a shearing shed will provide integrity of association and design under Criterion A; under Criterion C design becomes more important and must indicate the work-flow pattern of the shearing (and related) processes. In the smaller facilities, such as those where only a small number of sheep may have been sheared on a farm, tell-tale signs include the existence of a structure to hold the bag for fleece and an adjacent ladder or other climbing arrangement.

Property Subtype: Silos

Description

While not as common on the plains of Wyoming as in the Midwest where it has achieved iconic status, the silo can often be found in southeastern parts of the state as well as in those areas where dairy operations flourished. The silo would usually be a vertical, cylindrical tower-like structure for the airtight storage of silage (grains and grasses that have been stored and allowed to partially ferment to then use as fodder). It could be made of wood, concrete, or metal, or other materials such as stone. Average size is difficult to determine, but a common size was thirty-six feet high, of which four feet were below ground, and with an internal diameter of fifteen feet.

Requirement

Silos made an important contribution to the ranch or farm and they marked the movement of the operation to more modern form of agricultural organization, usually with some specialization. They would commonly be associated with dairy farms since they allowed for the processing of intense feed for animals kept near the complex headquarters. Their significance will thus be connected to the larger development of the farm or ranch in that direction. Silos are notorious for their deterioration once they ceased holding the fodder that they were designed for. If a silo retains its basic design and materials,

even with the loss of the domed (or other) cap, and its role / association in the historical operation of the complex is discernible, it will retain integrity under Criterion A. Under Criterion C, design, materials, and workmanship will become more important than under Criterion A.

Property Subtype: Trench Silos

Description

More common in this area than tower silos, trench silos were encouraged by Wyoming agricultural extension agents who freely distributed design plans for their construction. Of course, not all farms and ranches used those designs. The common element, however, was the creation of a large trench (think of the dimensions of a silo resting on its side), and then lining it, preferably with concrete, for the storage of the fermenting fodder. It would be covered with a temporary covering (planks or sheets of various material) that could be removed for access. Ideally, these silos would be built into the side of an incline so that one end would permit drive-in / walk-in access.

Requirement

As with the conventional tower silos, trench silos performed a vital role in the specialization and modernization of ranches and farms in the twentieth century. That role shapes the contours of historical significance for both kinds of silos; as with other features, they were part of the fabric of history that needs to be established in the evaluation of the property; they were not simply one more item in a random assortment of features that some operations had and others did not. Because of their literally very low profile, the trench silos are much less familiar than their kindred above-ground, in the air, counterparts. Careful, thoughtful examination of the site will be necessary to establish the nature (and number) of the silos as well as their historic use. Trench silos that are no longer in use have sometimes been filled with dirt or other material as a safety measure. If the walls of the trench silo are evident and it is clear that the concrete is not the foundation for another kind of building or structure, it will retain integrity and may be a contributing property to the complex. Integrity will be enhanced if the full contour and depth of the trench silo is evident from one end or if the cavity remains open.

Property Subtype: Poultry Houses

Description

Rare in the twenty-first century, poultry houses were common in Wyoming until well after World War II. The buildings in which chickens and turkeys were raised, both for domestic consumption and for commercial markets, varied substantially according to the scale and aspirations of the owner / operator as well as by the breed of fowls. The poultry house interior would usually include a roosting room with

separate levels for perches, for feeding shelves, for a dropping board, and for a brooder coop, and an additional room used as a scratching room for inclement weather. The typical poultry house would be a shed-roofed structure with an open or curtained and closable south elevation (to catch sunlight), although some instances of salt-box roof or other configurations are also to be found. The two main requirements for poultry houses were ventilation and heat, both adjustable to maintain a delicate balance. Poultry houses, like dairy barns, often demonstrated a clear association with gender roles.

Requirement

The poultry house must be plainly evident as such either because of its distinctive exterior or because of its interior which was fitted for chickens or turkeys. The presence of a ventilation system (usually with adjustable outlets under the rafters on the north elevation) and a system of heating (either passive solar or stove) enhances the integrity of the structure.

Property Subtype: Root Cellars / Storage Cellars

Description

The root cellar was once a standard feature on homesteads, ranches, and farms since it was the only way to keep foodstuffs cool in the summer and prevent them from freezing in the winter. While usually associated with domestic consumption patterns, because of the foodstuffs it contained, it also reflected the system of production for home consumption agriculture and that association is just as much a part of its significance. The root cellar was the next step after harvesting the vegetables from the garden. Ordinarily the root cellar was dug into the ground, often given a wall of bricks or stone, and covered with planks and then a thick layer of sod. Access was usually gained by a small entrance that tended to be (but was not always) located on the east end. It was usually located near the kitchen. It could be quite modest or very large. Often the root cellar was shaded by trees. On the interior, the root cellar commonly had a sand pit where carrots and turnips and other tubers were buried and a separate bin for potatoes, often packing the potatoes in straw in the bin. Several times during the winter, someone would usually spend time sorting through the potatoes, trimming the eyes (roots) off to keep them from growing, and other vegetables would likewise be tended underground. Special observation needs to be given the root cellar since some homesteads turned their original dugout home into a root cellar once an above-ground dwelling was constructed. In those cases, the root cellar gains additional significance in the evolution of the property.

Requirement

If the root cellar has not caved in it will generally possess integrity, and if it has collapsed, it may still be deemed a contributing feature if its size and root-cellar function can be definitely determined. A depression in the ground that may or may not have been a root cellar lacks integrity, although if another root cellar location has not been identified on that complex, it should be recorded as a possibility in a

survey or determination of eligibility of the ranch complex.

Property Subtype: Icehouses

Description

On larger operations that had access to a body of water where ice could be harvested in the winter, the icehouse often replaced the root cellar. The icehouse usually conformed to standard design considerations (if not standard appearance) which included alignment to prevent the broad side from catching the sun in the warmest part of the day, protection with shade trees, the use of double thicknesses of siding material, a door sill that extends up to a foot above the outside elevation (to prevent the loss of cool air when the door is opened), minimal fenestration just sufficient for release of warm air at the ridge (as through a cupola or gable vent), and frequently an entrance on the east (or shaded) elevation.

Requirement

Historically, the ice house is significant because of its association (1) with production for home consumption agriculture, (2) with pre-electrical grid systems, and (3) with operations that had families or crews large enough to undertake the demanding process of harvesting ice. By the same token, many ice houses were taken out of their intended use once the farm or ranch was connected to electrical power beyond a home generator and was thus able to acquire and use electrical refrigeration. That itself is an element of historic significance too. Thus, even on ranches that have been maintained and preserved, the ice house will in the vast number of cases have been put to other uses, but some can still be identified as icehouses. And some, subsequently cooled with electrical refrigeration, continued to serve their same function. Integrity of association and location is essential under all criteria. To retain integrity of design, necessary under Criterion C, the icehouse must possess a combination of any of these identifying features: building alignment to protect from solar heat, fenestration and entrances appropriate to an icehouse, extra thickness of walls, raised door sill, icehouse ventilation system (such as cupolas or gable vents). The presence of shade trees in the appropriate location enhances integrity.

3. Vegetative Features

Description:

This property type includes several kinds of features that were not technically built or constructed, but they were nonetheless carefully planned and designed and were essential features of farmsteads. They consisted of selected trees or plants planted and cultivated in purposeful arrangement with benefits to the

farm and ranch operation in mind. The garden was ubiquitous and fundamental, the orchard was a feature of enormous benefit when one could be made to grow, and the windbreak or shelterbelt a merciful feature that provided a barrier to strong winds, protecting people, crops, soil, and livestock. Originally they were conspicuous because of their clearly designed and purposeful arrangements, although they are often less obvious today.

Significance:

This group of features provided literally an organic connection to the soil and to nature, and it bridged the realm of nature, with its drainages and meadows and promontories, and the built elements of the ranch or farm. From some of the most fragile and ephemeral elements, the garden, to some of the most enduring, the windbreak, these features helped define many farmsteads. That definition, however, was much deeper than physical layout, for the gardens and orchards served historically to nurture a system of production for home consumption and independence from the market; the windbreaks and shelterbelts, which were in a conceptual way extensions of the gardens and orchards, underscored the independence of the farm or ranch, almost physically separating, if not enclosing, the farmstead from the surrounding environment.

Requirements:

These features are capable of demonstrating the social and economic environment in which Wyoming's farms, ranches, and homesteads operated, sometimes (gardens, orchards) doing so until they became integrated into a market system, and sometimes beyond that (shelter belts, windbreaks). They were not timeless, context-less features and their significance needs to be understood in terms of their social and economic function over time. As with built features, these features often reached a peak of development and then began a process of decline, and that decline is as much of the historical significance as the planting, plowing, tending, and expansion of the features. The integrity requirements for these vegetative features are similar in that they all require integrity of association, location, feeling, and setting. Design enhances integrity and is necessary under Criterion C. It is important also take into consideration the natural processes by which the features continue to grow, to decline and die, and sometimes to replace themselves.

Property Subtype: Gardens

The gardens generally consisted of plats of level ground, below an irrigation channel if irrigation was available, that were cleared, plowed, and planted with a variety of vegetables, ranging from the sensitive and delicate tomatoes in the more forgiving parts of Wyoming to the dependable potatoes and carrots most everywhere. Generally rectangular in shape to accommodate straight-line plowing and cultivation, these were commonly gardens that ranged from a third of an acre to several acres rather than the dainty backyard (or balcony) garden many twenty-first century citizens know. Of course, smaller gardens could also be found and sometimes these served as indications of family size, if there was a family

residing on the operation.

There may have been farms and ranches without gardens, but if so, they were exceedingly rare. Their critical significance derives from the independence they provided the homesteader, farmer, and rancher; they were not conveniences or add-ons to the system of ranching and farming but integral components of a system of production for home consumption. In virtually every part of Wyoming people usually managed to grow some of their own foodstuffs. Even in the inhospitable climate of Jackson Hole, with its very short growing season, farmers and ranchers routinely maintained gardens and then canned or otherwise preserved their harvests for the long winters. As Nellie VanDerveer observed of Jackson Hole in the 1930s, "All of the hardier vegetables flourish." She then listed carrots, turnips, cabbage, rutabagas, onions, peas, beets, radishes, and lettuce.[986] Aside from their social and economic significance, and aside from their bounty of independence, survival, and health, sometimes gardens took on particular ethnic importance as a source, and the only available source, for food items essential in particular traditions. Thus too the diminution of the garden in the lives and cultures of the farmers, ranchers and homesteaders was accompanied with the shrinkage of the gardens themselves. As rural families in the twentieth century focused on producing for the market more and as they specialized their production of cash crops or livestock more, they also began to purchase more of the goods they had previously produced. This was the other side of the market connection. The importance and the size of the garden thereby reflected lives, values, and social arrangements. In subtle ways, the garden also often reflected gender roles and its size and proximity to the house figured in those roles.

Requirement

The significance of the garden is substantial and that significance will be clear if there are remnants of it on a farmstead since it relates both to the system of production and consumption. Few farm and ranch gardens, however, survive unless they have received continued use, and those that survive will generally have diminished in size. In some instances the footprint of the garden will be clear, but that is often speculative. To retain integrity the use of a particular piece of land as a garden must be clear and may be determined by the marks on the earth where it was (or is) and by surrounding features, especially borders, irrigation / pump facilities, and its relation to domestic buildings and windbreaks, and presence of continued related vegetation (such as berry bushes and certain garden plants) that continue to grow.

Property Subtype: Orchards

Orchards consisted of fruit or nut trees planted in rows, and generally in exacting rows from each perspective; even spacing (as close as eight feet apart for plums, for example) facilitated their planting, cultivation, pruning, thinning, and harvesting—as well as allowing room for future growth. Often they were situated on sloping land for improved drainage, but that was not a defining quality. One characteristic was that these were slow to develop, and they were often vulnerable to the elements, but

[986] Nellie H. VanDerveer, "Jackson Hole: Agriculture," in WPA Collections, subject file 1327.

once established they became immediately recognizable features because of their geometry and the repetitive grouping of the same species for cross pollination. Even apples, plums, and cherries grew in the higher elevations such as the Laramie Plains. Orchards were often associated with apiaries, though these left a light touch on the landscape. Orchards could be any size, were usually geometrical, and the larger orchards not infrequently covered ten to fifteen acres or more. An orchard in the yard could consist of several dozen trees.

Irrigated farms and ranches were especially conducive to the growing of fruits. The Big Horn Basin, the North Platte River valley, and the Wind River valley around Lander and Riverton all proved suitable for fruit orchards—under the right conditions. Indeed, there is sometimes, again, an ethnic and cultural association, and the orchards were an integral element of Mormon settlements and even Star Valley produced impressive orchards along with its dairy output. Some orchards were grown in dry farm operations too, and with surprising success.

Orchards were not as common as vegetable gardens, but they were successfully tried in more parts of the state than modern orchard agriculture might suggest and they were a desirable part of farm and ranch life because of the variety in diet they provided and because of the independence they permitted. Those Wyoming farmers and ranchers in places where fruits could not be successfully propagated often lamented that they had (1) to travel to distant commercial centers to acquire fruits, and (2) that they had to use scarce cash, in a barter economy, to purchase the fruits. The preference by far was to be able to grow one's one fruits and nuts and fortunately this took place in many parts of the state. They were thus significant because of the independence they provided, because of the dietary variety, and because of the cultural associations they nurtured.

Orchards could be significant on several levels for what they reveal about the people who planted them (and the expectations of those people) and what they suggest about the farming culture of Wyoming. Planting orchards was seldom the first task of the homesteader or farmer starting out. There were other duties and needs to be attended to first and the fruit, literally, of this effort would be a long term achievement. The orchards thus represent generally mature operations in well-developed and settled areas at their inception. They also reflect the diversity of productive effort since most orchards tended to be small and more for home (or neighborhood) consumption than for shipping to distant points. The demise of farm orchards, especially in the years following World War II, and the rise of large commercial operations was a national phenomenon; appearances are, however, that in Wyoming the decline of small orchards was not offset by commercial monoculture orchards. The commercial, specialized orchards tended to be located well beyond the borders of the state.

Requirement

The significance of orchards, including modest clusters of fruit trees, will, as with other farm and ranch features, be tied to the system of resources of which it is a part. As with many of those features, so too with orchards: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and this pertains to significance. Careful examination will help establish that significance. For example, the distances between trees may indicate

sufficient room for wagons, a consideration important when the orchard was used for producing for the market. The physical appearance of the trees themselves likewise provides a clue as to the kind of orchard and its function on the farmstead. Fruit trees with tall trunks (without branches until five or six feet from the ground) generally reflect early patterns of allowing livestock to circulate in the orchard, a practice that helped fertilize the trees and conformed to a prevailing neglect of pruning; low-headed trees, with trunks that branched out eighteen or thirty-six inches from the ground, showed that livestock was kept out, usually with a fence, that pruning and cultivation was more scientific and systematic (low-heading caused the tree to bear fruit earlier as well as more plentifully), and that purposes were more commercial. When chickens were kept out, it showed the use of synthetic fertilizers.[987] Integrity is complicated since, as with other vegetative features, orchards have been subject to decay and deterioration from natural forces, especially once they were no longer part of an active farm operation. Fruit trees are notoriously susceptible to disease and decay as well as to strong winds and orchards that are no longer tended will show marked deterioration. On the other hand, these trees have a significantly longer life than vegetable gardens and their remnants will be commonly found if the orchard was able to mature. To retain integrity, the orchard must be clearly visible as indicated by the existence of some of the fruit or nut trees and by the discernible pattern of their arrangement. Location and design will enhance the integrity of the orchard if, for example, it is situated in the lee side of a windbreak and near the garden, or if a source of water from which it drew is clearly evident.

Property Subtype: Windbreaks

Windbreaks were parallel rows of trees planted on the windward side of a farmstead so that the combination of species, when mature, would provide shelter to the humans, livestock, and crops in the immediate vicinity of the farm or ranch headquarters, protecting them from strong winds. The species selected in the windbreaks were chosen to provide year-round protection, and some were chosen because they were quick growing and would provide shelter for the slower-growing trees on their lee side. Often closely-spaced shrubs would be located on the outside row to assist the young trees. The trees would be located usually sufficiently far apart to allow room for growth, and that distance would vary with the different species; unlike orchards, they would be staggered in their planting to provide a more effective barrier to the winds. They would ideally be placed at least a hundred feet away from farm buildings, and in that interval orchards and gardens would be placed, both for protection from the winds and to maximize use of the moisture collected in the accumulated snow that dropped behind this natural snow fence.

---

[987] See the discussion by Susan A. Dolan in her *Fruitful Legacy: A Historic Context of Orchards in the United States, with Technical Information for Registering Orchards in the National Register of Historic Places* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009), 86-93. This important study is focused especially on substantial orchards in other states, but much of the horticultural as well as National Register information can be brought to bear on Wyoming. I am grateful to Judy Wolf and Mary Hopkins for bringing it to my attention.

At least as early as the 1910s the Wyoming Agricultural Extension Station and the *Farm Bulletin* encouraged the use of windbreaks on Wyoming's farms and ranches and in 1924 the Clarke-McNary Law provided funds for the distribution of tree plantings to be used for windbreaks and shelterbelts, after which their use increased. Windbreaks were important because they provided an important measure of protection from the winds for the farmstead itself and, if properly designed, would also trap essential moisture in adjacent gardens and orchards. Often the terms windbreaks and shelterbelts were used interchangeably, even in the literature supplied by the bulletins, but there were differences.[988] The windbreak would protect the farm and ranch buildings and the gardens and other features located at the ranch headquarters and was often curved or cornered so that it would protect these features on two sides; the shelterbelt, on the other hand, would be longer and more strictly linear, positioned perpendicular to the prevailing winds, and would protect fields from the winds. The windbreak generally included more rows of trees than the shelterbelt. The windbreak was an important element and was increasingly used when land could be spared and the investment could be made in trees and their care. The standard procedure was to locate the windbreak at least a hundred feet from the house and other buildings and farther, if possible, to allow for snow collection in the intervening space. Often they were directly adjacent to the orchard, and Cecilia Hennel Hendricks lamented that "To grow an orchard here you must first grow a grove that entirely protects the orchard."[989] Finally, one of the obvious elements of significance for the windbreak is often forgotten: it took twenty years or more for a windbreak to mature and during those years they required considerable attention and even watering and cultivating. But the intention was for the windbreak to be a permanent part of the homestead, farm, or ranch, and to last into future generations. That farm, ranch, or homestead with a windbreak was the embodiment of huge expectations for the future and for the future of the family that nurtured it. Sometimes the windbreak lasted longer than the family that created it.

Requirement

Meant for long endurance, windbreaks will sometimes be one of the more conspicuous surviving elements of a farmstead, having outlived the other features they were intended to protect. The significance of windbreaks is determined by establishing their connection to the elements on farmsteads, all of which together may be contributing features, and by noting their role historically—observing which elements were protected and which were not and what that meant in the evolution of the property. Often individual trees will be missing and the arrangement will be less orderly than during the period of significance because of subsequent overgrowth, self-reseeding, and the appearance of volunteers of other species. Sometimes they have been removed in part because they interfere with large equipment or even access to the farm buildings. Standard formulas for planting windbreaks were often adapted to local and individual needs, so it is to be expected that any uniformity will be entirely local, and their composition and configuration may have evolved over time (with, for example, the replacement of

---

[988] T. S. P., "Wind Breaks and Shelter Belts," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 2 (May 1913): 330-32.
[989] Cecilia Hennel Hendricks, September 21, 1925, in Cecilia Hendricks Wahl, compiler and editor, Cecilia Hennel Hendricks, *Letters from Honeyhill: A Woman's View of Homesteading, 1914-1931* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1986), 473.

cottonwoods with other trees, in whole or in part).[990] Windbreaks will be considered to retain integrity if they still exhibit their clearly discernible linear configuration (straight, curved, or cornered), including the (imperfect) rows of different species.

Property Subtype: Shelterbelts

Shelterbelts were long rows of trees, often two or three parallel rows spaced about sixteen feet apart, that were positioned along the edge of a field perpendicular to the prevailing winds; in Wyoming this often meant on the west side of the fields although they were sometimes located on the north as well. Occasionally they would be but a single row of trees. The combinations of trees used varied according to individual availability, economy, and preference. As with the windbreaks, the evergreens would be placed on the inside row, a medium sized deciduous tree next, and on the outside something more substantial, such as ash and elm and sometimes cottonwoods. Cottonwood trees were initially recommended for windbreaks and shelterbelts but their use declined because the trees, while quick growing, and thus providing shelter for other trees to grow in adjacent rows, had a limited life unless watered, and then tended to attract insects and rot.

Shelterbelts were not as common in Wyoming as in Midwestern states, but they were sometimes used and when they could be planted and grown they proved their worth by conserving soil, moisture, and crops and they provided summer shade and winter shelter for livestock. As with the windbreak, its kindred and often conflated feature, the shelterbelt was a valuable feature for the operation of the farm or ranch and it was a commitment to the long term future, not short term profits.

Requirement

The significance of shelterbelts will need to be established by reference to other features to which they are related, physically, functionally, and historically. More vulnerable to the elements and to subsequent expansion efforts than windbreaks because of their greater length and fewer rows, shelterbelts will be much less commonly found. When they do survive, in whole or in part, they will be conspicuous because of their straight-line configuration and their prominence as vertical features in an otherwise open landscape. When that function and appearance continue, even partially, they will be considered to have retained integrity.

4. Watering Facilities and Windmills

[990] See for example, the instance of a farmer who had planted a row of cottonwoods in years past and in subsequent years sought to enhance this windbreak; the agricultural expert advised the farmer to plant two rows of golden willow to the inside of the row of cottonwoods. As with other elements of farm and ranch life in Wyoming, people worked with what they had. "Queries," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 1 (March 1912): 129.

Description:

This property type includes the variety of ways homesteaders, dry-farmers, and stock growers drew water from beneath the soil and preserved the moisture that came from the sky so as to obtain a steady source for their livestock and crops, and indeed for their own consumption. The users of the range developed a variety of means for acquiring and holding water and the broad, open land of Wyoming's farms and ranches is often punctuated at uneven intervals with the remnants of these structures. Wherever one exists—whether it is an improvement upon a spring, a well head, a rock cistern, a windmill and stock tank, or a dam and reservoir—the remnant is an indicator of effort on the part of an earlier inhabitant in historic times to provide water to thirsty livestock and crops in a dry land and thereby to both make their endeavor a success and to transform parts of Wyoming otherwise of limited productive potential into a significant agricultural area.

Significance:

Much of Wyoming consists of an arid or semi-arid environment and access to water has historically played a determinative role in the success or failure—or even the inauguration or avoidance—of homesteading, ranching, and related activities. The ability to either control nature or adapt to it has been one of the character-defining qualities of not only agriculture, but life itself, in the area. From early convictions that plowing the land would by itself bring rainfall, to scientific and pseudo-scientific efforts to dry-farm and graze cattle and sheep in that environment, the homesteaders, farmers, and livestock raisers have developed a variety of techniques to provide water for their operations—never an easy task to accomplish. As they did so, they left multiple structures as evidence of both their success and failure to harness the precious water that fell from the sky or that lay protected beneath the surface. The earliest settlers and ranchers located near the streams and creeks where they would have a steady supply of water, but later settlers had to devise other ways of securing water. They might locate near a spring and then make improvements on the spring to make it more productive or accessible. But in many cases they had to dig a well, and that well usually was dug even before they built a home. The wells were supplemented with pumps, many of them hand-powered, but increasingly the ranchers and homesteaders turned to windmills to extract water for their operations. Of necessity, these would be scattered throughout the range to accommodate the needs of the livestock as they grazed over a wide area.

Where there was a windmill, there would often also be a water tank to collect the extracted water for livestock consumption. In the early twentieth century, and most notably and systematically, in the 1930s, ranchers developed, often with government assistance, dams and reservoirs that could hold more water than could stock tanks. The windmill or dam that may stand as a lonely sentinel on the plains usually is the tip of the iceberg of a system of water development and storage that has deeply influenced the pattern of land use in the area. Moreover, it also revealed changes above ground as well.

Requirement

Those watering facilities and windmills that are contributing features for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of significance Agriculture or Exploration / Settlement will hold significance generally as part of a larger set of features with significance, not as individually significant properties although rare circumstances may exist for individual eligibility. A combination of historical research in relevant documents (for example, but not limited to, the well permit records in the office of the State Engineer and oral histories) and careful site analysis will help establish the contributing significance of the watering facilities and windmills. The historical and functional relationship of these features to the farmstead will be much easier to establish in cases where they are located adjacent to other buildings and structures.

Under Criterion A and Criterion B, the various subtypes of watering facilities and windmills are unlikely to be evaluated as either eligible or contributing features for the National Register as isolated, individual structures. Because of the potential for distinctive design and construction, however, they may be eligible independently under Criterion C. In fact, Criterion C holds an important value for assessing the eligibility of individual sites in remote locations *if* the engineering features represent a coherent system of providing water for livestock or fields. In this case, the operation of the windmill and related watering system must be clear and the mechanism and critical parts must be intact. Similarly, if there is reason to believe that the structure holds potential for yielding additional information, the structure may be eligible under Criterion D provided that the research design is clear and pointed regarding the importance of the data that may be gathered.

The integrity requirements for this group of resources, as with the auxiliary ranch / farm buildings and structures, place primary emphasis on their functionality and form—the ability of an individual watering facility or windmill to convey a sense of past time and place by providing evidence of the specific function it served during the period of historic significance. Integrity of location, setting, and feeling, as well as association are required under Criterion A; for Criterion C integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is also necessary.

The range of subtypes in this set of resources includes the following:

Property Subtype: Springs

Springs are naturally occurring points where water appears and flows onto the surface of the earth. While the natural features are not usually themselves historic resources unless associated with specific human developments or events nearby, sometimes they have been modified in a way to make them more productive in the ranching / farming operation, often with concrete or pipes or with guards to keep livestock from destroying it. The situation will be rare when a spring is an independently eligible feature (as when it becomes a prominent landmark or social center), and developed springs will more commonly be contributing features among an assortment of other properties.

Springs may be significant because they served many functions on farms and ranches, though many of

those functions were ephemeral, light in touch, and indistinct. As a source of drinking water gathered with a pail or as a source of water for thirsty livestock, any point along the flow of water provided by the spring, which might ultimately become a stream if in sufficient quantity, would be useful. Likewise the storage of containers of dairy (or other) products in the cool water could take place without development beyond constructing a simple weir or arranging some rocks to form a pool. They also were significant when they provided water for livestock, thus enabling the use of range otherwise beyond reach of the grazing animals.

These functions, however, seldom were site specific in a sustained way and will generally not be able to provide the important association necessary to qualify a spring for the National Register. Of course, if a spring became the basis of a larger pattern of development of historically significant buildings, structures, or social institutions and activities, then it could become a contributing feature by that association. This association could come when springs were modified to provide easier access for livestock—or for storage—and that modification may qualify as a contributing feature, but, again, would depend on the significance of the larger complex with which it is associated.

Requirement

It is necessary to demonstrate the historical significance of the spring through one of the associations indicated above and also to demonstrate that the association with the historical pattern or events is important. If it were a spring that enabled the access to a new range or settlement, that may be sufficient. If the structures associated with it were an important part of a range improvement / conservation program, that too could provide possible justification of an important association. As with other features, the fact of existence is not in itself sufficient.

The modification of the spring, to retain integrity, must clearly be historic and must retain enough of its historic appearance and design that its function is plain. The modification may simply be a rock lining that is placed around the source, or some form of concrete or pipe system that served as a conduit for the spring instead of its natural channel, or it may be a device to keep the livestock who use the spring from destroying it.

Property Subtype: Wells

A well is a system for conveying water stored underground to the surface so that it can be put to use for domestic and crop and livestock purposes. Wells may be deep or shallow, hand dug or drilled, but the purpose remains the same—bringing the water to the surface. Most wells were drilled, albeit many of them were drilled with a hand auger device before more sophisticated drilling machines eased the labor, but the hand-powered systems continued to form an economical system for many people after the advent of the more powerful and expensive devices. A pump at the well head—which may be powered by hand, by wind, by gasoline / diesel engine, or by electric motor—is often an integral part of the well, and sometimes will have changed from one system to another over time.

The well that supplied water for household and field use was one of the critical features of almost all homesteads, farms, and ranches. Even those situated near live water developed wells for reliable, clean, potable water. For those located farther from water the necessity was that much greater. One woman recalled the source of water in her childhood on a dry farm before they had a well:

> Water had to be hauled in cans and barrels. Ours came from a spring on Four Horse Creek about 2 ½ miles from our place. Our well hadn't been dug yet, so it was either haul the water or use what we could catch in buckets when it rained. Because it was such a precious commodity, water was always used very sparingly. We would wash and rinse the dishes, using two pans of water. The rinse water would then be saved to wash the next batch and the wastewater would be given to the pigs.[991]

The well was, for that reason, one of the earliest parts of the homestead to be developed, often dug before the house and barn were constructed, and its location could even determine the location of the house and other buildings. Its significance under Criterion A in a farm, ranch, or homestead setting will be derived from its relationship to the other resources and their historic associations.

Requirement

The associational significance of the well should be easy to establish as a result of research in available documents (including oral histories). The well drilling permits in the office of the State Engineer may provide valuable information that goes beyond the well itself, but the absence of an official permit or record should not be accorded an inordinate importance. Drawing upon the range of resources available for understanding the historical significance of the homestead, ranch, or farm will largely establish the significance of the well. A well on a dry farm homestead could have a very much different set of historical associations from that of its counterpart on a ranch situated on the banks of a stream.

Wells have not always withstood the elements of natural decay and social development. Sometimes they have caved in or have been replaced and buried whether the farm / ranch operation continues to exist or has been abandoned. Sometimes as safety measures the wells have been filled or permanently capped. The well does not have to be functioning, but its certain existence, even if capped and sealed, can give it sufficient integrity to make it a contributing element to a complex. If the well is associated with pumps and other watering features, or with other structures and buildings, the integrity is enhanced.

Property Subtype: Well Houses

---

[991]Margaret Dillinger Bowden, *1916: Wyoming, Here We Come!* (Gillette, Wyoming: privately printed by James H. Bowden and Jessie Outka, 2002), 14.

The well house is the shelter constructed to protect the well and pump. Since the well house is ordinarily used to protect a mechanical pump or other such device, its significance is generally associated with the arrival of that technology in the modernization of the farm or ranch. In the evaluation of farmsteads the well house will usually be placed at some point in the continuum representing the evolution of the operation. While it is thus not an element of great significance in the farmstead, compared with the well itself, it is a valuable feature in the quest for understanding the operation and the ranch / farm features over time.

Requirement

The historical significance of the well house, again, derives from its function on the individual farm or ranch being evaluated. Generally this can be established by indicating what need the well house met and how that need was addressed prior to its construction. The well house was often subject to rot from moisture, an ironic development in an arid or semi-arid environment, but the house, if clear in its function and reasonably intact, can retain integrity.

Property Subtype: Cisterns

Cisterns are containers often buried or partially buried in a location where rainfall or snowmelt will collect and be preserved. Cisterns are often quite simple in construction, something like a rock-lined or concrete-lined cavity, or even a manufactured container like a wood or steel barrel that has been partially buried. They usually possessed, at least originally, some kind of cover to impede loss by evaporation and some kind of an outlet at the base (if above ground) or a pump (if below ground) to allow the water to be directed to one use or another. The cistern will often be identifiable as a rectangular concrete slab near the house, usually with a manhole cover (concrete rectangle with O-ring attached for lifting) or a pump.

In the early years of the twentieth century the concrete cistern was heralded as a much needed improvement over the old rain barrel as a device for storing soft water (as distinct from the mineral-saturated surface water in many regions) for household use.[992] Therefore a great deal of its significance comes from its association with the farm family as a social unit rather than from the farm as an economic system of production, an important feature too often neglected in the evaluation of rural properties. While the cisterns tended to be substantial in size, often about eight feet on each dimension, they were labor intensive, not money drains, in their construction (they required a lot of digging and a fair amount of concrete for the eight-inch thick sides, bottom, and top) and were thus within reach of many farms and ranches that could not afford other "modern" technologies. This was one of the few elements of physical modernization that did not carry over into larger social or economic arrangements. On the other hand, the replacement of cisterns with running water was intimately connected with the larger modernization of the social fabric of rural America and in many rural parts of the nation did not

[992] See, for example, "Underground Cisterns of Concrete," *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, I (July, 1911): 7-11.

take place until after 1960.

Requirement

The significance of a cistern on a farm or ranch will be determined by its association with the other features and research in the historical record. A cistern that was located beneath a house obviously had a different association and significance than one that was located nearby—the one indicating the cistern as an integral element in the development of the farmstead and the other likely an add-on. The size of the cistern can indicate something of the family size. The cistern can, along with other features, provide clues to the priorities and needs of the family. If the cistern can be interpreted to provide information about these aspects of life on the farmstead, it may have the necessary historical associations, but only, again, as a contributing element in a larger complex in which the associations with the historical themes and issues can be established.

Cisterns are not always obvious and are often concealed in brush or undergrowth fed by the water they preserve. It is not uncommon to find only a concrete slab as the physical evidence of its existence. Over time they may have developed cracks and leaks to make them inoperative, but the design, materials, and configuration need to be plainly evident to retain integrity. Portable cisterns lack integrity unless they were permanently affixed to another feature or buried.

Property Subtype: Windmills

The technology of the windmill in history is a sometimes arcane study in itself and the mention of a windmill can summon images of the huge whirling vanes on a Dutch windmill as easily as it can generate images of the Halladay or Eclipse type commercially manufactured farm windmill so prominent on the American prairie. Despite the differences in appearance, and despite the initial uses of windmills for grinding grain, the operating principle is the same: the force of the wind turns the vanes which rotate a drive shaft that turns gears. In Wyoming and the Great Plains generally, the primary purpose was to pump water to the surface. The specific technology by which that principle was applied, however, varied considerably by manufacturer, by age, and by region.

Windmills are such a common feature of the rural plains that it is sometimes difficult to imagine what the prairies looked like before they appeared. That in itself gives a clue to the significance of the windmill since the ability of the windmill to bring water to the surface in remote areas also made those areas usable for grazing, since livestock need water as well as forage. The windmill could also provide water for small farms, usually not enough for extensive irrigation purposes but enough for gardens and domestic use.[993] In some instances, the windmill was actually a wind generator, a device by which rural

[993] See Allen G. Noble, "Windmills in American Agriculture," *Material Culture*, 24 (Spring 1992): 1-12, and A. Bower Sageser, "Windmill and Pump Irrigation on the Great Plains 1890-1910," *Nebraska History*, 48 (1967): 107-118

people would be able to produce and store electricity to power various pieces of electrical equipment and appliances.

The technology by which windmills operated varies enormously and was seldom standardized. So long as windmills were being erected in the field, which they were generally until around World War II, the manufacturers continued their innovation; it was only once demand subsided, and other forms of water extraction surged ahead, that the technology and design became static. Even during the Depression and the war, however, the installation of a windmill possessed a distinct social significance. As T. Lindsay Baker, the preeminent authority on windmills, notes, "Strangely enough, one of the more important domestic markets that arose was that of mortgage companies, which often bought new steel mills to replace outdated or wind-damaged units on properties which they had repossessed from borrowers in order to return the farms to production with tenant laborers."[994]

Requirement

Windmills would hold different significance when located in isolated settings where livestock would graze than when situated near the house and barn and garden and that significance needs to be established. Their arrival in many parts of the state can often be associated with the penetration of railroads in those areas and their decline can often be associated with the arrival of the electrical grid.

As with most watering facilities, windmills will be considered under Criterion A mainly as part of an eligible ranch / farm / homestead or district instead of as isolated features on the landscape. To retain integrity as a contributing feature, the windmill must retain its design, even if some of its elements—such as vanes or sucker rod—are no longer present or operable. The integrity of the windmill is enhanced by being a complete structure, its proximity to a water tank, and its continued operation. Under Criterion C, the windmill must retain enough of its distinguishing engineering features to establish the important association with the technology.

Note: The State Protocol between the Wyoming SHPO and the Bureau of Land Management requires no formal documentation of "stock dams, troughs, spring boxes, and associated windmills that post date 1930" for BLM authorized undertakings.[995]

Property Subtype: Water Tanks

A water tank may be any kind of large receptacle made of wood, metal, stone, or concrete and is used

[994] T. Lindsay Baker, *A Field Guide to American Windmills* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 107.
[995] State Protocol Between the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management State Director and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer, March 8, 2006, Appendix D, "Defined Non-Sites and Property Types Requiring No Formal Documentation."

for holding water that is pumped from an adjacent well. Water tanks by themselves are simply containers that hold water but, when they are associated physically with a well or windmill, they become an active element in the farm or ranch operation. They may provide evidence of the kind of ranching operation carried on by their location and size.

Requirement

Not significant unto themselves, water tanks may have significance as part of a larger set of features on a farmstead if the farmstead itself has significance. A water tank must retain its historic condition and material and its proximity to a source of water (even if the source is no longer present) to retain integrity. Note: The State Protocol between the Wyoming SHPO and the Bureau of Land Management covering BLM authorized undertakings requires no formal documentation of "stock dams, troughs, spring boxes, and associated windmills that post date 1930." That list would presumably also include water tanks.

Property Subtype: Stock Tanks

A stock tank is also a receptacle (perhaps gouged from the earth) for holding water to be used by livestock, but it is usually of substantially greater size and will get its water from a source other than a well. The stock tank is ordinarily positioned at an optimum location where it can collect tributary water from rainfall or snowmelt. As its name indicates, the stock tank provided an impoundment of drinking water for livestock. It would be a feature associated with both sheep and cattle operations and would derive significance from that function and relationship.

Requirement

As a solitary feature, the stock tank will ordinarily lack significance unless historical sources provide evidence of an important association with one of the themes in this context—for example, an important association with the Midwestern (enclosed) system of cattle production, or with land policy (the regulation of grazing and the leasing of public lands). A stock tank can easily deteriorate through the process of erosion, but it can qualify as a contributing element if it retains enough of its design to definitely identify it as a stock tank. Again, it needs to be noted, in keeping with the guidance established in a programmatic agreement between the Bureau of Land Management and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, stock tanks constructed *after* 1930 do not need to be recorded for BLM authorized undertakings.

Property Subtype: Dams / Reservoirs

The major dam and reservoir construction projects associated with the Bureau of Reclamation's expansion in the Big Horn Basin, the North Platte River valley, and the Wind River valley, are not

included in this context since they represented vast public projects on major drainages and are deserving of study in their own right and in their own context. On the other hand, there were a great many smaller dams and reservoirs placed on individual farms and ranches across Wyoming that were of just as much significance, even though they lacked the engineering expertise and focused resources that the big projects involved.

The critical distinction between a dam / reservoir and a stock tank is that the dam is located on a stream, albeit often an intermittent stream, where the stock tank is not on running water. Located on the stream or creek, the dam creates a reservoir of water for livestock consumption. While dams and reservoirs (and stock tanks too, for that matter) can be found that date to early homesteading and grazing activities, it was especially in the 1930s with the increased number of tractors and with an active range conservation program by the U.S. government that stock tanks, dams, and reservoirs began to be built in very large numbers in arid parts of Wyoming.

Small dams and reservoirs emerged at an early point in the grazing country of Wyoming, although they especially were associated with the shift from open range ranching to enclosed / fenced ranges. In open range ranching ranchers were understandably reluctant to construct many permanent improvements over which they would have no claim and to which others would have equal access, so the building of a dam, if it was at all substantial, came along with fences. There were exceptions and cooperative arrangements, for example among sheep operators, were responsible for the construction of dams on public land that was leased or otherwise controlled. The dams and reservoirs were also significant for their association with range improvement programs by the government in the 1930s.

Requirement

The dam and reservoir must have an important association with one or more of the themes of this context, most commonly as part of a complex of significant features and not by itself, and that association will generally be gleaned from historical documents. Like the stock tank, the dam, which was generally an earthen structure, has been subject to erosion and deterioration if not periodically maintained, and the reservoir associated with the dam has sometimes dissipated. But the dam will retain integrity under Criterion A if it retains its essential design features, whether or not it is still capable of impounding water.

Again, it needs to be noted, in keeping with the guidance established in a programmatic agreement between the Bureau of Land Management and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, dams and reservoirs constructed *after* 1930 do not need to be recorded for BLM authorized undertakings.

Property Subtype: Canals and Irrigation Ditches

Canals are open waterways (though in some parts of the year quite dry), constructed along a course that allows a continuous, gradual fall in altitude by which water is taken from a running source, such as a

river or stream, or from a reservoir to provide water for fields of grass, grain, or other crops. They will usually be associated with a headgate at their upper terminus and at the points where branches leave the main canal, and with branches and laterals as the network of channels spreads into the fields. Irrigation systems, both grand and miniscule, turned land that was otherwise not arable into productive crop land, provided the economic and physical basis for entire agricultural communities, and reflected a mix of private and government endeavors.

Requirement

The canal and irrigation ditch that made a difference in the lives of the owners / operators of the ranch / farm / homestead may be a contributing feature if the canal and ditch remain as definable features on a significant ranch, farm, or homestead. As independent, separate features, canals and irrigation ditches are problematic because of their extensive length and sometimes complex configuration. That quality, however, may enhance their significance as a critical element of a broad system of irrigation in either economic or engineering terms. Their nearly universal presence in Wyoming may make it difficult to establish the importance of the association of a particular segment with the historic themes of farming, ranching, and homesteading. A canal or system that opened up an entire area or that made possible the introduction of a particular system of agriculture (such as beet monoculture) might meet that standard under Criterion A; a section that reflected exceptional engineering or other technical innovation might make it significant under Criterion C. The presence of headgates on canals and ditches and other canal-related features enhances the integrity of the feature as a contributing element under Criterion A but is not necessary.

Property Subtype: Pipelines

Pipelines perform the same function as canals but are enclosed and tubular in construction, thus preventing loss due to evaporation. Pipelines for water (not for gas, oil, or other minerals) could serve the same general functions as canals and ditches and with less loss to evaporation. They could also, moreover, carry water, given sufficient pumping pressure or gravity force, uphill as well as down.

Requirement

Although less common than canals and ditches, pipelines can sometimes be found. They may be regarded as contributing to a larger historic property if they remain in their historic location and retain their identifiable functions or features. Scraps of disconnected, loose piping and tubing that is not located in a network configuration will not retain integrity, but this is different from a network, or part of a network, of piping that is intact and in its historic location but is no longer connected.

5. Fences

Description:

Fences may be made of a variety of materials, most commonly barbed wire, wood plank, or pole, although in some rare instances they are constructed of stone or other materials. They serve to restrict movement of humans or livestock (and wild game) into or out of defined parcels of land or simply to mark a boundary.

Significance:

Fences often appear to be the bane of the historic resource evaluator since a fenceline can go for miles in an unpredictable direction, be of an indeterminate age, and occur in places understood only by bovines, sheep, or their human herders. Yet they were an essential element of the development of the range, although the way they were viewed varied, of course, according to which side of the fence the observer was on. Homesteaders and ranchers fought over them. After the end of the open range, ranchers used them to confine their livestock in one area of the ranch while preserving another area from grazing. Indeed, the rise of fencing was one of the features that defined the end of the open range. Fences were of great importance in the development of stock growing, grazing, homesteading, and farming in the Wyoming.

Requirement

Most fences will not be eligible for listing on the National Register and the programmatic agreement between the Bureau of Land Management and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office does not require the documentation of "fences and exclosures (i.e., barbed wire, chain link, buck-and-pole, or other types of pasture fence)" except for "corrals, roundup or load-out facilities" for BLM authorized undertakings.[996] That same document also continues, however, to require discussion of the features and the justification for their exclusion. Moreover, it states, "If any of these property types exhibit significant architectural or engineering features, or are associated with a National Register eligible site or district, they should be recorded on a Wyoming Cultural Properties Form. Professional judgment and common sense should be applied."[997]

Fences that are associated with a qualifying farmstead, ranch, or district may be considered contributing features under Criterion A, but only if the important association is there, and if the location and materials remain historic. The distinctive design elements (such as a rip-gut fence which is outside the area where it may normally be found) or important examples of historic workmanship could make it

[996] State Protocol Between the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management State Director and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer, March 8, 2006, Appendix D, "Defined Non-Sites and Property Types Requiring No Formal Documentation."
[997] State Protocol Between the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management State Director and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer, March 8, 2006, Appendix D, "Defined Non-Sites and Property Types Requiring No Formal Documentation."

significant under Criterion C. Scraps of fencing or long strands of wire that are loose on the ground are not eligible, but this is different from, for example, a buck and rail fence that has deteriorated since the latter retains the integrity of location. In remote areas where the historical context of the fence is not clear, the presence and location of the fence should be noted and its probable association recorded even though it may not be listed as a contributing feature.

6. Livestock Trails and Driveways

Description:

Livestock Trails and Driveways are discernible corridors through which herds of cattle and / or flocks of sheep have been moved on foot either (1) from point of origin where they may have been purchased (or delivered by rail) to the ranch where they will be grazed, (2) from ranch or other location to shipping facilities (on a railroad, for example), or (3) in a pattern of transhumance where the stock are moved seasonally from one grazing ground to another. This would include any processing en route, such as branding or docking. These corridors may be simple or they may be substantially developed, but they will have been used regularly as a part of the conduct of a livestock operation. This will also have been more than a one-time use.

Significance:

The movement of livestock has long been an essential element of livestock grazing in Wyoming, and the driving of herds of cattle and sheep has become a progressively more organized and systematic operation involving, in the twentieth century, the interaction of private ranching organizations and government agencies. At the same time, however, the nature of the animals being moved has both enabled and forced the retention of traditional methods of herding livestock so that the movement of the herds and flocks retains essentials of the cattle and sheep operations of the nineteenth century as much as, and sometimes more than, other aspects of the modern grazing outfits.

Requirement

Livestock trails and driveways must have been importantly associated with the cattle and / or sheep industry in Wyoming within the period of significance. For those trails and driveways on public land, research in the relevant records will establish the importance of the association and generally document the use of the trails and driveways. Integrity requirements for these resources place primary emphasis on their functionality and ability to convey a sense of past time and place by providing evidence of the specific function they served during the period of historic significance. Under Criterion A these trails and driveways may be considered as independent features since they did not form part of a single, specific ranch operation but formed an independent part of the larger livestock industry in the state. These properties are unlikely to be eligible under Criterion B unless research demonstrates very specifically that the individual merits recognition within Criterion B and that a specific driveway or trail

actually is the feature associated with that individual that best represents that significance. While this is unlikely, history is a broad field and research will continue long into the future. The trails and driveways will likewise probably not be eligible under Criterion C unless there are specific features in the trail (such as bridges specifically designed for conveying livestock across a stream, or an underpass specifically designed for the livestock to pass under a road or railroad) that incorporate distinctive elements of design, workmanship, and materials. Eligibility under Criterion D will be demonstrated if the resource can be shown to yield potentially important information with the use of a specific research design.

Property Subtype: Cattle Trails and Driveways

In some few instances that have generally been marked on maps and on the ground, paths remain that were taken by cattle drives in the nineteenth century from Texas to various points in and beyond Wyoming. These, however, are exceptional and are largely well-known and recorded in their main trunk routes. At some point, however, the routes would fade as fewer cattle would continue the drive, with gradually more and more of the trail-drive herds being separated to take to different ranches and ranges, so that the trails would ultimately fade into just so many different paths to different places. Even these trails, moreover, had their seasonal variants and even their alternate routes within the season as later herds had to find fresh grass and so did not follow exactly the route of earlier herds.

Much more common will be the driveways that emerged with the system of ranching in which cattle grazed enclosed pastures for the winter, when they could be fed and otherwise tended, but were grazed in the cooler mountains during the summer. Especially with the regulation of grazing on the national forests, and the settlement of lands between winter pastures and summer grazing, corridors were developed through which the cattle—and herders—would migrate to the highlands in the late spring and to the prairies in the late summer. These driveways, developed by grazing associations for the benefit of their members, are thus twentieth century travel routes, operated by the ranching organizations, with herders and others paid from assessments on the members, and follow a fixed course from a gathering point central to the ranches to the summer range where allotments are maintained. The trail itself may be quite long; the Green River Drift, for example is over seventy-five miles long, although it contains subordinate segments like the Cora Stock Driveway. The driveway will be considerably narrower, though, ranging from bottleneck points of a hundred feet wide to nearly a mile wide, as determined by topography, property boundaries, and development. The driveways may also be associated with Cattle Drive Camps, Roundup Camps, and other features.

The cattle trail or driveway is significant as an element in the cycle of activities in livestock operations. That cycle is evident on two levels—the specific ranch operation where livestock were acquired, moved from range to range, and then finally moved to market points—and also on a larger historical level where cattle and sheep were moved into Wyoming in the nineteenth century. The significance is also evident both when the trails or driveways were replaced by truck-shipping in the 1930s and 1940s, and when they survived that replacement process.

Requirement

The importance of the historic association will need to be established in the historical record by indicating that such movement corridors were not incidental, were systematic, and were numerically significant over the period of historic significance. Physically, the cattle trail or driveway must retain a visible association with cattle ranching and the movement of cattle from one definable point to another as part of a larger system of such movement (either as part of transhumance or market-related movement). The origin (or point of embarkation) and destination must be clear in general terms or it can be associated with a major trail or one of its tributaries.

Property Subtype: Sheep Trails and Driveways

Sheep were once trailed across Wyoming from distant points to ranges in the state or beyond, and these trails often followed established routes for other traffic, and while there are records indicating the routes of some of these migrations, they did not become the established and prominent trails comparable to the Texas Trail or Western Trail among cattle herders. Moreover, these trailed flocks transformed into what became known as tramp herds, flocks of sheep that lacked any home range, that simply were taken across the country to consume as much of the grass and water as they would on the way; numbering in the hundreds of thousands, these could not follow the same route just because of the need for grass. The regulation of the national forests in the 1900s reduced some of the tramp herding, since it effectively drove them off the forest land, but it made the competition for grazing on the public domain managed by the General Land Office that much more intense. At the same time, however, the substantial sheep operators organized both to secure grazing privileges on the national forests and to lease private land (especially from the Union Pacific Railroad), and this entailed in the southwest part of the state the organized movement of sheep on a seasonal basis through their regular cycle of summer grazing in the mountains and winter grazing on the desert. At this point the grazing associations (like the Rock Springs Grazing Association) coordinated on behalf of their members not only the leasing of land but the movement of the animals as well, and they used these sheep trails. This activity increased with the regulation of the public domain under the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934. It is important to note that many of these trails were situated on national forest land or land managed by the Grazing Service / Division of Grazing / Bureau of Land Management and that the trails were regulated and maintained to some degree. Leonard Hay, in Sweetwater County, recalled that the Forest Service cut a trail to enable sheep herders to move through forest without congestion: "eventually, they moved that trail out and cut a strip half or three-quarters of a mile through timber to move us around so they just cut through the edge of the opening."[998] Sheep rancher John Niland described the trails in the mountains as "about a half-mile wide and every herd had to keep moving and make five miles a day or there was hell to pay and a mess of sheep to be sorted." Niland also noted that "the U.S. Forest Service provided corrals for sheep moving

[998] U.S. Forest Service, interview of James Jacobs (USFS) with Leonard Hay and William D. Thompson, Rock Springs, June 1968.

to and from the national forests. This not only allowed the forest rangers an opportunity to count livestock for management purposes, but also provided an excellent opportunity for the brand inspectors to look over assembled animals." Lest there be any doubt about the length of these trails, again John Niland testifies to their length: "There were designated trails to and through the forest that had been laid out by the government, the Forest Service and the railroad. One particular designated trail that I recall started at Shoshoni, Wyoming, and went south to Wamsutter, Wyoming, from Wamsutter to Dad, Wyoming, and then into Colorado as far as Rabbit Ears Pass. We could walk our sheep and horses every foot of the way and never cross any private land."[999]

The system of transhumance was vital in the development of the historic sheep industry in Wyoming and these trails and driveways came to represent the dominant routes in the seasonal shifts of sheep from one kind of range to another. Over time these paths became progressively more institutionalized and even regulated.

Requirement

To possess significance, the sheep trail or driveway must possess an important association with the seasonal cycles of movement in the sheep industry and exactly how the trail fit into that cycle must be clear. Understanding that the transhumance system included not just movement from one range to another but also significant stops at shearing facilities, the role this trail, or section of a trail, performed in the larger system must be explicit. Accordingly, research in relevant records (including Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management holdings, for example) is essential to establishing the association and role of the driveway or trail. Physically, the trail or driveway will retain integrity if it is visibly identifiable as a trail or pathway for the driving of large numbers of sheep without improvements or alterations that make it appropriate for other incompatible activities (such as modern motorized travel).

7. Herder Camps

Description:

Because ranchers and their herders for both cattle and sheep have worked livestock throughout the range of much of Wyoming, the camps of those herders—and the remains of those camps—are common features. While the camping locations of ranch workers who tended the sheep or cattle may appear to lack any physical features or permanence because the camps would move from time to time, those camps were anything but random, and favorite locations were used repeatedly and season after season.

Most of these camps will probably be sheepherder camps, but cowboy drive camps, camps used while

[999] John Niland, *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Lagumo Corp., 1994), 40-41, 46, 108.

working in remote parts of the ranch or grazing area, and also roundup camps during the years of the open range will also be found. Sometimes the sheep- and cattle-related camps are difficult to distinguish and the identification of specialized tools or other artifacts (like sheep shears or animal bones) in the area can help. One additional aspect is that over time, and with sustained use season after season, some of the sites that are otherwise ephemeral become relatively built up. In those cases, the site may be well known in the area and those sources of information should be tapped.

Marcel Kornfeld has developed an important analysis of cattle and sheep grazing-related sites in the western Powder River Basin that can guide researchers of historic resources throughout the state. The important distinction that Kornfeld makes is that the strategies for the sheep and cattle operations are different because the cattle ranch activities frequently tend to the livestock as they forage freely over the range and are herded only on special occasion, but the herders (cowboys and others) are kept busy building and repairing fences, checking on cattle for depredation or disease, availability of water, and so on. On the other hand, sheep operations direct the movement and activity of the sheep constantly. Although both cattle and sheep grazing follow transhumant patterns, the human activities related to these patterns are often different and evident in the sites that the herders have left.[1000] Kornfeld has thus identified four property subtypes for cattle ranching and three property subtypes for sheep ranching. The ranch headquarters site type has already been described and the requirements stated as in the property type, Ranch / Farm Houses.

Significance:

In areas where the physical dimensions of the range over which cattle and sheep would graze were vast, the livestock and ranch facilities (like wells and windmills and fences) could be maintained best by sending workers to the various parts of the ranch (and leased or otherwise accessed areas of public land) on a temporary or rotational basis (for cattle) or on a continuing basis (for sheep). Indeed, these remote activities of ranching rather than the activities that took place at the ranch headquarters often provide the enduring icons of both sheep and cattle ranching and for good reason. The livestock came to the headquarters only at select times, the majority of the time having been spent in the outlying districts of the ranch or grazing area. These camp sites thus provide a critical association with the livestock industry and a valuable point for understanding and documenting the history of that industry and individual ranches. This applies only to those long term camps and camps that provide significant information. Many camps will be short term and not of significance. Prudent and professional evaluation and judgment are necessary to make the distinction.

Requirement

This group of properties must be clearly associated with the livestock activities that they represent; thus

---

[1000] Marcel Kornfeld, "Stockraising Settlement Strategies," M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1982, 55-66; see also, Kornfeld, "A Model of High Plains and Intermountain Stockraising Settlement Systems," *North American Archaeologist* (1983): 51-62.

hunting camps or cabins would not qualify unless they had their origins as cattle or sheep-related operations and retain the essential features of the historic use. They must retain integrity of association, location, setting, and feeling.

Property Subtype: Cattle Line Shacks or Camps

These camps are important in the history of cattle ranching and a newspaper discussion of Senator John Kendrick's ranch in 1926 recalled its history, noting that in the early years of Wyoming cattle ranching, "Some of the big outfits would maintain winter 'line camps' at the limits of their range, stationing two riders there to keep the cattle, driven before the storm, within their own range."[1001] The line shacks or camps, according to Kornfeld, "are locations from which fences are mended, watering places and pastures are continually monitored, and other management activities take place."[1002] These "camps" may have a modest built shelter and even a corral nearby that will facilitate the work with the livestock.

The line camps where cowboys would be stationed for indefinite periods to tend to cattle, to fences, and to other needs of the operation were significant because they allowed livestock management practices to reach to the far corners of sometimes quite large operations. The line camps were thus essential to big ranches and were especially important during the years when the open range became gradually enclosed. After that, the larger ranches continued to need and use line camps.

Requirement

The site or building will be significant if the cattle ranching activity of which it was a part can be demonstrated to have an important association with the themes in this historic context. The association with cattle ranching (as opposed to other activities) can be established by some combination of the structure itself and its design and materials, the presence of artifacts like fencing materials, veterinary supplies, and other cattle-related activities, its location, and even its conspicuous presence in an area known as a base for remote activity and its proximity to fences, trails, dams, and other features that required maintenance. The site or building must be able to demonstrate that association to retain integrity regardless of the physical condition of the cabin or site. Under Criterion C, in addition to integrity of association, location, feeling, and setting, the cattle line shack must retain integrity of materials, design, and workmanship.

Property Subtype: Cattle Drive Camps

[1001] Malcolm C. Cutting, "A Cattle Magnate Sits in the Senate; Kendrick of Wyoming Applies Efficiency Methods to the Beef Raising Business and Takes the Gamble Out of It," New York *Times*, December 19, 1926.
[1002] Kornfeld, "Stockraising Settlement Strategies," 63.

The drive camps are occupied for shorter terms, even nightly, since they are used while moving cattle to a different location—to and from the mountains—and their presence will generally leave a much lighter footprint on the ground than line camps or shacks which are occupied for longer periods. An identifying characteristic is their association with cattle driveways, and thus they also can be connected to a pattern of transhumance. The cattle drive camp was a feature of life and work associated with cattle drives, the movement of cattle on foot from one place to another in the annual cycle of changing ranges or moving to market.

Requirement

The cattle drive camp will be significant because of its association with a larger cattle-raising activity, not just its isolated existence and use. To demonstrate that association the site must be located on or near a known or demonstrated driveway and to be significant under Criterion A the destination of the driveway must be clear, even if in general terms (e.g., Shell Creek grazing allotment, pens on Recluse Road, etc.), or it can be associated with a known major cattle trail (such as Texas Trail) or one of its tributaries. The use of the area as a cattle drive camp will presumably exclude other uses, such as for sheep, but if a site was used by both sheep and cattle at different times, that would need to be demonstrated with reference to historical documents and / or changing land use patterns. Eligibility under Criterion D will be demonstrated if the site can be shown to yield potentially important information with the use of a specific research design. The site will retain integrity if remnants of its use are visible, if the setting and location are clearly identified, and if subsequent use and development have not compromised the ability of the site to communicate its historical significance.

Property Subtype: Cattle Roundup Camps

Roundup sites are used by cowboys, bosses, and cooks and will often use wagons or tents. Size will be dependent upon the number of cowboys and others involved in the activity, so they can be quite extensive. They can even reach for miles since the different camps had their own substantial herds of horses to graze. Location will be useful in identifying roundup sites since they will be associated with either the autumn roundup for marketing or the spring roundup for branding and castrating. The older roundup sites from the open range days will typically be distributed in a pattern as the wranglers worked their way progressively farther down the major drainages. On large ranches dating from the 1930s, or possibly earlier, roundup camps can even have built features.

For good reason is the cattle roundup an iconic event associated with the raising of livestock. During open range days it represented the major time at which cattle were actually managed, controlled, and processed. After the open range period, the roundups continued as both an economic and social element of defining importance.

Requirement

Because cattle roundup camps were very busy places, because of the multitude of activities and peoples associated with them, and because they were customarily used and re-used year after year, or season after season, identification and associational relationships should not be speculative and can be based on a combination of size, location, artifacts, and historical documents. To be significant under Criterion A, the roundup activity must be associated with the practices and people associated with cattle grazing at the time and area of the roundup camp. Attention needs to be given the specific roundup activities that occurred in that area, whether under the auspices of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association or another private management. As with other campsites, the roundup camp may be eligible under Criterion D if it can be shown to yield potentially important information in a well-articulated research design. To retain integrity, the roundup camp site will need to have integrity of location, association, setting, and feeling. Generally those aspects will be present if the site has been clearly used for this purpose and subsequent development of the vicinity has been consistent with its use (for example the building of corrals nearby, but not the building of businesses); such development should not compromise the historic character of the site. Roundup sites that were used in years after the demise of the open range will include some of the following: corral, fences, loading ramps / chutes (indicating activity after the advent of trucks on the range), trash dump, and hearth.

Property Subtype: Sheep Outfit Central Camp

The central camp is different from the residence of the ranch owner, which is often the functioning headquarters of the ranch and which is generally located in town. The sheep outfit's central camp is located on the ranch and will generally be identified by a cluster of built structures (such as the pens and chutes identified in Auxiliary Ranch / Farm Buildings and Structures) and will often serve as a site for spring shearing and docking and other activities. A key functional characteristic of the central camp is its access to outlying herder camps so that it can supply the herders and sheep with scheduled deliveries of supplies as well as provide other attention as needs arise. The central sheepherder camp may include some kind of cabin, outbuildings, storage facilities, wood and refuse piles, and shearing / docking / shipping facilities.

Much of the bookkeeping and business functions of the sheep operation took place at the owner's house and office in town, but the sheep outfit's central camp on the ranch / range was the nerve center of the operation, especially in the early years before the development of centralized business organizations and grazing associations, before the construction of huge shearing plants, and before the downturn in numbers of sheep and sheep operators in Wyoming. Sometimes the central camps evolved into exactly those large shearing plants with related facilities, but many, smaller, central camps remained and retained their historic functions and significance.

Requirement

To be significant, the central sheep camp must be importantly associated with sheep operations at a particular point in history. This is not to say that it must be associated with a large sheep operation, for

the persistence of the smaller outfits depended exactly on the retention of these central sheep camps. To retain integrity, the association / function of the camp must be plainly visible by the structures it contains, such as shearing pens or even lambing pens. Integrity of association, location, feeling, and setting are necessary under Criterion A; the presence of identifiable routes to sheep herding areas from the facility will contribute to the functional identification of the site, but those routes are not necessary for integrity under Criterion A. The completeness of the facility, so that the different steps of the process can be identified, enhances the integrity of the site. Under Criterion C integrity of design, workmanship, and materials will be of greater importance than under Criterion A. Criterion D eligibility will require a clear research design to demonstrate the utility and value of the information to be gained.

Property Subtype: Shearing Facility

The shearing facility will sometimes be separate from the central camp and sometimes part of it. The older and smaller shearing facilities were often open-air arrangements while the larger and more recent facilities, also known as shearing plants, suggesting the industrial nature of the process, were enclosed and organized according to the various stages of the shearing process. One common feature, though not necessary, of open-air facilities is the presence of some sort of canopy to provide shade for the shearers and a structure for suspending the bag for fleece. Some sites may, of course, have just the shearing / docking / shipping features.

Shearing is significant for it is the process of harvesting the fleece of the sheep for market; indeed, for several decades, at least, only the wool (and not the mutton) had market value. The shearing process, however, evolved and its association with modernization, industrialization, technological innovation, and consolidation is critical to understanding the history of the Wyoming sheep operations. The shearing facilities provide key insights into that history and possess significance by virtue of those associations.

Requirement

To be significant, the shearing facility requires a demonstrable association with the themes identified in this historic context study. This will generally be established within a specific part of the state, for example, in the Big Horn Basin or in southwest Wyoming, and will establish the use of the facility chronologically in time and conceptually in historic process. The shearing facility need not be large, and it can be as simple as a one- or two-person operation, but some of the stages of shearing must be evident (i.e., the chute or pen containing the sheep to be sheared and a system by which they can be diverted into the shearing area, the way in which the fleeces were sacked, and then a system for loading the sacks onto a wagon or truck). In this way, integrity of association, design, location, feeling, and setting are especially critical. Not all steps in the shearing process need to be evident, although integrity is enhanced by the presence of more of the full system. Under Criterion C, integrity of materials and workmanship are also necessary.

Property Subtype: Sheepherder Camp

The individual herder camps are sometimes difficult to identify and also are abundant since the herders tend to move frequently to see that the sheep have fresh foraging areas. Marcel Kornfeld reports that "frequently, the only archeological remain is a hearth," although some camps may even contain "small one room cabins."[1003] Grazing and watering will be nearby almost by definition. And the seasonal location of these camps will correspond to the transhumant pattern of the sheep strategy itself—mountainous summer pastures, basin and range winter pastures, and protected areas for spring lambing. Although the sheepherder camps and the cattle drive camps are sometimes next-to-impossible to differentiate, the location of items such as sheep shears, sheep remains, and sheepherder monuments can aid identification.[1004] At the same time, it is important to note that short-term camps associated with stock grazing and recreation that provide no significant information are not required to be recorded under the terms of the 2006 programmatic agreement between the Bureau of Land Management and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office regarding BLM authorized undertakings.

One feature incidental to herder camps, but not a separate property subtype, is the arborglyph. The aspen groves commonly found in the high country used by sheep herders provided a natural canvas for isolated herders to communicate directions, yearnings for human contact, and identity-affirming messages. By carving into the aspen bark, those messages would endure since the carvings would become scars that would in future seasons become blacker and sometimes distorted by the growth of the trees. They would, in other words, last as the long as the trees on which they were etched. Although often associated only with Basque herders, in Wyoming these carvings were also left by herders of Mexican descent and these can provide additional cultural documentation.

The life of the herder, in terms of both assigned duties and isolated way of life, is in important ways equal to the life of the cowboy as part of the economic activities with which both were associated and also in their historic traditions, legend, and social meaning as lifestyles resistant to the forces of modernization. Given the peripatetic routines of the sheepherder, the campsites are often the only physical remnants of that life and work, at least until organized processes of shearing and lambing interrupted those circumstances for a short while.

Requirement

To be significant, the sheepherder camp site must demonstrate its important association with the patterns of the sheep operation and the physical remains must be identifiable with herding, excluding other uses (unless the site is also separately significant for associations with those other uses) and the location of the site within the specific pattern of transhumance, within the precise "feature system," of which it was a part, must be explicit and demonstrable. The presence of identifiable features such as arborglyphs

[1003] Kornfeld, "Stockraising Settlement Strategies,"57.
[1004] Kornfeld, "Stockraising Settlement Strategies," 80-98.

enhances integrity. Evidence of ethnic association can help establish both significance and integrity. Criterion D is especially appropriate for evaluating the sheepherder camp, but to be eligible under that criterion, the research design must indicate the kind and value of information anticipated.

8. Cemeteries and Graves

Description

Graves and cemeteries are resting places for the dead that may range from burial sites with simple (or deteriorated or even nonexistent) markers to elaborate markers and fenced borders.

Significance:

Graves and cemeteries are not exclusively associated with homestead / ranching / farming activities, but they sometimes formed a part of life on those ranches and homesteads and can be found in complexes that are eligible for the National Register. They sometimes appear as small family plots near the ranch or even at special locations on the land owned and used by the operation.

Requirement

It is important to note that burial places are not ordinarily eligible, and the National Register bulletin on completing nominations addresses the issues surrounding graves and cemeteries, noting the narrow circumstances under which they may be considered eligible or contributing. These circumstances are defined under Criteria Considerations C (graves and birthplaces) and D (cemeteries). Criteria Consideration C applies to those "historical figures of outstanding importance" for whom no other appropriate associated site or building exists. Criteria Consideration D (cemeteries) may, in some circumstances be relevant if the burial place derives its primary significance "from association with historic events." If a burial place is located within or near otherwise eligible features of a ranch / farm / homestead complex, the burial places can be considered a contributing feature under Criterion A. Just as with other features on the property, the significance of the family cemetery, for example, on a ranch, will depend on what it tells us about the historic patterns addressed in this context. Integrity of association, location, setting, and feeling are essential under Criterion A, but so also is integrity of materials, which is to say that a modern marker on a historic grave does not meet the standard of integrity. If a historic marker has been altered in workmanship (e.g., lettering) or in the addition of other materials (e.g., the addition of a concrete base or modern fence), that will compromise the integrity of the grave only if the modern elements outweigh the historic. Given the narrow latitude allowed by the Criteria Considerations and given the focus of the ranching, farming, and homesteading context, Criterion C will not commonly be used in the evaluation of burial properties within this historic context. Conceivably, they could be eligible, again within the allowable limits, under Criterion C if the grave markers or cemetery meet the requirements of distinctive workmanship, materials, and design in addition to the requirements for Criterion A.

9. Sheepherder Monuments

Description:

Sheepherder monuments are cairns located at scattered and prominent points where sheep range, usually constructed by herders who stack flat rocks atop one another.
Significance:

Sheepherder monuments are closely associated with livestock grazing practices but the relationship has not been conclusively documented. Increasing research suggests that they were only partially the product of idle time recreation on the part of a herder and were more significantly practical markers indicating campsites and other locations.

Requirement

Sheepherder monuments may, in unusual cases, be eligible for the National Register under Criterion D if they can be shown to yield potentially important information with the use of a specific research design.

10. Privies and Dumps

Description:

Privies and dumps are grouped together because they share a function as common depositories of ranch / homestead / farm refuse. They may appear either as potentially contributing features along with other elements on a ranch or as independent, stand-alone resources when other ranch features no longer exist.

Significance:

The artifacts contained in material cast off in the period of historic significance are capable of providing information about daily life on a ranch / homestead.

Requirement

The privies and dumps will be eligible under Criterion D if they can be shown to yield potentially important information with the use of a specific research design. The site must retain its integrity of location.

G. Geographical Data

This multiple property context applies principally to rural areas throughout the state of Wyoming. It also applies to communities in the state where ranching, farming, and homesteading activities took place.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Conceptualization of the Historical Issues

Prior to the preparation of this historic context study, there was no synthesis or overview of the history of ranching, farming, and homesteading in Wyoming. Despite the centrality of those activities to the state's history and despite the abundant materials relating to Wyoming's agricultural past, the treatment of that past by historians has remained focused on the episodic, the dramatic, or the individual, not the patterns with which groups and individual resources can be associated and by which their historical significance can be determined. Moreover, many studies of ranching and farming, in Wyoming and elsewhere, tend to reduce the activity to a simple economic endeavor, which, in part and at times, it was, but which also distorts the social relationships and objectives that shaped many of the farms, ranches, and homesteads in Wyoming. Indeed, one of the findings of this historic context study was that this reduction of farming and ranching to a business activity was itself one of the challenges facing Wyoming's rural population.

This study is an effort to understand how people settled Wyoming's homesteads, farms, and ranches, what they encountered, and how they and the land they settled transformed over a period of about a hundred years. In this way we can understand better not only the marks on the land that these people left—the buildings and structures—but also our own lives on that land. Today, as we journey across the state, we constantly encounter the remains of other people's journeys—not only the literal journeys of emigrant trails through Wyoming, but the life journeys of people who have made Wyoming their home, or at least who have tried. We see the abandoned ranches and farms alongside the continuing operations. We spot the lonely sheepherder monuments and the broken down windmills, silent sentinels of the landscape. And sometimes we see these things so often that we take them for granted almost as a part of the natural order, forgetting they were put in exactly those locations by people who made a great deal of effort because these constructions were part of the vision they had planned for their own part of Wyoming.

These are historic artifacts, like relics of an earlier civilization, that can speak to us and inform us of the values, practices, and priorities of different ways of living. As such, they are important, but they are

sometimes opaque in meaning and muted in message because they are scattered bits and pieces of a larger picture. It is by considering that larger picture, over the landscape and over the years, that we can understand better each of the pieces. And the whole, as in all of history, is greater than the sum of the parts. With a special focus on identifying their historic significance (almost all will be evaluated under Criterion A) this study endeavors to provide historic context, a picture of the broad patterns of history into which these artifacts of homesteading, ranching, and farming fit. By studying the buildings and the structures, we can come to a closer, and deeper, understanding of the past; conversely, as we study the past, we can come to a better understanding of the buildings and structures—what they meant, why they were built there and then, and why they were left—if they were left—and what their fate can tell us about our own lives today.

The study actually proceeds along two levels at the same time. One effort is to identify the themes and issues that have shaped one part of the history of Wyoming—how people have used the land to produce fiber and food and make a living of one kind or another thereby—and for a significant chunk of its history that was the dominant use of this land. At the same time, and on a second but related level, the study approaches the past with a sensitivity to the framework used by the National Register of Historic Places. This requires attention to the physical resources in the area that have been left by the people who lived its history. But it is important to be sensitive to both levels. The National Register system and the history of an area, after all, are not separate, are not isolated from each other, and are not either one to be ignored by the person who wants to understand and hold onto the physical elements of the state's past. Thus a major goal of this study is to identify points at which the historical narrative can be connected to the remnants of the past that still can be found on the ground, and to provide them meaning. Making that connection between historic resources and patterns of history is, after all, how we establish the significance of what we see on the ground. In all instances, what we learn from the past depends entirely on the questions we ask of it.

Change over time is both subtle and complex and represents much more than just ticking off a list of categories into which separate activities and developments can be reduced, inventoried, or catalogued. *There is very, very little that is cut and dried in history. There is very, very little that can just be looked up in some kind of reference.* And this is especially true of articulating the historical context. Historical context is the larger set of circumstances and forces that illuminates specific events by suggesting broader patterns of which those events may be a part or to which they may even be exceptions. Historical context thus is identified by determining what else is happening at the same time and also what happened before and after—there and elsewhere.[1005] Moreover, there is seldom universal agreement on those patterns since the close analysis of each aspect of the past and then the comparison

[1005] I have developed the notion of historical context more conceptually in two essays: Michael Cassity, "E. P. Thompson and the Local Historian," in Carol Kammen and Norma Prendergast, eds., *Local History Encyclopedia* (Walnut Creek, California: American Association for State and Local History and Alta Mira Press, 2000), 435-437, and Michael Cassity, "After Two Decades: The English Model and the American Context," paper presented at Southern Labor Studies Conference, Atlanta, September 1982.

of those findings with what other historians have found often produces historical debates; this also produces growth in our knowledge.

The focus of the study is on farming, ranching, and homesteading, except that these each are broad categories of activities. In fact, homesteading is an elusive concept that usually includes just about any activity on the land. Few, if any, historians would restrict the identification of homesteading to filing on public land under the terms of the Homestead Act of 1862 or the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 or even the Stock-raising Homestead Act of 1916. Such a definition would include ranchers but exclude farmers who filed on land under the Desert Land Act of 1877. Farmers and ranchers alike used the public domain to establish what became known as homesteads. And they were homesteads, sometimes legally and technically, and sometimes just as a cultural shorthand for starting out anew, for settling previously uncultivated land, or otherwise establishing a home on the land. The census had no category for "homesteads," and, for that matter, the census used the single category of "farm" to include the grower of crops and the grower of livestock. Thus this study, for reasons of necessity and practicality, as well as of historical sensitivity, focuses on the people who settled on the land and followed a variety of agricultural pursuits.

To examine those people and their lives—and the homes they made in Wyoming—is to confront a multitude of issues. At the outset, two broad patterns can be identified, and they are not completely separate from each other. One has to do with an in-migration of people, a continuing flow onto the Wyoming prairies and elsewhere too. From the 1860s, and for at least a half century afterwards, people came to Wyoming to settle on farms and ranches, often taking out lands under the homestead laws. This is important. In the first place, many people identify not just homesteading but any larger effort to settle on farms and ranches as something belonging just to the nineteenth century. In fact, this trend had an important twentieth century component. So part of this study traces the continual expansion and even flourishing of a variety of agricultural activities in the state, and that even goes into the 1920s and 1930s. At some point in those two decades, however, the tide shifted, for reasons explored below, and what had been an in-migration, became an out-migration, a veritable exodus from the land. Of course people had left the farms and ranches previously, and people continued to settle on the land, but now more people were leaving than were settling and the trend turned into a veritable depopulation of the countryside. Both the arrival of the settlers and their departure left marks on the land—and so did the development of their lives between those two points—and this study seeks to understand these better.

The second broad pattern has to do with modernization. Modernization is a model of historical change that is more commonly drawn upon than contemplated and articulated, more commonly assumed than explored. Many of the features associated with modernization in fact are so obvious that they are taken as given, as if they somehow were inevitable and pre-ordained. Those features include the varied but related innovations familiar to modern society such as the impersonalization of relationships, the erosion of traditional, local, or parochial loyalties and identities, the rise of more cosmopolitan identities, the specialization and synchronization of economic activities, and overall the growth of a national social structure that embodies a transfer of social, political, and economic authority from local to central levels which can coordinate large scale activities in a presumably rational manner. Not that modernization

explains, or even adequately describes, the pattern of change, for it clearly does not since many individuals, businesses, and communities actively resisted the process of change underway. In fact, much of the story of farming and ranching and homesteading in Wyoming is the story of life at the local level being overtaken, overwhelmed, and overrun by the engines of economic and social change at the national level, and then how people dealt with those changes. Sometimes it even seems as if modernization is pushing people to go one way, while their own dreams and traditions urge them to go a different direction, and that collision can be seen in the process of historical change in Wyoming. It is as important to identify, understand, and document that circumstance as it is to document the "growth" or "progress" that often dominates historical description. And it is often precisely at that moment where forces intersect that the remnants of historic activities on the ground make sense, or make more or different sense.

Every study needs to have a general termination point and the date used in this study is 1960. The current registration form for the National Register of Historic Places requires properties whose historic significance begins or extends beyond a point fifty years in the past to be justified separately as being "of exceptional importance." For several years, discussion has proceeded at different levels to blur or change this line, and there are substantial reasons to do so, but as of this writing, the registration form requires that fifty-year division and this study does not attempt to formulate an alternative standard.

Methodology

This study used conventional methods of professional historical inquiry and analysis and began with a survey of published and unpublished literature addressing the study area and also the literature dealing with the larger historical issues pertinent to the study. Thus it was essential to read broadly. Because Wyoming has been for a great portion of its history a rural state where farming and ranching have been important factors—economically, culturally, socially—and where homesteading has been a concrete fact of life, often just a few generations away from current occupants of the land, to explore the issues central to this study is to touch on the main contours of Wyoming history. It is not a separate branch of the state's history any more than people on the land have been a small subset of the population over much of our history. This study, however, has departed from some of the main traveled roads of the past in that it is essentially a social history; while social history carries definite implications for economic and political history, it has not always been clear to political historians that their subject has social and economic implications. This study has attempted to bridge the gaps and bring them together into a coherent framework.

In addition to drawing gratefully upon the previous works of historians (and other academic and public investigations), this study has also sought out the rich field of documents in local and regional history within the state. Those studies, like any other group of studies, including those prepared by professionals in the field, are uneven in contribution and in methodology. But they deserve to be considered and consulted for even the least of them has something to say—and something to be heard. In addition, and sometimes in the same pages, individual memoirs and accounts have been passed on to

the present, and these two constitute a valuable source for today's researcher, providing a human perspective that statistics and institutional chronicles can never capture. The point in the use of these local histories and memoirs is a very simple one and it takes two forms. One is that local history is as rich, vibrant, and complex as state or national history if the right questions are asked. The other benefit in using these sources is that they remind us that we are not dealing with nameless, faceless people; we are studying the lives and homes and dreams and troubles of actual, sometimes identifiable, men, women, and children, and the remnants of the past that we encounter were often left there by those same people, or by people like them.

In addition, there have been a number of cultural resource studies prepared in Wyoming—a great number in fact. Over the last generation or so, especially because of the operation of the National Historic Preservation Act, and in particular Section 106 of that act, these studies represent an additional body of information that has been consulted. Those studies are also useful because they form what might be considered the tip of a vast iceberg (in the authentic sense of *berg* meaning mountain) of information; the rest of the mountain of information is that stored in the extensive database in the Wyoming Cultural Records Office within the State Historic Preservation Office. That collection has provided important information on occasion when I have searched out particular terms and names, but it can also reveal much about what work has been done in the field, and the kinds of features that are commonly encountered. These studies and those data have been valuable at many points in my research, not just in the time it has taken to complete this project.

One particular cultural resource study on file (and online) in the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office bears special mention, not because it is so good or important or otherwise of use. It was however important in shaping the writing and thinking that went into this project. In 2005 and 2006, the current author prepared a study similar to the current project, a historic context study of homesteading, livestock raising, and farming in the Powder River Basin. That study was an attempt to develop a conceptual framework for understanding ranching and homesteading and farming in Wyoming, although I have dealt with these issues in various ways since at least 1981. As I returned to some of the same issues, but over a broader time span and over the entire state of Wyoming, I have constantly questioned how the forces at work in the northeastern part of the state were also operating elsewhere in Wyoming, and I have sought to identify common themes and also regional variations. There have been times when I have found some of the same patterns elsewhere in Wyoming and I have tried to indicate so in these pages. There have been times, moreover, where the broader view of the state has caused me to revise some conclusions I reached several years ago; thus there are times when I have been able to borrow from that earlier study and times when I have revised my thinking. I am hopeful that this current study will not just stand alone and apart from the earlier project, but will even replace it as the fruit of a broader and deeper investigation should.

Besides the literature examining the history of the study area, both on a local and state level, it was also essential to address more broadly the relevant historical issues, and this was done by reading widely in the scholarly literature, for example, in the areas of public land law, agricultural technology, modernization theory, economic history, and architectural and engineering history. By taking these

issues seriously, it is possible to find better what particular developments within the study area mean, for it deepens the sophistication of the historic context itself.

While I have cast a broad net and have drawn upon a variety of resources to examine in the process of preparing this statement of historic context, there are some repositories that are especially valuable. The local libraries, museums, and other collections I have visited in Wyoming proved unfailingly sensitive to preserving documents that reveal their local histories and they represent an indispensable resource. The two major archives—the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming and the Wyoming State Archives in Cheyenne—each held substantial rewards, both expected and unexpected. And not to be neglected are the published materials provided by the United States Census that helped establish patterns of change over time. Research opportunities in Wyoming history as it applies to ranching, homesteading, stock-grazing, farming, and rural life in general are many and they are profound. An objective of this study is not to close them off but to help open them up.

This study attempts to understand the past as a complex, evolving set of patterns of history that need exploration. It is not a study of individual ranches and farms, or even of the families associated with them. This study should help, however, as individual families and cultural resource professionals seek to place specific operations into the patterns of history; in that way they may gain an understanding of the broader significance of the farms and ranches they already know so well.

I. Major Bibliographical References

Archives and Manuscript Collections

Archival Collections in Wyoming

American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming

- Lillian Boulter Papers
- Katherine and Richard Brackenbury Papers
- Elmer Brock Papers
- Adeline H. Brosman Collection
- Edith K. O. Clark Papers
- Anita Webb Deininger, Hat Ranch Materials
- William Daley Company Records
- Moreton Frewen Papers
- Green Mountain Sheep Company Records
- Silas A. Guthrie Papers
- Hebard Collection
- Hegewald-Thompson Family Papers
- Gladys Hill Oral History Interview
- Roy Hook Ranch Photographs
- Ruth M. Irwin Papers
- Carl Lithander Papers
- James Mickelson Papers
- Rebecca Nelson, Model T Homestead account
- Lora Webb Nichols Papers
- Oscar Pfeiffer Papers
- James A. Shaw Papers
- William D. Sidey Letter
- D. J. Smythe Papers
- Wyoming Stock Growers Association Papers
- Wyoming Wool Growers Association Papers

Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne

- Oral History Collections

Mabel Brown
Jim Dillinger
Paul Frison
Duncan Grant
Jim Hardman
Lake Harris
Fred Hesse
Jeanne Iberlin
Wes Johnson
Ralph Jones
Art King
Ed Langelier
Pete and Naomi Meike
Jack "Wyoming" O'Brien
Leroy Smith
John and Henry Spickerman

Stimson Photo Collections
Wyoming Photo Collections
Wyoming Works Projects Administration, Federal Writers' Project Collection,
Wyoming Newspaper Collection

U.S. Forest Service, Medicine Bow – Routt National Forests, Douglas Ranger District, Douglas, Wyoming

Bankhead – Jones Farm Tenant Act Land Acquisition Records, Projects WY – 1 and WY –LU – 1

Wyoming State Library

Wyoming Digital Library, Wyoming Newspaper Project

Local History Collections in Wyoming Communities

Campbell County Library, Gillette
Campbell County Rockpile Museum, Gillette
Casper College Western History Center
Charles J. Belden Museum, Meeteetse
Converse County Library, Douglas
Fremont County Library, Riverton
Green River Valley Museum, Big Piney
Homesteader Museum, Powell
Hot Springs Historical Museum, Thermopolis

Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum, Jackson
Johnson County Library, Buffalo
Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale
Natrona County Library, Casper
Park County Archives, Cody
Sheridan County Fullmer Library, Sheridan
Sweetwater County Museum, Green River
Washakie County Museum, Worland
Wyoming Pioneer Memorial Museum, Douglas

Archival Collections outside Wyoming

Denver Public Library

Western History Collection

Library of Congress

Farm Security Administration-Office of War Information Collection

National Archives and Records Administration, Rocky Mountain Region (Denver)

Record Group 49 Bureau of Land Management (including Division of Grazing and Grazing Service) [Civilian Conservation Corps Records]
Record Group 95 Forest Service [Civilian Conservation Corps Records]

Nebraska State Historical Society

Souther Collection of Photographs

New York Public Library, Manhattan Branch, Schwartzman Building (including offsite storage)

Government Documents and Research Materials
Photograph Collections

Unpublished Reports and Multiple Property Nominations

Alpert, Alan. "Description of Historic Events Relating to Potential Coal Lease Areas in Campbell County, Wyoming." Wyoming Cultural Records Office files, 1977.

Brooks, Allyson, and Steph Jacon. "Homesteading and Agricultural Development Context, Draft Document." South Dakota State Historical Preservation Center, 1993.

Cassells, E. Steve, David B. Miller and Paul V. Miller. "Paha Sapa: A Cultural Resource Overview of the Black Hills National Forest, South Dakota and Wyoming." Longmont, Colorado: Plano Archaeological Consultants, n.d.

Cassity, Michael. "Stock-Raising, Ranching, and Homesteading in the Powder River Basin: Historic Context Study." Prepared for Wyoming State Office of Bureau of Land Management in coordination with Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, 2007.

Collins, William S. "Cattle Ranching in Arizona, 1848-1950." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Arizona State Historic Preservation Office, 2002.

Fullerton, Jean. "Homesteads on the Lincoln National Forest, New Mexico," Multiple Property Nomination, New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office, 1995.

Granger, Susan and Scott Kelly. "Historic Context Study of Minnesota Farms, 1820-1960," Prepared for Minnesota Department of Transportation, 2005.

Jost, Loren (ed.). "Exploring Fremont County History," Riverton, Wyoming, 1985.

Kurtz, Rick S. "Homesteading and Related Settlement, Glacier Bay Region," Multiple Property Nomination, Alaska State Historic Preservation Office, 1996.

McKee, Dave F. "A Historic Overview of Sheep Grazing in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Wyoming," Mitigation Report for Robinson-Jones-Whiskey Timber Sale," 1991.

Massey, Rheba, "Ranching Context," Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, 1992.

--------. "Homesteading Context," Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, 1992.

Miller, Mark E. "Draft Final Report of a Cultural Resources Inventory of the Corral Creek Coal Production Project Area in South-Central, Wyoming," December 1979.

Miyagishima, Kara M. National Historic Landmark Nomination, Heart Mountain Relocation Center

(September 20, 2006).

Murray, Robert. "Class I Historic Resource Study," prepared for Casper District of the Bureau of Land Management, February 1978.

Oliver, Sande and Bill Bryans, "Historical Literature Survey of the Pumpkin Buttes Area of Southwest Campbell County, Wyoming, including the North Butte Mine Site," prepared for Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company, Casper, Wyoming, April 1980.

Rosenberg, Robert. "Historic Overview of the Thunder Basin National Grassland," in Dennis Grasso, Steve Lau, and Robert Rosenberg, "Cultural Resource Overview: Medicine Bow National Forest including The Thunder Basin National Grassland," volume II, Prepared for United States Forest Service by Laramie: High Plains Consultants, March 15, 1981.

--------. "Historical Context – Sheepherder Camps in Wyoming," Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, 1982.

--------. "A Historical Context for Sheepherder Monuments (Rock Cairn Sites) in Wyoming," in Brian R. Waitkus, "Evaluative Test Excavations at Five Sites in the Bend Gravel Expansion Area," prepared for Wyoming Transportation Department, 1991.

Rosenberg, Robert, with Josie Kantner Smith and Elizabeth L. Rosenberg. "A Historical Synthesis of the Eastern Powder River Basin, Campbell and Converse Counties, Wyoming," prepared for Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, 1990.

Stein, Pat. "Homesteading in Arizona, 1862 to 1940: A Guide to Studying, Evaluating, and Preserving Historic Homesteads," Arizona State Historic Preservation Office, 1990.

Sullivan, Michael and Carol Griffith. "Down in the Dumps: Context Statement and Guidance on Historical-Period Waste Management and Refuse Deposits," Advisory Committee on Historical Archaeology, Arizona State Historic Preservation Office, 2005.

Watson, W. Bryan. "Homesteading in the Powder River Region of Wyoming: An Historic Overview and Theoretical Framework for the Evaluation of Historic Homestead Sites," Wyoming Bureau of Land Management Files, 1982.

Weidel, Nancy. National Register Nomination of Walcott Shearing Shed, Carbon County, Wyoming, August 6, 1997.

Books, Articles, Theses, and Published Reports

Allen, Barbara. *Homesteading the High Desert*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987.

Alston, Lee J. "Farm Foreclosures in the United States During the Interwar Period." *Journal of Economic History*, XLIII (December 1983): 885-903.

Armitage, Susan H. "Household Work and Childrearing on the Frontier: The Oral History Record." *Sociology and Social Research*, 63 (April 1979): 467-474.

Arnold, Peg. "Wyoming's Hispanic Sheepherders." *Annals of Wyoming*, 69 (Winter 1997): 29-34

Arnold, Thurman. *Fair Fights and Foul: A Dissenting Lawyer's Life*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1951.

Arrington, Leonard J. *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900.* Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1958; reprint of the 1958 Harvard University Press edition.

Atherton, Lewis. *The Cattle Kings.* Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1961.

Atteberry, Jennifer Eastman. *Building with Logs: Western Log Construction in Context*. Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1998.

Autobee, Robert. "Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program: The Riverton Unit." Third Draft, Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1996, on World Wide Web at http://www.usbr.gov/dataweb/html/rvrton2.html#N_39_.

Baker, T. Lindsay. *A Field Guide to American Windmills.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985.

Bangerter, Lowell A. "German Prisoners of War in Wyoming." *Journal of German - American Studies*, 14 (1979): 65-123.

Barnes, Will C. *Western Grazing Grounds and Forest Ranges: A History of the Live-stock Industry as Conducted on the Open Ranges of the arid West, with particular Reference to the Use now Being Made of the Ranges in the National Forests*. Chicago: The Breeder's Gazette, 1913.

Bartlett, I. S., ed. *History of Wyoming*, Vol. I. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1918.

Bartlett, Richard A. *The New Country: A Social History of the American Frontier, 1776-1890.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Bauman, Paula M. "Single Women Homesteaders in Wyoming, 1880-1930." *Annals of Wyoming*, 58 (Spring 1986): 39-53.

Belgrad, Daniel. "'Power's Larger Meaning': The Johnson County War as Political Violence in an Environmental Context." *Western Historical Quarterly*, 33 (Summer 2002): 159-177.

Blake, Betty, "Quiet Desperation," in Sublette County Artists' Guild, *Seeds-Ke-Dee Revisited: Land of Blue Granite and Silver Sage*. Pinedale: Sublette County Artists' Guild, 1998.

Bonner, William F. *William F. Cody's Wyoming Empire: The Buffalo Bill Nobody Knows.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007.

Boughn, Zachariah Lucian. "The Disposal of the Public Domain in Albany County, Wyoming, 1869-1890." M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1964.

Bowden, Margaret Dillinger. *1916: Wyoming, Here We Come!* Gillette, Wyoming: privately printed by James H. Bowden and Jessie Outka, 2002.

Bowman, Albert E. "Dairying in Crook County." *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 3 (July 1913): 4-5.

--------. *A Directory of Breeders of Purebred Livestock and Poultry in Wyoming*. Laramie: University of Wyoming Extension Service, 1923.

Boyle, Susan Calafate. "Natural and Cultural Resources: The Protection of Vernacular Landscapes." In *Cultural Landscapes: Balancing Nature and Heritage in Preservation Practice*, edited by Richard W. Longstreth, Susan Calafate Boyle, Susan Buggey, and Michael Caratzas. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Breimyer, Harold F. "The Changing American Farm." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 429 (1977): 12-22.

--------. "The Decline of the Family Farm." *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, 34 (1982): 186-197.

Brewster, John M. "The Relevance of the Jeffersonian Dream Today." in *Land Use Policy and Problems in the United States*, edited by Howard W. Ottoson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963.

Bright, Davilla. "Foreigners and Foreign Capital in the Cattle Industry of the United States." M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1935.

Brisbin, James S. *The Beef Bonanza: or, How to Get Rich on the Plains.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959.

Brooks, Bryant B. *Memoirs of Bryant B. Brooks: Cowboy, Trapper, Lumberman, Stockman, Oilman, Banker, and Governor of Wyoming.* Denver: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1939.

Brower, Barbara Anne. "The Forest Service and the Range Sheep Industry in the Wind River Mountains, Wyoming." M.A. Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1982.

--------. "Sheep Grazing in National Forest Wilderness: A New Look at an Old Fight." *Mountain Research and Development*, 20 (May 2000): 126-129.

Buckendorf, Madeline. "The Poultry Frontier: Family Farm Roles and Turkey Raising in Southwest Idaho, 1910-1940." *Idaho Yesterdays*, 37 (Summer 1993): 2-8.

Buenger, Robert L. *An Old Kid from Wyoming.* N.p.: iUniverse, 2005.

Burnett, F. D. "History of the Western Division of the Powder River Expedition under the Command of Patrick E. Connor in 1865." *Annals of Wyoming*, 8 (January 1932): 569-579.

Burt, Struthers. *Powder River: Let'er Buck.* New York, Toronto, Farrar & Rinehart, Incorporated, 1938.

Cabak, Melanie A., Mark D. Groover, and Mary M. Inkrot. "Rural Modernization During the Recent Past: Farmstead Archaeology in the Aiken Plateau." *Historical Archaeology*, 33 (1999): 19-43.

Calef, Wesley. *Private Grazing and Public Lands: Studies of the Local Management of the Taylor Grazing Act*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

--------. "The Winter of 1948-49 in the Great Plains." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 40 (December 1950): 267-292.

Calico Hill: Recalling the Early Years, Good Times and Hardships of Homesteaders Laramie County, Wyoming. Cheyenne: Jolly Dry Farmers' Club, 1973.

Campbell, Macy. *Rural Life at the Crossroads.* Boston: Ginn and Company, 1927.

Cannon, Brian Q. *Reopening the Frontier: Homesteading in the Modern West.* Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas.

Capps, Mary. "Early Ranches on Stockade Beaver Creek." *Annals of Wyoming*, 68 (Autumn 1996): 42-44.

Cassity, Michael. *Defending a Way of Life: An American Community in the Nineteenth Century.* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1989.

--------. "E. P. Thompson and the Local Historian." In *Local History Encyclopedia*, edited by Carol Kammen and Norma Prendergast. Walnut Creek, California: American Association for State and Local History and Alta Mira Press, 2000.

--------. "History and the Public Purpose." *Journal of American History*, 81 (December 1994): 969-976.

--------. "Huey Long: Barometer of Reform in the New Deal." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 72 (Spring 1973): 255-269.

--------. "'In a Narrow Grave': World War II and the Subjugation of Wyoming." *The Wyoming History Journal*, 68 (Spring 1996): 2-13.

--------. "Modernization and Social Crisis: The Knights of Labor and a Midwest Community 1885-1886." *Journal of American History*, 66 (June 1979): 41-61.

--------. "Wyoming Trying to Save Shadow of Its Past." Fort Collins *Regional Review*, November 25, 1981, 8, 11.

Cavert, William L. "The Technological Revolution in Agriculture, 1910-1955." *Agricultural History*, 30 (1956): 18-27.

Clay, John. *My Life on the Plains.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962.

Cochrane, Willard Wesley. *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Coffey, Walter Castella. *Productive Sheep Husbandry.* Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1917.

Collins, Mary Jane and Ky Dixon, eds. *Homesteads, Cowboys, Coal Mines: Lower Piney and Boxelder Creeks, 1876-1976.* N.p., n.d..

Collopy, Mary. "The Outlook for Farm Family Living." Wyoming Agricultural Extension Service, Circular No. 57 (January 1935).

Colman, Gould P. "Documenting Agriculture and Rural Life." *Midwestern Archivist*, 12 (1987): 21-27.

Condit, Thelma Gatchell. "The Hole-in-the-Wall, Part IV." *Annals of Wyoming*, 29 (April 1957): 41-66.

Conkin, Paul K. *A Revolution Down on the Farm: The Transformation of American Agriculture since 1929*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008.

--------. *The New Deal.* Arlington Heights, Illinois: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1967, 1975.

Connor, L[ouis] G[eorge]. "A Brief History of the Sheep Industry in the United States." *Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1918.* Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921.

Cookson, David A. "The Basques in Wyoming." In *Peopling the High Plains: Wyoming's European Heritage*, edited by Gordon Olaf Hendrickson. Cheyenne: Wyoming State Archives and Historical Department, 1977.

Cronon, William. "Turner's First Stand: The Significance of Significance in American History." In *Writing Western History: Essays on Major American Historians*, edited by Richard W. Etulain. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991.

Cross, George H. "The First Cattle Ranches." *Quarterly Bulletin of the Wyoming Historical Department*, August 15, 1924.

Curtis, Jan, and Kate Grimes. *Wyoming Climate Atlas*, copy located on the World Wide Web at http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/wsc/climateatlas/drought.html.

Cutting, Malcolm C. "A Cattle Magnate Sits in the Senate; Kendrick of Wyoming Applies Efficiency Methods to the Beef Raising Business and Takes the Gamble Out of It." New York *Times*, December 19, 1926.

Dale, Edward Everett. *The Range Cattle Industry.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930.

Dalrymple, Dana G. "Changes in Wheat Varieties and Yields in the United States, 1919-1984." *Agricultural History*, 62 (Autumn, 1988): 20-36

Danbom, David. *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Daugherty, John. *A Place Called Jackson Hole: The Historic Resource Study of Grand Teton National Park.* Moose, Wyoming: Grand Teton National Park, 1999.

Davis, John W. *A Vast Amount of Trouble: A History of the Spring Creek Raid.* Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1993.

--------. *Goodbye, Judge Lynch: The End of a Lawless Era in Wyoming's Big Horn Basin.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006.

Davis, Verna Burger. *My Chosen Trails: A Wyoming Woman's Recollections through the Twentieth Century.* Golden, Colorado: Deep Creek Press, 1998.

Dick, Everett. *The Sod-House Frontier, 1854-1890: A Social History of the Northern Plains from the Creation of Kansas & Nebraska to the Admission of the Dakotas*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press: 1937, 1954.

Diggins, John P. *The Proud Decades: America in War and in Peace, 1941-1960.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989.

Dillinger, Earl. *The Way It Was*. N.p.: Asuwil Graphic Company, 1980.

Dobie, J. Frank. *The Longhorns.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980.

Dolan, Susan A. *Fruitful Legacy: A Historic Context of Orchards in the United States, with Technical Information for Registering Orchards in the National Register of Historic Places.* Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009.

Donahue, Debra L. *The Western Range Revisited: Removing Livestock from Public Lands to Conserve Native Biodiversity.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999.

Doyle, Susan Badger. "[The Bozeman Trail]." In *Promise: Bozeman's Trail to Destiny*, edited by Serle L. Chapman. Park City, Utah: Pavey Western Publishing, 2004.

--------. "The Bozeman Trail, 1863-1868." *Annals of Wyoming*, 70 (Spring 1998).

--------. "The Bozeman Trail and Nineteenth-Century American Expansionism on the Northern Plains." Paper presented at Western History Association Annual Meeting, October 17, 1997, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Drago, Harry Sinclair. *The Great Range Wars: Violence on the Grasslands.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970.

Earle, B. J. "The Kendrick Ranch as Historic Context: Attention Coal Bed Methane Surveyors!" Poster Paper, 62nd Plains Anthropological Conference, Billings, Montana October 14-16, 2004. A copy of this paper is located on the web page for the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office Planning and Historic Context Program, http://wyoshpo.state.wy.us/SHPOweb2002/2002webpages/availablecontexts.htm.

Edgar, Bob, and Jack Turnell. *Brand of a Legend*. Basin, Wyoming: Wolverine Gallery, 1978.

Elliott, James Rupert. *American Farms: Their Condition and Future.* New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1890.

Fabry, Judith. "Agricultural Science and Technology in the West." In *The Rural West Since World War II*, edited by R. Douglas Hurt. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998.

Faville, A. D. "Dairy Possibilities in Wyoming." *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, 2 (July 1912): 180-182.

Fawcett, William B., Jr. "Implications for Ethnoarcheological Research on Wyoming Pastoralists for Hunter-Gatherer Studies." *Wyoming Archaeologist*, 24 (1981): 55-85.

Ferris, Robert G., series editor. *Prospector, Cowhand, and Sodbuster: Historic Places associated with the Mining, Ranching, and Farming Frontiers in the Trans-Mississippi West.* Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1967.

Fischer, William P. "Homesteading the Thunder Basin: Teckla, Wyoming, 1917-1938." *Annals of Wyoming*, 71 (Spring 1999): 21-34.

Fite, Gilbert C. *The Farmers' Frontier 1865-1900.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966.

--------. "The Transformation of South Dakota Agriculture: The Effects of Mechanization, 1939-1964." *South Dakota History*, 19 (Fall 1989): 278-305.

Flannery, L. G. (Pat), ed. *John Hunton's Diary, Vol. II, 1876-1877.* Lingle, Wyoming: Guide-Review, 1958.

Flora, Cornelia Butler and Jan L. Flora. "Structure of Agriculture and Women's Culture in the Great Plains." *Great Plains Quarterly*, 8 (1988): 195-205.

Foner, Eric. *The Story of American Freedom.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998.

Foss, Phillip O. *Politics and Grass: The Administration of Grazing on the Public Domain.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960.

Foulke, Thomas, Roger H. Coupal, and David T. Taylor. "Trends in Wyoming Agriculture: Level of Production." University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, MP-107 (December 2000).

Fowler, Charles A., III. *A Wyoming Country Boy in the 1930s: Memoirs of Charles A. Fowler, III.*

Bloomington, Indiana: privately printed, 2003.

Francaviglia, Richard V. *The Mormon Landscape: Existence, Creation, and Perception of a Unique Image in the American West.* New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1978.

Freeman, John F. *High Plains Horticulture: A History.* Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2008.

Friedberger, Mark. "The Transformation of the Rural Midwest, 1945-1985." *Old Northwest*, 16 (1992): 13-36.

Friedman, Milton, and Anna Jacobscon Schwartz. *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867-1960.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

Frink, Maurice "When Grass Was King." In *When Grass Was King: Contributions to the Western Range Cattle Industry*, edited by Maurice Frink, W. Turrentine Jackson, and Agnes Wright Spring. Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado Press, 1956.

--------. *Cow Country Cavalcade: Eighty Years of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association.* Denver: Old West Publishing Co., 1954.

Galvin, James. *The Meadow*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1992.

Ganoe, John T. "The Desert Land Act in Operation." *Agricultural History*, 11 (April 1937): 142-157.

Garceau, Dee. *The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, 1880-1929.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

Gardner, A. Dudley and Val Brinkerhoff, and Jolane Culhane, eds. *Historical Images of Sweetwater County.* Virginia Beach: Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, Publishers, 1993.

Gardner, Bruce. *American Agriculture in the Twentieth Century: How it Flourished and What it Cost*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Pres, 2002.

Gates, Paul W. *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture 1815-1860.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960.

--------. *History of Public Land Law Development.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968.

--------. "The Homestead Act: Free Land Policy in Operation, 1862-1935." In *Land Use Policy and Problems in the United States*, edited by Howard W. Ottoson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963.

--------. "Homesteading in the High Plains." *Agricultural History*, 51 (January 1977): 109-133.

--------. "Land Policy." In *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American* West, edited by Howard R. Lamar. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

--------. "Public Land Issues in the United States." *Western Historical Quarterly*, II (October 1971), (October 1971), 363-376.

Genung, A. B. *The Agricultural Depression Following World War I and Its Political Consequences: An Account of the Deflation Episode, 1921-1934.* Ithaca, New York: Northeast Farm Foundation, 1954.

George, Susanne K. *The Adventures of the Woman Homesteader: The Life and Letters of Elinore Pruitt Stewart*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.

Gillen, H.F. Johnny, ed. *Civilian Conservation Corps, Wyoming, 1933-1942.* N.p., n.d.

Gillette, Bertha Chambers. *Homesteading with the Elk: A Story of Frontier Life in Jackson Hole, Wyoming*. Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1967.

Goetzmann, William H. *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959.

--------. *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966.

Graham, Richard. "The Investment Boom in British-Texan Cattle Companies." *Business History Review*, XXXIV (1960): 421-445.

Grant, Michael Johnston. *Down and Out on the Family Farm: Rural Rehabilitation in the Great Plains, 1929-1945.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002.

Gray, L. C. "The Social and Economic Implications of the National Land Program." *Journal of Farm Economics*, 18 (May 1936): 257-273.

Greenburg, D. W. "Marvelous Sheridan County." *The Midwest Review*, VII (October 1926): 3-58.

--------. "Converse County's Magnificent Resources." *The Midwest Review*, VII (August 1926): 1-21.

Greenwood, Tharon. "Ranch Woman's Work." In *Seeds-Ke-Dee Revisited: Land of Blue Granite and Silver Sage*, edited by Sublette County Artists' Guild. Pinedale: Sublette County Artists' Guild,

1998.

--------. "World War II Memories." In *Seeds-Ke-Dee Revisited: Land of Blue Granite and Silver Sage*, edited by Sublette County Artists' Guild. Pinedale: Sublette County Artists' Guild, 1998.

Gregson, Mary Eschelbach. "Long-Term Trends in Agricultural Specialization in the United States: Some Preliminary Results." *Agricultural History*, 70 (Winter 1996): 90-101.

Grimes, H. "The Effect of the Combined Harvester-Thresher on Farming in a Wheat-Growing Region." *Scientific Agriculture* (1929): 773-782.

Guenther, Todd. "At Home on the Range: Black Settlement in Rural Wyoming, 1850-1950." M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1988.

--------. "'Could These Bones Be from a Negro?' Some African American Experiences on the Oregon – California Trail," *Overland Journal*, 19 (Summer 2001): 43-55.

--------. "The Empire Builders: An African American Odyssey in Nebraska and Wyoming." *Nebraska History*, 89 (Winter 2008): 176-200.

--------. "Lucretia Marchbanks: A Black Woman in the Black Hills." *South Dakota History*, 31 (Spring 2001): 1-25.

--------. "'Y'all Call me Nigger Jim Now, But Someday You'll Call Me Mr. James Edwards': Black Success on the Plains of the Equality State." *Annals of Wyoming*, 61 (Fall 1989): 20-40.

Guernsey, Charles A. *Wyoming Cowboy Days.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1936.

Hall, Ray M. "A History of the Latter-day Saint Settlement of Star Valley, Wyoming." M.S. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1962.

Hallberg, Carl. "Once They Raised Potatoes in Johnson County." Guernsey *Gazette*, online edition, at http://www.guernseygazette.com/main.php?story_id=297&page=23.

Handy-Marchello, Barbara. "The 'Main Stay': Women's Productive Work on Pioneer Farms." *North Dakota History*, 63 (1996): 17-27.

--------. *Women of the Northern Plains: Gender and Settlement on the Homestead Frontier, 1870-1930.* St. Paul: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Hanson, Margaret Brock, ed. *Powder River Country: The Papers of J. Elmer Brock*. Kaycee, Wyoming: published by the editor, 1989.

Hanson, Victor Davis. *Fields Without Dreams: Defending the Agrarian Idea*. New York: The Free Press, 1996.

Hardesty, Donald L. and Barbara J. Little. *Assessing Site Significance: A Guide for Archaeologists and Historians*. Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2000.

Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science*, 162 (1968): 1243-1248.

Hargreaves, Mary Wilma M. "Dry Farming Alias Scientific Farming." *Agricultural History*, 22 (1948): 39-56.

--------. *Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, 1900-1925*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.

--------. *Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains: Years of Readjustment, 1920-1990*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993.

--------. "The Dry-Farming Movement in Retrospect." *Agricultural History*, 51 (1977): 149-165.

Hart, Stanley H. *Wool: The Raw Materials of the Woolen and Worsted Industries*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Textile School of the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, 1917).

Hartley, Daniel R. "Factors Contributing to the Decline of the Wyoming Sheep Industry." M.S. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1976.

Heitzmann, Rod J. "The Archaeology of Ranching on the Rocky Mountain East Slopes of Alberta." Unpublished paper presented at Rocky Mountain Anthropology Conference, Waterton Lakes, 2001.

Henderson, Harry. "Governors of the State of Wyoming." *Annals of Wyoming*, 12 (April 1940): 121-129.

Hensley, Marcia Meredith. *Staking Her Claim: Women Homesteading the West.* Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 2008.

Hewitt, William L. "The Cowboyification of Wyoming Agriculture." *Agricultural History*, 76 (2002): 481-494.

--------. "Education for Agribusiness: Public Agricultural Education in Wyoming before World War I." *Midwest Review*, 9 (1987): 30-45.

--------. "Mexican Workers in Wyoming during World War II: Necessity, Discrimination and Protest." *Annals of Wyoming*, 54 (Fall 1982): 20-33.

Hickok, Lorena, Richard Lowitt, and Maurine H. Beasley, eds. *One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Historical Committee of the Robber's Roost Historical Society. *Pioneering on the Cheyenne River.* Lusk, Wyoming: The Lusk Herald, 1947; reprinted 1956.

History of the Civilian Conservation Corps Colorado and Wyoming District. Pueblo, Colorado: O'Brien Printing Company, 1938.

Hooker, William Francis. *The Bullwhacker: Adventures of a Frontier Freighter*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988; reprint of the 1988 World Book Company edition.

Hubbard, Leora M. *Campbell County Profiles: Interviews with Early and Not so Early Settlers and Citizens of Campbell County.* Shawnee Mission, Kansas: Inter-Collegiate Press, 1985.

Hufsmith, George W. *The Wyoming Lynching of Cattle Kate, 1889.* Glendo: High Plains Press, 1993.

Hunter, Byron, H. W. Pearson, and A. F. Vass. "Type of Farming and Ranching Areas in Wyoming." University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 228 (July 1938).

Huntoon, Peter W. "The National Bank Failures in Wyoming, 1924." *Annals of Wyoming*, 54 (Fall 1982): 34-44.

Hurst, James Willard. *Law and the Conditions of Freedom in the Nineteenth-Century United States.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967.

Hurt, R. Douglas. *Agricultural Technology in the Twentieth Century.* Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1991.

--------. *American Agriculture: A Brief History.* West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, rev. ed., 2002.

--------. *The Great Plains during World War II.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008.

--------. "The Tractor: Iron Horse for the Farmer." *Journal of the West*, 30 (1991): 9-29.

Irland, Frederic. "In the Big Dry Country." *Scribner's Magazine*, XXXVI (1904): 297-304.

Isern, Thomas D. "Adoption of the Combine on the Northern Plains." *South Dakota History*, 10 (1980):

101-118.

--------. *Bull Threshers & Bindlestiffs: Harvesting and Threshing on the North American Plains.* Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990.

--------. *Custom Combining on the Great Plains: A History.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981.

Jackson, W. Turrentine. "British Interests in the Range Cattle Industry." In *When Grass Was King: Contributions to the Western Range Cattle Industry*, edited by Maurice Frink, W. Turrentine Jackson, and Agnes Wright Spring. Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado Press, 1956.

--------. *The Enterprising Scot: Investors in the American West after 1873.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968.

--------. "The Wyoming Stock Growers' Association Political Power in Wyoming Territory 1873-1890." *Annals of Wyoming*, 20 (January 1948): 61-83.

Jakle, John A. and David Wilson. *Derelict Landscapes: The Wasting of America's Built Environment.* Savage, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1992.

James, George Wharton. *Reclaiming the Arid West: The Story of the Reclamation Service.* New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1917.

Jellison, Katherine. *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Jones, Lawrence A. and David Durand. *Mortgage Lending Experience in Agriculture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press for the Bureau of Economic Research, 1954.

Jordan, Teresa. *Riding the White Horse Home: A Western Family Album.* New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

Jordan, Terry G. *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion, and Differentiation.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993.

Jost, Loren. *Fremont County, Wyoming: A Pictorial History.* Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, Publishers, 1996.

Kirkendall, Richard S. "The Agricultural Colleges: Between Tradition and Modernization." *Agricultural History*, 60 (Spring 1986): 3-21.

--------. *Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt*. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1966.

Kornfeld, Marcel. "A Model of High Plains and Intermountain Stockraising Settlement Systems." *North American Archaeologist* (1983): 51-62.

--------. "Stockraising Settlement Strategies." M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1982.

Krysl, Larry James. "The Effects of the Great Depression on the State of Wyoming, 1935-1940." M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1960.

Lackie, H. M. "A Farm Poultry House." Wyoming Extension Service Circular No. 4 (September 1929).

Lambert, C. Roger "The Drought Cattle Purchase, 1934-1935: Problems and Complaints." *Agricultural History*, 45 (January 1971): 85-93.

Larson, T. A. *History of Wyoming.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965, 1978; 2nd edition, revised.

--------. "Mondell, Frank Wheeler." In *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West*, edited by Howard W. Lamar. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977.

--------. "Ranching in Wyoming." In Judith Hancock Sandoval, *Historic Ranches of Wyoming*. Casper: Mountain States Lithographing Company, 1986.

--------. "The Winter of 1886-87 in Wyoming." *Annals of Wyoming*, 14 (January 1942): 5-17.

Layton, Stanford J. *To No Privileged Class: The Rationalization of Homesteading and Rural Life in the early Twentieth-Century American West*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books for Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Brigham Young University, 1988.

Law-Evans, Elizabeth and Paul A. Kay. "Quantifying the Effect of Technology and Management on Wheat Yields in the Western Great Plains." *Great Plains Research*, 4 (1994): 133-146.

Lawrence, Amy, James Ehrenberger, and Lucille Dumbrill. "Blizzard of 1949." *Annals of Wyoming*, 76 (Winter 2004): 31-37

Lindsay, Charles. "The Big Horn Basin." *University Studies of the University of Nebraska*, XXVIII-XXIX (1932): 1-274.

Lord, Russell. *The Care of the Earth: A History of Husbandry.* New York: Mentor Books, an imprint of New American Library, 1962.

Lott, Howard B., ed. "Diary of Major Wise, an Englishman, Recites Details of Hunting Trip in Powder River Country in 1880." *Annals of Wyoming*, 7 (April 1940): 85-118.

Love, Barbara and Frances Love Froidevaux, eds. *Lady's Choice: Ethel Waxham's Journals & Letters, 1905-1910.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993.

Lusk, Frank S. "My Association with Wyoming." *Quarterly Bulletin of the Wyoming Historical Department*, August 15, 1924.

Lynn-Sherow, Bonnie. "Beyond Winter Wheat: Wheat Production and the USDA in the 20th Century." *Kansas History,* 23 (Spring – Summer 2000): 100-111.

Mackey, Mike. "Wyoming Stock Growers and the Taylor Grazing Act." *Journal of the West*, 35 (1996): 18-25.

--------. *Heart Mountain: Life in Wyoming's Concentration Camp.* Powell, Wyoming: Western History Publications, 2000.

Macpherson, C. B. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.

Macy, Robert W. *Few Clothes and Plenty Horse.* Moorcroft: Warbonnet Ranch, Inc., 1975.

Mallea-Olaetxe, J. *Speaking through the Aspens: Basque Tree Carvings in California and Nevada*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000.

Manley, Robert N. "Samuel Aughey: Nebraska's Scientific Promoter." *Journal of the West*, 6 (1967): 108-118.

Mather, Eugene. "The Production and Marketing of Wyoming Beef Cattle." *Economic Geography*, 26 (April 1950): 81-93.

McCormick, Cyrus. *The Century of the Reaper.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931.

McMurry, Sally. *Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America: Vernacular Design and Social Change.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997.

Mead, Elwood. *Wyoming as an Agricultural State.* Cheyenne: Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce, 1894.

Mercer, A. S. *The Banditti of the Plains, Or the Cattlemen's Invasion of Wyoming in 1892.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954; originally published 1894.

Merrill, Karen R. *Public Lands and Political Meaning: Ranchers, the Government, and the Property between Them*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Metal, Phyllis Luman with Doris Platts. *Cattle King on the Green River*. Wilson, Wyoming: Sunshine Ranch and Friends, 1983.

Morgan, Dale L. *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953.

Moul, Francis and Georg Joutras. *The National Grasslands: A Guide to America's Undiscovered Treasures.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006.

Nel, Johanna and Johannes E. Nel. "University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station: 100 Years of Service to the State." *Annals of Wyoming*, 64 (Winter 1992): 11-21.

Nelson, Paula M. *After the West Was Won: Homesteaders and Town-Builders in Western South Dakota, 1900-1917.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986.

--------. *The Prairie Winnows Out Its Own: The West River Country of South Dakota in the years of Depression and Dust.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996.

Neth, Mary. *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Niland, John. *A History of Sheep Raising in The Great Divide Basin of Wyoming*. Cheyenne: Lagumo Corp., 1994.

Nimmo, Joseph, Jr. "The American Cow-Boy." *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 73 (November 1886): 880-885.

--------. *Report in Regard to the Range and Ranch Cattle Business of the United States.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1885.

Noble, Allen G. "Pioneer Settlement on the Plains: Sod Dugouts and Sod Houses." *Pioneer America Society Transactions*, IV (1981): 11-19.

--------. "Windmills in American Agriculture." *Material Culture*, 24 (Spring 1992): 1-12.

--------. *Wood, Brick, and Stone: The North American Settlement Landscape*, vol. 2: *Barns and Farm Structures.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984.

Noble, Allen G. and Richard K. Cleek. *The Old Barn Book: A Field Guide to North American Barns and other Farm Structures.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995.

Noble, Ann Chambers. "Civilian Conservation Corps." http://www.sublette.com/history/ccc/#photos.

--------. "Noble Family History," In *Seeds-Ke-Dee Revisited: Land of Blue Granite and Silver Sage*, edited by Sublette County Artists' Guild. Pinedale: Sublette County Artists' Guild, 1998.

--------. *Pinedale, Wyoming: A Centennial History 1904-2004*. Pinedale: Sublette County Historical Society, Museum of the Mountain Man, 2005.

Noble, Bruce. "The Quest for Settlement in Early Wyoming." *Annals of Wyoming*, 55 (Fall 1983): 19-24.

Nourse, E. G. "Some Economic and Social Accompaniments of the Mechanization of Agriculture." *American Economic Review*, Supplement, 20 (1930): 114-132.

Nye, Russel B. "Changes in Twentieth-Century Rural Society." *Midcontinent American Studies Journal*, 10 (1969): 25-40.

O'Hara, Mary. *Wyoming Summer.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963.

Olmstead, Alan L. and Rhode, Paul W. "Reshaping the Landscape: The Impact and Diffusion of the Tractor in American Agriculture, 1910-1960." *Journal of Economic History*, 61 (2001): 663-698.

Olson, Ted. *Ranch on the Laramie.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973.

Osgood, E. S. *The Day of the Cattleman, a Study of the Northern Range, 1845-1890*. Minneapolis, The University of Minnesota Press, 1929.

Osterud, Nancy Grey. *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

--------. "The Valuation of Women's Work: Gender and the Market in a Dairy Farming Community during the Late Nineteenth Century." *Frontiers*, X (1988): 18-24.

Page, Vicki and William L. Hewitt. "The Changing Face of Cowboy State Agriculture: Turn of the Century Wyoming Agriculturist—A Demographic Profile." *Annals of Wyoming*, 60 (Spring 1988): 22-31.

Patton, Jacob Harris. *Natural Resources of the United States.* New York: D. Appleton and Company,

1894.

Paul, Rodman W. *The Far West and the Great Plains in Transition, 1859-1900.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988.

Perkins, Van L. *Crisis in Agriculture: The Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the New Deal, 1933.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Peterson, Fred W. "Tradition and Change in Nineteenth Century Iowa Farmhouses." *Annals of Iowa*, 52 (1993): 251-281.

Peterson, Henry J. "John Wesley Hoyt: Territorial Governor of Wyoming, 1878-1882." *Annals of Wyoming*, 22 (January 1950): 3-68.

Pitman, Leon S. "The Domestic Tankhouse as Vernacular Architecture in Rural California." *Material Culture*, 24 (1992): 13-32.

Poeske, Dale A. "Wyoming in World War I." M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1968.

Poppendieck, Janet. *Breadlines Knee-Deep in Wheat: Food Assistance in the Great Depression.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986.

Powder River Heritage Committee. *Our Powder River Heritage.* Cheyenne: Frontier Printing, Inc., 1982.

Proulx, Annie, ed. *Red Desert: History of a Place.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.

Purser, Margaret. "Archaeology on Western Ranches." On the World Wide Web, "Unlocking the Past: Celebrating Historical Archaeology in North America." http://www.cr.nps.gov/seac/unlocking-web/sidebars/sidebar9.htm.

Putnam, Eva Ogden. "Pioneering in Crook County." *Annals of Wyoming*, 3 (April 1926): 203-211.

Putnam, George E. "The Federal Farm Loan System." *American Economic Review*, 9 (March 1919): 57-78.

Quayle, W. L., and A. L. Nelson. "A Better Method for Winter Wheat Production." University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin No. 151 (February 1927).

Quayle, W. L., and Axell Christensen. "Feeding and Housing for Laying Hens." University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 149 (January 1927).

Quisenberry, Karl. "The Dry Land Stations: Their Mission and their Men." *Agricultural History* (1977): 218-228.

Raban, Jonathan. *Bad Land: An American Romance.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1996.

Radcliffe, Mabel. *From Cattle to Cadillacs*. N.p, n.d.

Rasmussen, Wayne D. "A Postscript: Twenty-five Years of Change in Farm Productivity." *Agricultural History*, 49 (January 1975): 84-86.

--------. "Technological Change in Western Sugar Beet Production." *Agricultural History*, 41 (January 1967): 31-35.

Rathgoe, Richard W. "Women's Contribution to the Family Farm." *Great Plains Quarterly*, 9 (Winter 1989): 36-47.

Raun, A. P. and R. L. Preston. "History of Diethylstilbestrol Use in Cattle." American Society of Animal Science (2002): 1-6; this symposium paper is accessible on the World Wide Web at http://www.asas.org/Bios/Raunhist.pdf.

Redwine, Augustin. "Lovell's Mexican Colony." *Annals of Wyoming*, 51 (Fall 1979): 26-35.

Reed, Silas. "Stock Raising on the Plains, 1870-1871." *Annals of Wyoming*, 17 (January 1945): 56.

Reisner, Marc. *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water.* New York: Viking Penguin Books, 1986.

Richards, Paul S. "The Golden Fleece." *The Forum*, XLVII (May 1912): 545-561.

Ricketts, William P. *50 Years in the Saddle.* Sheridan, Wyoming: Star Publishing Company, 1942.

Righter, Robert W. *Crucible for Conservation: The Struggle for Grand Teton National Park.* N.p.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1982.

--------. "The Wind at Work in Wyoming." *Annals of Wyoming*, 61 (Spring 1989): 32-38.

--------. *Wind Energy in America: A History.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996.

Rikoon, J. Sanford. *Threshing in the Midwest, 1820-1940: A Study of Traditional Culture and Technological Change*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Riley, Glenda. *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains.*

Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988.

Riney-Kehrberg, Pamela. "'But What Kind of Work Do the Rest of You Do?' Child Labor on Nebraska Farms, 1870-1920." *Nebraska History*, 82 (2001): 2-10.

Rios-Bustamante, Antonio. "Wyoming's Mexican Hispanic History." *Annals of Wyoming*, 73 (2001): 2-9.

Robbins, Roy M. *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain 1776-1936.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1942.

Rollins, George W. "The Struggle of the Cattleman, Sheepman and Settler for Control of Lands in Wyoming, 1867-1910." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Utah, 1951.

Rollinson, John K. *Wyoming Cattle Trails: The History of the Migration of Oregon-Raised Herds to Mid-Western Markets.* Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1948.

Rollinson, John K. and E. A. Brininstool. *Pony Trails in Wyoming: Hoofprints of a Cowboy and U.S. Ranger.* Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1941.

Rubottom, Helena Thomas. *Red Walls and Homesteads.* Cheyenne: Frontier Printing, 1987.

Russell, Osborne. *Journal of a Trapper*, edited by Aubrey L. Haines. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955; 1965.

Sageser, A. Bower. "Windmill and Pump Irrigation on the Great Plains 1890-1910." *Nebraska History*, 48 (1967): 107-118.

Sandoval, Judith Hancock. *Historic Ranches of Wyoming*. Casper: Nicolaysen Art Museum and Mountain States Lithographing Company, 1986.

Sandoz, Mari. *The Cattlemen.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1958.

Schafer, Joseph. *The Social History of American Agriculture.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936.

Schlesinger, Arthur M. *The Rise of the City.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933.

Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. *The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958.

Schoen, Jamie and Merry Haydon. "The Raid Lake Sheep Massacre." *The Wyoming Archaeologist*, 47

(Spring 203): 28-47.

Schultz, Charles. "The 76 Castle." *Wyoming Educational Bulletin* (April 1934): 4.

Schwartz, Harry. *Seasonal Farm Labor in the United States with Special Reference to Hired Workers in Fruit and Vegetable and Sugar-Beet Production.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1945.

Schwieder, Dorothy and Deborah Fink. "U.S. Prairie and Plains Women in the 1920s: A Comparison of Women, Family, and Environment." *Agricultural History*, 73 (1999): 183-200.

Seager, Allan. "Powder River in the Old Days." *The New Yorker*, August 17, 1957, 28-34.

Seifert, Donna J. and Barbara J. Little, Beth L. Savage, and John H. Sprinkle, Jr. *Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1995, 1997.

Shannon, Fred A. *The Centennial Years: A Political and Economic History of America from the Late 1870s to the Early 1890s.* New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967.

--------. *The Farmer's Last Frontier: Agriculture, 1860-1897.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1945.

Sheldon, Garrett W. *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

Shideler, James H. *Farm Crisis: 1919-1923*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.

Smith, Florence Blake. *Cow Chips 'N' Cactus: The Homestead in Wyoming.* N.p.: Unity Publications, 1962.

Smith, Helena Huntington. *The War on Powder River.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966.

Smith, Henry Nash. "Rain Follows the Plow: The Notion of Increased Rainfall for the Great Plains, 1844-1880." *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 10 (February 1947): 169-194.

--------. *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950.

Smith, Sherry L. *The Bozeman Trail.* [Cheyenne:] Wyoming Recreation Commission, Historic Preservation Division, 1981.

--------. "The Bozeman—Trail to Death & Glory." *Annals of Wyoming*, 55 (Spring 1983): 32-50.

--------. "Single Women Homesteaders: The Perplexing Case of Elinore Pruitt Stewart." *Western Historical Quarterly*, 22 (May 1991): 163-183.

--------. "A Woman's Life in the Teton Country: Geraldine L. Lucas." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 44 (Summer 1994): 18-33.

Smythe, William E. *The Conquest of Arid America.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905.

Sommers, Jonita. *Green River Drift: A History of the Upper Green River Cattle Association*. Pinedale, Wyoming: published by the author, 1994.

--------. "Growing up Tough in Wyoming." In *Seeds-Ke-Dee Revisited: Land of Blue Granite and Silver Sage*, edited by Sublette County Artists' Guild,. Pinedale: Sublette County Artists' Guild, 1998.

--------. "Technology Used for Communicating." In *Seeds-Ke-Dee Revisited: Land of Blue Granite and Silver Sage*, edited by Sublette County Artists' Guild,. Pinedale: Sublette County Artists' Guild, 1998.

Spencer, Charles Floyd. *Wyoming Homestead Heritage.* Hicksville, New York: Exposition Press, 1975.

Spencer, Pearl Budd. "The Changing Face of Haying." In *Seeds-Ke-Dee Reflections*, edited by Sublette County Artists' Guild. Laramie: Modern Printing, 1985.

Spring, Agnes Wright. "'A Genius for Handling Cattle': John W. Iliff." In *When Grass Was King: Contributions to the Western Range Cattle Industry*, edited by Maurice Frink, W. Turrentine Jackson, and Agnes Wright Spring. Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado Press, 1956.

--------. "Powder River Live Stock Company." *Colorado Magazine*, 28 (January 1951): 32-36.

--------. *Seventy Years: A Panoramic History of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association*. N.p.: Wyoming Stock Growers Association, 1942.

Stam, Jerome M. and Bruce L. Dixon. *Farmer Bankruptcies and Farm Exits in the United States, 1899-2002.* Washington: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Agriculture Information Bulletin Number 788, 2004.

Starr, Eileen F. *Architecture in the Cowboy State, 1849-1940: A Guide.* Glendo: High Plains Press, 1992.

Stewart, Elinore Pruitt. *Letters of a Woman Homesteader.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915.

--------. *Letters on an Elk Hunt by a Woman Homesteader.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915; reprinted, University of Nebraska Press, 1979.

Story, Byron. "The First Cattle up from Texas." *American Cattle Producer*, November 1938, 6-7.

Summers, Oliver N. "Turkey Raising in Wyoming." Wyoming Extension Service Circular No. 26 (July 1928; revised May 1929, March 1933).

Sweetwater County Historical Museum. *Eden Valley Voices: A Centennial Celebration of Stories.* Cheyenne: Pioneer Printing & Stationery, 2008.

Swenson, Robert W. "Legal Aspects of Mineral Resources Exploitation." In *History of Public Land Law Development*, by Paul W. Gates. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968.

Tanner, Francis Henry. "The Disposal of the Public Domain in Johnson County, Wyoming, 1869-1890." M. A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1967.

Thompson, E. P. "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism." *Past and Present*, No. 38 (1967): 56-97.

Towar, J. D. "Dry Farming in Wyoming." Wyoming Experiment Station Bulletin No. 80 (March 1909).

Triumphs and Tragedies of Crook County (n.p., n.d.).

Tugwell, Rexford. *The Democratic Roosevelt: A Biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt.* New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1957.

--------. "The Place of Government in a National Land Program." *Journal of Farm Economics*, 16 (January 1934): 55-69.

--------. "The Resettlement Idea." *Agricultural History*, 33 (October 1959): 159-163.

Tugwell, Rexford G., and Harry J. Carman. "The Significance of American Agricultural History." *Agricultural History*, 12 (April 1938): 99-106.

Turk, Louise. *Sheep: An Autobiography of Louise Turk, Woman Sheepherder. N*.p.: Pentland Press, Inc., n.d.

Unruh, John D. *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979.

Vass, A. F. *Account Book for Poultry Production and Costs Account Book for Poultry Production and Costs.* Laramie: Wyoming Agricultural Extension Service, 1930, 1934, 1936.

--------. "Range and Ranch Studies in Wyoming." University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 147 (June 1926).

Vass, A. F., and Harry Pearson, "An Economic Study of Range Sheep Production on the Red Desert and Adjoining Areas." University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 156 (July 1926).

--------. "Profitable Systems of Farm and Ranch Organizations for Certain Areas in Wyoming." Wyoming Agricultural Extension Service Circular No. 60 (June 1935).

Wahl, Cecilia Hendricks, compiler and editor, and Cecilia Hennel Hendricks. *Letters from Honeyhill: A Woman's View of Homesteading, 1914-1931.* Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1986.

Wall, J. Tom. *Crossing Old Trails to New in North Central Wyoming.* Philadelphia: Dorrance & Company, 1973.

Waller, John LeeRoy. "Economic History and Settlement of Converse County." *Annals of Wyoming*, 6 (April 1930): 291-294. This article is continued in *Annals of Wyoming*, 7 (July 1930): 330-337.

Watkins, T. H. *The Hungry Years: A Narrative History of the Great Depression in America.* New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1999.

Webb, Walter Prescott. *The Great Plains.* New York: Ginn and Company, 1931.

Weidel, Nancy. *Sheepwagon: Home on the Range.* Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 2001.

Wentworth, Edward N. *America's Sheep Trails.* Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1948.

White, John M. *The Newer Northwest: A Description of the Health Resorts and Mining Camps of the Black Hills of South Dakota and Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming.* St. Louis: Self Culture Publishing Co., 1894.

Widtsoe, John A. *Dry-Farming: A System of Agriculture for Countries under a low Rainfall.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911.

Wilkeson, Frank. "Cattle Raising on the Plains." *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 72 (April 1886): 788-793.

Williams, Jennie Winona. "Allen and Winona Williams: Pioneers of Sheridan and Johnson Counties." *Annals of Wyoming*, 14 (July 1942): 193-199.

Williams, Robert C. *Fordson, Farmall, and Poppin' Johnny: A History of the Farm Tractor and its Impact on America.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Willis, A. W. "Wheat: Price Steady to Lower: Buying Power Lower." In Wyoming Agricultural Extension Service, Circular No. 57 (January 1935).

Willson, Mrs. E. B. (Isabel). *Cabin days in Wyoming: A Historical Romance of the Running water Range*. Lusk, Wyoming: Privately Printed, 1939.

Wilson, M. L. "The Place of Subsistence Homesteads in our National Economy." *Journal of Farm Economics*, 16 (January 1934): 73-83.

Wishart, David J., ed. *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

Wolf, Judy K., ed. *On the Road to Preservation: Wyoming's Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, 2007-2015.* Cheyenne: Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, 2007.

Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wyoming. *Wyoming: A Guide to Its History, Highways, and People.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981; reprint of 1941 Oxford University Press edition.

Worster, Donald. *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Wright Centennial Museum. *From the Belle Fourche to Antelope: History of Southern Campbell County.* Gillette, Wyoming: Action Printing, 1991.

Wrobel, David. "The Closing Gates of Democracy: Frontier Anxiety Before the Official End of the Frontier." *American Studies*, 32 (Spring 1991): 49-66.

Wyoming Recreation Commission. *Wyoming: A Guide to Historic Sites.* Basin, Wyoming: Big Horn Publishers, 1976.

Yost, Nellie Irene Snyder. *The Call of the Range: The Story of the Nebraska Stock Growers Association.* Denver: Sage Books, 1966.