

To my children, who suggested and insisted on my making the attempt, I hereby dedicate the results thereof, in the hope it may be of some interest and satisfaction to them.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

1. Introduction

When a man gets to be a certain age he finds much time at his disposal (particularly is this true after a severe illness nearly ending the race has curtailed his various activities) and gives him time for reflection.

The experience of seventy years of living in this old world makes material for quite a lengthy book if all the incidents, activities and happenings could be brought out and written in an interesting manner. My family has been urging me to try and do this, but I find it hard to get started. I fear that any attempt made by me would fall very flat and be not only poorly expressed but uninteresting to the reader.

I have been fortunate in having had the privilege of spending my early life in the pioneer period of this great country, in fact have spent practically all my life in this territory and have witnessed many changes. I shall try to confine my story to actual facts and register them without distortion or exaggeration, with due regards for any that be of historical interest being simply described as I remember them - not "dressed up" to catch the interest of the reader of "Wild West" fiction.

Whatever the result may be, this will be the history of a long and active life spent among true pioneers of a great country where industry, incentive and honesty were all the qualifications a young man needed to take a part in the up-building of the country and obtain personal and financial success in a reasonable degree thereby.

When one stops to contemplate and review the enormous strides that have been made during the past seventy-odd years in the way of progress of transportation, communication and all things tending to improve modern living in this old world, it is hard to say where to start and where to finish. It certainly ill behooves me to try and cover it in a manner that would do justice and cover it in this story. I feel, however, that a few of the things which impress their importance upon me should be mentioned.

As I write, I hear a jet plane go by with its loud roar. No need for me to rush outside to try and see which way it was headed, for it is gone even before I hear the noise. Perhaps it's another pilot trying to beat the flight record recently made in December, 1953 by an army officer from the West Coast to New York in four and a quarter hours. Some change in the span of fifty years when the Wright Brothers flew the few feet at Kittyhawk, N.C. in 1903, at which time little importance was attached to it by the press or otherwise because it was generally thought that the crazy idea of two crackpots was not worth covering. Today, a very large amount of mail, freight, express and passenger service is handled by air to say nothing about how important a part in defense and war the airplane plays.

In 1899 I rode horseback forty-five miles to summon a doctor to visit my father who was ill at the home ranch and the old gentleman died before the doctor got half way on the road from town to the ranch. Today this same territory is served by telephone and the roads are such that an auto can travel the distance in a couple of hours with ease. We used to drive our livestock to the railroad for shipment to market. Now we haul them in a truck, perhaps not only to the railroad but in many instances clear through to the market. The shepherd now has an aerial set on top of his wagon and catches the broadcast over the radio telling him how the weather is going to be during the next few days, also gets all the latest news, market quotations or anything he wants to listen to. No longer is he the forgotten man waiting and hungry for the news that the camp tender used to bring on weekly trips to the wagon. All this we take as a matter of course and only when we stop to think can us older people realize how different things now are than they used to be.

"TIME surely marches on." Changes come gradually but surely, and one can hardly realize how fast the sands of time pass away. In the hurry of present day living, little time is left to enjoy many of the small but great opportunities to pause, investigate and enjoy much of nature's grandness which surround us all the time. We hurry on with blinders on the bridle, trying to keep up with the hurry and so called progress of the world; but when we arrive at somewhere near the end of the trail, we commence to wonder just how much we have accomplished and at what cost while making the journey?

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#### Father

My father, George Glenday Mortimer, was born in Scotland September 19, 1831 and came to America when 19 years old after having served his apprenticeship in Scotland as a stone cutter. After coming to America, Father worked at his trade for a few years, then got the "Gold Fever" and went to the California gold fields, from there to Montana and Colorado and finally landed in the Black Hills of South Dakota along about 1878.

He married my mother in 1879 and I was born in 1880 in Lead, (then) Dakota Territory. Father was then 49 years old.

His hope for the pot of gold never materialized to any great extent although he made several "strikes," I am informed, but never laid up any money. He was a splendid workman at his trade of stone-cutter and used to work on laying the engine beds for the Homestake mills, hoists, etc. besides mining occasionally. We lived in Lead until I was about six years old and then moved to the Carbonate Camp which was a small mining camp nearby. Here I started my first school.

We went to Denver in 1888 where Father went to work at his trade.

Father took a fling at the cattle business while we were living in Lead, buying a ranch and a bunch of cattle in the Fall of 1886 and giving the cattle to another rancher to run on shares. The winter of 1886-7 was a terribly hard winter and when Spring finally arrived, Father found that

he had gone out of the cattle business as there were none left to count. I sometimes wonder about this, because while Father knew his stone-cutting what he did not know about cattle was at least considerable and I doubt if he could have picked out any of his own cattle had there been any left of the herd in the Spring. Anyhow, he had the ranch left which at that time was more of a liability than an asset.

I'll leave the old gentleman here for the present. He was a quiet, kindly man, honest and of high character, whose word was as good as his bond. My early recollections of him are vague inasmuch as he was away from home so much of the time when in Denver working at his trade as a stone-cutter. He had to go where the jobs were, leaving the family pretty much to take care of themselves while he sent home the money he earned to keep the pot boiling. Sometimes the pot did not have any too much in it to provide a plentiful supply of the necessaries, but somehow Mother managed to keep things together and make home the place where her wonderful character displayed all the beauties of a good wife and mother whose influence on the lives of her children was strongly impressed and remained a constant beacon for their journey through life in the years to come. She seemed to be magnetized by that power which drew all who knew her to admire and respect her and many who were burdened with sorrow and trouble found in her an abundant source of relief and comfort.

Mother was born Eliza Murray on March 14, 1842 in England but was raised in Scotland. Married young to John Nichol, a stone mason, she bore seven children to this union, six of whom died either in infancy or at an early age. The family came to America in 1871, settled in Chicago where Mr. Nichol engaged in the building business. He was accidently killed while at work on a building in 1873. After her husband's death Mother had to seek employment, as little was left after settling up the estate.

Several years later she married my father who was an old friend of Mr. Nichol. Mother and her daughter Agnes, came out from Chicago to Lead (traveling from Sidney, Nebraska to Lead in a stage coach) where Father was at that time and the marriage was performed on December 10, 1879.

My half sister, Agnes, was fourteen years old when I was born October 16, 1880. She was old enough to assume control of her new brother and proceeded to spoil him with her love and devotion, not only while he was a baby but throughout the many years that followed. As this is written 72 years later she can still see no wrong in anything her brother does. To this good soul who has had rather a hard life and many sorrows, I owe a great debt for the constant love and abounding faith.

To her and my wonderful mother am I indebted for installing in my young mind the incentive to struggle for the better things in life and while making many a slip and often a failure along the way, I can truthfully say that their influence and love have served as a bulwark upon which I could always rely.

Lead City, Dakota Territory

I am informed that the time of my arrival at the Mortimer home was in the midst of the worst snow storm ever experienced at such an early date in the year, and the doctor had a terrible time fighting his way through the deep snow to officiate at the occasion. In the early days things were pretty rough and the pioneers were put to some severe tests in many ways. There were no hospitals, not many doctors and the arrival of a newcomer in the family was certainly not anything in the way of a picnic, but they got the job done in my case at least and I was lucky to have fallen into such good surroundings and to have been a strong healthy youngster.

It seems wonderful that the human brain can register and one can remember many of the incidents of early childhood even after the lapse of so many years and those happenings seem as though they might have been recent. Some of these might be of interest so I will try and give a few samples as I go along.

As usual in the early mining camps quite a few Chinese were in evidence. Some operated eating places and others laundries. They were industrious and good workers, attended to their own business and mingled well in the community, being well received and liked.

At first I was afraid of any one who looked like a "Chink" but after another boy chum of mine prevailed on me to accompany him one Chinese New Year to the laundry his mother patronized, and the China boys had stuffed us with all kinds of Chinese nuts, candy, etc., my fear of them vanished along with the refreshments, and the family had quite a time to keep me from moving down to Chinatown. Every Chinaman was a friend of mine from then on.

All supplies for the camp including the machinery used in the mines and mills were transported by either horse or mule teams or oxen. Our house was located on a corner where the main road up to the mills made the turn up the hill (right in front of the house). An ox team with probably four yoke (or span) of oxen, pulling only one wagon and one trailer could just make the turn on account of the narrowness of the road, but if they attempted to pull more than the one wagon and trailer with extra oxen to pull it, it was a sure bet that the extra wagon would knock off our front porch or "stoop," as we called it.

Whenever an ox team came by, it was a holiday for me and I gave it close attention. The bullwhackers driving the oxen carried long whips which they used very expertly in persuading each ox or "bull" as they were called, to do his duty. In addition to this, these men had a wonderful vocabulary of choice cuss words and it seemed as though the oxen, each of which had a name, understood this even better than the whip.

Close attention to all of these details enabled me to set up in our basement a bull train of my own, consisting of a number of old fashioned cheese boxes for oxen and some make-believe wagons. Each bull was given a name and I had quite a long ox train which I proceeded to drive, using a whip and copying from the choicest parts of my bullwhacker friends' vocabulary. I managed to become quite proficient. So much so that Mother took a hand in the game and my bull train came up missing and I was banished from the basement and I quit bullwhacking. All my life I

have had trouble in trying to forget how to swear whenever I got real mad.

The local blacksmith shop was another attraction to which some of us little fellows were drawn. The blacksmith was named Jack Daley and was one of those men who loved children and whom children worshipped. He wore a long beard and when I say long, I mean it. He wore it folded up inside his shirt and while it was not exceedingly heavy, it was said that it reached Jack's knees when he let it down. (I never saw it unrolled however.)

He made small leather aprons for two of us boys and we played at being blacksmiths round the shop when there was not much going on. However, whenever the work rolled in -- maybe some oxen to shoe, which they accomplished by placing the beast in some kind of a squeeze-gate while nailing on the shoes, or some horses to be shod or some other work -- Jack would say, "Well, goodbye boys." and this was our notice to get out and stay out until things quieted down. Long after I reached manhood I would occasionally see Jack and he always remembered his young helpers of long ago.

In the Fall of the year there would be a large amount of game brought in for sale. There was one large meat market which had a covered porch or awning in front of it. On this would be hung carcasses of deer, antelope and buffalo all around the porch, leaving only room for people to pass through on the side-walk. Of course, the entrails would be removed and the empty cavity of the critters would yawn open so the ribs would show to all who looked.

They tell this one on me, although I am frank to say I don't remember saying it but do distinctly remember seeing the animals. One day after being at the butcher shop, I asked Mother this question, "How many half barrel hoops do we have inside us to hold out our skin?" Of course, I presume the ribs of the butchered animals gave me the idea of "barrel hoops."

The City of Lead is located among big hills or small mountains (the Black Hills of South Dakota) and then, as now, the houses were built up on the hillsides, with either a steep grade or sidewalk stairways to reach them. The streets when covered with snow made splendid slides for sleds in the Winter time. The traffic problem in those days was not so acute as now and people took time off to enjoy themselves by sliding down some of these hills on bobsleds. Certain streets were roped off for children and this was a popular sport. Of course, I had to get into this game and one time after Christmas, while carrying a toy gun equipped with a bayonet which I had gotten for Christmas, was taken for a ride down this steep hill on a sled with some other kids. We went down all right but the landing wasn't too good and the sled I was on collided with another and there was a bad pile up. In some manner the bayonet on the gun I was carrying poked me in the forehead just above the left eye and cut quite a gash and I was carried home knocked out. As a reminder of that escapade I still carry the scar to show.

The stamp mills that crushed the ore from the mines were noisy things and several hundred stamps pounding in unison created a continuous roar all the twenty-four hours of the day and night. Part of these stamps were stopped occasionally for the "clean-up" and once in awhile they would all be stopped at once. When this happened in the night, the sudden quietness then prevailing would cause everyone in town to wake up out of the soundest sleep.

The boilers furnishing steam for the mills were fired with cord wood (pine trees cut into four foot lengths and split so as to be easily handled). The wood was cut in the forest nearby and hauled on narrow-gauge railroad cars to the top of the hill overlooking the stamp mills and the lengths of cord wood were pitched into a sort of trough or slide that carried them down by gravity to the bottom of the hill where they were pitched into a large wood pile. The end of the trough was turned up at the bottom so that the stick of wood on its way down would by its momentum be thrown away up in the air before falling on the wood pile. I can still see those sticks of wood flying through the air, sometimes turning end for end, over and over, and then landing on the big wood pile. While watching this, it was quite a game to try to guess how many times the different sticks would turn over before they landed.

Sister Agnes, or "Aggie" as she was then (and is now) called, was married October 31, 1885 to Jake Marshall and they lived in Lead for awhile and then moved to Carbonate Camp in 1886. They had a son born November 8, 1886 and named him Johnie. He was a frail little fellow and died in April 1887. They buried him at Lead in the Catholic Cemetery (Aggie's husband Jake Marshall being a Catholic). It was quite a distance from the road in the cemetery up the hill to the grave and the priest led the way, followed by the pallbearers and the family. The wind was blowing hard and the priest's robe billowed out like a balloon as he raced up the hill. He must have been in a terrible hurry, for by the time the mourners arrived at the grave, the services were nearly over and I can recall his going back down the hill without a word of sympathy to anyone and how mad my father was about the unseemly haste displayed on this occasion.

Father, Mother and I moved to Carbonate in 1887 and lived there a short time, finally moving to Denver, Colorado in 1888. After we left, Jake Marshall died of pneumonia in November 1888, leaving Aggie a widow.

The Carbonate Camp gave great promise of being a big strike and was quite a place. A post office, stores, hotel, saloons, etc. made it a lively community as long as the mining operations lasted.

I can remember but a few of the incidents that happened while in Carbonate Camp. Here I started my first school and do remember my first teacher, a man by the name of George Cook who later engaged in the farming and ranching business a short distance from Alva, Wyoming.

Doctor White (the doctor who officiated at my birth) was Postmaster of Carbonate. I presume that his earnings as a physician were none too good so he had to supplement it otherwise. I have been informed since that he wasn't too careful with the post office receipts during his

administration and as a result spent a few years in the custody of Uncle Sam. He was a large, heavy set man as I remember him and he used to have me run errands for him. On one occasion he sent me to his home for his glasses which he had forgotten. His wife gave me the glasses and I hurried to deliver them to him at the post office. It was during the noon hour and I met many of the miners coming off shift to dinner. The sidewalks were wooden and many steps up the slope of the hill and, while I was hurrying up one flight of steps, I fell down and the glass case slipped out of my hand and fell on the sidewalk just in time for one of the miner's heavy boot sole to come down on it full force. Well, not knowing what else to do, I grabbed up the case and without looking inside delivered it to the good doctor and hurried home. When the doctor went to put on his glasses, however, there was little left unbroken but the frame, and of course I had to explain what happened.

The doctor and wife had one daughter named "Citty." She was slightly older than me but we played a lot together. One of our pastimes was to slide down some of the large rocks which were numerous in the vicinity. These rocks were comparatively smooth on the surface and sloped at different angles and some were quite long and steep. We made toboggans out of five-gallon coal oil cans flattened out with one end turned up to slide down these rocks on. It was nice sport as long as you could stay on. Sometimes the friction made the bottom of the toboggan pretty hot to sit on if the slide was steep and long.

Our house set among the pine trees that grew around the camp; it was a pretty place and nature was then not much defaced. In the Fall of the year however, the hornets were very numerous and of course hungry. If there was any meat, game or otherwise, hanging out they would be at it thick as flies. They very much disputed interference and several times I got badly stung by them. I figured out a way to get even with some of them and set up a wooden block on which I placed a very small piece of meat. Then I put a smaller block by the side of this one, on which I sat with a good sized hammer in my hand and waited for Mr. Hornet to come and eat the meat. Never had long to wait and when they were busy I would smash them with my hammer, clean off the mess and wait for the next batch. It really worked fine and I sure got rid of a lot of hornets and also had the satisfaction of getting things evened up a bit.

Denver

The next move the family made was to Denver in 1888 where Father went to work at his trade of stone cutting and I entered school in the old Fairmont School (which was still in operation in the same building when I visited Denver some few years ago).

Father had a brother (Robert Mortimer) and a sister (Jane Malcolm) living in Denver at this time. Uncle Bob had several children as also did Aunt Jane but the Mortimer children were near my age while the Malcolm kids were older.

The families did not live near each other, but visited back and forth quite frequently. When the Mortimer bunch came to visit us, I used to rush to put all my good toys away and bring out the old ones because that bunch of kids were sure rough on toys and if I did not have time to put

my good possessions away, there were surely many broken before the visitors left.

Denver was a rapidly growing city at that time and many buildings were being erected and things were lively. Father was working all the time and we got along nicely. My activities of course were like most boys of my age, always trying to find something to do to interest and amuse myself. I had several pals, one of whom (Fred Mann) later came out from Chicago (to which place he had moved) to our ranch in Wyoming and stayed with us there until he got a job. He later became President of the old Aladdin Railroad (a short stub line from Belle Fourche to Aladdin), married and did very well financially. He is now living in California. I well remember how green he was when he arrived from Chicago as a tenderfoot.

Another boyhood friend (Otto Hunt) later moved to Western Kansas. He and I kept in touch with each other for many years before his death just a few years ago. We never got together since our school days though and this fact I have often regretted.

While on a business trip to Denver quite recently I was reading the morning paper in the hotel and noticed the announcement of the death of the President of the Mountain States Telephone Company, a man by the name of Fred Reid. The name meant nothing to me until I read the article in which it told about his being an old resident of the city and that he used to attend the Fairmont School. It then dawned on me that he was the Freddie Reid of my class at the same school, whom I had not seen or heard of since I had left Denver. He and I were close friends and visited back and forth in each other's homes many times. I later discovered that his niece married Teddy Ackerman, a boy from Belle Fourche who used to stay at our home here while he attended High School. So the world is a small place after all.

We kids used to pan gold in Cherry Creek (this stream runs through Denver) and often got some small flakes of gold and an occasional garnet. Of course, this called for just too much work to be much of a pleasure and, as it did not produce any revenue, we did not follow it exclusively.

In the Winter we skated on Archer Lake and one cold day while skating under a railroad bridge, I found an air hole and fell in. The ice was a foot thick except for this small hole and I had considerable difficulty in getting out, but finally made it to solid ice. Of course, I was wet clear to my neck and my clothes froze solid so I could hardly walk. The other boys wanted me to thaw out at the fire we had on the bank, but as it wasn't far to our house, I beat it for home and was glad to get there too. After thawing out and getting into dry clothes, I was all right and suffered no bad effects--not even a cold--but it was a close shave and could have easily been my finish.

Mother used to give me a weekly allowance of twenty-five cents for spending money. I tried to save fifteen cents for the Saturday matinee at the old Peoples Opera House. This was a kind of second class vaudeville (there were no movies in those days) and ten cents would take a small boy to "Nigger Heaven" (second balcony). The other nickel would

buy a fairly large sack of peanuts and one would be all fixed to enjoy the afternoon. To keep a semblance of order in the bunch of youngsters was a big job and the way this was handled was by a very big policeman stationed there and he carried a long buggy whip as his badge of office. He could use it very effectively too, and there was never much disorder while he was around.

I seldom had enough money to take the street car either going to or coming home from the show but was used to walking those days and sometimes managed to catch a ride part way. The mode of transportation varied in Denver then. There were also several lines of cable cars serving most of the city. Shortly before we left these were all replaced by electric trolley cars and I can recall some of the people complaining that riding in these electric cars gave them a terrible headache and they did not like to ride in them at all. This was, of course, just imagination on their part.

I got a job taking care of a lawn for an old man (at least he looked old to me at that time). It was a large lawn on a corner lot and was fenced in by a very ornate iron fence. I had to cut the grass once a week and water the lawn at least twice a week. The old fellow was always around when it was time to cut the grass and insisted that the edges around the fence that the lawn mower would not cut be clipped off with shears (which he kindly furnished). It was quite a job to crawl around and do this. The sprinkling had to be done in the early morning so I had to get up very early to do this. Altogether it was kind of a tough job. Of course, I was well paid. I received the magnificent sum of fifty cents per week and stayed with it until I earned enough to buy my first pair of long pants.

I well remember getting those pants. They were gray with a dark stripe and really looked beautiful to me. I think they cost about three dollars and as I knew how I got that money, I therefore appreciated the pants all the more.

After I got my pants I decided I was not getting enough money for the work I was doing and told the old man I was quitting. He tried to prevail on me to stay and said he would pay me more money as I had given good satisfaction, but I said no. I knew he had not been paying me enough, but I had my pants now and was quitting. He even went to our house and told Mother that he was very much interested in me and would like to have me stay and he would perhaps be able to do a lot for me as I grew up. Guess he was a man of considerable means and liked me but Mother told him that it was up to me to do as I wished and, of course, I just had quit and that was that. Maybe this was one of the bad mistakes of many made in my lifetime.

While on the subject of clothes, I think my appreciation of the new pair of pants was augmented by the fact that I had for years been wearing knee pants made of English corduroy. My mother's sister and her husband (Aggie and Isaac McHardy) were living in Sheffield, England and my uncle was superintendent of an institution named the "Truants' Industrial School." The boys in their care were uniformed, so to speak, with slip-on jersey sweaters and corduroy knee pants. Out of the generosity of her

good heart, my aunt used to send to my mother every once in a while a pair of these pants and a sweater for me to wear. These articles were made very durable and practically never wore out. The sweaters might stretch a bit around the neck, in fact after many "slips" on and off it was hard to tell which was front and which was back of the thing. And the pants surely stayed in service for mighty long periods. After I had one pair practically whipped and would be hoping to get a different kind, along would come from dear Aunt Agnes another outfit which of course had to be used because waste was not one of Mother's failings. I have never worn corduroy pants since and don't like sweaters either.

Another high light of Denver was the annual Scotch picnic. I think it was called the "Caledonian." Anyway, it was the once-a-year gathering of the Clan. As I remember, it was the Stewart plaid that was most in evidence. When you get a bunch of Scotsmen together along with all the wives and kids, and mix them up with a few bagpipes, a base drum or two, and a "wee-bit-a-wuskie," you really have something. A great many of those we knew were stone cutters or stone-masons as were my father and uncles Bob Mortimer and Robert Malcolm. In those days a great number of the men engaged in these trades believed it necessary to protect their health with a drink or two of good whiskey every day. This was supposed to cut loose the stone dust that they might inhale into their throats and lungs and thereby reduce the hazard of contracting tuberculosis, etc. My relatives were no exception to the general rule in this regard. Uncle Bob Mortimer had a splendid voice and enjoyed singing and was also proficient in dancing the "Highland Fling" and the "sword dance" to the \_\_\_\_\_ tone (?) of the bagpipes and believe me when the pipes and dancers got wound up good on this part of the program, it was a stirring exhibition to behold. I have heard that an unfriendly critic gave as his description of bagpipe music "that it sounded better when the listener was somewhat removed from the music and that the farther removed the better." This was really not nice nor true, as any loyal Scotsman will tell you. The children all had great times, contesting in foot races, sack races and all kinds of sports, lots of eats and cold drinks and went home tired but happy. Simple pleasures, but greatly appreciated and long remembered.

My sister Aggie married William D. Rhode August 3, 1891 and they rented the old ranch in South Dakota that Father had bought when he went into the cattle business. It was decided that I should go out there to spend my summer vacation in 1892 and I left Denver in early June, very much enthused of course over the trip, although I had never traveled alone before.

It was during the rainy season and the railroad had only been recently built and the track was pretty soft and occasionally we would be held up on account of washouts. I thought we would never get to Deadwood and we had to lay over one night at one place, I do not remember where it was. I got a room at the hotel near the depot and went to bed after telling the hotel man I had to catch the train at a certain time the next morning. Being very tired I slept late the next morning and when I woke up, got dressed, came down stairs and looked at the clock and found it

was long after the train was supposed to have gone, I was one terribly mad and disappointed boy. Recalling all the lessons in profanity learned from my bullwhacker friends, I proceeded to tell the hotel man what I thought about him for not calling me. Fortunately there were no ladies present, but there were quite a few railroad men who lay back and enjoyed the fun. After I had quieted down some, the hotel man told me that there was still plenty of time before the train left as the time of departure had been changed and that if I would go into the dining room and get a good breakfast, he thought I would feel better. Of course I was ashamed of myself but everyone took it in good spirits and the trainmen, I think, really enjoyed it all.

Well, we finally arrived in Deadwood. I do not know how late but a day or so at least. My cousin Dave Malcolm met me and you bet I was glad to see him for I was a lonesome, worried boy and just about out of money, too. I bid the trainmen goodbye. They had been awful good to me and Dave and I took the next train from Deadwood to Whitewood where Aggie and Will met us and we drove from there to the ranch. Altogether it was quite a trip for a twelve year old at that.

Summer 1892

I spent a fine summer with Aggie and Will and went back to Denver in time for school in the Fall of 1892. The change of scene from the city to the country impressed me greatly and I learned a lot about ranch life during my first experience of that kind. In Will Rhode I found a wonderful companion who understood boys and knew how to manage them. His folks came to the Black Hills from Iowa, I think, in 1876 and settled on the Belle Fourche River near where the city of Belle Fourche is now located. His father (Joe Rhode) was killed by Indians in 1878 while trailing the band that had stolen a number of settlers' horses.

Will had hunted deer and buffalo for market, "punched cows," and done all kinds of farm and ranch work. He knew how to do most everything and do it well. He was a splendid hand with horses and in fact, a true Westerner. His happy-go-lucky disposition made him many friends and he loved to visit and spin yarns. Besides all this, he played the fiddle well and was in great demand at the frequent dances held in the vicinity. His "book learning" was none too great but his knowledge of humanity and nature made him one from whom you could obtain a world of knowledge. To this worthy man I must give credit for good council and furnishing me with a fund of information that enabled me to carry on through many years of an uphill struggle during the formative period of my life.

I often wonder how he had the patience to devote the time it took to keep me on an even keel and am deeply grateful to have had him for a friend and companion and I am sure that by his influence I was able to develop many of the worth-while characteristics of western manhood which have stood with me throughout my life.

Will had a half brother named Cecil Ingersoll. Cecil was about a year younger than I was, but we hit it off very well and remained close friends for many years until his death which was caused by his being crushed between two railroad cars he did not know that the engine was attached to. This happened in the railroad yards in Belle Fourche.

Cecil was taking a short cut through the yards while on his way over to the wool warehouse to see about marketing his wool. He left a wife and son.

Summer 1893

In the Summer of 1893 my mother's sister Agnes and her husband Isaac McHardy came over from England to visit Mother's other sister Helen and her husband Ben Green, who lived in Chicago. After school was out, Mother took me with her to Chicago to visit her sisters, these being all of Mother's kinfolk then alive. The Columbian Exposition or World's Fair was being held in Chicago at that time and we were able to attend it quite a number of times. It was a wonderful show and some of the things I remember seeing are still vivid in my mind. "Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show" was also in Chicago and in company with my two uncles I saw that too and of course got a big thrill out of it. In my old "grammar book" (1894-95) I notice my description of "A Trip to the World's Fair" giving my ideas of what I thought of it at that time.

During our stay in Chicago my mother tried to persuade my Aunt Helen and Uncle Ben to agree to let me stay with them and go to school there, having in mind the fact that my father's health was failing and he could not work at his trade much longer. Also that at this time during the panic of '93 work was none too plentiful, and plans were being considered whereby the family would soon make another move. This time from Denver to Dakota where they would try and make a go of it on the old ranch, Aggie and Will having decided to move to Wyoming and take up a homestead.

Mother's hope of having me secure a good education was of course uppermost in her mind with little thought of the sacrifice it would be to her to have me so far from her. However, this was not to be. Uncle Ben and Aunt Helen, who had no family of their own having lost their only child in infancy, could not see their way clear to take on the responsibility of having a young man of my activities to worry over and I could never blame them for this. I would have greatly resented the idea of being separated from my home folks and of course after having recently spent the summer with Aggie and Will out in the "Wild West," I would never have wanted to stay in Chicago, much as I liked my aunt and uncle. In this manner it happened that conditions over which I had no control demanded that my future lay in the West and had I been consulted I am sure that I would have so chosen it.

My father joined us at Chicago and after a short stay after his arrival, the Mortimer family came back to Denver and I went to school in the Fall of 1893 and finished the sixth grade during that term. After school was out in the Spring of 1894 we shipped our furniture out by freight and Mother and I came by train to South Dakota and landed down on the ranch near Snoma, on Maloney Creek, where Aggie and Will were then living. Father came out later after working all Summer at his trade in Denver.

Prior to our leaving Denver, my father, yielding to my urgent pleadings bought me a shotgun. It was no play thing either, ordinarily it would seem proper to pick a little gun for a small boy, but Father never believed much in doing anything by halves. I wound up by having a double-barreled 10 gauge shotgun, with twenty-five brass shells and a

complete loading outfit as my first firearm. Of course, I was very proud and I looked forward to the time when I could get out and shoot the thing. This was not until I had arrived in South Dakota and Will learned me how to handle a gun (which took some time but I managed it and got much pleasure in hunting ducks and chickens).

I was a busy boy after we got to the ranch and found that Will had bought me an old pony named "Cap" and an old saddle to match. Cap was quite a horse. He was an old cow pony and used to be a fine "cutting horse" until he got so old his legs did not work too well and he stumbled occasionally. He was a flea-bitten gray in color, lazy as all get out, had a terrible rough gait when you could spur or whip him out of a walk, was hard to catch when you wanted to use him, was just plain "ornery," and wise as a hoot owl. But I loved him just the same and he was not mean and he made a good kid horse and was able to learn me a lot I did not know.

Will had also given his brother Cecil Ingersoll a pony, a dark gray named Jess. He was a younger and more active horse than was Cap and it was hard for Cap and me to keep up with Jess and Cecil but we made it O.K. Many were the pleasant hours both at work and at play during the times we could get together. (We lived about 15 miles apart which was quite a long distance in those days.)

Cecil and I had another chum by the name of Otto Barnett who used to always join us when I happened to be up to Cecil's home for a few days. Otto lived only about a mile from the Ingersoll place. He was a little younger than we were but we used to have many happy times together. Otto and I have been very close friends during all these years and have grown up together with the country and both have taken active parts in many enterprises of the surrounding territory during the development of the same. As this is written Otto is one of the leading citizens of Rapid City and is and has been for many years Manager of the Fairmont Creamery in that City, and still takes an active interest in community affairs. He is at this time a member of the School Board and also on the board members of the General Hospital.

#### The Kentucky Squirrel Rifle - 1894

The decision made by Aggie and Will to move to Wyoming and settle on a homestead resulted in Will having to commute during the summer and fall of 1894 between the Snoma ranch and the new home on Deer Creek, Wyoming (about 65 miles west of the ranch on Maloney Creek). He had to erect a house to live in and barn, corral, sheds, etc. needed for the livestock, when they moved up. This, together with the taking care of and harvesting crops he had in on the South Dakota farm kept him very busy and left Aggie, Mother and I alone on the old farm most of the time, although my cousin Dave Malcolm was there and helped with the work and Father came out from Denver in the late summer or fall.

I helped with whatever I could do, rode after the small bunch of cattle Will and Aggie owned and managed to keep busy and find some time to hunt and fish a little too.

Will had gone to Carbonate Camp and dismantled the small house that Aggie and Jake (her first husband who died in 1888 of pneumonia) used to live in while they lived there and hauled down to the ranch the doors and windows for use in the new house they were building in Wyoming. He stored these doors in an old granary, being very careful that the panel doors were standing straight up so that they would not warp out of shape pending the time he could haul them up to Wyoming.

Will had a fine old muzzle loading, Kentucky squirrel rifle with long octagon barrel, set-triggers, elaborate inlaid stock, and in splendid condition but had no ammunition for it. It was indeed a beautiful rifle and I often admired it and wondered how it would shoot. One day when all of the folks happened to be away when I came home from riding after the cows, I got the rifle down and cleaned it out as good as I could and placed a small amount of powder in the barrel, took one of the caps that fit in the 10 gauge shotgun shell, primed the old rifle and touched it off. Well, it worked very nicely and I was much pleased and then started to load it up right.

I put in quite a heavy charge of powder in the barrel, rammed it down with a wad on top, pounded out a piece of lead and whittled it down so that it would fit, and set that in for a bullet. Then I primed the nipple with another cap and looked for a mark to shoot at. Finally I decided that the old granary door would be about right, so I nailed up a piece of tin can for a target, got a rest for the old rifle about 50 yards from the target, took a good aim and pulled the trigger and off she went with a bang. I then went to see how close I had come to hitting the target and found the bullet hole not far from the edge of the tin; so it was a pretty good shot for the makeshift load. It then occurred to me that it might be a good idea to see where the bullet went and when I opened the door I found that it had not only gone through the door of the granary, but also through three of Will's nice panel doors he had stored there. Inasmuch as the bullet holes got larger each time the bullet went through one door into the next it made a pretty big hole in the last one, I can assure you.

This was not so good and dampened my spirits considerably. I said nothing about my rifle shooting until Will came back home the next trip. Then I told and showed him what I had done. Of course he did not appreciate the results of my marksmanship to any great extent, but perhaps realizing that he was a boy himself once, and as the damage had been done, he did not scold me but told me that this should be a lesson that I should always remember: look things over carefully before I shot a rifle to determine what might happen when a dangerous weapon was discharged. This lesson I never forgot and the doors of the new house, neatly patched to cover my misdeed, were long in evidence to remind me of my mistake every time I looked at them. The nice way that Will had in handling this matter made me admire his generous character all the more. He certainly knew how to handle the situation and I certainly profited greatly from it, even more so than I would have had he reprimanded me severely.

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I went to school in the fall of 1894 at the Snoma School about two miles from our ranch home, walking to and from school each day. This session of school proved to be the last of my school days. I was supposed to complete the seventh and eighth grades at this term but rather doubt if my efforts were sufficient to warrant the granting of any diploma to that effect. In any event I never received one.

It was a country school and I was the only pupil who was not either a Finlander, a Swede or a Norwegian in the 25 or 30 children ranging in ages from six to sixteen, who attended the school at this time. Some of the little fellows could talk but very little, if any, English when they started school and Miss Murphy, the teacher, surely had her hands full with this school. She was a good teacher and managed to do a fine job at that.

In addition to what I learned from the teacher at school, I received additional training in other things. Snaring rabbits and setting skunk traps besides learning to talk quite a little "Finn" were some of the items I picked up from my Finlander boy friends. Several of these friends still live in this vicinity and we meet occasionally and talk over some of our days together as boys in the old Snoma School of long ago.

#### King and Queen, the Mule Team

About this time the "itchy feet" of the Mortimer tribe commenced to evidence signs of another outbreak. Aggie and Will's enthusiasm of the possibilities of the Wyoming country, I think, had something to do with it. Anyhow, the result was the decision to make another move. I am not sure if it was the pioneer instinct that cropped out or the fact that we never stayed long enough in one place for the roots to take hold, or that my father's long prospecting for gold had made him prone to seek new possibilities. In any event, fate seemed to point toward Wyoming this time and arrangements were made to rent the old farm and migrate to Wyoming where Father, who had never exercised his homestead rights, would take up a claim near Will and Aggie's, and we would branch out into the cattle business. There was plenty of room for this was "open range" and had considerable advantages for running more stock than was possible in the more closely settled community around the Snoma ranch. We therefore determined to move after school was out in the Spring of 1895 and live with Will and Aggie until a house could be built on Father's new homestead. Will and Aggie had in the meantime "established residence" on their claim and were only staying through the winter of 1894-95 at their Snoma ranch to winter their livestock before taking them to Wyoming in the spring.

When we got ready to move to the new home, we left most of our furniture at Snoma ranch, as living quarters were going to be quite crowded in the small log house that Aggie and Will had built and we were to share for awhile.

I will have to take a little time here to describe our "outfit." If I ever knew who was responsible for buying the team and wagon, I have forgotten. I am quite sure if any of them were now alive, no one would have the nerve to acknowledge it anyway.

The wagon was old in the first place; the box was in bad condition and was far from being tight enough to hold grain. The rear wheels were dished so badly by having had the tires reset too tight that they resembled battered tin plates and made a track like a snake had crawled down the road. They wobbled so much that the brake blocks had to be a foot wide to provide a braking surface to any place the wheel tires would contact. There was no spring seat on which to ride, so a good substantial board served for this purpose. When driving this chariot, one could be pretty sure where front wheels would go but had to make allowance as to how close the rear wheels would follow.

The team was a pair of mules named King and Queen. They were not young at least, and as no one can tell how old a mule is by looking at him anyway, so it makes no difference. They were however, fully developed in character and each differed from the other in every way possible, even in sex. Queen was much the smaller of the two, being just medium size, brown in color, quiet disposition and always a little behind on the doubletree but a good, faithful critter and, as far as a mule can be, quite a decent animal.

King, on the other hand, was an exceptionally tall mule, light bay in color, high strung and quick in action, always pulling on the bit and ahead of Queen, and pulled more than his share of the load. He was not mean in that he did not kick or bite. In everything else that was disagreeable, he sure had it. He as hard to bridle, held his head so high that it took a tall man to get the bridle on without standing on a box or mounting the wagon tongue if a box was not handy. And he surely did not like to have his ears handled. In some manner he had suffered an injury by which the right side of his mouth had been torn out for several inches and this caused him some trouble in keeping his hay and grain in his mouth while eating, although this did not bother him much. It did, however, make it mighty hard to "steer" him though. If he did not want to turn the way you pulled the reins, old King could really let nearly half the bridle slip through the hole in his head and not disturb him until old Queen would crowd him over.

King and Queen at one time belonged to the Cross Anchor Outfit and were used to pull the bed wagon on the roundup. There was one steep pull out of what was known as "Deep Creek" on which old King and Queen had been stuck with too heavy a load so many times that it became a habit and when we got them, you sure had to dodge that Deep Creek hill, even drive many miles to go around it because they would not pull even the empty wagon up that particular hill. They knew it and believe me, I learned that a mule knows a lot. They proved an interesting team to drive, I assure you.

Another of King's traits was that he was "breachy." I never saw a fence that would hold him. He had a novel manner of getting over a fence--by rearing up on his hind legs while standing sideways to the fence, swinging around a quarter turn to deposit his front feet across the

fence, then humping his back and raising his hind legs to swing his hind end over and land with his hind legs on the same side as his front legs. I've seen him do this many times and he never missed nor cut himself.

Just one more of this old friend's bad points was that he was death on a young calf or colt. Any one of them that he could get to he would worry to its death. He would pick it up by his teeth, raise it as high as he could, then drop it down again and keep repeating the process until the little animal was dead. I watched him do this to a young calf on two different occasions before I could get to him to drive him away. I really did not have any love for King and I am sure that in this he truly reciprocated.

The rest of our belongings in the way of livestock consisted of nine head of cows of various ages and colors. I think the family also had a few hundred dollars saved up so that we could pay for improving the homestead and live on for awhile after a fashion. This in addition to some hand tools and a few farm implements completed the list of what we had when we landed in Wyoming in the summer of 1895. Father sold the Snoma ranch a short time after and bought some more cattle with the money and this helped out in getting a small start in the cattle business.

#### Developing the Homestead

It was here on the homestead that I stopped being a boy and commenced to take a man's place. I was less than 15 years old and not overly large nor strong for my age, had never worked steadily nor hard and of course, not having lived on a farm or ranch, had no experience except for the short time during my summer vacation and time spent on the Snoma ranch since coming out from Denver. Father likewise was new to ranching and his health was failing somewhat then and steadily got worse as time went on.

We had to rely largely on Will for help and guidance in getting things lined up and our first problem was to build our house. There was plenty of timber and ours for the taking, and the pine logs when peeled and laid up made a nice building. It did not take us long to erect the three room "L" shaped house and it was a comfortable home. The roof was double boarded with about six inches of dirt on top; this made it cool in the hot weather and warm in the winter.

As time went on we gathered a little here and a little there in the way of improvements and gained confidence and knowledge so that things went along more smoothly. We worked hard and put in long hours and by exchanging work with Will, we managed to get along fairly well. During the six years spent on the Deer Creek ranch we had built up a comfortable outfit in a modest way. House, barn, chicken house, granary, smoke-house, cattle shed, corrals etc., root cellar that never froze in the wintertime and which Mother used to keep the milk in. We dug a well 25 feet deep and walled it up with rock and fenced in quite a large pasture and broke up and farmed about seventy acres of cropland.

All this was accomplished by our own efforts except that we did pay out about \$150 for hired help during the period.

All of the buildings being built of logs and the corrals with pine poles entailed a great amount of work with the axe and saw. Father could never master the axe so as to be called a good hand with it, but I managed with Will's help to soon become quite a woodsman. Father however, was an artist with a pick and shovel, I presume gathered from his mining experience, and could sure move a lot of dirt in a short time with apparent ease. He dug the hole for the root cellar and practically all of the well digging and also rocked it up from bottom to top with loose rocks very expertly placed. (They are still in good condition and in place at the present time, 1952.)

Will and I changed work both on our projects and in finishing up his improvements on their place and in that way I received a great amount of knowledge that I could not have gotten otherwise.

Being far from town (50 miles) we had to be able to do most anything with what material was available. For instance, to get plaster to point up the log buildings, we would haul gypsum rocks from the outcrop on the hills near the Belle Fourche River, place them in a pit dug near a cut bank in the creek, tunnel a hole from the face of the cut bank back into the pit bottom for the fireplace. By building a hot fire in this the heat would circulate back into and through the gypsum rocks until they would become red hot and after they were burned enough, we would let the fire go out and then after the rocks had cooled enough to handle, we would remove them and pound them up fine and sieve the powdered product through a fine screen. This, mixed with the proper amount of sand and sufficient water, made excellent plaster for any purpose. It took a lot of work and did not cost a cent.

Will got hold of a blacksmith forge somewhere and patched it up so that it would work, also had an old anvil, vise, some tongs, hammers, etc. and he soon became quite proficient as a blacksmith. I also learned to dabble around pretty well and we got so we could shoe our own horses, sharpen plow lays etc. In fact, we did most all of our work with but little cost other than the materials.

Both our house and Will's began to leak badly after a heavy rain. When the thick layer of dirt got soaked up, the roof would leak for a week. This did not tend to make either Mother or Aggie very happy, so something had to be done. The problem was solved in this manner after consulting that wonderful "household necessity" (at that time), the Montgomery Wards Catalogue.

This book was sometimes called the "Wish Book" and provided both information and entertainment for the entire family. All kinds of merchandise was advertised as well as a complete grocery line. A great amount of mail orders were sent to this firm for shipment to different parts of the country. Shipments had to be made either by express or freight as there was not parcel post service in those days.

So as stated above, after looking it up in the catalogue, Will ordered a "FROW." A frow by the way is a tool which the "cooper" uses to rive out staves for barrels and is also used to rive out "shakes" or shingles from blocks of straight-grained timber. It has a heavy wedge-shaped blade about 12 inches long, three inches wide and tapering down from about one half inch on the top to a chisel edge at the bottom of the blade. On one end of this blade there is a handle hole provided where the handle, which is about the size of a pick handle only shorter, is inserted. To operate this affair, after first picking out a straight-grained pine log, you cut blocks off about 24 inches long and then split the block into quarters. Set this quarter block up on end in the forks of a holder that will keep it in place and place the knife edge of the frow across the edge of the quarter block about two inches from the "peak" edge and with a wooden maul drive the wedge blade of the frow down in full depth of the blade of the frow. Then by the aid of the handle, rive off the piece of the block. By repeating the process and driving the frow again into the block at about half or three quarter inch distances from the edge each time, you begin to secure a "shake" or shingle each time you rive off a strip and these get wider and wider as you proceed to work up the entire quarter block. A lot depends on how lucky you are in getting a good straight-grained log with few if any knots in it as to how fast the shingles will accumulate. But it really works well and these shakes nailed like shingles on to small pine poles laid into the dirt roof of the house really made a splendid roof when a double course was used.

This also took a lot of work but again it did not cost much and surely solved the leaky roof question and peace in the families again prevailed.

#### Will's Five Acres of Wheat

In the spring of 1895 Will plowed up about five acres of sod and planted it to wheat. It was a good stand and the favorable season produced a very fine crop of grain. The question was then: how to harvest it? We had no grain binder nor was there one in the country near us that we could borrow. Neither was there a threshing machine that we could get to thresh it, providing we cut it with a mowing machine which we did have. Will then got the idea of cutting the five acres of wheat with an old cradle which used to be the fashion before the invention of the harvester. A cradle is just an over-grown scythe with a fingered basket-like affair fitted so as to catch the grain when cut and allows it to be lain in windrow by the operator (provided he knows his business.) I think that Will enjoyed thinking up these primitive ideas that he used to bring out and see if they would work. Sometimes I also thought he regretted his doing so, after they would develop into such hard work. But anyhow, he proceeded to locate an old cradle and fixed it up so that it would work and in this manner we harvested the five acres of wheat.

Will operated the cradle and laid the grain down in windrows. Then I got into the picture with a long handled wooden fingered rake raking enough of the windrow to make a good sized bundle into a pile and take a couple of handfuls of grain, twist the heads together and make the band with which to tie the grain into a bundle. It was slow and monotonous work

but we finally finished the job and had a lot of nice bundles of wheat to show for it.

One day during the operation I had raked up a pile, twisted the band and was just reaching to slip the band under the pile to tie it, when "Buzz" went a big rattlesnake that was under the pile of grain. You may be sure that I quit that pile of grain in a hurry. After killing the snake, I just had to carry on and keep binding but for a long time after that, I would sure turn the pile over a time or two before reaching under it, always looking for that darned snake's partner but never found another.

After we had the grain all bound and stacked we still were confronted with the problem of threshing it. So again Will came into action with another bright idea and that was to thresh it with a "flail." A flail, by the way, goes back into history; it's just a long heavy stick about as long as a rake handle, with a shorter stick, say two feet long, tied onto the end of the longer one with a thong of leather or buckskin. To operate this all you have to do is to clean off a nice smooth place on the ground and, if you have it, lay a heavy canvas on the cleared place. Then proceed to lay a few bundles of grain down in the double row with the heads together. Now take your flail and proceed to beat out the wheat from the bundles (after removing the bands). When this is done, shake out the straw from the wheat with a pitch fork and keep beating until all the wheat is threshed out and the straw all removed. Then on a windy day, with a scoop shovel raise up a shovel full of the wheat and chaff as high as you can and spill it out slowly on a cleared place on the canvas allowing the wind to blow away the chaff and leaving the wheat fall nice and clean.

In this manner we completed the harvest of the wheat crop. And again, it did not cost anything except many a tired back.

After the harvest we hauled two loads of wheat to Beulah, Wyoming (about 25 miles from our place) where a flour mill was located. This mill was run by water power taken from Sand Creek and is still in operation (1953). At that time the miller (Mr. Andrews) traded 30 pounds of flour and 10 pounds of bran and shorts for one bushel of wheat.

We came home with enough flour to last us a year and had quite a lot of wheat left for seed and food besides. That flour surely made fine bread and biscuits etc; maybe we appreciated it the more because we really earned it by the primitive manner of the harvest. In any event, we had the double satisfaction of getting the job done.

After the first year however, we used a binder to cut what grain we raised and an old horse-power threshing machine made the rounds and threshed it. This however, took a lot of feed for the horses necessary to run the thing, besides the food the crew of helpers ate while threshing it.

George G. Mortimer, Miner and post hole digger or

## Digging yourself into a hole

The care of the cattle called for considerable horseback riding and my old horse Cap proved unequal to the task and I had to buy a younger horse. Cap was turned over to Father to ride after the milch cows and other short journeys around the place. They made a great pair, Father and Old Cap. Both were well along in years and seemed to understand each other. Strange to say Cap would patiently wait for Father to walk up and put a rope on him while loose in the pasture and lead him to the barn to saddle him, a thing unheard of when I would try and slip up and catch him. Then he would throw up his old head and tail and gallop to the far end of the pasture. After he was saddled, Cap would stand patiently while the old man climbed on and would then proceed in a leisurely manner to where they were going. They took their own time but managed to get a lot of things done at that and Cap kept fat and contented with his new master who never got ideas of speed into his head.

Father was a man of few words. One day while he was busy digging post holes for a calf pasture fence and was using his old standby tools (pick and shovel) to start the hole instead of the customary post bar, along came a nursery salesman who made the attempt to sell the old man some fruit trees. He made quite a talk about how good his products were and how big the apples would be when the trees got to bearing fruit. All the time Father kept on digging without saying anything. I happened to notice the strange team and buggy out by the fencing operation and went over to see what was going on and stood by and watched the show. The man finally quit his sales talk and following Father to the next post hole he was starting to dig, asked him, "How many trees do you want me to ship?" Father never looked up but said, "Young man, your business is selling fruit trees; mine at the present time is digging post holes. Goodbye." And he kept right on digging and the salesman gave it up and went away muttering.

## Homesteader's Entertainments

I had few boys of my age to run with and was thrown in contact with older men most of the time and thereby missed boyhood activities. These were not greatly missed, however, as there was always something to be interested in. I liked to hunt and there was plenty of game around to satisfy that pleasure. On Sundays it was my usual custom to go deer hunting when the deer were fat and managed to keep plenty of meat on hand for the family. Prairie chicken or grouse and wild ducks also provided a change during the season and occasionally a fishing expedition netted some nice catfish out of the river which was only a short distance from the ranch.

There was quite a settlement on Deer Creek and the surrounding country and new people were coming in and taking up ranches all the time and they used to gather occasionally and have card parties or other amusements when work did not interfere. "High-Five" was the popular card game those days and long were the hours spent on this pastime. When the crowd got together, of course, no money changed hands but each game was hotly

contested and woe on the fellow who made a bad play when the games were close. Of course, there were plenty of eats after the games and much talk and banter followed and all went home happy and ready for another session.

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Occasionally there would be a dance and the job was to get a place large enough to hold the crowd that would gather for occasions of this kind. If there was a school house near, that would be used. Or perhaps the dance would be held in the home of one of the neighbors whose house would allow space enough for four or more couples to get set for the square dance that was the popular one then. If the weather was pleasant enough most of the crowd of men would have to stand outdoors and look in while the dancers danced while the lesser number of women and girls would crowd inside and try to make room for the dancers.

Many men who rode the range in those days had come up from the South with trail herds and had left records behind them. Most of these men were trying to reclaim their lives and anxious to be peaceful and decent, but were men who were not to be trifled with and whose tempers were quick and dangerous. Consequently when two such fellows had disagreements, something had to give, and often resulted in one or the other getting badly hurt, if not killed.

There were men who could not hold their liquor with decorum and were quarrelsome when they had a hide full. At the dances it was the custom not to bring liquor to a dance and if a man was under the influence of liquor, he was invited to stay out of the dance hall. The ladies would not dance with him if he did get in. The enforcement of this rule sometimes led to a little trouble if the fellow got belligerent, but was generally handled in a quiet manner, but in no uncertain terms, by the better minded men who were in the majority.

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I recall that in one community where dances were held quite often at a school house under the supervision of a group of women who furnished the lunches and music, they appointed one of their number as a floor supervisor. She was a very small little matron, pretty as a picture and full of life and a general favorite with everyone. But, believe it or not, she was the boss. If one of the boys did happen to get too much to drink and attempted to dance, this lady would quietly ease up to him and escort the gentleman to the door and it was amusing to see a big lumbering cowboy being led off the floor by this little wren of a woman. He did not appear again until he had sobered up.

These pioneer women of the country are entitled to great credit for their influence for good over the rough life in the West. The men of that period respected good womanhood, I think, to a much greater degree than that is evidenced today.

The poor musicians (generally consisting of a fiddle and a guitar player) would be stationed in a corner and do their best to provide music for the dances. The dust that would fog up by the dancers would be swirled around by the ladies' long skirts and would cause the gentlemen players to inhale so much dust that they would really suffer as much as though they were stationed on a straw stack at threshing time. (I can speak from experience as I have operated in both positions.)

After the dance a lunch would be served. Sometimes it would be a "Basket Social" affair, where the lunch baskets furnished by the ladies would be auctioned off and the trick was for the gentleman to try and guess whose basket he was buying and, as they were not labeled with the name of the lady, sometimes the buyer would be disappointed in not getting to eat the lunch with the lady he "guessed" had provided the lunch basket. It was lots of fun anyway.

## Bally Gray and Uncle Jim Miller

John Gray, who on account of having lost most of his hair was called "Bally Gray" by everyone, and "Uncle Jim Miller" (no relation to me however) were two of my friends in the Deer Creek vicinity.

Bally originally from Iowa came to the country with his brother-in-law, who was an uncle of Will Rhode, named Dave Rhode. On their way into the Black Hills they camped on a creek near Buffalo Gap and a flash flood rushed down this creek, overflowing its banks and flooded their camp. Dave Rhode's wife and two children were drowned and John Gray and Dave Rhode managed to escape but could not save the others.

Bally roamed around the West for many years, working on ranches, punching cows for the big outfits and in 1893 made the "Oklahoma Run" on horseback when the Indian Territory was opened to settlers. He finally settled down on a ranch which he filed on, located just above the Cross Anchor headquarters on Medicine Creek, a few miles north of our place. He built up quite a nice little outfit and got hold of a few full blood Hereford cows and a good bull and proceeded to raise a bunch of good cattle.

He never married and lived alone, visited his neighbors occasionally but was not what could be called very sociable. If he liked anyone, he was a staunch friend, but very peculiar in many ways. He enjoyed practical jokes especially when the laugh was on the other fellow. He was a great lover of a good horse and his great pride was in his saddle horse "Smoker," a big rangy bay and splendid saddle horse. John rode him on the "Oklahoma Run" and there was nothing too good for Smoker in John's opinion.

Uncle Jim Miller was an old cowpuncher and too old to ride the range and was what might be called pensioned by Henry Weare (the owner of the Cross Anchor Outfit.) As a ranch man, Jim stayed at the home ranch and looked after things, was faithful to his employer to the limit although he would boss Mr. Weare around like a hired man whenever he happened to come to the ranch, and was as independent as a hog on ice and ruled the roost, so to speak, with an iron hand.

For some reason both these old fellows took a liking to me and I thoroughly enjoyed visiting with them and never missed a chance of dropping in to see them whenever I happened to ride near either of their ranches while looking after our cattle or sometimes hunting deer in their vicinity. Usually I tried to make my visits near meal time because as a growing boy I was always hungry. I can still remember how good Uncle Jim's stewed prunes tasted for dessert. He fixed them up with a heavy syrup and they sure tasted good. Occasionally I would trade him a piece of venison for a sizeable chunk of Cross Anchor beef and in that way we both had a change in diet.

Bally was a pretty good cook too and he made excellent sour dough biscuits as his crowning accomplishment in the culinary art.

I used to get a big kick out of my visits with these two old friends. They were great cronies, but quarrelled most of the time. One could never be sure how the land laid between them; they might be visiting each other back and forth for a considerable time and then get mad at each other and neither could say a good word for the other. I surely had to use a lot of diplomacy in trying to be friends with both of them. I was sometimes able to head off the breach between them which usually never lasted very long any way. I think each of them kind of leaned on me to soften up the other old fellow and always poured their troubles in my ears, each one always insisting he was in the right and that the other one was just a contrary old fool.

Bally pulled a fast one on Uncle Jim though that was about the climax and strained the situation just about to the limit. It happened this way.

Uncle Jim left the door of the "grubhouse" open one day to let it air out. This grubhouse was dug back into the hill, making it a kind of half cellar which never froze in the winter and remained cool in the summer. It was located near the ranch house and was used to store the large amount of food needed to supply the outfit. It was one of Jim's duties to take proper care of it and handle the supplies to the wagons when called for.

On this occasion a wandering skunk came along and while the door of the grubhouse was invitingly open, Mr. Skunk went in to investigate. When Jim came in to see how things were and close the door, he noticed the visitor and was much surprised to see what was huddled back in the corner among the cases of supplies stored in the place. Jim did not know just what to do; he feared that if he disturbed the skunk and tried to get him out, that the result would perhaps be serious and would spoil a lot of stuff.

While pondering over what could be done to relieve the situation, Old Bally rode up and, of course, Jim told him his troubles. Bally comforted Jim and told him not to worry and think nothing of it because it would be a very simple matter to get the skunk out without him making any smell whatever. If Jim would allow him to do the job without interference, he would proceed to get the skunk out of the grubhouse. Well, Jim finally agreed to let Bally go ahead with the job, which Bally proceeded to do.

He set an empty barrel with the open head of it just in the doorway of the grubhouse and packed the open spaces between the barrel and the frame of the doorway with gunny sacks. He then armed himself with a box of the sulphur matches used in those days and would light one and drop it down near the skunk. He kept this up and by dropping one lighted match after the other moved the skunk right out of the doorway into the barrel without any trouble whatever.

I presume the sulphur match smell was too much for Mr. Skunk and when he retired into the darkness of the barrel, Bally up-ended it and carried it, with the skunk inside, outside the grubhouse to a point right near the kitchen door of the ranch house. Here is where he got even with Jim, because he dumped the skunk out of the barrel and shot it with his six

shooter, right at Jim's doorway. Believe me, that surely scented up things plenty for a long time.

Of course, old Jim was plenty mad at Bally and it took a long time to heal that one up. Bally gave his alibi that he had fulfilled his part of the contract by getting the skunk out of the grubhouse without any smell, and he could not help it if by accident he had dropped the barrel and let the skunk out and had to shoot it or it might have run right back into the grubhouse.

After the stink settled and Uncle Jim could catch his breath once more and see how Bally had outsmarted him, the clouds passed away again and all was well on Medicine Creek once more.

### Sheep

The many new settlers coming in and filing on homesteads commenced to cramp the range for cattle as each new ranch made less available land on the free range that we were enjoying prior to this time. The range cattle of course were a problem and the settlers resented their running free over the territory and things commenced to get rather tight for water and grass. The large cattle outfits were commencing to realize that they were eventually going to be put out of business if they did not take some action to secure permanent right to the range which was up to this time free for all. Some filings were therefore made by employees of the big outfits on special tracts on which there was water and the Cross Anchor built a line fence many miles long on the North side of their range, to hold the drift from coming in from that direction onto their range. No serious trouble arose on account of range difficulties however as very often happened in many parts of the West over the question of who was entitled to something which neither really had any right to when it came down to the actual facts of the matter. But nevertheless, one could see that the days of free range and running large bunches of cattle were going to be short lived.

Two of the small stockmen in our neighborhood, Bob Watson and Hank Sutherland, sold their cattle and in the fall of 1896 brought in the first sheep that were ever in that immediate part of the country. They were small bunches, only five hundred in each but it was a start in the business which later was increased to quite an extent. The cattlemen of course were much concerned about sheep coming into the country as it was then considered impossible that sheep and cattle could successfully be handled anywhere near each other, even to the extent that it was reported that cattle would not eat the grass over which sheep had ranged nor drink water out of the same stream or pond that sheep had been near. This attitude did not tend to make a sheepman very popular with the cowmen, and resulted in some rather strained relations in the here-to-fore peaceful settlement. Fortunately however, good judgment in most cases prevailed and no killings resulted in this immediate neighborhood.

Many tragic things happened of course as was usual in a new country. Many of the cowboys came up from the South with trail herds and there were some pretty rugged characters who could be dangerous men to have

trouble with when aroused, and of course, there are always some people who get into trouble even today in the cross section of humans in any community. In some cases men whom you would least expect will get tangled up in some crime and suffer the consequences.

This story however is not for the purpose of enlarging on any of these unpleasant things that happened while I lived in Wyoming, even including some in which a few of my personal friends were implicated, and I am going to be charitable enough to pass up this feature with no more mention except to say that although I was burdened with a terrible quick temper I was fortunate in the fact that I never got into any trouble and for this I have always been extremely thankful.

The coming of the sheep opened up an opportunity for me in a way and although I did not think any more of a sheep or a sheep man than the other fellow, I saw an opportunity wherein I could earn some extra money. Remembering the old saying "if you could not defeat an organization it might be a good idea to join 'em," I joined with Charley Shroyer and Ben Dodds who were neighbors of ours and started to shear sheep during the period after crops were in and before haying started, going from sheep camp to sheep camp.

Leaving Father to take care of the chores while I was away, and if it would storm and stop the shearing I could come on home occasionally and see how things were coming. The first year I received six cents per head, the second year seven and the last year I ran the crew and got eight cents per head. I never got so as to be called an expert but the last year averaged one hundred head per day and that was a lot of money in those days and helped a lot toward expenses.

I gained a lot of experience besides learning the sheep shearing trade and also found that the sheepmen were not too bad fellows. Some of them were not making much money and the food they served their shearers varied from poor to excellent, and the poorer the food the faster we sheared so as to get onto the next job and hoped to find better grub there. Got rather tired of mutton though and had to eat it or go hungry. It was an interesting experience and being young I got along fine and had a lot of fun along with a lot of hard work. Shearing is hard on the back and rather an unpleasant job but you can get used to most anything if you have to and the diversion from other kinds of work was at least a change and I learned many things which came in good stead in later years while I was engaged in this work for the three years I followed it in a small way.

Sleeping on the ground in a camp bed in a small tent had its drawbacks but after working all day it was mighty comfortable and one gets used to his little "nest" and can rest very comfortably. I can remember when I came home and got into my own comfortable bed on a good mattress and springs, that I could not rest at all well until I got used to the soft bed. Mother could not understand how I could object to a good soft bed instead of the hard ground, but it was certainly a fact that until I got used to the good bed again, the camp bed felt best. So, it's all in getting used to anything I guess. I have no hankering now for a repetition of the experience.

Many were the pranks I played on poor old Charley Shroyer and Ben Dodds. They had recently come out from Ohio and were regular greenhorns. They had a lot of confidence in me and were always wide open for practical jokes and kidding. I took advantage of them in this respect most every chance I got. They took it all in good part however and we remained good friends for many years until both of them died. They were fine friends and good men and I am glad to have had them for friends for these many years.

#### Ben and Charley on the Sheep Shearing Crew

During the sheep shearing season every good day was utilized and every one worked hard to get this important job done as fast as possible inasmuch as the wool must be taken off the sheep while the same is perfectly dry. A sudden shower stops the procedure until the sun comes out and dries off the sheep. Several days of rainy weather become a nightmare when the outfit is camped out in a tent on the prairie with nothing to do but wait it out for the rain to quit and things dry out. My last season of sheep shearing was a very wet one and we were held up a lot by the rains.

During these periods it was hard to pass the time. After sharpening up our sheep shears and arranging our equipment and doing everything that needed attention, there was lots of time left and a nervous chap like I was had to something. If anyone could put up a job on someone else with a good joke, it helped pass the time.

Charley Shroyer and Ben Dodds shared the same tent with me and each of us had their own bed and other gear stored therein. Charlie enjoyed a good soft bed and was particular to see that every bump was smoothed off the ground if he had time to do it prior to rolling out his bed. He was also scared to death of lightning (and there was a lot of this that season) and when the lightning commenced to crack around close, Charlie would remove any metal object out of the tent if he could find any. He said that the metal "drew" the lightning and we had lots of fun in bringing his surplus pairs of shears and other things he had moved out back into the tent during his absence and planting them under or around his bed and then telling him about it the next morning. That would surely give him the excuse for getting mad.

One time I remember he had gone to a lot of trouble to fix up his bed so that it would be extra nice and comfortable after we had moved to a new camp. Ben and I split out some nice ash sticks about the size of a broom handle and six or eight inches long and nicely sharpened. While Charlie was gone visiting at another tent just before bedtime, we rolled back his bed and drove about a dozen or more of the ash sticks scattered here and there, leaving them stick up an inch or so above the surface of the ground under his bed. Then we rolled back his camp bed into place and we then went to bed and waited for Charley to come back. This did not take long because we were expecting to get up early in the morning.

Now, preparing to go to bed does not take very long in camp and Charlie soon removed his hat, shoes, socks and pants and proceeded to get into bed. I can still remember him howl when he rolled over on those ash pins. He certainly "blew up" and because he could not break off the pins nor pull them up by hand, he had to light the lantern, put on his boots and go out to the wood pile and get the axe, roll back his bed and drive down the pins even with the ground to smooth things out -- all the time threatening to kill us both and using language not printable which promised us dire disaster in the future. Ben and I thought it was very funny and enjoyed it but Charlie had other notions and I did not blame him.

Our last shearing job that year was for quite a big outfit who were well prepared with good corrals and equipment to handle the job with dispatch. They had a large cook tent with another canvas shelter to eat under and the wives of the two brothers owning the outfit cooked the meals. This was surely comfortable and the meals were fine and the eight hungry shearers did full justice to them at meal time and appreciated the privilege. The weatherman however did not cooperate very nicely and, as I remember it, there were a lot of showers that stopped the shearers quite often and we had to loaf part of the time.

Ben, who was a great hand to talk and visit whenever he got the chance, used to hang around the cook tent and talk with the ladies when there was nothing else to do. They had nice times together and the ladies liked to have him around as he helped carry wood and water and do other chores to help them when he could. Charlie and I thought we would have a little fun with Ben and waited our chance to job him in some manner and finally figured one out.

While Ben was setting on a camp chair near the entrance to the "lean to" talking to the ladies, Charlie and I strolled up and entered into the conversation, Charlie doing most of the talking. While he was diverting Ben's attention, I tied the long tails of his slicker (rain coat) to the tent pole with a piece of wool twine and then I went back to our tent. Immediately after I got there I started to call Charlie and Ben "to come quickly" like as though I had found something wrong. Of course Charlie took off at the gallop and Ben also got up and started to follow, but his being tied to the tent pole hindered his progress somewhat and resulted in his pulling down the pole and the drop of the shelter, which embarrassed him very much and did not help to improve his disposition. All the crew joshed him about it so much that he laid off his visiting for awhile.

One more joke on these two old friends and I'll quit. I often wonder how either of them could retain their strong friendship for me during all the years we were acquainted, when I used to take advantage of their good nature and confidence by my indulgence of playing jokes on them. But I got such a kick out of playing one against the other and they were so gullible that I could not resist the temptation.

Just a day or so before we finished this last job we were waiting for the sheep to dry off before starting to shear and it was quite cool that morning. We were helping to butcher a mutton. After the animal was

skinned and dressed out and hung up to cool, I picked out one of the kidneys and watching my chance, dropped it into one of Ben's pockets. He never noticed it and shortly after that the sun came out and we prepared to start shearing. Of course we all changed into our working clothes and Ben, knowing nothing about the kidney being in his coat pocket, just laid the coat down with the rest of his clothes on the bed.

It so happened that from then on the weather cleared up (it being late in June) and we finished up the job in a short time and loaded up and went home. I forgot all about putting the kidney in Ben's pocket and of course he did not know it was there, but it was. It provided something of an amusing incident which later Ben informed me of as follows.

Mr. Weare, the owner of the Cross Anchor outfit had bought out several of the settlers who had filed on land on Deer Creek and Ben had taken the job of farming the land for Mr. Weare and had put in the crop prior to going out with the shearing crew. After his return Ben learned that Mr. Weare was out at the Anchor Ranch and as he wished to confer with him about some of the farming business on the rented farm, he decided that he would go over to the ranch and talk things over. So on a rather cool misty morning after a rather hot spell, Ben hunted up his old coat which he had hung up in the granary, put it on, saddled up his horse and rode over to see Mr. Weare.

Ben said that as he rode along he seemed to notice that there were a terrible lot of flies in the air and the farther he went, the more flies there were, but it did not take very long to get to the ranch. Mr. Weare was there and as it was nice and warm in the sun out on the South side of the house, they went out there to talk. Ben stated that if he had noticed some flies on the way over from his place, he now discovered that they were more here and both he and Mr. Weare commented on how thick they were and even looked around to see if there was anything dead laying around. They moved over to the other side of the house in the shade. Well, Ben said that he kept trying to figure the thing out while he was fighting flies and he and Mr. Weare were finishing up their business. He said that he knew it was nothing about him because he had changed clothes after taking a bath before he came over. It could not be anything about Mr. Weare that was causing the attraction of the green flies that were literally eating them up. So they hurried up with their business and Ben took off for home still fighting flies and wondering what Mr. Weare would think of him.

After he had gotten a short distance from the ranch, Ben happened to put his right hand in the pocket of his coat and the old stinking kidney stuck to his fingers as he hastily pulled out his hand. This solved the problem because that kidney was certainly quite ripe and Ben told me that he knew in a minute who was responsible for such a mean thing to do to anyone and he cussed me out loud all the way home. After he had told me about this end of the story, I had a good laugh but did acknowledge that it was a dirty trick.

Henry G. Weare

I wish to pay tribute to a mighty fine gentleman, Mr. Henry G. Weare, the owner of the old Cross Anchor ranch. His family were bankers in Sioux City, Iowa and Henry also owned an interest in a bank at Spearfish. He ran the Cross Anchor outfit which was quite a large cattle company which he owned the greater part, if not all, of. He was a man who was easy to work for and ever ready to help out the men in his employ in any way possible. He always had a loyal crew of cowboys in his service, many of whom came up the trail from Texas with cattle herds and remained in the country. Some of them later took up ranches of their own and Henry Weare took care of their finances and never let them want for anything within reason if they did their part.

Unlike many of the larger cattle outfits, Henry did not hold a grudge against the homesteaders who were settling up the country and gradually absorbing much of the free range which the big outfits had enjoyed for many years. He tried to get along with the ranchers and would have his men cut out any of the ranchers' cattle and see that they were not disturbed when the round up came through the country.

We were in need of a mowing machine and had been using Will's. But as it was necessary to cut more hay, one machine for two outfits was not enough. Again it was necessary to figure out how to get the money to buy it and I thought about seeing Mr. Weare.

The next time he came out to the ranch, I asked him if I could put up some hay for him and told him that I needed about \$50 to buy a mowing machine. If he would advance me the money, I would put up (cut and stack) 10 tons of hay for the same. He asked me a lot of questions about how we were getting along, etc, and finally wrote me out a check for \$50 and told me to go ahead and put up the hay for him. Of course, I thanked him for his kindness and asked him where he wanted me to cut the hay. He told me, "Just anywhere near the ranch where the grass is good -- you pick the place." I am sure that he did not need the hay anymore than I would have needed another leg at that time and was only giving me a chance to think I was earning the money.

Well, I went to town and bought the mowing machine and the first hay I cut was for Mr. Weare. When the stack was measured there was 12 tons but I told him to take that for interest.

In later years after I had moved to Belle Fourche, I got to know Henry Weare in many different ways and always admired him and we were good friends until he died. I never forgot how he helped me out when I needed help, and he likewise remembered my doing my part as agreed.

Jess Driskill

Jess Driskill ran the T Cross T outfit, located on Beaver Creek a few miles South of our place. Jess was an old Texas cowman, a splendid roper, and all around cattleman. I used to work for him a few days at a time doing something around the outfit and also on several occasions go

with the wagon on the round-up while it was working the surrounding country and cut out our cattle etc. I always found Jess a very fine fellow who was ever ready to meet you half way but would not take any of the worst of a deal without a scrap. He also remained a good friend for many years but is now gone to his reward.

#### Some Horse Trading

About this time I found that we were in need of a bull and the question of getting one was somewhat of a problem. Bally had some good young bulls which he priced at fifty dollars which was a lot of money those days. Ordinary good calves were selling for not to exceed fifteen dollars per head. I had a half brother of Bally's pet saddle horse that I had secured from Will who owned the mother, a beautiful little mare named Peachy. He was a splendid piece of horse flesh and three years old at that time; I had broken him to ride but he was a bad actor and pitched occasionally. In fact, he was just a little too much horse for me to handle and unless I kept him rode down all the time and not give him time to rest up, he could throw me anytime he wanted to and he knew it.

Bally took a shine to him and kept telling me that I did not know anything about handling a horse and that he knew that he could get along fine with this young fellow if he had him. One day I tackled him for a trade and told him that I would trade him the horse for one of his young bulls. At first he said that he would not pay that much for the horse, but as I refused to give him any money to boot, he finally agreed to swap. I immediately delivered the horse and hauled home the young bull and thought I had made a good trade.

Old Bally was tickled to get the horse, too, and he turned him out in the pasture to get fattened up, as I had been riding him pretty hard. He told me to come over to his place when he got ready to get him up and ride him; he would show me how to handle a horse.

About a month after that he notified me that he was going to get the pony up the following Sunday and to come over. I wanted to see the results of the plan and thought I knew about what they would be. So I made it my business to go over to Bally's ranch on that Sunday morning, but got there a little too late for the show.

As I rode up to the corral, Bally had the pony tied to the fence and was trying to get the saddle off. The horse was acting like he was a wild bronc and old Bally looked like he had been run through a threshing machine. His face and hands were all scratched up and all bloody and his clothes were torn in several different places. All together he looked like a wreck. I looked on awhile until Bally finally got the saddle off and gave the horse a belt with a club he had nearby and quietly remarked that it seemed to me that he did not know anything more about handling a horse than I did and I was sure that I could do much better than that. However, I was careful to stay on my horse and not get too close to old Bally just then.

It seems that after Bally had saddled the horse and got on him, that he did not pitch much but ran away with Bally. There was a lot of scrub

oaks growing around the place and he tore through this brush patch and like to whipped all the clothes off Bally and skinned him up badly and acted like he never had been ridden. I don't think he ever tried to ride the horse again and a short time after traded him off to a half-crazy shepherd. The funny part of it was that the shepherd got along fine with the pony and rode him without any trouble and he never offered to pitch. I used to josh old Bally about this and always showed him up a little when he got to razzing me about something.

The young bull developed into a fine animal, too.

### Curing the Grub Line Rider

The home ranch of the big cow outfits very often were favored during the winter by some of the old cowpunchers who were not working and broke and drifted in to stay "just for a few days." These visits were not looked upon with favor by the companies and the visitors were classed as "grub line riders" and not encouraged to prolong their visits. Consequently there were not many of the riders who made a practice of being classed as hangers-on but occasionally the outfit would draw a few during the long winter months. Usually they figured out some chores that would occupy some of the visitor's spare time and help pay for his keep, including feed for his horse.

Old Uncle Jim Miller, who was ranch man for the Cross Anchor outfit, one time had a visit from one old timer named Jim Wilder who was a pretty wise old bird and knew about all the answers. Jim dropped in and made quite an extended stay. He was suffering with a very sore back and could do but very little work, hardly about to feed his own horse, to say nothing of cleaning out the stable, cutting wood or anything, but did have a good appetite.

Uncle Jim commenced to get pretty tired of it all and one day conferred with his old friend Bally Gray as to how the visitor could be prevailed upon to move on. Bally suggested that the best way would be to try and cure Jim's backache first, so that he would be able to ride. He had a bottle of wonderful liniment that, no doubt, would fix him up.

Uncle Jim agreed that was a good idea and the matter was suggested to the visitor that Bally would be glad to bring down the liniment and they would rub Wilder's back with it and no doubt that would do him a world of good. Of course, it was impossible to refuse such a generous offer. Wilder agreed to try it anyway, but said he did not have much confidence in a cure because his back was really very bad.

The "doctors" proceeded to peel off the patient's various layers of clothes until they got down to the bare hide, laid him face down on the bed and Bally proceeded to rub his back with the liniment, which was undoubtedly pretty strong. After Bally had thoroughly rubbed in a plentiful supply of the potent application on the patient's back, he accidentally spilled about a tablespoonful pretty low down on the bare back of the patient. In fact, so low it ran down to a place which did not

need the treatment but really provided some results. Poor Wilder came alive very quickly and for awhile gave every indication of how a turpentine dog acts under like circumstances.

Bally said afterwards that he and Uncle Jim had a hard time catching and holding Jim long enough to quiet him down, but that the one application was plenty to cure him. He put on his clothes, saddled up his pony and left for greener pastures, a wiser if not a more satisfied man.

#### Neighbor Bob

One of our neighbors who had settled on Deer Creek several years prior to the time we did (in fact, was the first one who located there) was an old cowpuncher who had married and started ranching and was quite a character. He was a good cow man and quite prosperous; he had secured by various means quite a large herd of cattle. It is said that he was "handy with a rope" and carried a running iron in his saddle pocket, and a maverick (unbranded calf) stood a poor chance if he happened around. His cows seemed to be very prolific and had at least one calf each and every year and Bob, as we will call him, got along very well. The big outfits watched him pretty carefully, but never seemed able to catch up with him.

At one time he was in need of a new bull, so he proceeded to locate one. He used a different method than I did when I traded Bally Gray out of one of his, however.

There was a man who lived quite a distance from Deer Creek who had recently bought a full-blooded young Hereford bull calf and one day when he was away from his ranch, this neighbor of mine happened along in a spring wagon and as the poor calf looked lonesome in the small corral, he decided that he would do something about it. He, therefore, loaded the yearling into his wagon and hog-tied him so that he could not get up. He took him home and turned him loose in a corral in the brush near his barn.

The bull had been tied so long in the wagon that he developed a very pronounced hump in his back from which he never got over. He grew up into a fine animal outside of this defect and gave good service. The fellow who lost his bull never knew where it had gone, although in later years he had a pretty good idea. Anyhow, Bob got a good bull out of it and no doubt thought it was a good joke.

After the new settlers came in, Bob decided that he would farm a little and raise a few hogs. He fenced in a small hog pasture in the oak brush and raised quite a lot of pigs. Feed was scarce that year and he ran out of grain to feed the pigs enough to keep them growing until the acorns got ripe and fell so that they could get any of them to eat.

Bob got an idea that a change of diet would be a good thing for growing pigs. He drove in a small bunch of his cattle which included two T Cross T outfit's steers and shot the two steers and then drove out his cattle,

cut the steers open and turned in his hogs for lunch. Well, they were hungry and proceeded to fill up and did a very good job of it. So much so that they gorged themselves and about half of them laid down and died.

You should have heard him squawk about his bad luck. "Just look at those hogs," he said. "Ain't that the darndest luck you every heard of?" He did not say anything about the luck of the owner of the two steers he had shot had suffered, but of course they belonged to a big outfit and that was that.

One time I was riding after our cattle and heard someone shooting several times just over the hill. I rode up and looked over and saw Bob on horseback near an animal lying on the ground. I rode up and discovered that it was a dead bull and Bob told me that he had been trying to get this old Cross Anchor scrub bull out of the country as he had been fighting off his good bulls. Every time he drove him away he would come back.

This time he decided he would fix him so that he would stay in one place and proceeded to empty his six shooter into the old fellow's head. This located the bull quite effectively and accomplished Bob's purpose, but it did not appeal to me to be a very gentlemanly way to handle the situation. I said nothing about it however, but it did not raise my opinion of this fellow very much.

I had good reason to not like him and his methods for a trick he played on me one time. Will and I were cutting saw logs one winter and I would walk up to Will's place in the morning and we would then ride out to the timber on a bob sled, cut logs for a few hours and then come back in time to get home and do the evening chores.

On this particular morning when I came near Will's place I noticed, in the freshly fallen snow that had come the night before, where a wolf had crossed the trail and he was apparently dragging a trap on one of his front legs. I did not have my gun with me so I went on up to the ranch house and borrowed Will's rifle and started out to trail Mr. Wolf. Just as I was leaving, my friend Bob rode up on horseback and we told him about what I had found. He did not say anything but evidently watched which way I was headed on the Wolf's trail and rode off up the creek towards home (so Will afterwards informed me.)

I followed that wolf for several miles and was getting closer all the time. He would tangle up that trap with the brush he went through and was getting pretty tired. On top of the divide he went down into a thick bunch of timber and I was sure that by slipping around this, I would be able to get him before he got through the other side. I started around and had gotten about half way when I heard a shot which sounded as though it came from about the place I had figured the wolf would come out.

I hurried around as fast as I could for perhaps a quarter of a mile and came out into the open in time to see a fellow riding away and dragging something through the snow tied to the end of his saddle rope. I figured that it was friend Bob all right and was pretty mad, I can tell you. But

he was too far away for me to shoot at him and I am glad that he was because if ever I felt like killing anyone, this was it.

He went back home past Will's place and showed the wolf which was a big gray, and it had a number four wolf trap on his front leg that he was caught in and broken the chain. He told Will about slipping around me and shooting the wolf and said that he would make it all right with me later. He never did, however, and I suppose collected the bounty and kept the trap.

Later I told him that it was a lucky thing for him that he was as far away from me as he was, or the story would have had a different ending. So you can see why I did not particularly like this neighbor.

### Wolves

The gray wolf was a menace to stockmen. They would make a fresh kill every time they were hungry and were big and strong enough to down a full grown cow or horse to say nothing about a young calf or colt. Their method of operating was to slip in and cut the ham-string of the animal and thereby make it powerless to run and would then commence to eat on the animal while still alive. On a young animal they would sometimes just grab them most anywhere and their jaws were so powerful that they had no trouble in soon overcoming it. If they were interrupted and the critter got away, the wound would prove so serious that the animal would seldom recover.

The County and the cattle companies offered large bounties for the killing of one of these wolves and professional trappers were employed to eradicate them. They were extremely hard to trap and also were seldom seen as they moved mostly by night and had an extremely keen sense of smell by which they could catch a man's scent for long distances and sneak out of sight. Their howl was one that would make your flesh creep and one shiver to hear it at night, even though you were safe in your bed. You could not hear a bunch of these wolves howling without a feeling of danger.

I never was fortunate in catching one in a trap nor of shooting one, but in addition to coming close to getting the one that friend Bob beat me out on, I had one time had another chance. This happened one day while I was walking up to the timber to cut some corral poles. I was carrying a double-bitted axe but that morning I had left my rifle at home. I had been in the habit of taking it along with me but that day I told Father that I did not want to bother carrying it as I had not seen anything to shoot at for the past several days I had been taking it. Father remarked at the time that I would perhaps see something if I did not take it, but I left it anyway and started out.

I was just getting to the top of the divide and near the timber when I looked down the trail and lo and behold I saw a big gray wolf coming down the trail toward me. He was looking back over his shoulder and the wind was blowing from him to me, so that he could not wind me. I stepped to one side behind a small jack pine and waited to see what he would do.

Well he came right along the trail, looking back occasionally but never wavered on his way down the trail. He kept coming until he was less than a hundred feet from me and sat down on his haunches and kept looking around.

I stood and looked at him for several minutes hating myself for leaving the rifle at home. I had a good chance to see how large he was and wondered if I could wait until he went by me and possibly I could hit him with the axe. However I gave that up and decided that I could at least give him one hell of a scare if nothing else.

I jumped out in front of him and gave a yell and you should have seen him make tracks from there. He jumped through the brush like a floundered horse and surely made himself scarce around those parts. So that's all the chances I ever got to bag me a wolf. I did however dig out a den one Spring and got one small wolf pup out of it.

I used to trap an occasional coyote and have shot a number of them also. One winter I trapped five bob-cats and while hunting deer one time, found where a large sized mountain lion had passed through quite recently. I followed its tracks for a long time until it got nearly dark but never caught up with it. That was the only lion that I ever saw any evidence of being in the country.

I surely did enjoy hunting deer and while they were not too plentiful, managed to get one nearly every time I went out hunting. This gave us plenty of deer meat and I used to give away quite a lot to the neighbors as one did not like to see any spoil.

We used to raise a few hogs and would cure the hams, shoulders and bacon for summer use, and with pork and an occasional deer and other game managed to live pretty well. We would also kill a beef every winter, so we never went hungry.

#### How Not to Kill a Coyote

There were quite a lot of coyotes around the ranch one winter and as they were getting pretty bold and catching a chicken every once in a while, I set out several traps to try and take them down a bit and did catch several.

One morning while riding my trap line I came across a coyote in the second trap. He was a big fellow and had a nice pelt. I did not want to shoot him and mess up the hide and spoil the trap set, so thought I would kill him with a club. Selecting a good big stick I proceeded to sneak up on him and after several attempts, managed to bat him over the head and stun him and then belted him another hard blow on the head and thought I had fixed him for good.

Knowing however that these fellows were hard to kill I thought it would be a good plan to make sure of it before I took his foot out of the trap

and wondered how best to accomplish that purpose. It was a cold, winter morning and I was wearing a big muffler around my neck. I took the muffler off and tied it as tight as I could pull it around Mr. Coyote's neck, thinking that if he did have any life left in him that the muffler tied so tightly around his neck would finish him off for sure.

Then leaving him still in the trap I started to look at the other traps I had set out. This took considerable time and I did not find any more coyotes trapped nor any of the traps sprung. I rode back to skin the gentleman I had caught. When I approached the place I was surprised to find the coyote setting up on his haunches like a big dog, his mouth open and his tongue hanging out. My muffler around his neck with the long ends sticking out resembling a necktie made him look like he was all dressed up and waiting to welcome me.

There was nothing left for me to do but shoot him and retrieve my good muffler and this I proceeded to do, and then also had the big job of cleaning and washing the muffler before I could wear it again. At least I learned not to underrate a coyote's endurance. They are smart and they are tough and had I not left this one's foot still in the trap, I suppose he would have been wearing my muffler all the rest of the winter.

#### The Dog Jack

There is one member of our family that I have as yet not mentioned. I refer to "JACK" the dog. Jack was a black shepherd with some white around his neck and face and part of his legs. He was a fairly large fellow and smart as could be. He never came into the house but was always around when anyone came out. He slept in the hay stack that was always stacked near the barn and made his nest right on top of the same, even in the coldest weather. If a hawk happened to come around after a chicken, Jack was after him and never allowed him to light. Also he was on hand if any stray coyote came near the place and we could tell by the way he barked whenever any prowler was near.

Father was his special friend and whenever Father and old Cap started out for a ride, Jack was sure to follow up. He was friendly to anyone who came to visit and was, in fact, everyone's friend. When we came to town to live we brought him along and he lived to a ripe old age and we all mourned his passing when finally it came his time to leave us.

I well remember one time however that his activities proved quite embarrassing to me but the circumstance is worth telling, I think.

Hal Baxter, who lived on the river a few miles East of us, was one of those fellows who took life pretty easy. He was a bachelor and had a little cabin and a small barn on his place and lived there occasionally. He was quite a hand to make lengthy visits to his neighbors and would often drop in, put his horse in the barn or turn it into the pasture, and just make himself at home for a few days. It seldom occurred to him to do any chores to help out or do anything but just visit and, while he was

entertaining and always was able to give a report on what was going on in the country, he was considered as pretty much of a "grubline rider." When he thought that his welcome was about worn out, he moved along to the next victim for another visit. He was an exceptionally good shot with a rifle and did a lot of hunting and quite often he would bring in a deer which would provide something to help out the larder of the family he was at that time visiting.

He had a few cattle which ran with his brother's and these gave him a little money to keep him going, but Hal never bothered much about accumulating anything and also never spent anything except for actual necessities. When hunting, he never carried more than two or three cartridges because he was such a good shot, as he seldom needed but one shot to get his meat.

One day when I was getting ready to ride after the cattle, Hal came along and asked me if I happened to have any 30-30 cartridges (which I did not). He said that he shot a deer a little while before and only crippled it with the first shot and missed it the second time he shot at it, and did not have any more shells. He said that he would go on home and get some more cartridges and come back and try and get the crippled deer, and rode on.

Shortly after he left I started out to ride around our cattle which were running North of the ranch and as usual I carried my rifle in the gun scabbard. It wasn't long after I got a mile or so from the house before I noticed a deer on the hillside which was acting strangely. It would go a few yards and then lie down for awhile, then get up and start out again and do the same thing. The brush was not thick and I could see it very plainly and knew that it must be the deer that Hal had shot shortly before. It was easy for me to ride over and get pretty close to where the deer was and tied my horse and walked over the ridge and shot the deer. Sure enough it was badly crippled in the shoulder.

I dressed it out and loaded it on my horse and took it home. After skinning it I found that the front leg and part of the shoulder that Hal's bullet had shattered was shot so badly that it was useless to keep, so I cut it off and threw it down into the draw that was near the granary. I quartered up the rest of the deer and hung up the meat and had just finished stretching the hide when Hal came back from his place with the cartridges he went for.

Of course he had to stop and visit awhile and noticing the deer hide that I had just finished stretching, asked me where I had killed it. I thought I would have a little fun with him before I told him the truth. So I said, "I killed it over South about a mile." He then noticed that there were only three quarters of meat hanging up and asked me what had become of the other front quarter. I told him that I had given that to old "Uncle Jack Bates." Hal was a little suspicious but turned to get on his horse and ride off, and this was when Old Jack took a hand in the game and came around the granary corner dragging the part of the shoulder of the deer which I had thrown away. It was just all the old dog could do to drag the thing, but he timed it just right at that and of course Hal got a big laugh out of it and never forgot to tell how I had tried to

steal his deer and if it had not been for the old dog showing me up would have gotten by with it.

Orville and Sam wash dishes - Boys Will Be Boys

Orville (O.J.) Brownfield was one of my closest friends. He lived on the adjoining ranch with his brother George and they were both frequent visitors at our house. Orville used to work for us occasionally and he and I were very good friends. Orville and I used to go to dances at Five Mile, Montana, about 20 miles north of our place and this is where he met his wife and they married after he had moved from Deer Creek and located on Box Elder Creek and went into the cattle business.

When we were living on Deer Creek it was the custom for us young fellows to meet about once a week on Sundays at one of the ranches of the bunch and have a kind of get-together doing various things -- perhaps riding a bucking horse, playing ball or if the weather was not good, playing cards. In fact, just a gathering where anything could happen and generally did.

On one occasion I remember when we met at the Pannel ranch on the river. We fooled around at one thing or another and after we had had dinner (which was one of the important things we were usually greatly interested in), we played cards to see who would wash the dishes. Orville and I got stuck to do this messy job while the rest of the crowd loafed and enjoyed themselves.

We retired to the kitchen and went through the motion of washing the dishes. I don't remember if it was Orville's or my idea, but we just washed the top cup and saucer and plate, and neatly piled the dirty ones under the washed one, and placed them in the cupboard where they belonged. We took long enough to accomplish what was supposed to be our job, came smiling back to the rest of the crowd and after staying a short time, Orville and I excused ourselves and went home, thinking we sure had played a good joke on the bunch.

Nothing was said about what we had done and it so happened that for quite awhile after we had pulled this stunt that for any of our meetings we were never both there together. We both kind of forgot the matter and after a considerable length of time we both went to one that was held at Hal Baxter's cabin. Everything went along smoothly and we sure had a nice time and, of course, had the usual good dinner which we all enjoyed.

This time after dinner all the other fellows suddenly came alive and grabbed the side-kick Orville and myself and we sure got the works. They took Orville outside and tied his feet together and then bent him over a small ash tree and tied his legs to that and then let loose.

It raised him up so that his hands just touched the ground. While he was in this position, they just gently punched him around occasionally or

pinched him where it would hurt the most. They kept this up until he was about all in and they had to let him down before he went out completely.

In my case they bent me over a bed roll, stomach down, and while two fellows held my hands and another two stretched out my legs, a third husky wielded a cartridge belt to good advantage where it surely blistered my setter and I don't mean maybe.

After they got tired of their fun, they let us up and gently suggested that they thought it would be a good plan if they allowed us to do the dishes. We were glad to accept the invitation and this time we washed them very carefully and made sure that all were nice and clean before we put them back in the cupboard.

They surely played rough, those fellows, and you may be sure we did not repeat any more stunts of that kind again. Both of us were so darned sore for a week that it was no fun at that.

#### Uncle Ben Green

Uncle Ben Green made us a visit from Chicago and of course was much interested in all the Western country which was new to him. Aggie met him when he arrived at Belle Fourche and brought him out to the ranch and he stayed for quite a while. George Brownfield and I took him on a trip to the Devils Tower which was about twenty miles from our place. It was in September and the country looked beautiful; the frost had nipped the leaves just enough to color them and the different shades of color which covered the hills and valleys were grand indeed.

I took the wagon and George rode horseback. We had a camp outfit and the weather stayed nice so that camping out was a pleasure and Uncle Ben enjoyed it all very much and when he got back to Chicago he bragged about what a good cook I was.

We took three days to make the trip, one to drive to the tower, stayed over at the Tower one day and came home on the third day. Uncle Ben took a lot of pictures and he had a good camera and was quite good at taking pictures and he surely had a large collection of views of the visit he made to the Bear Lodge country.

I had made one other trip to the Tower with Will and Aggie to attend a celebration held on the Fourth of July, 1895 at which time Mrs. Rogers climbed the tower. There was a large crowd and they had a dance after the other doings and we stayed all night and came home the third day. Mr. Rogers, the husband of the woman who climbed the tower in 1895, had climbed it the year before and the ladder that he made by which to get up over the worst part of the climb was still in place. In fact this was in evidence for many years.

In 1937 I made another trip to the Tower to attend their annual picnic held in June of each year and at which I was to make a speech. We left Belle Fourche about ten o'clock in the morning by auto, drove to the Tower which is about 75 miles from Belle Fourche, had our picnic lunch,

attended the doings, made my speech and got back to Belle Fourche before dark that night. I could not help but compare the modes of travel which I had used in making the visits.

New Post Office at Mona - Waking up in Mona,

During these years since we came to Deer Creek the settlement had grown so much that someone decided that it would be a good idea to get a post office on Deer Creek and proceeded to organize to that effect. Alva was our closest post office and it was about 13 miles south of our place and it was quite a problem to send and receive the mail for those so far from the post office.

Of course, about the first thing that was deemed necessary was to find some good-natured soul who would act as postmaster and they settled on Mother for the job. She being always willing to do anything for anybody finally agreed to accept this responsibility, which later proved of course to be a nuisance.

Then it was a matter of selecting the name by which the post office would be known. Finally it was decided that the name would be MONA, and after due time the office was established with Mother as the first postmaster. The service was three times per week and the first mail carrier securing the contract for carrying the mail was Jim Gorum and service was started May 29, 1897.

The establishment of the post office was quite an event in the neighborhood and many of the patrons proceeded to make it a point to arrive early so as to mail their letters in time to get them off by the carrier, and then stay over until the carrier came back with the mail from Alva so that they could get any letters they might have coming.

In the meantime Mother could prepare dinner for them while they were busy waiting for the arrival of the mail. This finally got to be a considerable chore and our family finally woke up to the fact that maybe the post office was not much of a convenience to us; but it certainly was to the patrons.

Mother finally woke up to how she was being worked and decided that our meal hours were going to be changed. For awhile we went on a two meal schedule, in other words we did not have any dinners on mail day. This discouraged the visitors and after a while they ceased expecting to get free service and things became a little better in this respect.

Mother kept the job until we moved from Deer Creek but did have a hard time in getting rid of the office when we did move. She served notice on the Department that she was going to leave the country but the Department made no effort to make any change in the postmaster. When we had patiently waited for word from them for a much longer time than she had notified the Department that she was going to leave, we finally packed up all the post office supplies, put them in a box and took them over to the

postmaster at Alva and took her receipt for them and in that manner we got rid of the job. This was one way of doing it anyway and I often wondered why we were not called up on the carpet for handling the matter in this crude way. Evidently Mother's final report and cash must have been correct because we never heard anything to the contrary. The office was not discontinued however and after awhile was re-located and remained in operation until discontinued on Dec. 5, 1942.

Jim Gorum, neighbor (Big Game Hunter/Stoke of Bad Luck)

Another old friend of mine was Jim Gorum who had a ranch a couple of miles down the creek from our place and ran a few cattle. He was a tall, dark complected fellow with a heavy mustache. He was quiet and unassuming but had a good mind and was very good company. I greatly admired him as a man and I think he liked me, too. We got pretty well acquainted, especially after he got the contract of carrying the mail from the new post office of Mona to Alva. Mother being the new postmaster and our house the post office, of course, made him a frequent caller at our place and he was always prompt in trips on mail days.

His neatness in his personal appearance was rather in contrast to the condition of his housekeeping, however. He had a large, one room, hewed log cabin with an attic which you could get up to by the means of a somewhat shaky ladder that was nailed to the wall. I never had occasion to go up to the attic so I would not know what he kept up there, if anything. I do remember the arrangement of the rest of the place.

The cabin had a gabled, shingled roof and a brick chimney, which was more elaborate than most of the houses in the country at that time. The chimney was placed in about the center of the cabin and was built on a frame support up through the attic and the roof peak. Jim had a "box stove" for heating the house, located on the west side of the chimney and a cook stove on the east side, both stove pipes elbowing into the brick flue. His bed was situated at the west end of the cabin and the cupboard and table on the east end, leaving the center available for general storage, chairs, etc. Altogether, it made a very comfortable outfit for a bachelor and all he had to keep clean was the middle part so one could navigate around without stumbling over things (if you were lucky.)

On one occasion when I was nearing Jim's cabin and was going to stop to see him about something, I heard a rifle shot. It seemed to come from the cabin and as I got closer, there was another muffled report. This time I was sure that it came from the inside of the cabin. Also I noticed smoke coming out of the open window and about the time I got off my horse and started to walk the short distance to the cabin to investigate, the door was opened from the inside and Jim came out for air carrying his Winchester rifle in his hand.

Of course, I wondered what was up and asked him what he had been shooting at, and he mildly answered that he had been shooting mice, which seemed to me to be pretty small game for a 45-70 rifle. I asked him if he had hit the mouse. He said yes, he got him with the second shot but sure messed things up pretty bad.

He then told me he had tried to catch that damned mouse in a trap, had tried to poison him, but with no success, and when Mr. Mouse came out of his hole this morning and commenced to play around, it was just too much. Jim grabbed his trusty gun and shot the critter, and that was all there was to it.

By this time the black powder smoke had cleared away and we went indoors and found where the two bullets had gone through the floor and one had hit a knot and splintered up a large chunk of flooring and there was quite a scattering of the remains of the deceased mouse to be cleaned up. By this time, both of us were laughing at how foolish a fellow can get when he gets mad, and Jim asked me not to tell this one on him for awhile at least and I kept the promise.

I have described the interior of the cabin somewhat in detail because about a year after the mouse hunt, I made another visit to Jim's place and this time on a sad errand.

It was in the summertime and Jim had been out at the wood pile cutting up some wood for the cook stove and while engaged in this manner, a neighbor rode up and stopped awhile because a heavy cloud was coming up and it looked like it was going to storm. Both Jim and his visitor gathered up an armful of wood and carried it into the cabin just before the storm struck.

There was a lot of lightning in the cloud and it was hitting pretty close and it soon commenced to rain. Jim, who was an inveterate smoker, hunted up his old corncob pipe and proceeded to fill it up with tobacco, pulled a match out of his pocket and reached up to the stove pipe to scratch the match on and light his pipe. He had the pipe in his left hand with his thumb over the bowl so the tobacco would not spill out and just as he reached up with his right hand to scratch the match, a bolt of lightning struck Jim in the back of his head, killing him instantly.

The visitor, Will Gardner, was stunned but not hurt and when he came to, there lay our old friend on the floor dead, still holding his old pipe unlit in his hand and his thumb over the bowl. Gardner came up to our place as it was the nearest and we spread the word around the neighborhood and it was not long before there was plenty of help to do all that could be done in the way of notifying his brother, who lived in Deadwood, and helping to arrange for the funeral. They buried him in Deadwood.

#### The Masquerade Ball

While living on the ranch in Wyoming, I would occasionally attend a dance in Belle Fourche and as it was about a fifty mile horseback ride I would stop off at Ralph Weber's ranch (which was about half way), change horses and Ralph and I would go from there to town together. After the dance

was over we would ride back to his place and I would get some sleep and then go on home the next day.

Ralph and his mother had a fine location on the river, owned quite a large bunch of good Hereford cattle and were comfortably well off. Ralph was somewhat older than I was and a quiet easy going fellow. Never got in a hurry nor worked harder than necessary, but managed by the help of one hired man, to run the outfit with pretty good success, although he was so slow and deliberate in all his actions that he gave me "the willies" to work with him. He was not only slow in his movements but also slow in his speech and would drag out a conversation or a story until one would begin to wonder when he would get through talking or reach the climax of the story. Whenever he started to do anything he reminded me of one of those big hawks taking off the ground from a standing start when disturbed from dining on a dead rabbit. They flopped their wings a long time before they started to fly, and it then takes them considerable time to clumsily get fully air-borne.

Ralph and I were good friends and his mother and mine enjoyed each others' company also and we visited back and forth as often as we could but on account of the distance separating our homes, this was not very frequent.

To get back to my story about the Masquerade dance however-- During the Christmas holidays there was to be held in Belle Fourche a big Masquerade Ball which was advertised to be an extremely good one with fine music provided, good eats, and plenty of costumes promised for rental to those who did not provide their own. All who attended must be fully masked, but of course had to lift their masks for identification and show their invitation before entering the dance hall. Quite an affair, and Ralph and I were thrilled at having received an invitation and looked forward to having a good time although we were not fortunate enough to have lady pardners and had to "go stag," after arriving somewhat late in the evening.

The matter of selecting our costumes was the first obstacle to surmount and we found these pretty well picked over. I forget now what I managed to salvage out of the ones available but had no trouble in regards it fitting me, but getting one the right size to fit Ralph was a different story.

He was a big man -- short legged but extremely long in the back -- and the only costume that came anywhere near fitting him was a Red Devil outfit complete with forked tail and horns to match. We had to peel Ralph down to his underwear to manage crowding him into the Devil suit and after much effort in dressing him, he sure looked the part and could only move with considerable effort; but as he was not geared up for speed anyhow, we thought he could navigate to advantage and we went to the dance, The Devil and me.

There was a big crowd and the music was good and as it was not necessary to be introduced to the ladies, there was no excuse for not joining in with the spirit of the occasion of having a good time and this I proceeded to do. After some time however, I noticed Ralph was not

dancing but standing back on the side lines and I thought I better check up on the Devil and when I did he told me that he was feeling quite a noticeable draft in his rear and had been trying for some time to signal me to come to his aid. We meandered out-side and discovered that the Devil suit and Ralph had parted company; there was a very decided gap in his rear end which was so pronounced that repair was impossible and there was nothing left to do but go back to the room we had engaged at a rooming house and pry Ralph out of his disguise. After getting him out of the thing and his crawling back into his clothes we went back to the dance and Ralph had to sit on the side lines until it was time to unmask and eat the refreshments provided at that time.

After the lunch the dance went on for awhile and he got to dance a little anyhow but the big event went kind of sour to him and we rode back to his place not too much pleased over the outcome although so far as I was concerned I had a good time and joshed Ralph about his looking like the Devil at least. He said that he not only looked it but that the suit was so tight that he also felt like the devil until the thing ruptured.

So ended another of many happy remembrances, Ralph and I remained friends long afterwards and often recalled this incident in later years when we met. He passed away only a few years ago in California.

#### Shopping Trip to Belle Fourche

On account of our being so far from town, it was necessary that we buy our provisions and supplies in large quantities and usually made only about two trips a year into town with a wagon for the supplies needed. We raised all the meat that we used except, of course, the game that hunting provided. We also got our flour in large enough quantities to last nearly a year by taking wheat to the mill and trading it for flour. The rest of the groceries and other supplies we either sent mail orders for at least a part of them or bought them when we went in for supplies with the lumber wagon.

When it was learned that someone was going to make a trip to town, other neighbors who were in need of anything asked the fellow who was going to go in to bring it out for them. This sometimes amounted to quite a lot of extra shopping, but not as much as one would expect as whenever we noticed that we were getting short of anything it was written down on a "Want List" and in that way we were able to keep pretty well supplied and seldom ran out of anything. If we did and someone else had more than necessary, we would borrow it until we could get into town.

Mother seldom went to town as the ride was too hard on her. Will and Aggie often made the trip and we would do their chores while they were gone and they would bring out our supplies. Likewise Will would do our chores when both Father and I would go to town and Mother would go up to their house to stay until we got back. I often went alone and it was quite a vacation to get to town and get all the things that Mother had on her want list and keep the spending "within the budget." We did not have

things charged to us but tried to pay for what we got and if we did not have the money, we just got along without the article.

On one occasion after finishing up my shopping and getting my dinner and paying my stable bill, I found that I had just 25 cents left in my pocket. I was walking past Dan Robert's saloon at the time and turned in the door and walked back to where the gambling tables were operating and stood watching the roulette game which was going at the time.

After watching awhile, I thought that I might as well be entirely broke as the way I was, so I pulled out my quarter and threw it on the black and waited for the ball to drop. And it dropped in the black and I won another quarter. I kept playing and with a beginner's luck wound up with something over \$30 and had sense enough to quit and walk out. It was the first time that I had ever had the nerve to try gambling and I was a happy boy to have that much money all my own at one time and wondered just what I would do with it.

Remembering that Mother had been wanting a barrel churn to replace the makeshift dasher and cover I had made to fit in an earthenware three gallon crock that she had been using, I bought her a barrel churn, also goods for a new dress. I bought Father a pair of new boots and a jack knife and myself a new hat and some fancy shirts and socks and some other stuff. O yes, I also included some candy and a few cigars. Spent all my money, but was happy.

When I arrived home and unloaded the wagon (I left my purchases until the last) and after Mother had checked over to see if I had gotten all that she had ordered, I gave her the package with the dress in it and set the churn up in the kitchen. I then gave Father his presents and laid my own on my bed and Mother just stood there with her mouth open. Finally she broke out with the questions, "Young man, where did you get all this stuff? You surely did not CHARGE it, did you?" I did not know what else to tell her except the truth and so I told how I had gambled and won \$30 and bought the stuff for a present to them and also to myself.

Father just grinned and said, "Thank you, son." Mother said, "I hope that you will not make a habit of it because it is not right. But I am sure glad to get that churn; I have wanted one a long time."

Of course Mother wanted to try the new churn and as soon as she had enough cream on hand, she prepared to see how the new churn would operate. She read the directions, washed up the machine nicely and proceeded to make some butter.

For those of you who perhaps never saw one of these contraptions, I will try and describe it. First, the barrel (of different sizes, that one was a five gallon capacity) was fitted with a lid which clamped on, with a cork gasket to make it tight when closed. On each side of the barrel just half way down there was the axle bolted on. That fitted into the frame and this caused the barrel to hang free and rotate when the handle (which was attached to one side of the axle) was turned causing the barrel to turn end over end and produced a tumbling effect that agitated the cream and soon produced the butter.

On the lower edge of the barrel, there was the vent or drain by which the buttermilk was drawn off when the churning was completed. This had a cork stopper to make it tight. You were supposed to not put in more than about two and a half or three gallons of cream for each churning.

Well, everything went along all right and Mother was happily turning the crank and wondering how long it would be until the butter came when something happened. She had forgotten just one little thing that the directions called for and that was a caution to be sure and open the vent by removing the cork and let out the air in the churn after the churn had been revolved for awhile, after which, of course, you were to replace the cork and proceed. She just kept turning however, and when the pressure got strong enough, it blew out the cork and the cream under pressure made a festoon of beautiful proportions all over the kitchen. In fact, it really "hit the ceiling" and did it make a mess. I got into the house in time to help clean up, but things were pretty taut around there I assure you. I dared not say anything for neither the churn or I, as the donor thereof, were very popular about this time.

This lesson, however, proved very effective and thereafter she got along fine with it, but for a long time it was dangerous to mention anything about her mechanical ability in running new-fashioned gadgets.

#### Death of Father; Cattle Drive

Father's health, which had been poorly for a number of years, commenced to get worse. He had been doctoring for a considerable time with but little success. During the Winter of 1898-99 he was very bad and by March 1, 1899 it got so that we felt it necessary that we get the doctor for him. Getting a doctor those days meant something. There was not telephone service and the only way possible was to send for one and that meant a horseback ride to town.

Will and Aggie were staying at our place and helping Mother care for him and it was decided that I should go to town and send the doctor out. I started out March 3 and rode to Belle Fourche, arriving there late that night, and got in touch with Dr. L.J. Townsend, who had recently located there, and got him to start out for the ranch.

It was storming a little and got worse as he went along with his team of horses and buggy. He got lost and missed the road and had considerable trouble in finding the way; but finally, after getting about half way he was met by George Brownfield, whom the folks had dispatched to advise him that Father had passed away early that morning (March 4, 1899) so the doctor turned back to town.

In the mean time, after resting my horse and also sleeping for a few hours, I started home and did not know that Father had died until I got there late that night.

Such was the passing of a good man. He was 67 years old when he died and he had been sick a long time.

The neighbors were wonderful in our time of trouble and they did everything they could to help us in every way. We decided that we would bury Father in Belle Fourche Cemetery and Will and I started in to town with the body while Mother and Aggie stayed at the ranch as it was storming quite bad and very cold at the time.

After arriving in town, we took the body to the undertaker who placed it in a casket and made arrangements for the funeral, which was held the following day and Father laid to rest in Riverview Cemetery. My cousins Dave and Jim Malcolm and Jim Mortimer were then in Belle Fourche, working on some buildings that were being erected at that time and they were very helpful.

When it was all over and we got home again, it surely seemed strange and lonesome without Father being around. While he was a very quiet man and never had very much to say, he was always around, taking an interest in everything and doing whatever he could to help along. Long before he died he talked to me about his not going to be with us long and told me that he was depending on me to take over and handle things as though they were my own, thereby gain confidence in myself so that I would not miss him so much after he should leave us. Further that he would always be ready to council with me and give all the advice that he could on anything that was troubling me, but for me to take on the management of the ranch and feel that it was my responsibility.

I tried to do this and gradually worked into the way of things and I suppose became a little swelled up over being the boss, so to speak. At any rate, his method of handling the matter proved to be very wise, and except for sorrow and regret for his death, things went along as usual and I assumed full responsibility as though I was much older than my actual years (18). In fact, I had very little boyhood and had to take a man's place in many ways very early in my life. Rather think I thought myself a great deal smarter than I was, but I would listen to any advice that was offered -- sometimes (perhaps to my disadvantage) not take it as given.

The increase in cattle and the incoming of the sheep commenced to have their effect in crowding the range so that several of the settlers in the vicinity sold out their holdings to Henry Weare, owner of the Cross Anchor outfit, and moved to other locations. Mr. Weare had a standing offer and price of about \$500 for a quarter section (160 acres) and he paid to anyone who wished to sell. While it was a very low price, it was all that could be realized for the land at that time and gave a ready market if the holder wanted to get rid of it and move to other places where they would have more room.

Late in the year of 1899, Will and Aggie sold their cattle and ranch and moved to Belle Fourche. They stayed there for awhile and later bought a ranch down the river about two miles from Belle Fourche and moved there in the Spring of 1900. The Summer of 1900 was a very dry one and crops and grass were short. We had some feed left over, but did not harvest

enough feed to winter our stock at the Deer Creek ranch and it became necessary to either sell the stock or move them to where there was feed enough to winter on.

We finally decided to move the cattle to Will and Aggie's ranch and bought their hay and feed. We moved the cattle down later in the Fall of 1900. Mother went to Chicago to spend the winter with her sister and husband while I stayed with Aggie and Will and took care of the cattle until March, 1901, when I took them back to the Deer Creek ranch where we had enough feed to carry them through until grass started.

I had a pretty hard trip back with the cattle. It was nice weather when we started and I had Cecil Ingersoll and Nick Stetta helping me drive them. Will was to haul a load of hay for the first and second night's feeding and after this I had arranged to stop at two different ranches where I could get some feed.

All went well until the morning of the second day. After we started, the weather changed and it commenced to snow hard. It was tough going from there on and we got to the Belle Fourche River at the old Riverdale crossing. The river was up a little and running big snow balls from the heavy snow that had fallen. We had considerable trouble in getting the cattle started into the river but finally did. In the process my horse found a hole or stumbled over a stone, at least he fell down in the middle of the river and I got soaking wet.

Fortunately when we got across to the other side of the river and into the old Baxter house (which was abandoned), there was an old stove there and after building up a good fire, I finally got dried out after a fashion. Will came along with the second load of hay for the cattle and our camp outfit and we got supper and went to bed.

From there on we got along pretty well and got to the ranch about noon the fourth day. Lost one cow on the trip. She slipped on the ice on the edge of the river, broke her leg and we had to kill her. Altogether, I guess we were lucky at that.

Father's Headstone

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While staying at Will and Aggie's place (two miles from Belle Fourche) wintering the cattle, I had some time to spare after feeding early in the mornings and later in the evening and used to come up town several times a week. My cousins (Jim Mortimer, George and Jim Malcolm) were then working for the contractor Jay O'Banion cutting stone for the new high school that was being erected in Belle Fourche. I spent quite a lot of time watching the workmen in the building process.

The stone cutters were having a lot of trouble in getting their chisels properly sharpened and tempered. The blacksmith in town did not seem to be able to temper the tools right. This gave a great deal of trouble and caused frequent resharpener and retempering. Will had moved his blacksmith tools from Deer Creek to the new ranch he had bought and set up a little shop in an old shed there. This gave me an idea and I asked O'Banion to let me take some of the tools down to the ranch and I would see if Will and I could do any better with sharpening them. He readily agreed. So I took quite a bunch of the worst ones down to the ranch to try to sharpen and temper them.

Well, the result was that with Will's assistance, he and I managed to get a very good job done on the first batch and Mr. O'Banion told me that I was elected to be tool sharpener from then on. For the rest of the time I was there I sharpened all the tools on the job with Will helping occasionally; but as he was very busy with fixing up the old buildings on the ranch, the most of the blacksmithing fell to me.

Jim Mortimer made a proposal to me that if I would supply the stone necessary, that he and the other stonecutters on the job would carve a headstone for Father's grave and set it up for me on the cemetery lot. I agreed to this immediately and got Mr. O'Banion to order the proper sized stone for the job and Jim got busy. In spare time he and the other boys working occasionally finished up a splendid headstone and set it up on a good foundation in the cemetery where it has stood for the past 53 years and is still in perfect condition.

Jay O'Banion charged me enough for the stone used in the process to balance up my bill for sharpening the tools all winter, so I don't think he lost anything and I was perfectly satisfied. The stone had to be large chunks and one of the three pieces was about five feet long and as it was nice clear sandstone shipped from Hot Springs, I suppose it was

worth what it cost me which was just a little energy coupled with good luck in being able to properly temper the tools.

#### The Hundred Head of Cattle

In the summer of 1901 when I happened to be in town for some reason I called at the bank and was talking to the cashier, Arthur Marble.. He asked me how many cattle we had and I told him about 100 head including that year's calf crop. He asked me if I could run any more and I told him that I probably could now that some of the settlers had moved out and that the prospect for a good grass and feed crop seemed possible. He then told me that there was a large bunch of southern cattle up at the yards having been shipped in for sale and if I was interested in buying some, I should go up and look them over. If I wanted to buy any, the bank would be glad to furnish the money. Of course they would want a mortgage on those I purchased and also on the cattle we then owned as security for a loan.

Well, I went up and looked the cattle over and concluded that they were worth the money providing that they could be kept for two years and everything went all right. They were two-year-old steers and like all southern cattle at that time, rather small for their age, and it would take at least two years to grow them and show a profit that would be safe to figure on.

I came back to the bank and said that I would take a hundred head of them and Mr. Marble proceeded to make out the papers and after doing so, handed me the mortgage and note to sign. I looked it over and noticed that the note and mortgage were made payable in six months and called his attention to the fact that I was certain that I would have to have at least two years to come out on the deal and asked him to make the papers out so as to be due in two years instead of six months.

He said that he could not do this but that it would be all right as they would make new papers at the end of the six months and extend them for another six months and that was the way it would have to be.

I had never had any banking experiences nor borrowed any money, but I insisted that I could not see it that way. I agreed to pay the interest every six months but insisted that the paper be not made payable until two years from date or until I sold the cattle, if prior to that time. When he told me that this was not banking practice and he could not do it that way, I told him that I did not want the cattle bad enough to get them under those conditions and quit thinking about it.

It was a very fortunate thing that I did not get into this as many who did found themselves in bad shape when the six months were up. The cattle market broke sharply and the banks called their loans within a year and several men I knew went broke by buying too heavily at that particular time. This was not good judgment on my part, but just plain good luck I guess. But anyhow, I missed that one.

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Somewhere about this time Mother got the idea that she would build a small house in Belle Fourche. She therefore bought a lot in Park Addition and made arrangements for Dave Malcolm (my cousin), to build a four room square cottage. Dave was a carpenter and soon had the house erected and she rented it to George Ross who was at that time working for Charley Small who had a clothing store in Belle Fourche.

Things were rather unsettled for us at Deer Creek; Will and Aggie were gone and range conditions were not satisfactory for the running of cattle and I began to look for another location. George Brownfield and I made a long trip up into Montana where Orville Brownfield had settled on Box Elder Creek. I heard of a place that was offered for sale that was owned by a man named Jensen. It was a splendid hay ranch and he had offered to sell it for five hundred dollars. At that time he was working for Col. Dawson, an Englishman who ran a big horse ranch on the Mespah.

We went up to see him about it but he had apparently changed his mind about selling the place. I offered him the price that I heard that he had asked for it and, in fact, raised the bid to fifteen hundred dollars but I guess that this was just too much money and decided that he was not going to sell it at all. So I quit and came back home.

Had I been able to buy that place I suppose that I would have become a resident of Montana and it would have changed my entire life. But it seemed that this was not to be and after my return home, Mother and I decided that we would sell out our bunch of cattle and the ranch and move to Belle Fourche. I think that it was mostly her idea that I should quit trying to be a large cow man and seek some other means of livelihood and possibly she did not relish the idea of going away out so far from civilization and commence another experience of building up a ranch in the wilds of Montana and that my restless disposition demanded some other kind of expression than trying to conquer the various obstacles incident

to the successful operation of the stock business. Anyhow, this was our decision and we commenced to prepare to make the move, be it for better or worse.

After Father's death, mother bought the relinquishment of his rights from a man named Harley Dalby, who had filed on a place adjoining ours. Under the law she could make commutation proof after eighteen months. We sold the two places to Henry Weare and after Mother had made final proof on hers, the transfer was made just before we left for Belle Fourche. We sold the cattle to a man named George Nielsen who lived about three miles South of our place on the Belle Fourche River. George had been working for cow outfits for many years and went by the name of "Denmark." He was a hard worker and prospered and raised a fine family. George died many years ago but Mrs. Nielson still lives on the old place with a son. I had the pleasure of seeing and having a visit with her for a short time just a few years ago.

. G. Mortimer Memoirs

3. To Buy or Not to Buy

Reaching now the time of my leaving Wyoming to return to South Dakota, my thoughts go back to a small log cabin located in a beautiful spot near the Belle Fourche River, southwest of our old ranch. It had been built for a long time, I do not know who by, nor when. The builder had "gophered" out a part of the hillside to get a level place upon which to recess one end of the cabin so as to protect it from the weather and perhaps conceal it from view to a degree. There was only one window (I should say a place for one), and the only door had swung on wooden hinges and was held shut by a wooden slip latch. There was no floor and the pole and sod roof had caved in altogether; it was in a very dilapidated condition, but at one time was home for perhaps an old time hunter or trapper.

What appealed to me though was a crude wooden sign nailed to the door that had the following inscription cut deeply into the weathered wood by a sharp knife.

"Goodbye old cabin,  
I bid you adieu,  
I may come back to Wyoming,  
But never again to you."

I often regret that I did not remove this gem and retain it as a keepsake but there was so much sentiment attached to it, that at the time I did not have the heart to do so.

When I left our old log home on Deer Creek I recalled the inscription on that old cabin door, with about the same reluctance as perhaps affected its former owner when he pulled out. And when I did return some twenty years afterward, our old house and all the

other buildings had been removed and only the well left in evidence. So it is that "Time Marches On."

The decision to quit the ranch and move to town was made with considerable uncertainty on my part, for to say the least the change was going to be quite radical. I was going to start a business career, about which I knew absolutely nothing, and take my place among the business men to whom I was practically a stranger. Certainly the transition from a rancher to a merchant exemplified the old saying, "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." The unbounded confidence and encouragement always placed in me by my dear old mother, I am sure, gave me the strength by which I made the decision that I could and would succeed in the attempt.

The strong friendships formed at this period of my life still remain in my memory although most of those old friends have passed to their reward. In those days we seemed to find more time to cultivate closer contact with each other and, in spite of having to work hard, we managed to get a lot of fun out of life, as well as doing what we could to help each other when we had a friend who needed help.

When we moved to town we had to rent a house for a short time until Mr. Ross could find a place to move to, so that we could get into the house that Mother had built. We brought the work horses and my two saddle horses in with us and after keeping them awhile I finally sold them, too. I found it a hard thing to do when it came to parting with those two saddle horses. It was like parting with old friends. They were good ones, too, and I had raised one of them from a colt. They were good enough that I was able to sell them to the Government at Fort Meade for cavalry mounts and I knew that they would be well cared for at least. I also had quite a bunch of range horses that I had leased to Joe Irwin on shares, and did not sell these for quite awhile after I had moved to town.

Well, I guess that this about ends my Wyoming residence and brings me and Mother into South Dakota again in November of the year nineteen hundred one (1901).

After getting settled in a rented house in Belle Fourche I was confronted with the problem of getting something to do. As I had no experience in anything but ranching, this was pretty much of a problem to solve. Mr. Alanson Giles and his son Edgar were running a hardware store then in Belle Fourche, the old man owning a two-thirds interest and Edgar one-third. Mr. Giles also had a big ranch down the river a few miles and was kept pretty busy trying to manage it and handle the store at the same time and wanted to sell out his interest in the store so that he could devote all his time to the ranch.

We had been trading with them all the time that we had been on the ranch and were fairly well acquainted and I used to loaf around the store occasionally after I came to town. Mr. Giles suggested to me that it would be a good opportunity for me to buy him out and go into the hardware business with Edgar.

Mother and I talked it over and decided that it might be all right to look into the matter and so I did. The first thing to consider was how much money would it take to do this. Mother and I had about \$3000 between us, besides the house that she had built some little time before and this was all we did have. This left me with about \$1500 that could be called mine with which to gamble on.

After several sessions with Mr. Giles as to what he would take for his holdings, he finally made me a proposition. That for the sum of \$1500, he would turn over to me his entire two-third interest in the store, me to assume all his share of the liabilities and secure assets of the Giles and Son Hardware business. He also furnished me with a statement showing his estimate of how much stock there was on hand, the amount that the firm owed the wholesalers and a list of assets in the way of notes and accounts receivable that were coming from his customers.

Taking this as a basis from which to work, the plan was that if I bought his interest I was to sell Edgar back enough interest so as to make us each have a one-half interest in the proposed new firm of Giles and Mortimer. Mr. Giles owned the building in which the store was located and this was, of course, to be rented to the new firm at a reasonable rental per month.

"To Buy or Not to Buy," was the question. Having been left pretty much to myself as to making decisions in the past and having a much higher value of my ability and knowledge than was justified under the circumstances, I was inclined to take a chance and go into the deal. I did to a certain extent realize the fact that in so doing I was laboring under a handicap of knowing nothing about the hardware business or in fact, any mercantile business and had never been behind a counter in my life, did not know the credit from the debit side of a ledger and in all respects, was just a blank.

To make a long story short, I took Mr. Giles up on the bargain and paid him the \$1500 for his share of the business "as was," sold Edgar enough interest (on time) to make us equal partners and was in the hardware business in a hurry.

After making the deal, I went over to the bank and told my friend Mr. Marble, the cashier, that I had bought out Mr. Giles and was going into the hardware business. He did not seem to be very enthusiastic over the proposition and asked me several questions of what the deal was. I then told him about it and he asked me, "When are you going to invoice?" Well, I hated to say it, but I promptly replied, "What do you mean by invoicing? I just bought the thing." (Just like I had been used to buying a cow brute - or maybe I should say "a pig in a poke.")

I will never forget the expression on Marble's face after I told him that. He just looked at me for a minute and said, "Well, maybe the Good Lord will take care of you, but I can't." He then told me a few of the things I could have learned had I talked to him first instead of after. But anyway I was then a hardware merchant so to speak and had bet my last

dollar on the outcome. So it was now up to me to find out if I was to sink or swim from there on.

S.G.Mortimer Memoirs

#### 4. To Catch A Thief

The hardware business proved to be pretty good and I gradually worked into it and learned by trial and error some of the ramifications of the business. I took a correspondence course in bookkeeping and got so I could understand some of the things I should have known before I went into the business.

We did a large credit business those days and it took a lot of money to carry the stockmen from one shipping season to the other and I found that I needed more capital. After one year I bought out Edgar's interest in the business and from there on I managed it alone. Dr. L.J. Townsend and his father put in some money with me in the business and we worked up a very nice trade and did quite well from there on and made some good money.

My Finlander friends from the old Snoma vicinity were very loyal customers of mine and sent any newcoming Finns to me for their hardware needs. As I also had quite an acquaintance with the old Bear Lodge friends, the business grew in spite of its many shortcomings. I used to make it a point to be always available, be it early or late when a customer wanted to load out his outfit and very careful to fill all mail orders when they came in. If I did not have the article in stock, I would go out and buy it from my competitor if he had it and so not disappoint my customer. I eventually worked up a nice mail order business.

One of the unpleasant things I had to do in my hardware experience was in running down a rather bad character who lifted a new rifle off the rack in the store and made off with it. I was suspicious of the fellow as he had been loafing around town for some time and whenever he came in, I watched him pretty closely.

On this occasion after he had gone out of the store, I soon discovered that a new rifle was missing and I proceeded to take after him. After quite a hunt, I finally caught up with him and made him acknowledge that he had taken the gun and cashed (sic) it out. So I turned him over to the Chief of Police.

The following description of the incident appearing in The Belle Fourche Bee of Jan 14, 1904 will explain the incident better than I can. Anyhow we put this fellow out of circulation for awhile as he got a year or two in the "Pen" for his trouble and as far as I know he never showed up again in Belle Fourche.

"Sam Turner, a young fellow who has been punching cows in this section for a time, and best known among his companions as "Brazos Sam" got cute last Monday and while loafing around the store of Giles and Mortimer, swiped a brand new Savage rifle. Mayor Mortimer missing the weapon in a short time, started on a still hunt and soon ascertained that the genial Samuel was the purloiner and tackling the fellow, made him give up. He

had cashed (sic) the gun under the freight warehouse along the railroad track. After getting the gun, Chief Brooks arrested the man and he is now in the County jail. Tuesday at his preliminary he pled guilty to the charge of grand larceny and now awaits his sentence."

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

12. Grubstake for Calamity

The Belle Fourche Bee in its issue of Jan. 16, 1953 had the following item in its "50 Years Ago - Jan 15, 1903" column.

"Calamity Jane, the noted frontier woman, with her daughter, arrived in Belle Fourche and expects to make this point her home for the present. She says she is tired of travelling and desires to locate somewhere, where she can lead a quiet life, earn her living and spend the balance of her days in peace and quiet. Her true name is Mrs. Burke."

Poor Jane has been written about by so many would-be historians, that if she was able to read their versions of the various escapades credited to her, she would be greatly surprised, to say the least.

I knew Calamity Jane when she came to Belle Fourche to live. I well remember the first time I saw her. She came into the hardware store and after introducing herself, asked me if my name was Mortimer and when I told her it was, she asked if I was any relation to George Mortimer whom she said she used to know up in Montana in early days. Then I told her that I was his son and that my father was dead, but that I had often heard him speak of knowing her when she was a young girl (Jane Canary, I think he said was her maiden name).

Of course, with that kind of an introduction Calamity and I became friends and after talking awhile, she said that she was going to do laundry work for the girls in the Red Light District and that she needed an outfit to start up with. She had no money, but I staked her to what she needed in the way of wash tubs, boiler, flat irons, etc. and let her pick out what she wanted. In other words, I started her up in business with no payment down.

She did pretty well from the start and paid me a little at a time until it was all paid up. Every once in a while, however, she would take a notion to celebrate and proceed to get drunk. When she was "in her cups", she was pretty much of a nuisance to every one she came in contact with and swore like a trooper and proceeded to raise Cain as long as she remained intoxicated.

Of course, after one of these spells she was very repentant and also "broke." She would come around and ask for a little money to eat on until she could get straightened out and back to work. I would give her five or ten dollars and she always paid me back as soon as she earned the money. However, I recall that when she moved from Belle Fourche to

Deadwood, she left owing me three dollars, which, poor soul, she never got around to paying me, as she died soon after.

My remembrance of her was that she was just a poor old woman who had been buffed around by conditions that were not all of her own making. And from what my father told me of his knowledge of her younger days in the mining camps of Montana, she was far from being all bad and had a large heart, which caused her to be ever ready to help and assist those in need. Many a poor miner owed his life to her care of him while sick. It is perhaps true that she used to deal faro in the gambling halls and frequent places where a woman should not, and fraternize more or less with the rough characters of those early days; but as far as joining bands of outlaws, hold-up men, and the like, I do not believe that such was ever the case.

If so many of us who are prone to exploit the misfortune of others just to enlarge on publicity mostly for ourselves or what is called "local color" for the tourist would only recall a portion of what is good in the other fellow, I am sure we could at least be more comfortable in our own misdeeds which may not have been brought to light.

In my own personal opinion there are many other women in the world who, if the truth was known, had or have records that would put poor old Calamity in the background. Only St. Peter will be able to properly classify them as they enter the gate, and I am betting that Calamity Jane has plenty of company wherever she is.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

11. High Noon

Two neighboring ranchers operating adjoining holdings northeast of Belle Fourche had been having trouble over range, water, and other problems occasioned by encroachment of their livestock grazing on what they considered their rightful claims on such. Finally the quarrel came to a head, and the matter got to a point where it wasn't pleasant and bad blood existed between them in no uncertain terms.

I am going to refer to these two men in this story as "Jim" and "Curley" which will serve the purpose. Both were good men, but hot tempered and unreasonable, which made it practically impossible to get their problems straightened

out by way of any compromise between them. They both traded with me and were good customers. They confided their troubles to me and each would tell about how unreasonable and ornery the other fellow was and threaten all sorts of things each was going to do to the other about settling their trouble.

In turn, I tried to get them to settle their differences in a peaceful manner and avoid personal violence by all means, as such would only aggravate matters. But they seemingly could or would not listen to reason and things got worse and worse as time went on. Fortunately, both of them seldom happened to come to town the same day, so that personal encounter was avoided and the fight went on and got to be considered somewhat of a joke. If referred to by any of their friends, it was

likened to their doing their fighting "with gunny sacks, with both contestants fifty yards apart from the other, and no running up."

One day, Curley came into the store and bought a few needed supplies. He, of course, had to tell me all about the latest and to him, the worst thing, that Jim had pulled on him and said that the next time he ran into Jim there certainly was going to be trouble. I gave him my usual advice about this and passed it off as just another of their squabbles, and as I was going to the bank, he and I walked out of the store together.

It was rather a cool morning and I noticed that Curley was wearing a long heavy overcoat over his ordinary clothes. We had only gone about half a block up the street, when at the corner, who should we meet but Jim coming around from the cross street. Before I knew it, both of them pulled off their coats and started to fight. After Curley had shed the long overcoat, I noticed that he had a six-shooter strapped on. Jim was unarmed.

Curley evidently forgot that he had a gun and they went at it - hammer and tongs. Quite a crowd commenced to gather to watch the outcome and I thought it would be a good thing to let them settle the matter. To make it kind of an even affair, I grabbed Curley's gun out of the scabbard so that he could not use it (providing that he happened to remember that he had it along).

After they had fought awhile, we got them separated with but little damage done to either; but Curley, when getting slightly the worst of the encounter, did remember his gun and reached for it and found it gone, was pretty sore at me for having disarmed him.

After the battle, Curley and Jim were led off the scene by some of their friends and I went to the bank and then back to my hardware store.

Shortly after my return to the store, Jim came in and he was still mad and wanted to buy a six-shooter and some cartridges. I refused to sell him the gun while he was in such a condition because I knew what would happen and he went out, mad as a hornet, saying that he would buy one somewhere else.

Dan Arnold, a former sheriff and police officer, was in the store at the time, and after Jim had gone out we watched him go into another store, presumably to buy the gun. We did not think that they would sell him one; but to make sure, we both went out and waited for Jim to come out.

We did not have long to wait, for out came Jim with a gun in his hand and he was stuffing shells in it and starting up the street looking for Curley. Dan and I had planned on what to do and Jim had not gone far, when Dan caught up with him on one side and I was even with him on the other side. We both nailed him by the arms at the same time and had the gun in a matter of seconds.

We took Jim back to the store and talked with him until he cooled off a bit and got him to agree to talk things over with Curley. Then we sent for assistance from a few friends who helped things along. They both

realized how close to a fatal ending their quarrel had led them and, as far as I know, they had no more trouble as long as they were neighbors.

Dan took the gun that Jim had bought back to the store he purchased it from and surely "told off" the merchant who sold it to Jim when he was in the condition he was when he bought it. The storekeeper claimed that he did not know anything was wrong and said that he certainly would not have made the sale had he been aware of the facts, etc. This may have been true, but I am inclined to doubt it. Anyway, I was glad to have been able to help avoid either of these men getting into serious trouble by their gun toting. They both appreciated Dan's and my active interference in the deal and were men enough to thank us for it later.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

6. The Keeley Cure

"Old Theodore", as he was known (although not an old man, perhaps in his forties), was a tinner by trade and a piano player by choice. He could play anything on the piano and do it wonderfully well. He was always in demand for playing for dancing parties held by the "real society groups", as well as his principal vocation of furnishing the music at the more exciting places in the Red Light District. Taking everything into consideration, he was quite a popular fellow. His one failing was that he punished a lot of whiskey and was never what could be called perfectly sober. It was quite a job to keep him in just the right condition so that his several abilities could function when his services were needed.

I used to put him to work at the store when he was able to work in the tin shop and always had a lot of work for him to do, as he was an excellent workman. But it surely took a lot of figuring to keep Theodore and the tin shop moving along in harmony, to say nothing of the wear and tear on my nerves.

It finally got to the point where something had to be done if this gentleman's services were going to be utilized to the fullest extent and I moved in on my old friend Dr. L.J. Townsend, who at that time had an interest with me in the hardware business, and asked him if he could do anything professionally for Theodore.

After thinking it over, the doctor said that he thought he could give him the "Keeley Treatment" if he would agree to it being done. He further stated that it would be a pretty serious matter to handle because someone would have to be in constant attendance with the patient for a considerable period of time. But if Theodore would agree to take the treatment and I would agree to getting the necessary help to handle and care for him, we would go ahead and try to straighten him out.

We called Theodore in and put it up to him and he promptly agreed to the proposal and said that he wanted to quit drinking but seemingly could not do it without assistance. This we agreed to furnish and I rented a room in a rooming house and made arrangements with the parties running it to furnish the necessary food, etc. I then lined up a force of "male

nurses" (not registered) among the friends of Theodore to stay with and take care of him in staggered periods, so that he was never left alone. The good doctor then took over and we gave poor Theodore "the works."

For about ten days or two weeks things got pretty strenuous around that rooming house and both the doctor and myself found out we had sure bit off a chunk of responsibility in assuming the cure of friend Theodore, who by the way went through the torture of the damned for awhile and he was seeing everything from pink elephants to green turtles or worse most of the time.

It proved quite a problem to keep the necessary help on hand and to try to pacify the owner of the rooming house for the somewhat unpleasant results of the patient's reactions to the program.

However, everything has an end and the results fully justified the effort. Theodore came out of it a different man. He never took a drink, worked in the shop faithfully, and played his piano at dances and saved his money during all the time I remained in the hardware business. After I sold out, however, he did not get along with the new owner and I think after awhile, got to drinking again and moved away and I lost track of him.

Theodore appreciated what we had done for him and tried his best to combat the terrible liquor habit which had such a hold on him, but I suppose such was not to be. Whatever the outcome was, he should be entitled to the credit of making the effort.

Personally, however, I do not want to participate in a repeat performance of this episode.

S.G.Mortimer Memoirs

## 7. His Honor, the Mayor

The year 1903 was an eventful year in my life. The town of Belle Fourche kept growing and it was decided that it should be incorporated into a CITY and an election was held for that purpose (April 20, 1903). The election carried (78 to 23) for the change in government and it became necessary to elect a new set of officers for the term of one year, or until the next general election.

For some unknown reason, I was nominated and elected on the 14th day of May, 1903 as the first mayor of Belle Fourche. That was just one other thing that I had no idea of what was in store for me, but after it happened without any exertion on my part I was put in the position of having to make the best of things. Therefore, I accepted and was sworn into the office. I later found out that the honor of being Mayor of a city carried with it many responsibilities, many were not pleasant and some of which I shall elaborate on.

Soon after my election I found plenty to keep me busy with one thing and another and the City Council had to hold many special meetings to get lined up with revision of ordinances to conform with the difference in city government and the old town ordinances.

There were, of course, some appointments to be made, among others a Chief of Police. As this individual would have a great deal to do with the keeping of peace in the city and should be one with a great amount of judgment as to how to accomplish that important duty, it to me was a question as to whom I should select from the several applicants who were seeking the position.

After several conferences with the other members of the Council, I found a majority in favor of one man whom I did not think was the man for the job on account of his temperament. He was quick to anger and somewhat overbearing and I felt sure would not only be in continual trouble himself, but would also cause everyone else more or less trouble, too. However, I felt that I might be wrong and inasmuch as the rest of the Council felt so strong for him, I named him chief. But I had my fingers crossed when I did it and proceeded to go ahead with the rest of the business at hand.

The fire department was in horrible shape. We had very little equipment and the members of the volunteer organization few in number and many too old to get to the fire after the alarm before the building was burned down. There were quite a number of professional gamblers in town then and these fellows were of course up all night. I got several of them interested in joining the project of reorganizing the fire department. One little fellow by the name of Ole Trot was a kind of leader of the bunch and very much interested and to make a long story short, we really got the job done. Soon we had a good live organization. They got out and practiced and whenever the bell rang, night or day, they were there and did an excellent job. We had good cooperation from the people and soon got some additional equipment and from there on things went fine.

I had not much more than got the fire department lined out and in good working order before I ran into a proposition that was going to seriously affect one of what then was one of the "major industries" you might say of this and most western towns. I refer to the gambling which was carried on in all the saloons.

We had five saloons at that time and all had gambling more or less. The cowboys coming in town off the round-up were nearly all good customers and, after being out on the range for a few months, were liberal spenders. The games allowed them to soon get rid of their surplus money and be able to go back to work sooner than otherwise. Although the games all ran on the square and none allowed that were crooked, the percentage of course finally cleaned out the player who kept at it, which most of them did.

The State Legislature of 1903 passed a law making gambling illegal in the State of South Dakota. This law did not go into effect until July 1, 1903 and, of course, it was up to the City officials to enforce the law and close the gambling. This was done, much to the discomfort and against the wishes of all the gamblers and saloon keepers in the city who had the idea that the closing was optional with the officials, which of course was not so.

Anyhow, it darned near wrecked my pet fire department which as I stated before enjoyed the membership of most of the younger members of the gambling fraternity in the City. They voiced their objections long and loud and predicted dire results of the closing of their "legitimate business" as they called it. My friend Ole whom I had appointed Fire Chief even went so far as to buy a sack of grass seed and proceed to walk up and down the streets scattering the seed as his prediction that grass would grow in the streets of the City after the gambling would be closed.

He was not alone in this either because many of the old timers thought that when the gamblers folded up and left town, it was also time for you to roll your pack and go also. But things quieted down after considerable time and some trouble, but the predicted grass crop never materialized anyhow.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

8. New Chief

Considerable feeling developed over the issue of the law being strictly enforced regarding abolishing gambling and there could be no question of straddling the fence. One had to be either for or against it. Although I had always been not opposed to the saloon business and the gambling being carried on together as it had always been done in Western towns, I realized the fact that certainly as Mayor of the City I could not do anything but see that the law was enforced. Therefore, I took a definite stand and let it be known that as far as the City of Belle Fourche was concerned, it was a closed town.

Many of my good friends did not agree with me and tried to get me to ease up a bit and let the boys do a little gambling on the side maybe, but I could see that this would not work and remained firm in my stand. The majority of the Council stood by me and rode out the storm.

Here it was that the Chief of Police showed up his weakness. By that I do not mean to say that he tried to shirk his duties as a peace officer, but the situation was so tense among the saloon men and gamblers and others who always follow in line that there was some pretty serious situations where a lot of judgment and diplomacy, together with a cool head, could be used to advantage in handling the duties of a police officer.

Unfortunately both for him and most everyone else, he managed to keep himself in hot water all the time and had the whole bunch on "Saloon Street" practically boiling most of the time. A lot of tangles had to be straightened out and a great amount of these fell on my shoulders until I was about to go nuts and wondered how in the world I was going to handle things without someone getting killed.

The police committee of the Council cautioned him to keep his temper and not have arguments, do his duty with as little trouble as possible until things smoothed out, but this did not improve the situation. These conditions continued for considerable time until one day I happened to meet an old peace officer named Lee Brooks who had just returned to Belle

Fourche after a long absence. He was a man of wide experience as a peace officer and had the reputation of being perfectly able to cope with any kind of a problem arising in keeping law and order.

In the course of our conversation I asked him what he was doing then and he answered that he was not at the present time engaged in anything but was just looking around for a place to settle for awhile. I then asked him if he would be interested in the job as Chief of Police in Belle Fourche. He answered that he probably would, but that he understood that we already had one. I then told him that if he would accept the appointment, I would discharge the present incumbent and he could have the job and that the Council was meeting that night and he could start on the next day as Chief. This he agreed to do.

That night at Council meeting I told the Chief that his resignation was requested and if he did not resign, I would discharge him. As the Council were pretty much of the same opinion as was I, he finally agreed to resign and did so. I then appointed Lee Brooks to fill the vacancy and we had a new Chief of Police.

Of course the retiring Chief was mighty sore at me and from that time on he never considered me as one of his friends, but it surely was a relief to have a man on the job who took hold of things like Brooks did. From that time on we did not have much trouble. It soon became known that when it became necessary for the police officer to enter the picture that there was to be no fooling around and the offender quieted down or else find the trouble he was seeking.

One unfortunate circumstance arose soon after Brooks took over when, in trying to disarm one of the real bad fellows, the gun that Brooks was trying to get from the man was discharged and the bullet entered the groin of the man and severed the artery in his leg and he bled to death before a doctor could reach him. This was the only shooting scrape that happened however, and things were peaceful from then on. I can tell you it was surely a relief.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

## 5. When Sand Creek Ran Uphill

One day early in the spring Wallace Butts and I took a notion to go trout fishing and drove up to Sand Creek which is about 30 miles from Belle Fourche. To go that far by team and buggy it was necessary that we get an early start, which we did. As we had a good team of horses and a light rig, we arrived in good time in the forenoon on a beautiful Sunday morning.

Neither of us had ever fished for trout before so we did not tempt to do any fancy fly fishing, but settled on the good old angle worm for bait and a cane pole with a strong line and a good hook. The stream was high and somewhat roily, just ideal for worm fishing and we hoped for good results.

In addition to having taken plenty of lunch along, we fortified ourselves with a bottle of good Scotch whiskey (for fear we might get snake-bit) and we were ready for business.

After considerable time trying to encourage the fish to bite and not getting their cooperation to any extent, we came to a beautiful spot just below a waterfall where there was a big pool. This looked like an ideal place to stop walking and settle down where we could rest and fish at the same time. Not having anything in my fish creel except the bottle of Scotch which was getting somewhat heavy to carry, I nestled this down in the edge of the stream (conveniently between Butts and myself) so as to keep it cool. Having everything so perfectly arranged, we put on new worms and got busy.

We started to catch a few fish and to properly celebrate our good luck and would occasionally take a little nip of Scotch in honor of the occasion. I presume that the more fish we got, the more Scotch we disposed of. In any event, I guess we caught too many fish.

Butts finally took a notion to move a short distance to a new place further around the pool and when he got up to move, he fell into the pool which he discovered was pretty deep at that particular spot.

After a good laugh at his predicament, I got up to help him get out and thereby discovered how potent the brew of Scotland was. Because when I did get up and steadied myself a little, I noticed a very peculiar change in the stream, in that instead of the water falling down over the falls like it was before I got up, it had suddenly changed its course and was then running uphill so to speak. That's where I also fell in the pool and by the time both of us managed to crawl out, we were two very wet and somewhat cooled off fishermen, with no dry change of clothes.

We decided then that we had plenty of fish and after wringing out what water we could out of our clothes we hooked up the team and started back to town. Fortunately we had a little Scotch left to see us home and neither of us suffered any ill effects of the wetting. But I have always held a wholesome respect for the wily manner by which Scotch whiskey can sneak up on a fellow and get the best of him without his knowing it. So maybe that lesson helped some.

## 9. Courtship of Mabel

Hardware stores in those days handled not only shelf and heavy hardware, but also farm implements, wagons and buggies, etc. During the different seasons of the year it kept us busy unloading and setting up machinery and business kept improving so that we had about all we could handle. Of course, as time went on, I became better acquainted with all the other merchants and gradually worked into the business life of the town in many ways, as well as meeting the younger folks. I took in the many dances and other forms of amusements that the younger set attended.

There were no autos those days so, of course, one's "range" was limited to a great extent as transportation was quite a problem and the hiring of a livery team to take your lady friend to a dance made it quite an expensive affair and therefore not an every day (or rather, night) occurrence. It was of course more economical to have your girl friend live in the same town at least, but I never had any luck that way and had to select one who did not know me very well. She lived about fifteen miles out in the country (Snoma) when she was not teaching school which was a longer distance away than that.

I was so busy that I did not have time to go and see her very often but would ride down to the ranch on horseback every week or so and visit her and some times several couples would bunch up and all go to a dance together. This would take practically all the night to accomplish and by the time we would get back to the ranch after the dance and I would then ride home, I would be pretty late for work the next morning.

I remember on one occasion we went to a dance about five miles from her home and for some reason the music did not show up and there was no one to play for the dance. Some bright mind in the bunch remembered that I could play the fiddle after a fashion and dug up an old instrument and I was delegated to sit in the corner all night and play for the dance and watch my girl dance with the other fellows. This of course did not please me very greatly, but I was stuck for the evening at least and was just about all in and ready to quit as soon as I could.

Mabel Wood had three sisters and three brothers and the old ranch was a lively place. There was always a lot of company around, especially was this true on Sundays when many young folks gathered to see the girls and also partake of a few good meals. The Wood ranch was noted for the hospitality shown to whomever came to enjoy it. The father, Mr. A.F. Wood, like to visit and was a very well informed man on current events as well as being well educated and both he and his wife enjoyed having young people around.

One time when I was there in the winter time after supper, Mother Wood started to iron some clothes. (This was not on Sunday, by the way.) She kept on ironing long after Mabel and I thought she should quit, but as it was too cold for comfortable visiting outside, we were forced to stay inside. I thought it would be a good plan to see how long the ironing could be prolonged, in spite of the fact that Mrs. Wood gave me several hints that she thought it about time for me to start for home.

After the ironing was all done and there was no apparent excuse for her to stay around any longer, inasmuch as the rest of the family had already gone to bed, she finally bade us good night and started off apparently to go to bed. I then said to her, "that the next time I came down I would be glad to help her also do the washing if she would save it until then and we could do both the washing and ironing together." That kind of got her to thinking I guess that maybe I was going to be rather a nuisance in the family for a long time and I think from then on she resigned herself to the fact that she was on the way of losing one of her daughters and made the best of it.

Sometimes when I got ready to go home I would have trouble in locating either my horse or some riding gear. The horse might be moved from where I left him (or the team) and placed in another barn or shed. The saddle, bridle or blanket was hidden behind something, part of the harness was unbuckled, or anything else would cause me to know that some one was having a little sport at my expense, all of which had to be taken as part of the game and charged up to a future brother-in-law or some other young buck who was wanting to have a little fun.

### Irrigation Project

About this time there was talk of the possibility of building the irrigation works by the newly established Bureau of Reclamation (June 17, 1902) and through the efforts of two men, Peter Vallery and Alanson Giles, interest was awakened to the selecting of a site for a large reservoir at the junction of Dry Creek and Owl Creek, a distance of about ten miles North East of Belle Fourche. In 1904 Mr. Raymond F. Walter was appointed as Engineer in charge of the Belle Fourche Project and came to Belle Fourche and established his office.

Mr. Walters entered the service of the Reclamation Bureau on May 20, 1903 as an engineer and was detailed to irrigation surveys and investigations in South Dakota. Consequently he had investigated the possible site mentioned, which Mr. Vallery and Mr. Giles and others had been promoting, prior to his appointment as engineer in charge of the Belle Fourche Project in 1904 after the Reclamation Bureau had approved the building of the proposed project.

Mr. Walter brought his family, consisting of his wife and two children to Belle Fourche to live and built a house just across the alley from where we lived and of course we became well acquainted. He liked to fish and hunt and we used to spend a lot of time enjoying these sports and many were the good times we had together until he left Belle Fourche in 1909 to accept an appointment as Supervising Engineer for the Central Division, comprising Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Nebraska and Wyoming. He continued his advancement in the service until he finally on May 1, 1925 was appointed Chief Engineer of the Bureau with field headquarters at Denver, Colorado. He remained in this position until his death in 1940 and his passing made another space in my line of old friends which of course can never be filled.

A great amount of preliminary work had to be done by the people interested in the new irrigation project and much effort had to be expended to meet the many demands made by the Bureau of Reclamation for their study of the advisability of building the project. This included the signing up of all the privately owned land by those who would be under the project, their agreeing to accepting the terms of payment, etc, arranging for needed assistance from our Senators and Congressmen for help in Washington and many other things which came up during the early days of the scheme. Robert J. Gamble and A.B. Kittredge were Senators at the time and Charles H. Burke and Eben W. Martin were the

Representatives, Mr. Martin representing the Second District of which we were a part.

In those days the Government was not in the habit of playing "Santy Claus" to the extent displayed in latter days and it was necessary to conform to the absolute law in effect at that time wherein the Reclamation Bureau had to be assured that the money allocated to any project would be returned within the time agreed on in the original contract. The project was designed to cover an area of about 90,000 irrigable acres, about half of which was public lands and the other half privately owned. The estimated cost of the project was \$2,100,000 and called for the payments to be made at the rate of \$3.00 per year per irrigable acre, with an operation and maintenance charge of forty cents per acre per year, making the total charge per year of \$3.40 per acre for the ten years after water was delivered and the total amount of the estimated cost of the project returned to the Government.

On this basis the private land was signed up by the owners and the public land withdrawn from entry until the project was completed. An irrigation district association was formed and the bids for building the project advertised and contracts let for the same. This was accomplished in 1904 and we were all set to go. What every one expected was to enjoy a wonderful era of prosperity and progress in this territory.

The contracts were let to several different construction firms. Orman and Cook were the successful bidders on the construction of the dam, Waddell-Finley for the inlet canal, and Robinson and Cheeney for the diverting dam. Work on these started and proceeded with energy, causing a great demand for labor and, as there were no modern earth moving machines in those days, the power used was to a large extent horses and mules and steam shovels and dump carts where they could be used. Also a narrow gauge railroad was built to transport part of the fill to the dam and bring the cement facing blocks to the dam site from the place where they were built near the present town of Fruitdale.

Altogether it was a very active place and everyone was of the opinion that this section of the country was going to develop into a regular paradise, where everything planted would grow on the barren flats that did not at the time produce anything but a scant growth of grass and sagebrush in some places.

"The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft a-glee" according to Robert Burns' prediction and never was a more truthful word spoken. Orman and Crook went broke on their contract, as did Waddell and Finley. Robinson and Cheeney had some difficulty also but their contract I believe was completed by Robinson. The money panic of 1907 having a decided effect on this phase of things, the work was finished up by the Bureau, I believe. Anyway the project was built as planned.

This was the second project started by the Reclamation Bureau, the first one being the Salt River project in Arizona. Many mistakes were made in the planning and in some instances in the construction which in later days would have been better arranged and, through the experience gained

by the Reclamation service in their many years of construction and planning, avoided to a great extent.

When the public lands were opened for homestead entry in 1909, there was a rush to secure a "Farm Unit" under the project. These units contained an acreage of from 40 to 160 acres according to their location and "homesteaders" filing on them consisted of people in all walks of life, from school teachers to deep-sea divers, many of whom never lived on a farm much less tried to irrigate one and the result was not pleasant.

When water was finally turned on and used for several years, it developed that there was a great amount of seepage and this caused a very heavy expense to construct proper drainage to relieve the situation. Many of the new settlers lost their places and the project got a bad reputation which it took a great many years to overcome and get on the more practical basis which it now enjoys after many years of trial and error.

However, I must stop on trying to cover this feature of South Dakota history and get on with my story. Mr. Raymond Lund, now connected with the Northwestern Railroad has made an extensive survey of the history of the Project and submitted his findings in a splendid manner and after ten years effort has delivered a wonderful contribution to the history of the Belle Fourche Project.

Most every person at some time in his life thinks of trying to get a patent on something or other and I suppose that I was no exception to the general rule. At any rate, I had been thinking for a long time about a gadget which should be something worthwhile.

I got the idea from watching the carpenters when they came onto a job. About the first thing they would do would be to make a set of sawhorses or trestles. This took up a lot of time and material and after the job was done, they went off and left what was left of them. It was my thought that, if a set of castings could be molded to fit the angles for the legs with hollow sleeves in them so that the legs would fit in easily

and fastened with a set screw, these could be attached to the cross pieces by simply boring a hole through the cross pieces and putting a bolt through to hold it firmly. Thereby it was possible to take them apart easily when through with the job and transport them easily to the next job.

Well, I submitted the idea to the patent office and did receive the patent and thought I surely had something. I made a trip to Chicago with a train of cattle in the fall of 1903 and while there got in touch with a large contractor who was a friend of my uncle, Ben Green. I had a model of the saw-horse and submitted it to him for his reaction. He tried it out in every way and seemed very much interested and said that he could use a large number of them, but would have to first consult his foreman regarding their use. He would see me the next day and let me know just how many he could use. (I had in the meantime received a price from a manufacturer as to what they would cost to have them made.)

Well, to make a long story short, I met the contractor the next day and was surprised to hear him say that he could not use any. I, of course, asked him why this was, when he appeared so interested in the idea only the day before, and he told me that while his foreman thought that they were a fine thing, the UNION would not stand for their use, because it took a carpenter several hours work to make a set and this would interfere with their earnings to the extent that their use would cause a strike.

So I came home without an order and never had the time or money to spare to follow it up further. Since this time the idea has been picked up and as the patent expired years ago, the use of such trestles are now much in evidence and used generally by painters and other artisans.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

13. Pat, the Irishman

Pat O'Connor, one of my many old time friends, pulled a good one in the "long ago" when he and his three brothers (Jack, Tim and Mike) were engaged in the cattle business on a ranch on Owl Creek north of Belle Fourche. Their bachelor quarters were not too elaborate but were comfortable and suited their purpose. Their hospitality was very generous and they had lots of company most of the time because everyone was welcomed to share what they had. Pat was the eldest and an extremely interesting and popular fellow who always had a good story to tell and enjoyed a good joke to help pass away the time.

On one occasion late in the fall, a man travelling north stopped in to stay all night. The roads were bad and his team rather tired, and as he knew that he could not get through to the next stopping place without travelling all night, he decided to stop with the O'Conner boys until morning, providing they would wake him up early so as to get a good start. Pat told him they would be happy to do this and he was welcome to stay.

The team was unhitched, watered and fed and the guest escorted into the house for supper which was just about ready. After supper was over and the dishes cleaned up there was, of course, plenty of talk about different things in which the visitor joined, but kept stressing the fact that he sure wanted to get started on his journey very early in the morning. As he had no watch by which to keep track of time, he would have to depend on being awakened by his hosts. Pat assured him that he would personally guarantee to take care of that part and not to worry about it. He would set the alarm clock for four o'clock and as it did not get daylight until about six, the traveller would have time to feed his team, eat his breakfast and be on his way before it was daylight. So with this matter being settled they got ready for bed.

Prior to going to bed, however, Pat wound up the clock and set the alarm to go off at four o'clock as he had promised.

He also did something that he had not promised to do. After setting the alarm for 4:00 a.m., Pat set the clock ahead three hours so that when the alarm did go off at the time set on the clock, it actually was only 1:00 by the correct time. Therefore, as it was about 9:00 p.m. when they went to bed, their night's rest only amounted to about four hours before it was time to get up.

Everything worked out as planned. The alarm sounded promptly at 4:00 a.m. Pat got up, checked on his guest to be sure he got up, fed and harnessed his team while Pat got breakfast ready. After eating breakfast, he helped the fellow hitch up his team and started him on his way rejoicing. Then Pat went back to bed, congratulating himself on having given his guest exceptionally good service.

One can readily appreciate the guest's reaction to the joke played on him. He admitted later when next he ran into Pat that the night spent with him was certainly one awful short one and was followed by one hell of a long day; but he learned not to travel again without a watch of his own, nor place much confidence in an Irishman.

One year during the haying season, Pat was driving a team of horses that were not too well broken and they ran away with Pat and the empty hayrack, taking off over the prairie as fast as they could run. In some manner Pat was thrown off and one of the cross beams of the hayrack struck him on the back of the head and really scalped him. The skin and hair was lifted and peeled off the top of Pat's head and hung down over his forehead.

When the other boys who were working nearby got to Pat, he was unconscious and they realized that he was badly hurt. They took him to the house and made him as comfortable as possible and one then rode into town for the doctor.

Dr. L.J. Townsend came out and cleaned off Pat's wounds, pulled back the misplaced scalp and sewed it back in place and took him into town for further attention and treatment. It wasn't too long until Pat was as good as new again, but it was surely a close shave.

Pat never suffered any serious after effects of this incident and jokingly remarked about how lucky he was to have been hit on his head instead of any other part of his anatomy.

Those were pretty rugged days and one wonders how so many sick and wounded men and women survived when medical attention was so far removed from the isolated scenes of illness or accident. The services of the doctors of that period with the limited facilities at their command was surely wonderful, and to these good men, who were on call night or day in serving their fellow man, goes great credit and appreciation.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

#### 14. Housekeeping in Belle

Our house was not modern by any manner of means, just had four rooms and two small closets, no plumbing as there was no sewer system in those days. But we did have water piped to a point just outside the kitchen door. No electricity and we used kerosene lights, had coal burning cook and heating stoves, and not too much furniture. But at that, we were very comfortable.

I was fortunate in my choice of a helpmate in that Mabel did not demand anything more than we were able to afford and throughout all the years of our married life has been a good manager and proved a true helpmate in every way.

At the time of our marriage (Dec. 25, 1903), I was taking the sum of \$66.00 per month out of the hardware store business for wages, but had to increase this to \$75.00 shortly after. This, of course, seems a terribly small amount when compared with wages received now; but when you recall that butter in those days was 25 cents a pound, eggs as low as 8 cents a dozen, fresh pork by the whole or half pig 5-7 cents a pound, meals at the restaurant from 25-35 cents each, coal \$5.00 a ton, potatoes from 75 cents to \$1.00, clothing and shoes in the same line of prices, you are able to realize that a dollar would stretch a long way in those days. A laboring man was lucky to receive 25 cents per hour and would put in ten hours for \$2.50 and board himself; farm hands got \$25-\$35 per month and board and room. Rent for a house like ours was about \$15 a month.

At any rate we got along very nicely and when we could afford it, we built on a small kitchen WITH A SINK IN IT (which drained into a cesspool outside) and cold water piped to it. This was sure a great advantage we thought, because we did not have to pack in the water any more and could also dump the wash water in the sink.

When the electricity was available, we also had the house wired and ONE light placed in each room. This was really something we thought at the time. We did not have a bathtub yet and still used the old "Chick Sales" outside privy. We used a hand power washing machine that had to be wheeled in from the outside back porch when used and also wheeled out again when the washing was finished.

All three of the children (Helen, Dorothy, and George Freeman) were born in the old house; there was no hospital in the town then. Dr. F.E.

Townsend (of the "Townsend Plan" fame) officiated at Helen's and Dorothy's birth and Dr. J.L. Chassell when Freeman was born.

One day after our children were born, I came home to dinner and found Josie Muth and Mabel waiting for me. They both were much concerned over the fact that the house next door had been put up for sale and a certain man who had a large family had been looking the house over with the idea of buying it. This family of his was something of a nuisance to anyone who lived near them.

There were several boys in it that were terrors and both Mabel and Josie (who had two little boys and lived just across the alley from us) were up in arms and proceeded to lay down the law to me in no uncertain terms. They insisted that if they were going to raise their families, they had to have reasonably decent surroundings and that the proposed new neighbors were certainly not satisfactory to their way of thinking. Further, it was up to me to go up and see the owner of the house next door and buy it before any deal was made to any one else.

Well, with two women after me, what could I do but comply with their request and the result was that that very afternoon, I bought another house and had to mortgage it and the one we lived in to get the necessary money to pay for it. But anyhow, I was able to come home again without fear of another uprising, at least for a time anyway.

Shortly after this we remodeled the new house, putting in a basement and building on an extra bedroom, kitchen and bathroom, and, joining with the other neighbors in the block, put in a private sewer to the river and made a very comfortable home. We then made our first and only move and have been living in the same place ever since (911 Harding Street).

So I guess it can be truthfully said that the Mortimer family finally did settle down in one place, this time for good.

S.G.Mortimer Memoirs

15. Mortimer for Senator

In 1904 The Republican Convention to nominate a candidate for State Senator to represent the 40th District comprising Butte and Meade Counties was held at Sturgis. It was Butte County's turn to receive the nomination inasmuch as the two counties took alternate turns in naming the candidate. D.R. Evans, Walter Hamilton, Peter Edwards, T.L. Ackerman, and W.J. Chiesman were prominent in Butte County politics and attended the convention as delegates. There may have been some others but I cannot remember them.

The Democrats had already named their candidate some time before and he was a prominent citizen of Meade County named Jack Hale. He had served several terms in the Legislature and was well and favorably known and considered an extremely hard man to beat, so hard in fact, that none of the politicians of Butte County wanted to run against him. I do not know how it happened, as I was never consulted nor had any desire or ambition to run for anything; but our delegation came home with the news that I

had been named as the candidate selected to make the race for State Senator at the general election in November against Jack Hale.

This, of course, was a surprise to me and I surely had no hope of being elected and considered that I had been selected as a "fall guy" for the very doubtful honor of representing the District at the Ninth Legislative Session in 1905. However, I yielded to the encouragement of several friends to accept the nomination and make the race. I had little hope of being successful because I had nothing to offer the voters in the way of experience, knew nothing of politics, and had no acquaintance with any of the Meade County voters where the largest part of the district vote was located. I was also very busy in the hardware store and did not think I could make any hard fight for the job for the reason I could not afford to spend either the time or money to make any extended campaign. But I got some cards printed and thought, here goes for a good trimming which might be good for me and break me from any future ambitions along political lines.

When the campaign was pretty well along, the County Chairman came to me and wanted me to make some effort toward getting some votes. He advised me that they had some campaign money that could be used and for me to take about \$100 and go down to Meade County and see if I could do some campaigning. He also advised me that if I did not get busy that I was going to get beat badly.

I finally agreed to take \$50 and go to Sturgis and try and get a little acquainted with at least some of the voters. I made the trip just shortly before election, about a week I think. I met quite a lot of the Republicans and made a special effort to get in touch with the younger fellows and asked that they try to get a few votes for me in Sturgis and left a little money and a lot of my cards with them to use in my behalf.

While in Sturgis I ran into Jack Hale and he asked me what I was doing down in his territory and we had a nice visit. He was a fine gentleman and we were good friends and I had known him for some time. I, of course, told him I was just building a basis for November and we had a good laugh over it.

Just to show how the Democrats felt about my chances in winning, the following was in the "Sturgis Record" (Republican paper) quoting the "Sturgis Press" (Democrat paper):

"The Sturgis Press, Dem., endeavors to bolster up its waning courage by the following, which would be funny if true: S.G. Mortimer, of Belle Fourche, a youngish man and a fairly good looking one at that, was down here over Sunday making goo-goo eyes at our voters. He it is whom the Republicans of this senatorial district have put in the field against our Jack Hale. He would however, better hunt shelter against the "Hale" storm on November 8. There won't be enough of him left in the race to hold a post-Mortimer examination over."

Politics, however, sometimes plays some funny tricks and the results of the election surprised a great many people. One particular requisite needed by anyone entering politics is a very tough hide to withstand the storm. Teddy Roosevelt was running against Parker for President and carried the election with a Republican landslide, electing the whole Republican ticket, yours truly included. I beat Jack in his own ward in Sturgis and he only carried Meade County by 50 votes; I carried Butte County by 296 votes, which gave me a plurality of 246 votes in the District and won the election, much to my surprise and, I think, most every one else's.

Poor Jack Hale was very much disappointed, I was later informed, especially in that I beat him in his own ward; but, as I have already stated, one must be not too easily hurt in a political race for if he is, he is sure to get some bitter disappointments in playing politics.

It was now up to me to make some arrangements and do a lot of planning so as to be able to get away by the first of the year to attend the Legislative Session held at Pierre. I began to wonder if I had not made a serious mistake in allowing myself to be persuaded to ever make the race. The building of the Irrigation Project made a lot of business and things looked very good - although I was doing more business than I could handle without much more capital and this was beginning to worry me considerably as to how I was going to handle things.

About this time J.C. Eccles came to me with a proposal to buy me out and offered an attractive price for the business. After due consideration and conference with Dr. L.J. Townsend, my partner, I accepted his offer and sold out to him.

Having disposed of the business, I was able to get lined up to go to the Legislature on the opening in January.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

16. S.G.M. Goes to Pierre

In 1905 going to Pierre was quite a job in itself. There was no railroad then across the State from east to west. We had to travel from Belle Fourche to Norfolk, Nebraska, then change cars and go to Sioux City, Iowa. From there to Worthington, Minn. and then from there to Pierre. It took the better part of three days and we travelled about 1000 miles.

One disturbing feature: we were expecting an addition to the family and I had hated to leave Mabel at home during this time. Mother was living with us, however, and I got a good reliable boy (Frank Wilson) to do the chores, etc. for them; and, as we figured that the expected arrival would not happen until after the close of the sixty-day session, I had proceeded to Pierre with many a misgiving and worry as to how it would turn out.

Mr. O.O. Stokes of Harding was the Representative from Butte County and he and I agreed that we would room together and, as he was going to Pierre early, he was to arrange for quarters for the session's length of January 3 - March 3.

When I arrived sometime later, I found that he had made arrangements for a large room over a store building (vacant at the time) that contained two beds and had an adjoining bath room and was heated with a hard coal base burner stove. Mr. Newton Tubbs, Representative from Custer County, and Charles Ham, Representative from Meade County, were also to occupy the same room with Mr. Stokes and myself.

This arrangement suited me nicely as these men were all very congenial fellows and we got along very well. I forget what the charge for the quarters was, but it was not nearly as expensive as was a hotel room. But, of course, not as convenient. Inasmuch as we only received \$5.00 per day pay for our services as Senators and Representatives of the great State of South Dakota, we did not have any money to throw away. We also received mileage of five cents per mile both ways, and I collected about \$60 mileage. Stokes got more than that, because he had additional mileage from Harding to Belle Fourche to add to his take.

The location of our room was about midway between the old State Capitol building and the Lock Hotel, about six blocks to the Capitol and three to the hotel. In the cold weather it was a quite invigorating walk from the room to the Capitol when the wind blowing off the old Missouri River was sweeping around the corners and the snow hitting you in the face.

The room was cold, too. The lower floor being vacant did not tend to help out very much and that hard coal base burner stove was a hard thing to manipulate. It had a habit of going out while we were gone for the day and it took a lot of attention to get it started up again. The fellow who came home first often had the pleasure of warming up the joint; and we used to accuse "Dad Stokes" of purposely delaying his appearance on an especially cold day, so that this job would be attended to prior to his arrival.

Of course the hotel was where a lot of legislative work was done, and many an hour was spent there in planning and forming what action should be taken on the various bills being considered. Then, as now, I presume it could be said that perhaps more is accomplished in the way of legislation in hotel rooms than in the Capitol itself.

My main mission was to introduce the "Irrigation Code" insisted on by the Reclamation Bureau. They provided me with a complete copy of what they thought would be satisfactory to them; but it was in book form and the bill had to be prepared prior to its introduction. It was a lengthy document and Mr. Stokes and I had to get it properly typed in duplicate, together with several additional copies. It was our intention to introduce one in the Senate as a Senate bill and another in the House as a House bill and whichever passed first would be substituted for the one pending in the other body when it came time for its consideration.

The Attorney General's office now helps the members do this kind of work, but at that time they did not, or if they did, we did not know it. Therefore we did it the hard way. During this interval of preparing the measure, we of course commenced to get acquainted with the members and gradually learned the routine of things. I soon found out that there was a lot for me to learn and I managed to keep very busy with it all.

The Legislature that year was strongly Republican. In the Senate there was only one Democrat, one Populist, one Independent, and the remaining 42 were Republican. The Republicans were sharply divided, however, into two groups: one group being "Stalwarts (the old machine bunch) and the other group calling themselves "Progressives."

The Progressives' interest was particularly directed toward the approval of the somewhat popular demand for the passage of a statewide primary election law. A strong petition had been circulated prior to the meeting of the Legislature urging that body to enact what was known as the "Richard's Primary Law" which was really the "hot potato." Until this matter was out of the way, there was not very much done in the way of a vote on any controversial subject. The Stalwarts were in control of the organization of the body and had controlled the politics of the State for a number of years under the old convention system and this proved to be the bone of contention and finally was disposed of by the rejection of the petition to adopt the "Richard's Primary Law" by a very close vote, only one or two votes. There were 24 Republicans voting against it (of which I was one), and later in the session the adoption of a law known as the caucus law, "Regulating Primaries and Conventions", as a substitute was enacted. This action I am sure had the effect of breaking the back of the Stalwart section of the Republican Party in South Dakota for, at the next general election in 1906, the Progressives took over and elected Coe I. Crawford for Governor against Sam Elrod who was running for a second term, and most of their ticket.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

17. Senate Intrigue

My committee appointments in the Senate were as follows: Education, Federal Regulations, Irrigation (Chairman), Legislative Expenses, and Mines and Mining.

After introducing the bill for a state "Irrigation Code", I was somewhat surprised and also disappointed when it was referred to the Judiciary Committee and not to the Committee on Irrigation, of which I was the Chairman, where I had expected it to land. But, of course, I could do nothing at the time to remedy this feature.

I do not remember to what committee the companion bill which Stokes introduced in the House was referred; but in a reasonable length of time, he was able to get action on it and it came out of the committee with a due pass report and passed the House and came down to the Senate. To have it receive quicker action so that the law would be passed sooner than otherwise, I of course had to move that the House Bill take the

place of my Senate bill and it then also was referred to the Judiciary Committee and put to sleep along with my Senate bill.

I began to realize that there was something wrong somewhere because I could get no satisfaction out of the Judiciary Chairman as to when he would bring the matter up for consideration and began to get worried. I wanted to get the measure passed and be able to get back home as soon as possible in case of necessity (the birth of our first child).

In the meantime many things were happening and I had gotten well acquainted with the other senators and after a long time, I found out that the opposition to my bill was coming from my own territory west of the River, very possibly from the mining interests who did not want their water rights investigated and adjudicated as the bill provided.

The mining interests were very strongly entrenched in the political set up at that time and I realized that I was up against a hard fight. I called on Mr. Walters, the engineer in charge of the Irrigation Project to come to Pierre and help me out. He came down and stayed about a week explaining all the features of the measure to all of the senators who would listen to him, but we could not get Jim Lawson, the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, to have a public hearing of the matter before the committee.

Things began to liven up in the Senate about this time. The City of Deadwood had been planning on diverting the waters of Elk Creek as a supply source for its proposed waterworks and had sent a delegation to Pierre to secure the passage of a bill granting cities the right to acquire by condemnation proceedings the waters of any stream, within or without the city's limits for waterworks purposes.

The delegation sent was a strong one and the Lawrence County members had a lot of power in the Legislature and the result was that the bill was introduced and went through both houses in a hurry. It was not referred to the Committee on Irrigation in the Senate and, when it came up for passage, I voted for it as did all the rest of the Hill's delegations. It was later discovered that this Elk Creek, although heading in Lawrence County, ran through Meade County and there were a number of ranchers who irrigated considerable land from it. In fact, my roommate Charley Ham lived on this same creek and he also voted for the bill.

The passage of this law raised "ned" in our home territory, and Charley Ham and yours truly were surely in the dog house. I was ignorant of the fact that there even was an Elk Creek in Meade County and Ham surely overlooked the importance of the measure as to how it would effect him and it, therefore, was up to us to try and correct the error that the hurry-up passage of the measure caused.

There was another delegation from Sturgis that arrived shortly after the Deadwood bill had passed and they had blood in their eyes. After a lot of hard work, we were able to correct the damage by the passage of another measure that provided that no city could go out of its own watershed to obtain water and this shut off Deadwood's idea of diverting

Elk Creek. I sure took a long breath of relief after this was over, I can tell you.

The reaction of my friendly newspaper The Sturgis Press as to my ability as a Legislator was not complimentary, I assure you.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

19. Irrigation Code 1905

Time was running out for me about now and I was getting mighty sore about how my Irrigation Code was being held without any action. Repeated pleas to the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Jim Lawson, did no good and he even commenced to infer that it would never come out of the committee. I began to get mad and went to work all the harder on a different way than mere persuasion.

The tactics of the Lawrence County delegation in connection with the Deadwood measure did not set too well with the fair-minded fellows and I had by this time made many friends. Among others was Senator Amsden who was like myself a first-termer. He realized my predicament and was heartily for me and he was the chairman of the committee that had a bill of Jim Lawson's, pertaining to a sewage system for the City of Aberdeen, which Lawson had to have passed. Inasmuch as there was some features in this measure which conflicted with the corrective law which killed the Deadwood water bill, Amsden was not particularly sold on giving it favorable recommendation out of his committee, although pressure was being put on him to report it out.

Under these circumstances it was not hard to convince Senator Amsden that it perhaps would be a good plan to hold up action on this measure at least for the present.

I commenced to make a canvass of the Senate to find out how much support I could get if an attempt was made to force my bill out of the committee. And as I had only one particular thing to do while Jim had many other things on his job of practically running the Senate, this made me feel good. As the session was nearing its close, I thought it time for a showdown and approached Senator Lawson and informed him that unless he brought out my bill for action, with or without any recommendation if he so pleased, I was going to force it out on the floor. He thought I was fooling at first, but I made it a point to tell him that if he did not think I could, for him to look around a little and see where he was at. This, I guess, he did. The result was that the next day my bill appeared on the calendar (without recommendation) and upon roll call carried by a comfortable majority.

Very soon after this Jim came to my desk and asked me what was holding up his pet measure and said that he had to get it out and passed. I told him that I did not know as the bill was in Amsden's committee and I was not a member of that committee. He looked at me a minute and then said "You know all about it and you can fix it very quickly if you want to. What do I have to do to satisfy you on the passage of this bill?" I told him that I had only my personal objections to the portion of the bill that conflicted with the corrective measure passed in the Deadwood water deal, and told him with those objections removed, I would vote for it,

but not otherwise and for him to see Senator Amsden about getting it out of the committee. I also advanced the idea that it might be well for him in the future to watch the poor suckers a little closer, because one can never tell how far a frog can jump by the looks of him.

Jim finally got his bill out and passed it, but there was little left of it but the title. And so ended the battle and the State had an Irrigation Code.

I was advised to stay on and see that the bill was approved by the Governor before the session closed and as I had battled the thing for so long, I did so and finally had the satisfaction of witnessing Governor Samuel H. Elrod making it the law of the State.

In the meantime I received a telegram advising me that Mabel had presented me with a daughter (Helen) on February 24th and that though she had been terribly sick with the delivery, she was getting along well. This, of course, was a relief but I surely felt like a criminal for being absent from home at a time like this when I should have been at her side. When it was all over, I came home and arrived eight days after the baby was born. I can truthfully say that I was sick and disgusted with my Legislative experience and thoroughly resolved that I was through with politics for all time.

S.G.Mortimer Memoirs

19b. Laws Enacted 1905

The final outcome of the Ninth Session of the Legislature was that it produced many important laws and was and still is regarded as an outstanding record. The following list of some of the measures passed will give an idea of their importance to the welfare of the State:

1. Relating to Census: Providing for collection, preservation and publication of census and vital statistics and appropriating money for carrying same into effect.
2. Regulating Primaries and Conventions: This was the law passed to pacify the public demand for a statewide primary law and to my mind was a good law, but proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back as far as the old Stalwart Republican organization was concerned.
3. Food and Dairy Department Created: To prevent adulteration, misbranding, and imitation of foods, beverages, etc.
4. Sale of Gasoline at Retail: Providing that all containers in which gasoline were sold must be painted RED.
5. State Irrigation Code: Providing for law governing appropriation, adjudication of water rights and use of water, etc. as required by the Reclamation Bureau.
6. Creating a State Livestock Commission: Relating to the eradication of diseases of domestic animals.
7. Requiring registration of motor vehicles and regulating their use on highways, streets, etc.: Owner must file with Secretary of State an application for license and pay the fee of ONE DOLLAR, for which he would receive a seal of aluminum, circular in form

not over two inches in diameter and stamped with "Registered in office of Secretary of State" and a number. The owner must have this license attached to the dashboard and also have the number assigned painted on the back of the vehicle. (This was a very crude system, but was at least a start and there were few cars then anyhow. The bill also provided among other things, that when the driver of an automobile happened to meet

someone driving a fractious horse or team, it was his duty to stop the machine and go to the aid of the fellow having the trouble with his horses. Also, if the driver of a team thought he was going to have trouble in meeting the machine, he could, by raising his right hand, signal the driver of the auto who must then stop his car and go and help the fellow giving the signal.)

8. Sale of Illuminating Oils: Allowing sale of Kansas kerosene in the State. (Prior to the passage of this law this was prohibited on account of the tests demanded by our laws were higher than the new oil field oils could meet. Senator Abel who was handling the legislation kept a kerosene lamp continually burning on his desk to demonstrate that it was perfectly safe to burn Kansas oil.)

9. State Capitol Building Commission Created: This provided for the erection of a building for capitol purposes in Pierre, South Dakota and provided funds for such purpose. (The passage of this bill settled once and forever the question of permanent location of the State Capital at Pierre. This had been in former years a controversial matter and at the election in 1904 the question was "Shall the Capital be removed from Pierre to Mitchell, S.D.", the Milwaukee railroad being in favor of Mitchell and the Chicago and Northwestern battling for it remaining at Pierre. It was a real battle I can tell you and it was no trouble for anyone to get a pass from either road, providing he could be vouched for as being in favor of the removal or retention of the capital according to the different railroad's interest.)

10. Establishing Twine Factory and Cordage Plant in the State Penitentiary.

11. State Library: Defined and provided for its custody and care.

12. Wolf Bounty: Appropriated \$10,000 for the eradication of wolves and coyotes, paying \$5 bounty for full grown wolf and \$2 for each pup; also \$2 for each coyote or coyote pup. (This was a biannual battle between the Eastern and the Western section of the State. They had no wolves in the Eastern part and did not like to see the money spent for this purpose; while in the Western part, they had a lot of wolves and knew the damage they caused to stock raisers and, of course, wanted and needed the law to kill them off. During the 1903 session one of the Western representatives secured a full grown live wolf that had been caught in a trap and took him to Pierre and tied him up to the flag pole in the State House yard so that all could see how big they were.)

There was also a law passed making it mandatory for the locomotives on the railroads to be equipped with electric headlights. This caused a howl from the railroads but the law was passed.

Another law I remember was one regulating the length of sheets required on hotel beds and Pullman cars. Seven feet, I believe, was the minimum length permitted. (The senator speaking for this bill made the statement, "The reason for the measure was to have the sheet long enough

so that the top could be turned down over the quilt and in that manner help to keep the sleeper's face off the dirty quilt which had perhaps been covering the preceding sleeper's smelly feet." Maybe he had something there at that.)

An attempt was made at this session to discontinue the Springfield Normal School, but after a hard battle this bill was defeated by a narrow margin. It seems that this is a question that refuses to remain settled and there have been several attempts to discontinue this school, the last one in the 1953 Session I believe.)

The record would not be complete without mention of the "Joker Bill" that was introduced, author unknown, during the session.

The livestock sanitary bill providing for the dipping of all cattle in the state to eradicate the scab (which was at that time quite bad, especially in the Western part) was a very important bill and being something new in the way of the provisions governing the treatment by dipping the stock in large tanks, caused much discussion and lengthy hearings before the committee that had it in charge. Cattle had to be dipped twice, with an interval of ten days separating the procedures, and of course many other provisions in connection with other cattle diseases.

Located at Sioux Falls there was a "Coursing Club" quite active in the sport of coursing (chasing) jackrabbits with hounds. They made the request for one of their representatives to introduce a bill providing that there would be a closed season on jackrabbits so that there might be no shortage in the supply for the Coursing Club's sport. After considerable persuasion, this gentleman did introduce such a bill "By-Request" and of course it took the usual course and was referred to a committee for investigation and action.

Some time after this, one morning when we came to the Capitol, we found on our desks along with other bills introduced, a House bill providing that all jackrabbits must be rounded up and dipped twice (just like the cattle) with an interval of ten days between dippings. I do not remember for sure but I do not think the bill had anyone's name on it, but it got by the printer and was all in due form for action. Of course, this got a big laugh and the poor fellow who had introduced the Rabbit Coursing bill received a lot of suggestions. So many, in fact, that if I remember correctly he went home and did not return during the short time the session lasted after the appearance of the rabbit dipping bill. This, of course, killed the bill protecting the rabbits completely, but I supposed it had little chance of passing anyway.

After my return from serving in the 1905 Legislature, I had to look around for something to do. Now that I had an addition to the family, it was up to me to see that we had something to eat at least and I had no business or other means of livelihood. Dan Arnold had started a little

plumbing business and, on account of the many new buildings being built, was buried with work.

After looking this over, I bought a half interest in his business and started to work with him as helper. The work was hard and sometimes not very pleasant, but the pay was good and we had all we could do and the business increased very fast. Dan was a fine man to work with and that made it agreeable and the work was interesting. I managed to learn fast and was handy with tools so that I got along very well. The firm of Arnold and Mortimer built up a nice business.

We had quite a number of men working for us and sold a lot of material on which there was a good profit besides the amount received for our labor.

At this time I made the acquaintance of Peter Norbeck. He was engaged in the artesian well drilling business at Redfield, S.D. and had several drill rigs in and around Belle Fourche drilling artesian wells. He often came out to see how things were going and called at our shop for some pipe or fittings that he was short of.

Norbeck later went into politics and was elected Governor of the State and later went to the United States Senate. During his administration as Governor, the Non-Partisan administration of North Dakota were in power and North Dakota inherited a number of measures that nearly wrecked the state. This wave of opinion seeped into South Dakota to a certain extent with the result that we also got a few, among others The Hail Insurance Law, The Rural Credits Law and The Cement Plant. All of these with the exception of the State Cement Plant proved to be flops and caused the State the loss of much money.

Norbeck was credited with making the statement that unless the State of South Dakota beat the Non-Partisan bunch to the punch before they got control, they would take the State, and therefore endorsed the measures which we did finally pass. He was a man of strong personality and a pretty smart old Norwegian who built up a strong organization over the State that finally enabled him to be elected to the United States Senate.

He is entitled to the recognition which I am glad to say is accredited to him: being the one who was responsible for the establishing of the Custer State Park and the wonderful scenic roads that traverse it. He battled this project through in spite of much opposition. Today it stands as a monument to his foresight and energy which will ever prove of untold value to all the many who now enjoy this wonderful playground. He also presented to the Legislature in 1920 when in special session and again in 1921 the matter of building the several bridges across the Missouri River which were completed in 1926.

When I endeavored to return to work after the accidental loss of my right eye, I soon discovered that I was going to have a hard time in doing the things that I used to be able to do and was very much handicapped. I had to confine myself to doing very little and, therefore, had a hard time in keeping up my end of things. I realized that I was not being fair to my partner in the business, Dan Arnold.

I disposed of my interests in the plumbing business by selling out to my partner and he in turn took Walter Wyckoff into the business and they made a fine team and did very well, both being very high class men whom I valued as dear friends.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

## 26. A Land Office Business

After I had sold my interest in the plumbing firm of Arnold and Mortimer because of my eye accident, several of my friends urged me to make the run for the office of County Treasurer which was open for nomination. Although I had thought that from my experience as Senator I had gotten all the politics I wanted, I decided after much consideration to enter the race and came out for the nomination and had no trouble in getting it.

My opponent on the Democratic ticket was a man by the name of William Fried who had served as County Clerk, I believe. He was a very fine fellow, well liked and known throughout the county, and made a formidable opponent. The resulting race at the November election in 1906 was a stiff one, I assure you.

Butte County then was very closely divided between the Republican and Democrat parties and it was anyone's race. Had it not been for the extreme loyalty of my Finlander friends in the county, I doubt if I would have been elected. They really "went the limit" for me in the old Snoma precinct and, as I also had a lot of friends in other parts of the county, I managed to wiggle out ahead of Fried with 706 votes to his 630, thereby winning by 76 votes.

The "Old West," as we knew the western part of South Dakota, commenced to undergo a decided change. In 1904 the opening of a part of the Rosebud Indian Reservation to homestead entry, the completion of the North Western Railroad from Pierre to Rapid City in 1907, the Milwaukee Railroad from Chamberlain to Rapid City during the same year, together with more reservation land being opened in Tripp County in 1908 and some also in the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Reservations in 1909, caused a large influx of home seekers throughout the western part of the State.

The main line of The Milwaukee R.R. touched the extreme northeast corner of Butte County and this caused that part of the range country to settle up fast. A new town of Lemmon was started and a land office was established at that point for the filing of the homestead entries. The people of Belle Fourche, not to be outdone, woke up to the fact that we also needed a land office. Proper steps were taken to have our Representatives in Congress introduce a bill to establish a United States Land Office at Belle Fourche. This was accomplished and the Land Office was opened here July 1, 1909.

In the meantime I was nominated and elected County Treasurer again in 1908 for my second two-year term, and during this time was in office when old Butte County was divided into three counties (Butte, Harding and Perkins) at the general election of 1908.

The establishment of the Land Office at Belle Fourche opened the opportunity for the appointment of two officials to head the same, Register and Receiver, and as these were very desirable political "plums," there were many applicants for the positions. I was one of them and after a lot of hard work, I managed by the help of my political friends to be successful and was appointed by President Taft as Receiver of the United States Land Office at Belle Fourche, South Dakota to take effect July 1, 1909. I resigned from the office of County Treasurer of Butte County on June 30 and took over the job of Receiver at a salary of \$3000, which was a lot of money in those days.

The Land Office was a very busy place. The homesteaders flocked in to file on the vacant government land in droves. We had as many as 700 homestead entries in one month. The handling of this amount of business together with the holding of hearings on contest as to who was first to file, and trials connected with claims of original settler not having commenced nor maintained residence within the proper time, made it a rather interesting and complicated business.

All hearings etc. in connection with this class of business were held before the Register and Receiver and many claims were hotly contested and each claimant had legal counsel to protect his interests. The decisions of the Register and Receiver were subject to appeal to the Commissioner of the General Land Office and a great many were carried up at considerable expense to the parties interested.

In addition to the filing and final proof made on the homestead entries, the collection of all water charges under the Government Irrigation Project were made by the Receiver and I sure handled a lot of money. I was not allowed to accept checks or drafts, so all payments were made in the shape of gold, silver or currency, which I had to ship by express to the United States Depository at Deadwood. When the lots were auctioned off at the opening of the Town of Newell (under the Irrigation Project), I came back to Belle Fourche from the auction at Newell with \$35,000 in my grip. This was the most money I ever had in my possession at one time in my life and I wondered if I would be held up before I got it safely deposited.

The homestead laws at that time provided that any "head of a family" or single person, 21 years of age or older, who was or had declared his or her intention to become a citizen of the United States, was entitled to make homestead entry on 160 acres of unappropriated land, with six months in which to establish residence thereon in a "liveable" house. By maintaining such residence for a period of five years, he or she could make final proof thereon and, if satisfactory proof was so made, they would receive patent for the land. The filing fees were \$14 and the final proof fees generally ran to about the same amount.

However, if the settler wished, he could make what was called "commutation proof" after fourteen months actual residence by paying the sum of \$1.25 per acre for the land, in addition to advertising fees, etc, and receive patent for the land. On lands that were located in former Indian Reservations, the sum per acre was only fifty cents for commutation proof. Most of the settlers, who by the way were locally

called "honyokers", made commutation proof so as to be able to sell the land or get a loan on it.

There was a general belief that the land that was located for homesteads was so worthless "that the homesteader was making a bet with the Government and the terms of the bet were that the Government bet the settler 160 acres of land against \$14 that the settler would not be able to make a living off the land for five years." And this in a great many cases was about true.

The greater part of the vacant land was filed on. This, of course, put the final stop to the free grazing the cattle and sheepmen had enjoyed for many years. After final proof was made, many of the stockmen bought out the homesteaders and secured permanent title to their holdings. Later on the law was changed so that the unappropriated lands were opened for homestead entries of 640 acres, or additional homesteads granted to those who had filed on 160 acres to make additional entries of 480 acres.

Land under the Irrigation Project was divided into "farm units" of from 40 to 160 acres of irrigated land, and the applicant had to assume the water right charges, in addition to the other requirements of the homestead laws. Time proved that many disappointments were experienced by the original settlers and many suffered losses thereby, but eventually the economy of the territory settled down to a workable proposition and is now pretty well established, and the first mistakes corrected to a certain degree.

My administration as Receiver of the U.S. Land Office lasted until September, 1913 at which time I resigned. The resignation was not because I wanted to quit the job, but because the election of a Democrat President (Woodrow Wilson in 1912) and the expiration of my term of office in July, 1913 made it necessary that the vacancy be filled. Of course, the Democrats had plenty of men who were willing to accept this kind of a windfall after their long vacation from political appointment. So, here it was shown again that political appointments are not permanent jobs and "to the victors belong the spoils."

After the election of President Harding in 1920 and the Republicans were again in the saddle, the term of Postmaster Rush O. Fellows expired at the post office in Belle Fourche and I was appointed Postmaster to take effect May 1, 1922. I held this position from that date until I resigned October 15, 1934. Personally, I was willing to continue, but the fact that the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt upset the political apple cart of the Republicans just changed my mind for me. I was again out of a job.

My good old friend, Capt. Seth Bullock, who was a great friend of Teddy Roosevelt when he was ranching in North Dakota and in later years President of the United States, rather took me under his wing and gave me some advice as to some matters in politics. I remember one of his favorite admonitions in this respect that he impressed on me. He cautioned me as follows: "In your political life, never deny anything. If you do, they will prove it on you as sure as hell."

I have never forgotten this and have always conducted my political life (or at least tried to) in a manner so that I stayed close to honorable procedure and have never found any reason to stray away from honest dealing in politics any more than in ordinary business. To me, good politics mean only one thing, and that is good government. Every citizen must or should take an active interest in politics if they have any interest in good government. And because a man holds a political office does not mean that he is necessarily a crook.

In my long life, I have been fortunate that a great many of my bitterest political opponents have been and have remained my closest personal friends. I look back with no regrets on any of my past political life except that perhaps I might have been better off financially in private business.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

18. The Belle Business Scene

Perhaps I should at this time explain to the reader that the City of Belle Fourche was not wholly populated by bartenders, tin-horn gamblers, ladies of the Red Light District, etc. Nor were all the visitors cowboys. There were some very fine people also in the community: good merchants, lawyers and other professional men and many tradesmen representing the different classes of work, all of whom were engaged in their respective lines of work and endeavor. The different churches were well represented and we had good schools for the children.

Competition was keen and the different merchants held their business confined to their individual lines. In other words the drug store sold drugs, the grocer sold groceries and the butcher meat; the lumber yard sold lumber and other building material, while the hardware store stuck to hardware and implements. Other towns nearby were competing for business and, as Belle Fourche was young in years and enjoyed a large business territory which used to go to the older towns for its supplies, we in Belle Fourche soon realized that it was up to us to try and satisfy the needs of our trade territory better than the other fellow or suffer the loss of business. This drew us close together and we labored toward trying to make our town the best place to trade in the country and what was good for one was also good for all.

Our customers were in the most part stockmen and farmers living outside the City. In some cases they came as far as a hundred miles to buy their supplies. As there were no automobiles in those days, it was something of a job to drive in a four-horse team to take out the needed supplies to last them until the next trip. Usually those coming in from the distant ranches made only about two trips a year so that their purchases had to be large to carry them over. The merchants had to carry big stocks and in many cases the merchandise was sold on time as the rancher only marketed his stock once a year.

We got good prices for our merchandise and if a man could pay cash, he of course got a better price than did the fellow who had to be carried a

year on the books or gave his note for what he bought. Loses from unpaid accounts were surprisingly small when the volume of business was considered. Repayment could be depended on. During the time I was in the hardware business I never sued but one man, and while I did lose some accounts by their not being paid, the amount lost was small indeed. Of course, there were exceptions to the general rule but it did not take long for the merchants to get wise to those who were not honest and we passed the word around so that if one got stuck, the others could watch their step.

New business came in and the City continued to grow and show improvement and was what could be truthfully described as an energetic young city, noted for the activity and energy of the citizens. The fact that it was located in the very corner of the then County of Butte and was the county seat thereof made it a long distance for people having county business to transact from other parts of the County to come to town for that purpose as the present territory of Butte, Harding and Perkins were then all in the one county of Butte.

Our worry was that some day it might be possible for us to lose the County Seat if the North and East parts of the county got well settled and on several occasions we attempted to carry an election for a new court house which would improved the chances for a more permanent status being supplied as our location as the county seat town. We did not have much luck in these attempts and were voted down on both occasions that I recall.

#### Commercial Club -

In 1911 in the back room of the Butte County Bank at a meeting called to consider the establishment of a Rural Free Delivery mail route out of the city, the need for some sort of an organization to handle the many problems that were constantly arising was brought out and discussed. The City and surrounding community were developing so fast that something must be done to take care of the interests and welfare of the community and the City in particular.

The suggestion was made to organize a Commercial Club and hire a paid secretary. Two other meetings were held in the old Court House at which there were a large number of interested men and the result was the starting of the Commercial Club. Seven directors were elected: M.W. Butts, M.J. Smiley, Jim Noble, V. Bernard, T.H. Gay, F.S. Harris and L.M. Simons. The directors selected S.G. Mortimer as the first president and hired H.O. Cooley as a paid Secretary. This was done according to the by-laws approved at the last organization meeting.

During all the years since that time, this organization has been in existence with very few changes in the by-laws (one being the change in name from Commercial Club to Chamber of Commerce) and has maintained a paid secretary ever since. I do not think that there is another city of anywhere near its size that can boast of a record of this kind in the State.

Fortunate was Belle Fourche that these seven men were selected as directors for the newly-formed Commercial Club. They were men of strong personalities, firm and clear in their thinking and not afraid to take a stand on any matter. They would fight hard for their convictions while in session, but when the matter was finally settled by a majority vote, all would go out and work hard to put the deal across. In all my experience I never worked with a better bunch of men. Firm became our bonds of friendship as we labored together and I treasure most gratefully the remembrance of that period.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

29. Court House

Rapid settlement of the large area north and east of Belle Fourche caused by the completion of the Government Project, opening of the Land Office, and the division of Butte County in 1908, old fears arose that Belle Fourche might lose the county seat inasmuch as it was located in the extreme southwest corner of the county. The new towns of Vale, Newell and Nisland, being located under the Government Project, gave promise of becoming large all the time and might become contenders that would cause us considerable trouble. This did not tend to make us feel any too secure unless we could promote a new court house which was needed badly.

Our former attempts toward this feature had brought little encouragement as we had lost out on at least two occasions when we had attempted to attain that end by putting the voting of bonds up for a vote of the people. The last attempt was made in 1906 and this one did not leave a very good taste in the mouths of those who were definitely opposed to the proposition.

Some worthy soul had the bright idea that it would be a good time to have a special election for the voting of a bond issue of \$40,000 for the building of a new court house at Belle Fourche and that the time to hold the election was in the winter.

After a lot of consideration, it was decided to do this and February 13, 1906 was selected for the date of the election. Necessary arrangements were made for the holding of the election on that day. Of course, the general idea was that, if the election was held at this time of the year, it was possible that the boys out in the sage brush would be busy attending to their livestock and not bother too much about going to the polls to vote, while here in the settlements the vote would be the heaviest. We could, by making a special effort to get out the vote, secure enough votes to put the deal across without any question.

Well, we certainly got busy and lined our forces up and commenced the campaign. We did everything that was possible and put a lot of effort and considerable money into the fight. It was certainly a hot campaign. Many were the committees named and various were their duties in connection with the effort. Among others, I recall one committee had to fill countless numbers of small half-pint bottles of liquid refreshments for distribution to the voters who might like a nip of good cheer in the

cold days that might be expected (and hoped for) during the campaign, and for encouragement to vote right on the court house deal.

The boys on the outside were not idle either and likewise had some effective fellows who never slept very much I guess.

After the vote was cast and counted, we were certainly surprised at the number of new votes that were in Butte County. The final count showed 671 for and 710 against the voting of the bonds. Again our hopes were lost by the small majority of 41 votes. We were never able to determine how our opponents dug up so many votes, and some were uncharitable enough to accuse them of voting all the names on the various cemetery headstones outside Belle Fourche. In any case, the vote of the people prevailed and we were beaten at our own game.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

21. Serious Accident 1906

On Friday, April 13, 1906 I met with a serious accident in which I suffered the loss of my right eye. This, in addition to proving to be a serious handicap during the remainder of my life, was indirectly the cause of a change in my future activities in the way of occupation. The manner in which I met with the accident was peculiar and, as is usual in cases of this kind, wholly unnecessary. But it sometime seems that these things are ordained to happen and one happens to be in the right place at the exact right time to make the connection. It happened in this manner.

Each year the City used to put on a celebration called a "Stock Meeting." At this time the large cattle companies had their annual meeting for the arrangement of their program for conducting the spring round-up. They specified who was to act as wagon boss for each outfit, where work would start for each wagon, what territory it would cover, where the round-up would end, and much more detail relating to the proper conduct of the affair. The City put on some show of entertainment for the visitors and generally it was quite an affair and drew large crowds of stockmen and other visitors every year.

This year a special attraction was a drilling contest. This consisted of two teams of miners from the Homestake Mine competing as to which could drill the deepest hole in a hard rock in a given length of time. Each team consisted of three men. One man held the drill and turned it around in the hole while the two others armed with heavy sledge hammers swung heavy blows upon the drill, alternately hitting the drill head while the drill holder held and turned it. The rock was set on a staging platform raised about six feet above the ground so that the surrounding crowd could get a good view of the affair while the drilling was in progress. The two teams drilled separately, the first one drilling for the required length of time allowed, and then the second team took over and drilled their hole for the same length of time. The team who got the deepest hole in the hard rock was declared the winning team.

Of course I wanted to see this as I had never witnessed one before and proceeded to get in the front row among the large gathering so as to get the ringside seat perhaps twenty feet from the drillers. Well, the first

team had hardly begun to work when one of the strikers hit a somewhat glancing blow with his heavy hammer on the drill head and cut off a corner of the steel of the drill. It came directly toward me and struck me in the right eye, penetrating the eyeball and lodging inside.

I saw the thing coming like one sometimes does when a bug hits you in the eye, but it came so swiftly I could not even close my eye. I felt the eye water run down my cheek and knew that I was seriously hurt. Of course, the pain was very severe; but with the help of someone, I was led up to Dr. L.J. Townsend's office. He immediately ordered me to get up to Deadwood. He would call Dr. Verco, the oculist, and have him ready to take care of it. I just had time to catch the train that was then leaving and went to Deadwood.

The doctor gave me something to ease the pain and made an examination. This disclosed the seriousness of the affair and the next day he removed the eye. The piece of steel was inside and about as big as half of one's little fingernail and as sharp as a razor on one side which cut through the tough eyeball like a bullet. It was a relief to get the eye out though, as the pain was mighty severe.

I returned home after a couple of days and had no complications but found it hard to navigate without running into the right side of a door or, in trying to eat, would sometimes over reach and knock over the glass of water or other thing I was reaching for, or perhaps close my hand on empty space before I reached the glass. It took a long time for nature to adjust the sight in this regard, although the other eye was exceptionally good. I could see very well with it, but my ability to judge exact distance from anything never has been nor will be as it was on account of the absence of the cross vision the two eyes provided.

It has been a bother for these many years, but I am thankful for the fact that the one good eye has served so well.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

22. S.G.M. Newspaperman 1906

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Mr. E. Ralston, the owner and editor of the Belle Fourche Bee, a weekly newspaper published in Belle Fourche, was a good friend of mine and he kept after me to buy him out as he wanted to get into the real estate business. I used to loaf around the office once in awhile and he continually kept suggesting that I buy him out. When I explained that I did not have any money to spare for that kind of an investment besides not knowing anything about the publishing of a paper, I took it more or less as a joke.

One day, however, he became quite serious about it and I commenced to consider the matter. Jim Smith was a young printer who had just come up from Kansas to work for Ralston and was a good printer and full of energy. I went into the back room of the printing shop and got to talking to Jim about the matter and asked him if he would like to take over the management of the business and buy a share in the paper, if I

decided to buy it. I explained that I thought I could get enough of my friends to put up some money and join me in the venture and we would incorporate the business and buy Ralston out. Jim said that he would be glad to take a shot at it and thought that he could make a go of it but did not have any money.

Well, I went out and commenced to look around for some of my friends to join me in the newspaper business. In less than a day I had interested the following men to go into the venture, besides Jim Smith. D.R. Evans, W.J. Chiesman, F.E. Bennett, W.B. Penfold, T.L. Ackerman, W.R. Glassie and Arthur Maxwell each put in \$500.

I think the price Ralston was to receive was \$3500 and he agreed to take \$500 in stock in the corporation as part payment. After arranging with the rest of the men to endorse Jim Smith's note at the bank for his \$500, the deal was made and the "Bee Publishing Company" incorporated and the new management took over April 1, 1906, Jim Smith, Editor.

Arthur Maxwell was elected secretary and I was president. We both kept a close watch on things and helped Jim with some of the problems which arose occasionally and we audited the books every month. After the first few months we began to see that we had struck a good bargain and the darned paper was making money hand over fist. We both then got the same idea at once I guess, for I started out to buy out any of the others who wanted to sell their stock and picked up Ralston's and Penfold's stock; Maxwell got Evan's and Ackerman's. The other fellows decided not to sell.

Business kept good and we bought a building and moved the paper in and put in some new machinery. After the irrigation project opened up we established a paper called The Valley Irrigator at Vale with Oscar Massie as editor. We also established another paper named The Butte County Press, located at Nisland, with a man by the name of Walter Grant as editor. This one did not survive very long.

I retained my interest in The Bee until I was appointed Receiver of the U.S. Land Office at Belle Fourche and was required under the regulations not to be interested in a newspaper in which public notices pertaining to land office business were published. I sold my interests to the Corporation and made a very nice lot of money in this venture. Jim Smith kept buying the other stockholders out until he finally owned the entire property and ran it very successfully until his death in 1947.

S.G.Mortimer Memoirs

25. The Belle Creamery,  
Hospital and Hotel

In October 1919 M.J. Smiley, Dr. C.A. Cook and I were appointed by the Commercial Club as a Hospital Committee, with instructions to "start a hospital in Belle Fourche." This resulted in a job that was certainly a

tough one and caused this committee a lot of headaches. I served on the committee and later on the Hospital Board from that time on until Dec. 31, 1946.

During this period of time with the help of the good people of this territory, we developed a very fine hospital, modern in every respect and known as The John Burns Memorial Hospital. It is free of debt and giving splendid service to not only Belle Fourche but to the surrounding territory.

I cannot go into all the details of all the accomplishments of the Commercial Club during the years, as that would be a history in itself. Suffice it to say, that through its efforts the Tri-State Round-Up. The Tri-State Fair and Sales Association were formed and the ground secured for the round-up grounds, the establishment of the sugar factory at Belle Fourche (M.J. Smiley being the leading figure in this effort), the building of the Don Pratt Hotel and many other items of betterment for the community, which now are taken as a "matter of course," took a lot of effort on the part of many of the men interested in the betterment of the City.

Someone in 1909 got the bright idea that Belle Fourche should have a creamery. After a lot of consideration, the usual "committee idea" was followed, and Will Glassie and myself were appointed as a committee to start a creamery. We enlisted several other good workers to assist us, among whom I remember M.J. Smiley, Fred Harris, and Hiram Barnett. We went out and sold stock among the farmers and business men to incorporate the Belle Fourche Valley Creamery, supposed to be a co-operative affair.

After a lot of hard work, we got the job done, bought a building which housed a steam laundry owned by F.C. Thulen, worked this over to suit our purpose, got the necessary creamery machinery, hired a buttermaker and were soon in the creamery business.

We soon commenced to learn things about this, too. We found that the rosy picture painted by the fellow who sold us the machinery was a bit exaggerated and that it took something more than just getting the thing ready for business to make a howling success in this kind of venture. When no one but the buttermaker ever had any experience in the management and while it looked good on paper, it just did not work out too well. It wasn't long until we found that dissatisfaction between the farmers and the management was a factor and even some of the farmer-directors of the organization were shipping their cream to our competitors. This did not lend great encouragement to the newly-formed creamery and something had to be done and that soon.

A few of us who had been quite active in the thing (M.J. Smiley, Fred Harris, Hiram Barnett, Ed Baldwin, W.B. Penfold, Will Glassie and myself) thought we saw possibilities in the venture and decided that we would try and buy the old stock all up and reincorporate. This we proceeded to do and wound up by owning the whole thing, under the new name of "Belle Fourche Creamery." We proceeded to do the thing up right and built a brick addition to the building in which we housed a refrigerator and storage plant, arranged for a \$25,000 credit at the bank by signing a

joint note and really went into business on a big scale. It cost me \$2500 as a starter.

We commenced to go after business and bought cream and eggs far and wide. We had visions of a large profit by the fact that we had storage facilities to hold until prices were right before we sold; however, things did not seem to pan out just the way we had planned. When we disposed of the surplus after holding it for a long time, we woke up to the fact that we had reached the limit of our credit with the bank and had to replenish some by an assessment.

This was certainly a hard jolt and squeezed two of the fellows out because they could not raise the money. The remainder of us had to take their stock over and dig up the \$25,000. This put me in to the extent of \$5000 before I got my name off that "joint note."

The wind up of the unfortunate thing was that after a long time, we managed to finally dispose of the plant and realized just about what money we had put into it, not counting any interest on the investment, nor payment for the gray it put into our hair during the possession of the plant.

The creamery, however, remained in existence all the time and has really been a fine thing for the development of the country.

Another committee activity about this time was in promoting the building of The Vance Hotel (now called the Hampton). Hugh Vance, a cowman from Meade County, made a proposition - that if we would furnish him the location, he would erect a three-story and basement hotel with 150 rooms. This sounded good to a lot of us, as we needed a good hotel badly.

The Butte County Bank owned the lots next to their bank and offered to sell them for this purpose for \$4500. Well, I got on this committee also, and after quite a lot of hard work, we raised the money by subscription and bought the lots. I was then delegated as "Trustee" to hold title to the same until the building was completed up to and including the first story, and then turn the deed over to Mr. Vance. This I did and the hotel was completed and has and still does contribute much to the welfare of the City, since its completion in 1910.

I recall one amusing incident in connection with the campaign of securing the funds for the purchase of the lots for the hotel. After paying for the lots, I found that there was \$50 left over in the fund, and not knowing what to do with this money, I sent a letter to each subscriber, asking what they would suggest. I received many different suggestions, but the most amusing one was, I think, the suggestion of my old friend Capt. Seth Bullock. He advised that in his opinion I should buy the fellow who designed the front of the hotel a leather medal. Evidently the Captain did not appreciate the architectural beauty of the edifice. (I do not recall just what we did with the money, but no doubt there was some other project available soon after on which to spend it.)

I branched out a bit in 1927 in another field. For many years I had been making regular trips up to Sand Creek fishing. In fact, Mabel and I spent a week up there in company with Clarence Cleveland and his wife, and Aggie and Will in 1924. We camped out and had a glorious time as it was a wild country then and the stream was full of fish.

In later years Walter Wyckoff and I built a small log cabin on the Finch place. Freeman was old enough then to help and we had a big time erecting the cabin and building the fire place, etc. We used to all go up there during the weekends when the weather was good in the summertime and kept our beds and equipment there all the time so that it was very handy. We all enjoyed it. Our daughter Helen and Chuck Williams were married there in the summer of 1925.

The Consolidated Light and Power Company owned a piece of property just above the Finch place comprising some 525 acres. They had secured this property with the idea of putting in hydro-electric power plant but had never started on the job and finally abandoned the project. I happened to be very well acquainted with the manager (Lee Boyer) and asked him one time if it was for sale. He said it was not for sale at that time; but that if ever it was decided to sell it, he would give me first chance to buy it. This property took in about three miles of the creek because the stream meanders through it very crookedly and contained some of the best fishing in the country. I realized that it would some day be worth a lot of money.

In 1927 Boyer advised me that they had decided to sell the land and said the price asked would be \$7500. I asked for a 30 day option at that price and he gave it to me. Therefore, it seemed that it was up to me to act. After a lot of thought, I decided that I would take it and made arrangements for the money and told him that he had sold the place.

About this time some of my old fishing friends got wind of the deal and came to me begging to be allowed to get into the thing along with me and I very foolishly said, "O.K., let's organize a corporation and buy it." The result was that 25 fishing fools put in \$300 each and organized the Sand Creek Country Club and took it over. I, like a big chump, took nothing for promoting the deal and put in my \$300 like the rest, instead of holding out at least one forty acres of the choicest part for myself.

Anyhow, I have the satisfaction of seeing that at least there is a nice place left for a few of the faithful to enjoy the great privilege of having a fine vacation spot. Most all the members of the Club now have nice cabins erected along the stream on spots allocated to them for the purpose. And it is a wonderful playground.

The Annenberg holdings are located just above the place and are noted for their elaborated grandness; but to me the simple cabin we enjoy has it beat a mile.

Besides the five saloons and the gambling outfits I inherited as mayor, there was another quite prosperous business known as the "Red Light District." There were three houses: one known as Dora's, another as Irene's and a smaller one known as Pidge's. Each of these had a considerable number of lady inmates living therein. These girls, as they were called, were not allowed to frequent any of the saloons, nor appear on the streets at night. They stayed at home and conducted themselves quite decently so far as their vocation allowed.

There was a place in each house to dance and bottled beer was sold to those who wished it. Anyone wanting to visit these places could do so, but had to go to them to partake of what pleasures were available. They did quite a prosperous business, however, and were well patronized by the cowboys when they were in town.

Strange as it may appear, these places did not create much disturbance and seldom demanded any attention by the police, except when things got so out of control that the madam could not handle them.

When the City incorporated, the method of handling this feature of the city business was carried on as it had been done by the old town board. The several madams were required to appear once a month at the Justice of the Peace's office and pay the monthly "tax" on their establishments - I think it was \$25 each - for disturbing the peace or some such charge. Anyhow, this revenue was received and entered on the Justice's docket accordingly.

The office of the Justice of the Peace was located just across the street from my hardware store and quite often when the judge happened to be gone from his office (which was frequent), one or more of the madams would visit the office to pay her fine and find that the old man was not there to receive the money. They would, therefore, come across to the store and give me the money and I would give them a receipt and later turn it over to the judge and take his receipt for it. Simply a little matter of courtesy which I was later to find quite embarrassing.

Some years after I had sold my hardware store, I sued a man who had purchased a mowing machine from me and never paid for it. I got a judgment against him. When I was Receiver of the United States Land Office, this man made proof on a homestead entry and I happened to recall his name when the papers went through my office. I then remembered that I had a judgment against him and went to the court house to look it up. I knew that in all probability he would be making a loan on his homestead, and my judgment would be shown against the land, and he would have to settle.

My search for the judgment proved that it had never been recorded in the Clerk of Court's office. So I then had my attorney, L.M. Simons, see if he could find it. He made a strict search and finally found it docketed in the City Justice of the Peace record. My attorney who had taken care of the original business had never transferred it to the county records as he should have done.

Well, Mr. Simons had it properly transferred and sure enough, it was only a short time until my old customer called on me and paid me a nice lot of interest along with the principal that he owed me. I thought I was pretty lucky.

My friend Simons told me that he sure had a hard time in finding the judgment and only looked at the old city docket as a last resort. He remarked at that time that he had noticed that I was mayor of the city, but the old fox did not tell me all that he had uncovered in that search and patiently awaited his chance. After about twenty years he sprung this joke on me which is really too good to keep hidden, although I could have gladly choked him when he did spring it.

In my Masonic career I had taken a very active part in the building of our new Masonic Temple and had also been elected in line of advancement in the Grand Lodge of South Dakota. At a large meeting of Masons held in the new temple after it was finished, I was to be honored by my brethren for the good work that I had done for the craft. My closest friend and fraternal brother Simons was delegated to do the honors, which he was able to do and did do in a very fine manner. Except...

When he had spread it on pretty thick about my record in Masonic activities and should have stopped, he pulled a little black book out of his pocket and after thumbing over several pages, looked up in his wise old manner and said something like this:

- That he had known me for a long time and had found that I had been active in political and other matters in different ways for many years;
- Also that in my younger days I must have been mighty active in ways that were not generally known;
- That in a search through the old city records he had found some mention of these and had made a note of them for future reference; and

- Reading from his notes, "On a certain date, S.G. Mortimer had paid Dora's fine of \$25 to the City Justice; on another date not much later S.G. Mortimer paid Irene's fine of \$25 to the City Justice" and so on down the list, name after name of the girls' fines that I had paid to the Justice of the Peace;

- Winding up with the remark that I must have been some man to have taken care of so many girls in my prime.

Of course, the joke was on me and I was called to explain more about it and every one got a big laugh out of it all. Old friend Simons surely got a big kick out of the joke he played on me that time. Coming from him who was and had been for years one of my closest friends, I enjoyed it as much as did the rest.

#### Masonic Record

I joined the Masonic Lodge in 1902, receiving my Master Mason degree on Dec. 5, 1902 in Cedar Lodge, Number 124, at Belle Fourche, and have

remained a member of the same lodge ever since. I celebrated my fiftieth anniversary of continual membership in the same lodge and received my fifty year medal from the Grand Lodge of South Dakota on exactly the same date (December 5th) in 1952.

The following is a list of my Masonic membership and Masonic service record:

Master Mason:

Cedar Lodge, No.124, AF&AM, Belle Fourche; Dec. 5, 1902

Consistory Degrees:

4th-32nd, Black Hills Consistory, Deadwood; Jan 28, 1910

Royal Arch:

Japheth Chapter, Belle Fourche; March 13, 1912

Royal & Select Master:

Black Hills Council, No.3, Lead, SD; June 15, 1923

Knight Templar:

Black Hills Commandary, No. 23, Spearfish, SD; 1936

Shrine:

Naja Temple A A O N M S, Deadwood, SD; June 23, 1911

Order of High Priesthood:

South Dakota; June 12, 1919

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Eastern Star: Lebanon Chapter No. 78, Belle Fourche, SD (Served one term as Worthy Patron in 1931)

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Masonic Service:

Master of Cedar Lodge, No. 124, Belle Fourche, SD 1911 and 1912 (2 years)

High Priest, Japheth Chapter No. 41, Belle Fourche, SD (two terms)

District Deputy Grand Master, District 24; 1930, 1931 (two terms)

Junior Grand Warden, Grand Lodge of SD; 1933

Senior Grand Warden, Grand Lodge of SD; 1934

Deputy Grand Master, Grand Lodge of SD; 1935

Grand Master, Grand Lodge of SD; 1936-37

State Chairman, George Washington National Memorial; 1938, 1939

Member of Jurisprudence Committee, Grand Lodge of SD; from 1941 to date.

For further reference regarding my term as Grand Master, I would refer the reader to the Grand Lodge Proceedings for the year 1937, which contains the report made of my administration.

My affiliation with Masonry has proven to be one of the most happy and satisfying experiences of my life. It has given me a wonderful education besides providing me with the love and fellowship of the finest bunch of high class men one could ever hope to meet. My father was a Mason as was his father before him, and I am proud to say that I can address my only son as a Brother Mason.

S.G. Mortimer Memoirs

27. Civic Pride

It was rather a come down for me to adjust myself to the fact that I was retired and without anything to do and has taken some time to fully realize that I would have to let many opportunities to make some money go by, when there have been so many chances arise to tempt me. But I appreciate that perhaps it is time I slowed up a bit and try and enjoy some of the things I have missed during my rather active life. Certainly I have no complaint about not having had plenty to occupy most of my spare time in the past and have always had to scratch to keep up with the various activities that I have been engaged in.

In looking back I often wonder how in the world I managed to get mixed up in so many different things with the thought that, had I spent all my time attending to my own affairs, how much better off I would have been in the final wind-up. Then again, I feel that there is a certain satisfaction that after all, it is better that a man should try and take his part in endeavoring to try and repay in a small degree the honor and confidence reposed in me by the people who have been so kind to place me in so many places of responsibility during my long experiences in this territory.

I have never asked for their assistance or support without their readily giving it to me and I hope that my efforts have been such that I cannot ever be accused as having violated their confidence or betrayed their trust.

There is a little poem that strikes me as something very fitting and appropriate. The author is R.W. Glover.

IT ISN'T THE TOWN, IT'S YOU

If you want to live in the kind of a town  
That's the kind of a town you like,  
You needn't slip your clothes in a grip  
And start on a long, long hike.

You'll find elsewhere what you left behind,  
For there's nothing that's really new.  
It's a knock at yourself when you knock your town;  
It isn't your town--it's you.

Real towns are not made by men afraid  
Lest somebody else gets ahead.  
When everybody works and nobody shirks  
You can raise a town from the dead.

And if while you make your stake  
Your neighbor can make one, too,  
Your town will be what you want to see,  
It isn't your town--it's you.

The quoted excerpts are from MEMOIRS written in 1953 by  
Samuel George Mortimer  
(1880-1959)

"My father, George Glenday Mortimer (1831-1899), was born in Scotland September 19, 1831 and came to America when 19 years old after having served his apprenticeship in Scotland as a stone cutter. After coming to America, Father worked at his trade for a few years, then got the "Gold Fever" and went to the California gold fields, from there to Montana and Colorado and finally landed in the Black Hills of South Dakota along about 1878.

Mother was born Eliza Murray (1842-1921) on March 14, 1842 in England but was raised in Scotland. Married young to John Nichol, a stone mason, she bore seven children to this union, six of whom died either in infancy or at an early age. The family came to America in 1871, settled in Chicago where Mr. Nichol engaged in the building business. He was accidently

killed while at work on a building in 1873. After her husband's death Mother had to seek employment, as little was left after settling up the estate. Several years later she married my father who was an old friend of Mr. Nichol. Mother and her daughter Agnes, came out from Chicago to Lead (traveling from Sidney, Nebraska to Lead in a stage coach) where Father was at that time and the marriage was performed on December 10, 1879.

My half sister, Agnes {later Mrs. Will Rhodes}, was fourteen years old when I was born October 16, 1880 in Lead, Dakota Territory. Father was 49 years old.

His hope for the pot of gold never materialized to any great extent although he made several "strikes," I am informed, but never laid up any money. He was a splendid workman at his trade of stone-cutter and used to work on laying the engine beds for the Homestake mills, hoists, etc. besides mining occasionally. We lived in Lead until I was about six years old and then moved to the Carbonate Camp which was a small mining camp nearby. Here I started my first school.

We went to Denver in 1888 where Father went to work at his trade.

Father took a fling at the cattle business while we were living in Lead, buying a ranch {in the Snoma area} and a bunch of cattle in the Fall of 1886 and giving the cattle to another rancher to run on shares. The winter of 1886-87 was a terribly hard winter and when Spring finally arrived, Father found that he had gone out of the cattle business as there were none left to count. I sometimes wonder about this, because while Father knew his stone-cutting what he did not know about cattle was at least considerable and I doubt if he could have picked out any of his own cattle had there been any left of the herd in the Spring. Anyhow, he had the ranch left which at that time was more of a liability than an asset."

{The family moved in 1895 to a Wyoming homestead in the Bear Lodge on Deer Creek.}

"Our livestock consisted of nine head of cows of various ages and colors. I think the family also had a few hundred dollars saved up so that we could pay for improving the homestead and live on it for awhile after a fashion. This in addition to some hand tools and a few farm implements completed the list of what we had when we landed in Wyoming in the summer of 1895. Father sold the Snoma ranch a short time after and bought some more cattle with the money and this helped out in getting a small start in the cattle business.

It was here on the homestead that I stopped being a boy and commenced to take a man's place. I was less than 15 years old and not overly large nor strong for my age, had never worked steadily nor hard and of course, not having lived on a farm or ranch, had no experience except for the short time during my summer vacation and time spent on the Snoma ranch since coming out from Denver. Father likewise was new to ranching and his health was failing somewhat then and steadily got worse as time went on."

{George Mortimer, the father, died in 1899 and young Sam and his mother moved to Belle Fourche in 1901 with Sam buying Alanson Giles' hardware store. He was elected the first mayor of Belle Fourche at 22 1/2 years old in 1903 to serve for a salary of \$23 a year and married Mabel Wood (1876-1969) of Snoma December 25, 1903 at the Wood Ranch. They lived at 911 Harding Street in Belle Fourche all their married life except the first few years when they lived in the house next door.

Mabel's father, Albert Freeman Wood (1848-1903), had come to Dakota Territory from Rhode Island in 1869 to visit his sister Sarah Wood Ward, the wife of Congregational minister Joseph Ward in Yankton. A.F. operated a jewelry store in that town for several years until he crossed the Territory with the first group (Old Settlers' Expedition) to travel from Fort Pierre to Rapid City arriving on Feb. 26, 1876. He shipped sawmill equipment to the Black Hills and set up his mill at Castle Creek, moving it in 1878 to Lead City. In the 1880 Census report of Lead City, DT, he declared his occupation to be "capitalist." He was a partner in several gold mines before becoming a rancher, moving to the Snoma homestead in 1881 where he lived until his death in 1903. Mabel, eldest of seven children of A.F. Wood and Martha Peterson (1849-1924) from Laerdal, Norway, had attended Spearfish Normal and was teaching school near Snoma at the time of her marriage to S.G. Mortimer. Her siblings were Emma Wood, Charles Wood, Bertha Wood, Louis Wood, Gertrude Wood, and Lloyd Wood.

In 1904 S.G. Mortimer was elected to represent Meade and Butte (Perkins and Hardings Counties were included in Butte County at that time) in the 1905 S.D. State Senate. He introduced the Irrigation Code to further the Project at Orman Dam and worked hard to get it passed before the end of the two-month Ninth Legislature in March 1905. To journey to Pierre he took the train from Belle Fourche to Norfolk, NE to Sioux City, IO, to Worthington, MN, to Pierre, SD.-- a three day trip of 1000 miles.

In April of 1906 at a competition of hardrock miners using steel drill bits and eight pound sledges double-jacking on a platform set up in the main street of Belle Fourche, he was struck in an eye by a flying bit of steel off the drill head. He had to travel by train to St. Joseph's Hospital in Deadwood for surgery to remove his right eye.

He was in the plumbing business briefly before being elected County Treasurer in 1907 and appointed by President Taft as Receiver of the Land Office in Belle Fourche in 1909 at a salary of \$3000.]

"The land office was a very busy place. The homesteaders flocked in to file on the vacant government land in droves. We had as many as 700 homestead entries in one month and the handling of this amount of business together with the holding of hearings on contests as to who was first to file, and trials connected with claims or original settler not having commenced nor maintained residence within the proper time, made it a rather interesting and complicated business. In addition to the filing and final proof made on the homestead entries, the collection of all water charges under the Government Irrigation Project were made by the Receiver and I sure handled a lot of money. I was not allowed to accept

checks or drafts so all payments were made in the shape of gold, silver or currency which I had to ship by express to the United States Depository at Deadwood. When the lots were auctioned off at the opening of the Town of Newell (under the Project) I came back to Belle Fourche from the auction with \$35,000."

{S.G. Mortimer considered his neighboring Wyoming rancher Henry Weare, owner of the large Cross Anchor Ranch, to be a mentor and good friend. Seth Bullock counseled him once: "In politics, never deny anything as it will come back to bite you." Calamity Jane asked him to grubstake her to laundering equipment in 1903 when she came to Belle Fourche to serve the red light district. S.G. became a Mason in 1902, and in 1935 was Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of South Dakota. He served on every Belle Fourche civic committee for decades being instrumental in the formation of the B.F. Creamery, the John Burns Memorial Hospital, the Don Pratt Hotel, the Courthouse, and was the first president of the Commercial Club which was the forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce. He owned with other businessmen the Belle Fourche Bee, Butte County Press at Nisland and Valley Irrigator of Newell, selling the Bee in 1909. He served as Postmaster of the Belle Fourche Post Office from his appointment in 1922 until 1934 when the Democrats were voted into office. S. G. Mortimer organized the Sand Creek Country Club in 1927. He died in 1959 at the age of 79.

Sam and Mabel had three children. The eldest, Helen (1905-1965), was born when he was away in Pierre trying to get the Irrigation Code passed. She married Charles Williams and lived in the Los Angeles area until her death in 1965. They had two children - Sharon (1926- ) and Jay (1931- ). Dorothy (1907- ), the second daughter, graduated from the University of SD in Vermillion Phi Beta Kappa and reigned on campus as Miss Dakota for Dakota Days of 1928. She married John B. Dunlap (1905-1988) and lived in many states as his career progressed within Shell Oil Company. Their children are Janet (1933- ) and Mary (1939- ). The third Mortimer child, your very own George F. Mortimer (1909- ), better known as Mort, who represented you for the 28th District in the SD House of Representatives for 20 years, was inducted into the SD Hall of Fame in 1993. He married Marjorie Caldwell (1909-2004) in 1938 and is the proud father of the doctors Mortimer in Rapid City: James (1940- ), the veterinarian and Sam (1946- ), the pediatrician and proud grandfather of Jim's two children Jeb (1970- ) and Shan (1971- ) and Sam's two offspring Luke (1975- ) and Katie (1978- ).

George F. as a young man was a barnstormer in his own plane, served in W.W. II, was a postal worker and longtime Postmaster at the Belle Fourche Post Office (following in the family tradition of his father and grandmother who was the Postmistress of Mona in their Wyoming home at Deer Creek). He has been an active member of the Cedar Lodge of the Masons in Belle Fourche, a leader of Boy Scout Troop 19 which produced Eagle Scouts regularly, and is active still with the Chamber of Commerce promoting the city and its businesses. At his induction into the SD Hall of Fame, the tribute recalled his contributions in the State House. "Mort was both our funny bone and our conscience. Mort's humor, as he served as a state representative, played a critical role in relieving

stress when the process became really intense." "His common sense made legislation entertaining."]

Prepared for the Butte County Historical Society meeting  
Newell, SD on April 19, 1997  
Janet Dunlap Rathbun, granddaughter of S.G. Mortimer  
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Rapid City, SD 57702  
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S.G. Mortimer as a Teenager on the Homestead in The Bearlodge, WY  
by Janet Dunlap Rathbun, Granddaughter  
West River History Conference, Sept. 19, 1997

(Young Sam, an only child born to a 49-year-old father, was born in Lead, DT in October, 1880. George wed Eliza Murray, a widow with a 13-year-old daughter Aggie in December, 1879. A stonecutter, nineteen year old George had left Scotland to mine gold in California, Montana and Colorado before arriving in the Black Hills about 1877. These stories are from Sam's Memoirs, (1953) and refer to his brother-in-law Will Rhodes, without whom the family could not have survived the five years on Deer Creek between 1895 and 1900.)

I have been fortunate in having had the privilege of spending my early life in the pioneer period of this great country. I shall try to confine my story to actual facts and register them without distortion or exaggeration, with due regards for any that be of historical interest, being simply described as I remember them, not "dressed up" to catch the interest of the reader of "Wild West" fiction.

In 1895 the "itchy feet" of the Mortimer tribe commenced to evidence signs of another outbreak. Aggie and Will's enthusiasm of the possibilities of the Wyoming country, I think, had something to do with it. Anyhow, the result was the decision to make another move. I am not sure if it was the pioneer instinct that cropped out or the fact that we never stayed long enough in one place for the roots to take hold, or that my father's long prospecting for gold had made him prone to seek new possibilities. Arrangements were made to migrate to Wyoming where Father, who had never exercised his homestead rights, would take up a claim near Will and Aggie's, and we would branch out into the cattle business. There was plenty of room for this was "open range." We therefore determined to move after school was out in the Spring of 1895 and live with Will and Aggie until a house could be built on Father's new homestead.

The wagon was old. The box was in bad condition and was far from being tight enough to hold grain. The rear wheels were dished so badly by having had the tires reset too tight that they resembled battered tin plates and made a track like a snake had crawled down the road. They wobbled so much that the brake blocks had to be a foot wide to provide a braking surface to any place the wheel tires would contact. There was no spring seat on which to ride, so a good substantial board served for this purpose. When driving this chariot, one could be pretty sure where the front wheels would go but had to make allowance as to how close the rear wheels would follow.

The team was a pair of mules named King and Queen. They were not young. They were, however, fully developed in character and each differed from the other in every way possible, even in sex. Queen was much the smaller of the two, being just medium size, brown in color, quiet disposition and always a little behind on the doubletree but a good, faithful critter and, as far as a mule can be, quite a decent animal.

One of King's traits was that he was "breachy." I never saw a fence that would hold him. He had a novel manner of getting over a fence--by rearing up on his hind legs while standing sideways to the fence, swinging around a quarter turn to deposit his front feet across the fence, then humping his back and raising his hind legs to swing his hind end over and land with his hind legs on the same side as his front legs. I've seen him do this many times and he never missed nor cut himself.

The rest of our belongings in the way of livestock consisted of nine head of cows of various ages and colors. I think the family also had a few hundred dollars saved up so that we could pay for improving the homestead and live on for awhile after a fashion. This in addition to some hand tools and a few farm implements completed the list of what we had when we landed in the Bear Lodge on Deer Creek, Wyoming in the summer of 1895. Father sold the South Dakota ranch a short time after and bought some more cattle with the money and this helped out in getting a small start in the cattle business.

It was here on the homestead that I stopped being a boy and commenced to take a man's place. I was less than 15 years old and not overly large nor strong for my age, had never worked steadily nor hard and of course, not having lived on a farm or ranch, had no experience except for the short time during my summer vacation and time spent on the S.D. ranch since coming out from Denver. Father likewise was new to ranching and his health was failing somewhat then and steadily got worse as time went on.

We had to rely largely on Will for help and guidance in getting things lined up and our first problem was to build our house. There was plenty of timber and ours for the taking, and the pine logs when peeled and laid up made a nice building. It did not take us long to erect the three room "L" shaped house and it was a comfortable home. The roof was double boarded with about six inches of dirt on top; this made it cool in the hot weather and warm in the winter.

All of the buildings being built of logs and the corrals with pine poles entailed a great amount of work with the axe and saw. Father could never master the axe so as to be called a good hand with it, but I managed with Will's help to soon become quite a woodsman. Father however, was an artist with a pick and shovel, I presume gathered from his mining experience, and could sure move a lot of dirt in a short time with apparent ease. He dug the hole for the root cellar and practically all of the well digging and also rocked it up from bottom to top with loose rocks very expertly placed.

Being far from town (50 miles) we had to be able to do most anything with what material was available. For instance, to get plaster to point up the log buildings, we would haul gypsum rocks from the outcrop on the hills near the Belle Fourche River, place them in a pit dug near a cut bank in the creek, tunnel a hole from the face of the cut bank back into the pit bottom for the fireplace. By building a hot fire in this the heat would circulate back into and through the gypsum rocks until they would become red hot and after they were burned enough, we would let the fire go out and then after the rocks had cooled enough to handle, we would remove them and pound them up fine and sieve the powdered product through a fine screen. This, mixed with the proper amount of sand and sufficient water, made excellent plaster for any purpose. It took a lot of work and did not cost a cent.

I had few boys of my age to run with and was thrown in contact with older men most of the time and thereby missed boyhood activities. These were not greatly missed, however, as there was always something to be interested in. I liked to hunt and there was plenty of game around to satisfy that pleasure. On Sundays it was my usual custom to go deer hunting when the deer were fat and managed to keep plenty of meat on hand for the family. Prairie chicken or grouse and wild ducks also provided a change during the season and occasionally a fishing expedition netted some nice catfish out of the river which was only a short distance from the ranch.

There were quite a lot of coyotes around the ranch one winter and as they were getting pretty bold and catching a chicken every once in a while, I set out several traps to try and take them down a bit and did catch several.

One morning while riding my trap line I came across a coyote in the second trap. He was a big fellow and had a nice pelt. I did not want to shoot him and mess up the hide and spoil the trap set, so thought I would

kill him with a club. Selecting a good big stick I proceeded to sneak up on him and after several attempts, managed to bat him over the head and stun him and then belted him another hard blow on the head and thought I had fixed him for good.

Knowing however that these fellows were hard to kill, I thought it would be a good plan to make sure of it before I took his foot out of the trap and wondered how best to accomplish that purpose. It was a cold, winter morning and I was wearing a big muffler around my neck. I took the muffler off and tied it as tight as I could pull it around Mr. Coyote's neck, thinking that if he did have any life left in him that the muffler tied so tightly around his neck would finish him off for sure.

Then leaving him still in the trap I started to look at the other traps I had set out. This took considerable time and I did not find any more coyotes trapped nor any of the traps sprung. I rode back to skin the gentleman I had caught. When I approached the place, I was surprised to find the coyote setting up on his haunches like a big dog, his mouth open and his tongue hanging out. My muffler around his neck with the long ends sticking out resembling a necktie made him look like he was all dressed up and waiting to welcome me.

There was nothing left for me to do but shoot him and retrieve my good muffler. but then also had the big job of cleaning and washing the muffler before I could wear it again. At least I learned not to underrate a coyote's endurance. They are smart and they are tough and had I not left this one's foot still in the trap, I suppose he would have been wearing my muffler all the rest of the winter.

Being so far from town, it was necessary that we buy our provisions and supplies in large quantities and usually made only about two trips a year into town with a wagon for the supplies needed. We raised all the meat that we used except, of course, the game that hunting provided. We also got our flour in large enough quantities to last nearly a year by taking wheat to the mill (at Beulah) and trading it for flour. The rest of the groceries and other supplies we either sent mail orders or bought them when we went in for supplies with the lumber wagon.

Mother seldom went to town as the ride was too hard on her. I often went alone and it was quite a vacation to get to town and get all the things that Mother had on her want list and keep the spending "within the budget." We did not have things charged to us but tried to pay for what we got and if we did not have the money, we just got along without the article.

On one occasion after finishing up my shopping and getting my dinner and paying my stable bill, I found that I had just 25 cents left in my pocket. I was walking past Dan Robert's saloon at the time and turned in the door and walked back to where the gambling tables were operating and stood watching the roulette game which was going at the time.

After watching awhile, I thought that I might as well be entirely broke as the way I was, so I pulled out my quarter and threw it on the black and waited for the ball to drop. And it dropped in the black and I won another quarter. I kept playing and with a beginner's luck wound up with something over \$30 and had sense enough to quit and walk out. It was the first time that I had ever had the nerve to try gambling and I was a happy boy to have that much money all my own at one time and wondered just what I would do with it.

Remembering that Mother had been wanting a barrel churn to replace the makeshift dasher and cover I had made to fit an earthenware three gallon crock, I bought her a barrel churn, also goods for a new dress. I bought Father a pair of new boots and a jack knife and myself a new hat and some fancy shirts and socks and some other stuff. O yes, I also included some candy and a few cigars. Spent all my money, but was happy.

When I arrived home and unloaded the wagon (I left my purchases until the last) and after Mother had checked over to see if I had gotten all that she had ordered, I gave her the package with the dress in it and set the churn up in the kitchen. I then gave Father his presents and laid my own on my bed and Mother just stood there with her mouth open. Finally she broke out with the questions, "Young man, where did you get all this stuff? You surely did not CHARGE it, did you?" I did not know what else to tell her except the truth and so I told how I had gambled and won \$30 and bought the stuff for presents to them and also to myself.

Father just grinned and said, "Thank you, son." Mother said, "I hope that you will not make a habit of it because it is not right. But I am sure glad to get that churn; I have wanted one a long time."

The coming of the sheep opened up an opportunity for me in a way and although I did not think any more of a sheep or a sheep man than the other fellow, I saw an opportunity wherein I could earn some extra money. I started to shear sheep during the period after crops were in and before haying started, going from sheep camp to sheep camp.

Shearing is hard on the back and rather an unpleasant job but you can get used to most anything if you have to and the diversion from other kinds of work was at least a change and I learned many things which came in good stead in later years. The first year I received six cents per head, the second year seven and the last year I ran the crew and got eight cents per head. I never got so as to be called an expert but the last year averaged one hundred head per day and that was a lot of money in those days and helped a lot toward expenses.

Sleeping on the ground in a camp bed in a small tent had its drawbacks but after working all day it was mighty comfortable and one gets used to his little "nest" and can rest very comfortably. I can remember when I came home and got into my own comfortable bed on a good mattress and springs, that I could not rest at all well until I got used to the soft bed. Mother could not understand how I could object to a good soft bed instead of the hard ground, but it was certainly a fact that until I got used to the good bed again, the camp bed felt best.

During the sheep shearing season every good day was utilized and every one worked hard to get this important job done as fast as possible inasmuch as the wool must be taken off the sheep while the same is perfectly dry. A sudden shower stops the procedure until the sun comes out and dries off the sheep. Several days of rainy weather become a nightmare when the outfit is camped out in a tent on the prairie with nothing to do but wait it out for the rain to quit and things dry out. My last season of sheep shearing was a very wet one and we were held up a lot by the rains.

During these periods it was hard to pass the time. After sharpening up our sheep shears and arranging our equipment and doing everything that needed attention, there was lots of time left and a nervous chap like I was had to do something. If anyone could put up a job on someone else with a good joke, it helped pass the time.

Many were the pranks I played on poor old Charley Shroyer and Ben Dodds. They had recently come out from Ohio and were regular greenhorns. They had a lot of confidence in me and were always wide open for practical jokes and kidding. I took advantage of them in this respect most every chance I got.

Charley and Ben shared the same tent with me and each of us had their own bed and other gear stored therein. Charley enjoyed a good soft bed and was particular to see that every bump was smoothed off the ground if he had time to do it prior to rolling out his bed. One time I remember he had gone to a lot of trouble to fix up his bed so that it would be extra nice and comfortable after we had moved to a new camp. Ben and I split out some nice ash sticks about the size of a broom handle and six or eight inches long and nicely sharpened. While Charley was gone visiting at another tent just before bedtime, we rolled back his bed and drove about a dozen or more of the ash sticks scattered here and there, leaving them stick up an inch or so above the surface of the ground under his bed. Then we rolled back his camp bed into place and we then went to bed and waited for Charley to come back.

Now, preparing to go to bed does not take very long in camp and Charley soon removed his hat, shoes, socks and pants and proceeded to get into bed. I can still remember him howl when he rolled over on those ash pins. He certainly "blew up" and because he could not break off the pins nor pull them up by hand, he had to light the lantern, put on his boots and go out to the wood pile and get the axe, roll back his bed and drive down the pins even with the ground to smooth things out -- all the time threatening to kill us both and using language not printable which promised us dire disaster in the future. Ben and I thought it was very funny and enjoyed it but Charley had other notions and I did not blame him.

Charley was also scared to death of lightning (and there was a lot of this that season) and when the lightning commenced to crack around close, Charley would remove any metal object out of the tent. He said that the metal "drew" the lightning and we had lots of fun in bringing his surplus pairs of shears and other things he had moved out back into the tent during his absence and planting them under or around his bed and then telling him about it the next morning. That would surely give him the excuse for getting mad.

Our last shearing job that year was for quite a big outfit who were well prepared with good corrals and equipment to handle the job with dispatch. They had a large cook tent with another canvas shelter to eat under and the wives of the two brothers owning the outfit cooked the meals. This was surely comfortable and the meals were fine and the eight hungry shearers did full justice to them at meal time and appreciated the privilege. The weatherman however did not cooperate very nicely and, as I remember it, there were a lot of showers that stopped the shearers quite often and we had to loaf part of the time.

Ben, who was a great hand to talk and visit whenever he got the chance, used to hang around the cook tent and talk with the ladies when there was nothing else to do. They had nice times together and the ladies liked to have him around as he helped carry wood and water and do other chores to help them when he could. Charley and I thought we would have a little fun with Ben and waited our chance to job him in some manner and finally figured one out.

While Ben was setting on a camp chair near the entrance to the "lean to" talking to the ladies, Charley and I strolled up and entered into the conversation, Charley doing most of the talking. While he was diverting Ben's attention, I tied the long tails of his slicker (rain coat) to the tent pole with a piece of wool twine and then I went back to our tent. Immediately after I got there I started to call Charley and Ben "to come quickly" like as though I had found something wrong. Of course Charley took off at the gallop and Ben also got up and started to follow, but his being tied to the tent pole hindered his progress somewhat and resulted in his pulling down the pole and the drop of the shelter, which embarrassed him very much and did not help to improve his disposition. All the crew joshed him about it so much that he laid off his visiting for awhile.

Just a day or so before we finished this last job we were waiting for the sheep to dry off before starting to shear and it was quite cool that morning. We were helping to butcher a mutton. After the animal was skinned and dressed out and hung up to cool, I picked out one of the kidneys and watching my chance, dropped it into one of Ben's pockets. He never noticed it and shortly after that the sun came out and we prepared to start shearing. Of course we all changed into our working clothes and Ben, knowing nothing about the kidney being in his coat pocket, just laid the coat down with the rest of his clothes on the bed.

It so happened that from then on the weather cleared up (it being late in June) and we finished up the job in a short time and loaded up and went home. I forgot all about putting the kidney in Ben's pocket and of course he did not know it was there, but it was. It provided something of an amusing incident which later Ben informed me of as follows.

Mr. Henry Weare, a Spearfish banker and the owner of the Cross Anchor outfit, had bought out several of the settlers who had filed on land on Deer Creek and Ben had taken the job of farming the land for Mr. Weare and had put in the crop prior to going out with the shearing crew. After his return Ben learned that Mr. Weare was out at the Anchor Ranch and as he wished to confer with him about some of the farming business on the rented farm, he decided that he would go over to the ranch and talk things over. So on a rather cool misty morning after a rather hot spell, Ben hunted up his old coat which he had hung up in the granary, put it on, saddled up his horse and rode over to see Mr. Weare.

Ben said that as he rode along he seemed to notice that there were a terrible lot of flies in the air and the farther he went, the more flies there were, but it did not take very long to get to the ranch. Mr. Weare was there and as it was nice and warm in the sun out on the South side of the house, they went out there to talk. Ben stated that if he had noticed some flies on the way over from his place, he now discovered that they were more here and both he and Mr. Weare commented on how thick they were and even looked around to see if there was anything dead laying around. They moved over to the other side of the house in the shade. Well, Ben said that he kept trying to figure the thing out while he was fighting flies and he and Mr. Weare were finishing up their business. He said that he knew it was nothing about him because he had changed clothes after taking a bath before he came over. It could not be anything about Mr. Weare that was causing the attraction of the green flies that were literally eating them up. So they hurried up with their business and Ben took off for home still fighting flies.

After he had gotten a short distance from the ranch, Ben happened to put his right hand in the pocket of his coat and the old stinking kidney stuck to his fingers as he hastily pulled out his hand. This solved the puzzle because that kidney was certainly quite ripe and Ben told me that he knew in a minute who was responsible for such a mean thing to do to anyone and he cussed me out loud all the way home. After he had told me about this end of the story, I had a good laugh but did acknowledge that it was a dirty trick.

Orville Brownfield was one of my closest friends. He lived on the adjoining ranch with his brother George and they were both frequent visitors at our house. It was the custom for us young fellows to meet on Sundays at one of the ranches of the bunch and have a kind of get-together doing various things -- perhaps riding a bucking horse, playing ball or if the weather was not good, playing cards. In fact, just a gathering where anything could happen and generally did.

On one occasion we met at the Pannel ranch on the river. We fooled around at one thing or another and after we had had dinner (which was one of the important things we were usually greatly interested in), we played cards to see who would wash the dishes. Orville and I got stuck to do this messy job while the rest of the crowd loafed and enjoyed themselves.

We retired to the kitchen and went through the motion of washing the dishes. I don't remember if it was Orville's or my idea, but we just washed the top cup and saucer and plate, and neatly piled the dirty ones under the washed one, and placed them in the cupboard where they belonged. We took long enough to accomplish what was supposed to be our job, came smiling back to the rest of the crowd and after staying a short time, Orville and I excused ourselves and went home, thinking we sure had played a good joke on the bunch.

Nothing was said about what we had done and it so happened that for quite awhile after we had pulled this stunt we were never both there together. We kind of forgot the matter and after a considerable length of time we both went to one that was held at Hal Baxter's cabin. Everything went along smoothly and we sure had a nice time and, of course, had the usual good dinner which we all enjoyed.

This time after dinner all the other fellows suddenly came alive and grabbed the side-kick Orville and myself and we sure got the works. They took Orville outside and tied his feet together and then bent him over a small ash tree and tied his legs to that and then let loose. It raised him up so that his hands just touched the ground. While he was in this position, they just gently punched him around occasionally or pinched him where it would hurt the most. They kept this up until he was about all in and they had to let him down before he went out completely.

In my case they bent me over a bed roll, stomach down, and while two fellows held my hands and another two stretched out my legs, a third husky wielded a cartridge belt to good advantage where it surely blistered my setter and I don't mean maybe.

After they got tired of their fun, they let us up and gently suggested that they thought it would be a good plan if they allowed us to do the dishes. We were glad to accept the invitation and this time we washed them very carefully and made sure that all were nice and clean before we put them back in the cupboard. You may be sure we did not repeat any more stunts of that kind again.

I occasionally attended a dance in Belle Fourche and as it was about a fifty mile horseback ride I would stop off at Ralph

Weber's ranch (which was about half way), change horses and Ralph and I would go from there to town together. After the dance was over we would ride back to his place and I would get some sleep and then go on home the next day.

Ralph was somewhat older than I was and a quiet easy going fellow, never got in a hurry nor worked harder than necessary. He was so slow and deliberate in all his actions that he gave me "the willies" to work with him. He was not only slow in his movements but also slow in his speech and would drag out a conversation or a story until one would begin to wonder when he would get through talking or reach the climax of the story. Whenever he started to do anything he reminded me of one of those big hawks when disturbed from dining on a dead rabbit. They flopped their wings a long time before they started to fly, and it then takes them considerable time to clumsily get fully air-borne.

During the Christmas holidays there was to be held in Belle Fourche a big Masquerade Ball which was advertised to be an extremely good one with fine music provided, good eats, and plenty of costumes promised for rental to those who did not provide their own. All who attended must be fully masked, but of course had to lift their masks for identification and show their invitation before entering the dance hall. Quite an affair, and Ralph and I were thrilled at having received invitations and looked forward to having a good time although we were not fortunate enough to have lady partners and had to "go stag."

After arriving somewhat late in the evening, the matter of selecting our costumes was the first obstacle to surmount and we found these pretty well picked over. I forget now what I managed to salvage out of the ones available but had no trouble in regards it fitting me, but getting one the right size to fit Ralph was a different story.

He was a big man -- short legged but extremely long in the back -- and the only costume that came anywhere near fitting him was a Red Devil outfit complete with forked tail and horns to match. We had to peel Ralph down to his underwear to manage crowding him into the Devil suit and after much effort in dressing him, he sure looked the part and could only move with considerable effort; but as he was not geared up for speed anyhow, we thought he could navigate to advantage and we went to the dance, The Devil and me.

There was a big crowd and the music was good and as it was not necessary to be introduced to the ladies, there was no excuse for not joining in with the spirit of the occasion of having a good time. After some time however, I noticed Ralph was not dancing but standing back on the side lines and I thought I better check up on the Devil. He told me that he was feeling quite a noticeable draft in his rear and had been trying for some time to signal me to come to his aid. We meandered outside and discovered that the Devil suit and Ralph had parted company; there was a very decided gap in his rear end which was so pronounced that repair was impossible and there was nothing left to do but go back to the room we had engaged at a rooming house and pry Ralph out of his disguise. After getting him out of the thing and his crawling back into his clothes we went back to the dance and Ralph had to sit on the side lines until it was time to unmask and eat the refreshments provided at that time.

After the lunch the dance went on for awhile and he got to dance a little anyhow but the big event went kind of sour to him and we rode back to his place not too much pleased over the outcome although so far as I was concerned I had a good time and joshed Ralph about his looking like

the Devil at least. He said that he not only looked it but that the suit was so tight he also felt like the devil until the thing ruptured.

(The father George Mortimer died of a long battle with silicosis or "miner's lung" in March of 1899. Will and Sam took the body to Belle Fourche for funeral and burial during a spring storm.) When it was all over and we got home again, it surely seemed strange and lonesome without Father being around. While he was a very quiet man and never had very much to say, he was always around, taking an interest in everything and doing whatever he could to help along. During the six years spent on the Deer Creek ranch we had built up a comfortable outfit in a modest way. House, barn, chicken house, granary, smoke-house, cattle shed, corrals, and a root cellar that never froze in the wintertime and which Mother used to keep the milk in. We dug a well 25 feet deep and walled it up with rock and fenced in quite a large pasture and broke up and farmed about seventy acres of cropland. All this was accomplished by our own efforts except that we did pay out about \$150 for hired help during the period.

Long before he died Father talked to me about his not going to be with us long and told me that he was depending on me to take over and handle things as though they were my own, thereby gain confidence in myself so that I would not miss him so much after he should leave us. Further that he would always be ready to council (sic) with me and give all the advice that he could on anything that was troubling me, but for me to take on the management of the ranch and feel that it was my responsibility.

I tried to do this and gradually worked into the way of things and I suppose became a little swelled up over being the boss, so to speak. At any rate, his method of handling the matter proved to be very wise, and except for sorrow and regret for his death, things went along as usual and I assumed full responsibility as though I was much older than my actual years (18). In fact, I had very little boyhood and had to take a man's place in many ways very early in my life.