



COMANCHE COUNTY COWBOY: A CASE STUDY OF A KANSAS RANCHER

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IN DESCRIBING the development of that part of the nation known in romantic fiction and in history as the Western range, there is a tendency to people it with stereotypes. There were cowboys, nesters, miners, sheepmen, ranchers, schoolmarms, prostitutes, storekeepers, gamblers, and outlaws. Each, it would seem, knew his or her place and did not stray from the assigned role. Ranchers simply never became miners and miners never took to tending store. The one prominent exception was the lawman who was permitted to operate at different times on either side of the law in a variety of occupations.

Other frontiersmen and developers of new lands, those on the cutting edge of civilization, traditionally have been described as multifaceted individuals, best characterized as jacks-of-all-trades. Because of their flexibility and adaptability, each man was a veritable multitude—a combination of woodsman-

hunter-trader-trapper-inventor-carpenter-farmer-speculator.¹ The early range, however, seemed to produce only specialists. Historians have been more willing to grant some of the same frontier characteristics to certain individuals in the cow country but not to others. Lewis Atherton, for instance, did see in the versatility of the "cattle kings" a major reason for individual successes.

If any one word explains or offers a universal key to how so many men started without inherited money and became cattle kings, that word would be "trader." Instead of relying simply on the natural increase from a small herd of cattle to make them wealthy, such men traded in cattle, in mines, in beef, in store goods—in anything that came to hand and yielded a profit by being passed on to someone else in the channels of trade.²

He did not find the same flexibility in the cowboys who he saw as being clearly differentiated from the ranchers. Individuals were either one or the other. The extent of this

Title-page photo: Capt. Christopher Carson Pepperd, an authentic representative of the small rancher in the West, came to Comanche county in 1874. He drove 500 head of cattle up from Texas to establish, within a short time, one of the finest ranches in the area. Inset in this early photograph taken on a Comanche county ranch is the branding iron owned by Pepperd. The open "A" and "E" are the initials of his wife, Annie Ewell.

1. Frantz and Choate's account is a notable exception to this generalization. They saw the cowboy as a "composite, the blood-and-sinew prototype of all frontiersmen." — Joe B. Frantz and Julian Ernest Choate, Jr., *The American Cowboy: The Myth and the Reality* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), p. 8.

2. Lewis Atherton, *The Cattle Kings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 219.

stereotyping can be seen in one of his opening premises:

I believe that ranchers were far more important than cowboys in shaping cultural developments, and, incidentally, were far more exciting as well. As hired hands on horseback who compromised with their environment at relatively low levels, cowhands exerted little influence on the course of American history. On the other hand, ranchers tried to dominate their environment, and at least succeeded in modifying it.³

This is, of course, far too restrictive. In southwestern Kansas, at least, there was a great blending of types. Along the old Jones and Plummer trail leading from Dodge City to Fort Supply in the 1880's were individuals who reflect considerable versatility. Elijah Hutchinson and sons who operated a road ranch on the trail also worked as cowboys, freighted goods, experimented with molasses manufacturing, tried raising sheep, operated livery barns and a hotel, as well as farmed.⁴ G.W. Brown, who maintained a similar road ranch a dozen miles west of the Hutchinsons and was the first white man to mark Meade Center as a settlement, was a rancher, storekeeper, and Indian fighter in much the same tradition as Daniel Boone, the frontiersman.⁵ David Michael Mackey, who also had connections with the Jones and Plummer trail, represented the cowboy who married the farmer's daughter but never forgot his first love of cattle. He stopped by John Marts's road ranch in 1882 while trail driving for the Crooked L. There he met the adopted daughter of the ranch operator and later returned to marry the girl. The couple preempted a claim nearby but eventually gave it up to establish a cattle ranch on the Oklahoma border.⁶ On the other hand, Charles E. Haywood met his future wife at a road ranch on the trail while herding cattle in the North Canadian river range. He, however, remained to develop a homestead and eventually establish a general store.⁷ When the open range was abandoned, most of the cowboys did not, in fact, just fade away like old soldiers but stayed

on to run small farms or retail stores in the newly established towns.

Not only was there a blending of roles in these men but there was a substantial number who stood somewhere between those recognized as ranchers and those labelled as cowboys—never owning large enough herds of cattle or controlling enough land to be classified as cattle kings, yet were affluent enough and operated a spread large enough so that they certainly could not be classified as one of the "vagabond-heroes-on-horseback." These men, along with the farmers who homesteaded the free land, became the inheritors of the rapidly closing range and carried the development of the area into its contemporary mode. Usually rising from the ranks of the cowboy, they acquired a limited number of cattle and acres, adapted to the new, more restrictive demands of their environment, and survived. In western Kansas these men drifted either into an emphasis on farming or an emphasis on stockraising but in either case did not rely exclusively on cattle or crops.

The group, for lack of a better title, can be designated as small ranchers. They retained much of the accepted values and lifestyles of both the cattle kings and the cowboys. From their days as cowhands they espoused a love of freedom, an appreciation of good horse flesh, a deference to "respectable women," an expectation of personal physical courage, and a pride in daring exploits—all coupled with a remarkable resilience and adaptability to the environment. As entrepreneurs and operators of cattle spreads they adopted the characteristics of the more ordered and settled life. They married "respectable" women, acquired land which was fenced in, traded in cattle or "anything that came to hand," diversified their operations to include farming, and in other ways modified the environment in which they operated. The result was an interesting mixture of the entrepreneur and the rugged individualist which accounts in part for some of the unique voting patterns and social customs of the Kansas southwest.

Such a man still delighted in gambling on a horse race and an occasional game of "seven up" in the backroom of the local pool hall. But he would attend church the next morning with his choir-singing wife on his arm. If he was tempted to plunge into various get-rich-quick

3. *Ibid.*, p. xi.

4. *Pearlette Call*, January 17, 1880; *Fowler City Graphic*, July 30, 1885, July 15, 1886, November 19, 1887; *Wilburn Argus*, August 20, 1886.

5. *Meade County Globe*, Meade, June 27, 1891; Meade County Council of Women's Clubs, comp., *Pioneer Stories of Meade County* (Hutchinson: 1965), p. 237; William E. Connelley, ed., "Life and Adventures of George W. Brown," *Kansas Historical Collections*, Topeka, v. 17 (1928), pp. 98-134.

6. Meade County Council of Women's Clubs, *Pioneer Stories of Meade County*, pp. 121-124.

7. C. Robert Haywood, *On My Father's Side* (Topeka: 1975), pp. 23-53.

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In southwest Kansas pioneer ranchers were versatile. George W. Brown (1847-?) maintained a road ranch, was the first white man to mark Meade Center as a settlement, and was a storekeeper, as well as an Indian fighter in the tradition of Daniel Boone.

schemes, such as mining, he was just as likely to help organize a cooperative grain company or establish a general store at some crossroads village. To the end of his life he might boast of the wild, free days of his youth, yet praise the coming of law and order and vote for prohibition at the general election.

The following is a case history of one such small rancher in southwestern Kansas. The study will remain incomplete, with irritating gaps and intriguing innuendoes, because of the sparcity of records. His goings and comings were of considerable interest to the local community and were recorded in the local press and his more notorious exploits were given brief mention in accounts of the rougher side of the frontier cowboy life. Never reaching the importance of a Charles Goodnight or Col. Ike T. Pryor, he has no biography.

Yet from the scattered public and second-hand accounts, Capt. Christopher Carson Pepperd (usually referred to as C.C. or Captain) emerges as an authentic representative of the small rancher. He came out of the Civil War as a trail-herd cowboy, established a ranch in the shadow of a larger cattle combination, sur-

vived the unpredictable Kansas environment, founded a town, diversified his economic base to include the operation of a hotel and general store, and explored the possibilities of mining. He eventually suffered total financial collapse, and died destitute and alone in a city far from his Kansas activities. Buried in a pauper's grave, he escaped a society that had changed beyond recognition. His particular life with its rags-to-riches-to-rags pattern was unique, but the general scenario was not unusual. Pepperd stood representative of those who changed the raw prairie from what it had always been to what was then considered a better place to live and to die.

EARLY LIFE

THE DETAILED certainties of C.C. Pepperd's early life are missing. The inferences and possibilities are more numerous but still far from revealing much of the precise influences and motivations for his later career, although some hazy inferences can be drawn from his ethnic, religious, and social background. In C.C.'s case, the definition of those formative matters will be largely speculative.

He was born in Lusk, Ireland, not far from Dublin, in 1839.⁸ Little, not even the names, is known of his parents. The spelling of the last name was apparently altered over the years after they arrived in America. The conversion of the "a" to "e" was an American adaptation and there is little doubt that it was originally pronounced Pep-PARD.⁹ In 1850 the family migrated to the United States and settled in Norwood, an independent city within the city of Cincinnati, Ohio. There were at least two other brothers: Patrick born in 1834, and Lawrence born in 1836. The family was, in the words of a descendant, "paddy-pig poor," requiring every member to work.¹⁰ Forced to hussle any available job, the brothers were denied an education and C.C. never learned to read or write. The only childhood memories passed on to later generations were those of

8. The date is undoubtedly correct, based on family calculations and the U.S. census for 1880. The place of birth is also based on family tradition plus the obituary of a brother, Patrick Pepperd, in the Coldwater *Western Star*, February 5, 1898.

9. C.C. Pepperd blamed his brother for the error. Although C.C. never learned to write, he swore he "at least knew how to spell his own name."—Typewritten copy of the history of the Pepperd family written by Clair L. Pepperd, Coldwater, a great-nephew of C.C., pp. 1-2.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

grinding poverty and street brawls between the Irish Catholics and the German Protestants of the city.

In 1886 an editor in Coldwater casually interviewed C.C. about his past and gave his readers as thorough a review of Pepperd's life before the Civil War as is to be found. The account is obviously inaccurate in some details and woefully incomplete. It revealed only enough to justify the editor's assessment of Pepperd "as a true type of the chivalry of the plains and a fine sample of the self-made man in the far west." Although the account is not too helpful, it does suggest some interesting early adventures. In its entirety it reads:

Capt. C.C. Pepperd, a jovial Hibernian, a true son of Erin and withal a good Democrat, came to Cincinnati from the "Old Sod" in 1850, removing to Keokuk, Iowa in 1854 and landing in Atchinson [sic] the same year. He eventually traveled to California and was in Texas in 1872, after which he sojourned three years in Colorado.¹¹

To be in Atchison the year before it was incorporated is, to put it mildly, remarkable but still possible. A three-year stay in Colorado also seems plausible but not in the chronological order given by the editor. That a poor immigrant boy should leave home at age 15, roam throughout the West, and become a cowboy in Texas, is a convincing and frequently repeated story of that era.

What is known about the prewar years is the essence of clarity when compared to the war years themselves. Throughout his life C.C. claimed to have served in the Confederate cavalry and to have risen to the rank of captain under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston.¹² Friends and family accepted his version of army life and afforded him the title, "Captain," not only out of deference to his station in life, but also in recognition of an authentic rank in the service. Military titles were in abundance in the West following the Civil War and, as Atherton observed, "Such titles seemed appropriate for ranchers who controlled large quantities of land and set the rules for numerous employes. Moreover, ranchers liked to be addressed by their titles, viewing them as thoroughly compatible with their achieved status in society."¹³ C.C. was such a man and preferred to be addressed formally as Capt. C.C. Pepperd.

Pepperd's respect for and his stories about General Johnston would seem to verify his claim of military service under this Confederate general who possessed a certain gamecock jauntiness that C.C. could admire and emulate. Yet, when he applied for a pension, C.C. testified in his petition that he had enlisted in Arizona as a private under the assumed name of Joe Bowers.

The official war records of Joe Bowers are fairly clear. He was mustered into service August 8, 1861, at Fort Fillmore and served as a private in Capt. Thomas Helm's company of the Arizona volunteers, also known as Herbert's Battalion Arizona mounted volunteers and as the Texas Arizona Battalion mounted rifles. Bowers was transferred to Captain Qury's company, July 1, 1862.¹⁴ Paroled on September 1, 1865, Bowers was allowed to return home.¹⁵ Some 40 years later various individuals, including Capt. James Tevis, testified that they recognized C.C. Pepperd as the man known as Joe Bowers who served under Captain Tevis's command.¹⁶ The age listed on the muster roll for Bowers corresponds closely to C.C.'s age. No reason was given by C.C. or those who testified in his behalf for his enlistment under an alias. Had he run afoul of the law and escaped into the army as many another miscreant had before and since? Why the name Joe Bowers? Later in life a Joe Bowers was to be a very familiar person to C.C. Joe Bowers served off and on as sheriff of Comanche county during the years C.C. was a prominent rancher there. They had, in fact, casually opposed each other for that same post before the county had been organized.¹⁷ Had C.C. assumed Joe Bowers's name, not at the time of enlistment, but in 1905, as a desperate move to secure subsistence because he knew Bowers was dead and his records intact while C.C.'s own records, for some unknown reason, were not?

Clearly the facts are not known. It is safe to assume, however, that he did serve in the Confederate forces. Among other reasons to

14. Company muster rolls, "Military Service Records," National Archives, Washington, D.C.

15. Parole voucher, *ibid.*

16. Affidavit and depositions from Thomas Farrell, James Tevis, and George W. Jones, October 19, 31, 1905, supporting the application for Confederate pension made by Pepperd.—"Christopher C. Pepperd Collection," Texas Archives, Austin.

17. "Comanche-co. Thirty Years Ago and Now," *Coldwater Western Star*, January 5, 1917. See also, July 23, 1887.

11. *Coldwater Western Star*, August 14, 1886.

12. Pepperd, "The Pepperd Family History," p. 10.

13. Atherton, *Cattle Kings*, pp. 122-123.

accept this, is the fact that in 1861 or 1862 he married Annie E. Ewell in Virginia.¹⁸ Annie Ewell was related to Gen. Thomas Ewell and the romantic picture would certainly be more pleasing if C.C. had been a dashing young officer courting the general's niece rather than a lowly horse soldier. Be that as it may, he did marry Annie Ewell and on that occasion surely used the name of Pepperd. To complicate an already confusing picture, the census of 1880 lists a daughter, Nettie T., who was born in Missouri in 1862, about the time Bowers was transferring from one company to another.

If Pepperd was indeed Bowers, he was paroled September 1, 1865; if not Bowers, Pepperd, at least, was out of the army in the same year. His son, Richard, was born in 1865, and the census shows the family still in Virginia, presumably near or with the Ewell in-laws.¹⁹

The immediate post-war years are scarcely more documented than the war years. By 1872 the Pepperds were in Texas, where, by his own account, C.C. spent his time as a working cowboy, breaking horses, and following the great Texas herds north to Kansas. His presence in the vicinity of Sun City and Ellsworth at a time when they were booming cowtowns, places him very much in the center of the cattle industry in the heyday of the open range.

RANCHER

C.C. came to Comanche county as a full-fledged rancher in 1874.²⁰ He had accumulated enough capital to drive 500 head of cattle up from Texas and to establish, within a short time, one of the finest ranches in the area.²¹

The headquarters of the spread was located on the banks of Mule creek near the present town of Wilmore. Situated as it was in the heart of some of the finest buffalo grass range in Kansas, Mule creek in the early days tended to inspire the local reporters to extravagant flights of lyrical prose. Not uncharacteristic was the description by E.G. Phelps.

Mule Creek is a pure and sparkling little rill that murmurs its song the year around even in the driest season, its

banks being high and rugged gives it quite a romantic air for the level prairies of Kansas. The majestic shade trees too are no small factor in the makeup of Mule creek valley. Their shapely branches and dense foliage would adorn with credit the parks of New York.²²

Others remarked on the clearness and abundance of water in the stream, a factor of no mean consequence in the cattle industry. In the words of Walter Prescott Webb, "In selecting a ranch site the ranchman's main considerations were grass and water."²³ C.C. had chosen well.

Although there were a few other ranches scattered about, the region was largely undeveloped. Sun City to the northeast and Medicine Lodge 40 miles to the east were the closest towns; neither was more than a raw village. Medicine Lodge, the larger of the two, was still struggling for identity 10 years after the signing of the famous peace treaty. It consisted, at the time Pepperd settled in the area, of 13 log cabins and a cedar log stockade large enough to protect 200 settlers from marauding Indians. In spite of the grasshopper infestation of that year, C.C. prospered, in part due to the winters which remained deceptively mild until the mid-1880's. From his base on Mule creek, Pepperd came eventually to control some 3,000 acres of land as well as having access to much open range. "Control" is used here, not in the sense of ownership but as recognized "range rights" by his neighbors. "This meant a right to the water which he had appropriated and the surrounding range. Where water was scarce the control of it in any region gave control of all the land around it, for water was the sine qua non of the cattle country."²⁴ The distance to market in Dodge City, 55 miles northwest, provided an added economy in marketing his stock. He was so taken with the area that his enthusiasm persuaded a younger brother to come West. Lawrence Pepperd also set up on Mule creek near his brother.²⁵

In the beginning, C.C. envisioned his ranch not only as a breeding and feeding operation but also as a half-way finishing station for feeder stock destined for Dodge City. He intended to replenish his herd from cattle driven up from Texas and to sell them in smaller lots of a few hundred head in Dodge or other Kan-

18. U.S. Federal census, 1860, Virginia; Pepperd, "The Pepperd Family History," p. 10.

19. U.S. Federal census, 1860, Virginia.

20. The precise date is undetermined. The Coldwater *Western Star* put it a year later. Evidence reported elsewhere in this account seems to clearly establish him in the area by 1874.

21. Coldwater *Western Star*, August 14, 1886.

22. Coldwater *Echo*, June 16, 1887.

23. Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1936), p. 228.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

25. Pepperd, "The Pepperd Family History," p. 9.

C. C. Pepperd claimed to have served in the Confederate cavalry under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston (1807-1891), attaining the rank of captain. In later years he liked to be addressed as Captain Pepperd. Photograph of Johnston reproduced from *Biographical Sketches of Leading Citizens of Sedgwick County, Kansas and a Compendium of National Biography* (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Company, 1901).



sas centers.²⁶ The practice of bringing in Texas cattle, however, soon ended. Although situated east of the quarantine or "Texas cattle dead line," he, like others in Kansas, suffered significant losses from splenic fever, referred to locally as "Spanish" or "Texas" fever. In spite of his connection with and affinity for Texas, Pepperd was convinced of the necessity of the deadline and of the dangers of Texas cattle to Kansas herds. In what was to be a life-long disparagement of law enforcement officials, Pepperd contended that the major requirement for the area's prosperity was the strict enforcement of the existing quarantine legislation.²⁷ After the initial experience with Texas fever, he shifted his purchases primarily to the Kansas markets in Dodge City and Medicine Lodge.²⁸

There were other hazards of ranching such as prairie fires and unpredictable weather, but they were considered normal costs of doing business. C.C. had his share of problems but prospered in spite of them. How well he was

doing is indicated by the description of his ranch made by a Dodge City reporter traveling through southwestern Kansas in 1877:

Here we saw what we never expected to see so far removed from the confines of civilizations, a magnificent two story frame house, painted, plastered and well furnished. A fine grainery and barn built of first class lumber stood no great distance off nestled in the shadows of the elms and cottonwoods of Mule creek.²⁹

Others described the home as "elegantly furnished" and Captain and Mrs. Pepperd as generous hosts.³⁰ The immigrant boy from Ireland was becoming a man of means, status, and influence in his new life.

By 1880, however, the new was in danger of becoming obsolete. Ranchers were finding that their costs were increasing more rapidly than the price of beef. The open range was gradually closing and new techniques of cattle production and marketing were necessary. The new strategy of using a fixed range replaced the old open range, and made novices of even the most experienced cattlemen. One solution to the shrinking profits and the narrowing range was to form cooperatives which merged assets-

26. For his early cattle business visits, see the *Dodge City Times*, October 14, 1876, June 9, September 8, October 13, 1877; *Ford County Globe*, Dodge City, July 2, 23, 1878.

27. *Ibid.*, December 25, 1877.

28. *Ibid.*, July 23, 1878; *Dodge City Times*, June 29, 1878; *Barber County Index*, Medicine Lodge, March 26, 1886.

29. *Ford County Globe*, December 25, 1877.

30. Mary Einsel, *Kansas: The Priceless Prairie* (1976), p. 97.

and land and provided for the introduction of more sophisticated management. One such joint effort was the Comanche County Cattle Pool, organized in April, 1880. With its main ranch house located 30 miles southwest of Medicine Lodge, the pool at one time stocked its range with more than 80,000 cattle and had a working remuda of 400 horses. Their territory dipped down into Oklahoma, came 30 miles up the Cimarron river, and extended to the head of Mule creek and the range controlled by C.C.³¹

It was a bold but futile effort to meet the requirement of a fixed range. The march of civilization, with its taxes and regulations, the rigors of nature, and the unwieldiness of the organization caused the pool's early demise and disbandment in 1886.³² The two Pepperd brothers resisted the system of pooling and remained independent operators. Their response, however, was scarcely more appropriate than that of the pool.

Up to that point ranching, of either the open or fixed range, had depended on controlling large areas of land but not necessarily owning it. All such operations were doomed. Factors in the environment which had led to the earlier successes carried with them the seeds of eventual destruction. The free land inducement to settlers provided for in the Homestead act was to prove irresistible to land-hungry Easterners, when they discovered that the same soil and climate which had produced the abundance of buffalo grass so efficient in fattening the Texas steers, was equally capable of nourishing other crops. The resulting conversion of the range to small-scale farming left no room for large-scale ranching. Adjustment to this new environment was to tax the imagination and resources of the ranchers who hoped to remain. In the end, the response of the Pepperd brothers was as ineffectual as that of the operators of the Comanche County Cattle Pool.

Lawrence, on the one hand, recognized the inevitability of change, decided not to fight it, sold his holdings, and returned to Ohio.³³ But before he did, the brothers engaged in the kind of harassing of the "soddies" that Hollywood has so frequently highlighted. Stereotype and

reality in this instance tend to blend in what has become a predictable confrontation of economic interests. And, if in real life the young couple didn't actually walk arm-in-arm into a technicolor sunset, the mixed marriages of the progeny of sodbuster and rancher did end many a feud.

It was to be true for the Pepperd clan as well. When the Henry Baker family homesteaded on land "controlled" by C.C., the rancher tried to force them off his land. This confrontation, as described by a latter descendant, is the stuff Hollywood thrived on for years!

What made it a story to me was that family personalities were involved in an extension of the old battle between the cattlemen and the homesteaders. The man behind the plow was my mother's father, a homesteader and a sod buster. The man on the horse was Kit Pepperd,³⁴ my father's uncle for whom he was working at the time, and a cowman thoroughly dedicated to scaring all the homesteaders out of the country if he could do so. The way my mother told it was that soon after the Baker family arrived . . . and made plans to settle near Mule Creek, Henry Baker started to breaking sod for his new farm. Before too long a man on a horse showed up and began to point out to Baker that he had no right to be there because he (Kit) owned all the land up and down Mule Creek. Baker did not even look up. He just kept on plowing and eventually Kit rode away.³⁵

If not by strength of character and stubbornness, as in this case, the settlers were destined to prevail by sheer numbers. In southwestern Kansas, the cattle industry was to survive only by adjusting to the changed conditions. It is to C.C.'s credit that he did recognize the changing times and attempted to adjust his operation to the new circumstances.

The date of the next phase of cattle culture in that section of Kansas is fairly precise. In the words of "The Old Timer" writing in retrospect in 1916, for Comanche county the change came in 1884 when the town of Coldwater was founded and with it "the beginning of 'civilization.'"³⁶ For the next five years Coldwater boomed. With three stage lines running into the town and the rest of southwestern Kansas attracting homesteaders, the newly established press reported that there was an average of 30 wagons a day passing through and usually four to six men looking for farms.³⁷ By the middle of August, 1884, Coldwater, then less than

31. Mary Einsel, "Some Notes on the Comanche Cattle Pool," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Topeka, v. 26, no. 1 (Spring, 1960), p. 62; Richard Sheridan, "An Economic History, 1500-1900," *Economic Development in South Central Kansas*, Lawrence, pt. 1a (March, 1956), p. 59.

32. Einsel, "Comanche Cattle Pool," p. 66.

33. Pepperd, "The Pepperd Family History," p. 13.

34. The family nickname for C.C. was obviously taken from the second name association with the famous scout, Kit Carson.

35. Clair Pepperd to Mrs. Carol Freeman, April 8, 1971, copy of letter in possession of author.

36. "Comanche-co. Thirty Years Ago and Now," *Coldwater Western Star*, November 3, 1916.

37. Einsel, *Kansas: The Priceless Prairie*, p. 96.



These photographs of cowboys employed by the Comanche cattle pool were taken in 1884. The pool was a cooperative effort of ranchers which merged assets and land in 1880. The Pepperd brothers did not join the pool and remained independent operators. The cowboy at far left, *below*, is Joe Bowers who defeated Pepperd in an election for sheriff before Comanche county was organized.



three months old, had a population of approximately 350. The two hotels could scarcely house the newcomers, and the carpenters were lagging far behind their contracts for new homes. The result was an abundance of tents which gave the town the "appearance somewhat of an army camp. . . ." ³⁸ The following year Comanche county was officially organized. Almost immediately (after June 1, 1885) a herd law went into effect requiring all livestock to be closely contained. The law ended both the open and fixed range. Only on land a man owned could cattle run free, and since land was being parceled out in 160-acre plots, the man behind the plow won the final round.

C.C. went into this new phase from a solid base. The local papers judged him to be "a man of considerable wealth" and "among the foremost of the cattle men" in the area. ³⁹ In 1884 he sold \$18,000 worth of steers at one transaction and still possessed 1,200 head of "well-selected stock." ⁴⁰ But the access to the free range, which had constituted his greatest advantage, was gone. If Pepperd, or any other rancher, was to survive, it would be necessary to buy the land and diversify his operation. In the words of Lewis Atherton,

During those volatile years many ranchers prospered, but many more fell by the way. Although courage and luck helped lift the successful above their less fortunate contemporaries, no man achieved a stable prosperity on so flimsy a base. Problems were too numerous and too changing in nature for that to happen. It required imagination and business skill to capitalize on the opportunities afforded by the ranching frontier. ⁴¹

The acquisition of land did not come easy, but in 1885 C.C. did buy three parcels totaling 400 acres. ⁴² With more limited land, he also found it necessary to emphasize farming. Apparently this was accomplished with some success. One local paper commented, when C.C. brought to the office some fine specimens of corn he had raised, "whatever the Captain does he does well, and when he undertakes to raise corn he raises the biggest in the country." ⁴³ But farming remained for him only a support for cattle raising, not a substitute.

38. "Comanche-co. Thirty Years Ago and Now," *Coldwater Western Star*, November 17, 1916.

39. *Larned Weekly Chronoscope*, November 25, 1887; *Coldwater Review*, December 30, 1884.

40. *Coldwater Western Star*, August 14, 1886.

41. Atherton, *Cattle Kings*, p. 170.

42. Land records, Comanche county courthouse, Coldwater.

43. *Coldwater Review*, September 3, 1886.

What C.C. needed was a new opportunity, a new enterprise. True to the speculative instincts of other successful ranchers, he turned to the most likely prospect at hand—that is, to town development.

TOWN BUILDER

BY THE SUMMER of 1886 the anticipated effects of the Homestead act and the Timber Culture act were being realized in all of western Kansas. Settlers were filling in the vacant claims in Comanche county as they were all along the southwest tier of counties. In the Mule creek area it was reported that "This portion of the county is comparatively well settled and neatly painted farm houses are visible all up and down the creek valley. Large pastures are fenced in and hundreds of cattle are feeding on the luxuriant grass, large fields are in cultivation, and crops are growing fine in all portions of the county. . . ." ⁴⁴ The brief phase of fixed range in the Kansas cattle industry was over. Fences and crops dominated the scene with cattle as an important, but not exclusive, economic interest.

The big news for C.C., however, was the rumor that the Chicago, Kansas and Western railroad, the southern branch of the Santa Fe, was moving into the area, and, most importantly, would cross Mule creek at or near the center of his ranch. For men with vision in the West the railroad always meant opportunity.

With his foreman, Tom Wilmore, C.C. decided to organize a town at the Mule creek crossing, to build the necessary stores, to establish cattle pens for shipping local livestock, and to encourage schools and whatever else was needed to attract settlers—in short, to stop resisting the inevitable and bid civilization welcome. If you can't lick 'em, join 'em! With true gambling instincts, C.C. and his foreman flipped a coin to see who would have the honor of having the town bear his name and thus being immortalized on the state map. Wilmore called the toss and Wilmore it was to be. ⁴⁵ Once the name was chosen the next important ingredient in the formula for an authentic town was to have a post office. Using his Democrat connections, C.C. secured a commission from

44. *Coldwater Echo*, June 16, 1887.

45. Pepperd, "The Pepperd Family History," pp. 13-14.

Pres. Grover Cleveland for his son Richard, who became Wilmore's first postmaster.⁴⁶

With proper ballyhoo and advertisement in local papers, C.C. organized a "GRAND FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION" to call attention to the new townsite and its great prospects. Organized in keeping with the best frontier tradition, provisions were made for a "fatted ox" to be roasted over an outdoor pit, patriotic speeches, and races, "Horse-racing, Foot-racing, Wheel-borrow-racing, and Sack-racing. . . ." ⁴⁷ In anticipation of the event, the editor of the Coldwater *Echo* rode out to report on the progress of the town. He was obviously caught up in the captain's enthusiasm and passed on to his readers his impression of Coldwater's newest rival:

The graders on the C.K.&W. are working on some heavy grade on Mule Creek and it is where the railroad crosses it that the new town Wilmore is located. The town has been surveyed and embraces a very beautiful tract of land bordered with nice groves. At present there is not a house in sight. The only sign of habitation is a prairie dog town which is a good indication. Now if we should make the statement that town lots sell for from five to fifty dollars in the city of Wilmore some skeptics would declare it a newspaper bite and perhaps it would hurt the growth of the town. Wilmore has everything in its favor to make it a prosperous town of considerable commercial importance. Situated as it is in a rich agricultural district, on the line of the C.K.&W. about 11 miles from Coldwater, and backed by men of sufficient means to start the new boom. The *Echo* hopes to soon visit Wilmore again and will expect to see a neat cluster of new roofs and brightly painted signs on what is now the open prairie. ⁴⁸

The celebration was all that C.C. could have hoped for. A thousand people (boom town editor's estimate) showed up for the day. The Nescatunga cornet band "rendered some very fine music," the local preachers spoke eloquently, and the horses ran spiritedly around a half-mile track for purses of sufficient magnitude. ⁴⁹ It was predicted that if the Chicago, Kansas & Western railroad came through, "Wilmore will fly." ⁵⁰ There was no doubt that by the end of the day, the town was off to a flying start.

Pepperd's first commercial venture was to build a general store which would also house the post office. Richard was to operate both

store and office but C.C. was recognized as the owner. "An immense stock of groceries" was ordered and Pepperd became overnight Wilmore's leading merchant. ⁵¹ The C.K. & W. was still 20 miles away but the track layers were making good time. ⁵² The town builder was by then so optimistic that before the store was completed he began work on a hotel, not only to accommodate all the passengers the C.K. & W. line would deposit there, but also to help convince the railroad to make Wilmore a division town—the dream, hope, and expectation of every town in western Kansas in the late 1880's.

The Pepperds, father and son, began taking a more active role in the community and their names appeared in the local papers with more frequency. It was noted that young Dick Pepperd, apparently a quiet, serious-minded young man, even attended the "Band Boys' Hop." ⁵³ C.C. had achieved such local status that the paper carried his testimonial as to the curative powers of liver pills. Dick also took an active part in building a new school for the now flourishing community. Both became more active in the Democrat party affairs where C.C. was declared "a whole team within himself." ⁵⁴ Father and son were obviously stretching their energy and resources and enjoying the new surge of activity.

COAL FEVER

AT THE HEIGHT of his town building schemes, Pepperd was presented with yet another unexpected opportunity. In his efforts to adjust to the new system of raising cattle with fenced pasture and a self-contained feed and water supply, C.C. had found that the "sparkling little rill" could be, like the grass, overstocked.

In the fall of 1887 Pepperd secured a local drilling team, Hazlett and Miller, to bore a water well near Mule creek to supplement the available water and as an insurance of a good supply if the creek should go dry. At about 75 feet the drill hit a vein of coal. ⁵⁵ This discovery of what the local experts judged to be a supe-

46. Coldwater *Western Star*, July 23, 1887; Coldwater *Review*, March 2, 1888.

47. Coldwater *Echo*, June 16, 1887.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*, July 7, 1887.

50. Coldwater *Review*, March 16, 1888.

51. *Ibid.*, August 26, 1887, March 2, 1888.

52. Coldwater *Western Star*, July 23, 1887.

53. *Ibid.*; Coldwater *Review*, March 2, 16, 23, 1888.

54. Coldwater *Western Star*, September 22, 1888; Coldwater *Review*, June 22, September 21, October 12, 1888.

55. *Ibid.*, October 28, 1887.

rior quality of coal caused an immediate flurry of excitement. When the drill was still bringing up coal after going nearly four feet into the strata, the owner, as well as the community, contracted a serious case of "coal fever." The editor of the Greensburg *Rustler* following up on the rumor of the find, drove out to Pepperd's ranch to investigate. The scene there reminded him of the early gold strikes in Colorado.

One hour's drive brought us in sight of an unfurled flag, and its floating folds, combined with the wild yells of excited men, brought to mind vivid pictures of the Leadville find of a few years ago. There, in the heart of a beautiful grove of winter-clothed cotton wood, close to the water's edge of that clear, bright little stream Mule Creek, was an anxious, eager crowd, among whom we noticed Capt. C.C. Pepperd, owner of the ranch; H.H. Rich, mayor of Coldwater, and president of the First National Bank of that place; John P. Jones, cashier of the same institution; John P. Kern, the jovial merchant tailor, and quite a large number of strangers.

On examination we found what is pronounced by old miners the finest bank of fire clay in America. The next material they went through was eight or ten feet of sulphur and iron. The coal was struck at about 52 feet from the surface and found to be three feet and ten inches in thickness. We are led to believe this is the strongest vein of coal in the state. . . . After satisfying ourselves as to the truth of all reports, we accepted Capt. and Mrs. Pepperd's cordial invitation to dinner, thereby teaching the

genial Capt. that newspaper men knew better how to appreciate a good dinner than a coal find.⁵⁶

Normally not a man to hide his light under a bushel, C.C. apparently tried to keep some control over the rumors of the extent of the strike. His reticence only inflamed the imagination of the local press, although it added to the skepticism of those in other parts of Kansas.⁵⁷ It apparently was Pepperd's intention to develop the mine on his own, but it soon became obvious that he needed more capital and more expertise than he could muster. His first feelers for such support went out to the railroads. Both the Rock Island and the Santa Fe sent officials to survey the situation, and Pepperd reported that they had agreed to furnish the necessary funds.⁵⁸ He also indicated that the Chicago, Kansas & Western had proposed making Wilmore a division town since it was only two miles from the coal strike. For many the interest in Pepperd's mine by the railroads erased all doubts.⁵⁹ As the winter

56. Greensburg *Rustler*, November 3, 1887; Coldwater *Review*, December 2, 1887.

57. *Ibid.*, March 2, 1888.

58. *Ibid.*, March 16, 1888.

59. Nescatunga *Enterprise*, March 17, 1885; Coldwater *Review*, March 16, 1888.

Pepperd saw an opportunity when he learned that the Chicago, Kansas and Western railroad, the southern branch of the Santa Fe, was going to build through the county, crossing Mule creek at or near the center of his ranch. With his foreman, Tom Wilmore, he decided to organize a town at the creek crossing. They flipped a coin to see who would have the honor of naming the town, and Wilmore won the toss. Wilmore, population 94, is still on the map. This photograph of the Santa Fe depot there was taken about 1900.



deepened many more came to see in his discovery the answer to the growing problem of fuel scarcity. The neighboring *Nescatunga Enterprise* reported early in December: "The coal famine still rages. . . . We hope Capt. Peppard will develop his coal mine in a short time so that we will not be compelled to depend upon a railroad to bring in our supply of coal."⁶⁰

As the news spread others, outside speculators as well as local men, came to investigate and to invest. It was reported that members of the Sun City Mining Company were definitely interested along with various entrepreneurs described as representing certain "monied corporations."⁶¹ After visiting the mine, members of the Sun City group reported back that they were "fully satisfied that it's a big thing. . . ." ⁶² It was, however, an enthusiastic group of local businessmen who moved first to follow up on Pepperd's lead. Incorporated as the Eagle Coal and Mining Company, they found in Joseph Grant an aggressive vice-president and mine supervisor.⁶³

The latter group started a tunnel on an incline into a hill, following the general path of several of the thin veins which Grant was convinced would merge eventually into a thick strata of solid coal. To heighten the excitement, the ore from the shaft assayed in Chicago, revealed 940 ounces of silver to the ton. There was also some evidence of copper and a trace of gold.⁶⁴ This latter bonus sparked even more rumors and the *Coldwater Review* picked up a number of articles from other papers around the state which indicated that a "Kansas City syndicate" had developed great interest in the mine and Coldwater would soon have a stamping mill.⁶⁵

There were other exploratory holes bored, all showing evidence of mineral deposits. But all were hampered, as Pepperd and the Eagle Coal and Mining Co. had been, by a "strong flow of artesian water" and by collapsing quicksand.⁶⁶ Outside enthusiasm and interest tapered off, although exploration and some digging continued. After most of the others had abandoned



Bill Tilghman (1854-1924). Dodge City saloon owner, police officer, cattleman, and gun-slinging warrior in county-seat fights, won a horse race with Pepperd's foreman, Tom Wilmore. A witness said every puncher on the range was "broke after that horse race."

60. *Nescatunga Enterprise*, December 3, 1887.

61. *Coldwater Review*, February 3, April 6, 1888.

62. *Sun City Union*, November 4, 1887.

63. *Coldwater Review*, January 6, 1888.

64. *Ibid.*, February 17, 1888.

65. *Ibid.*, August 17, September 7, 1888.

66. *Ibid.*, April 6, 1888.

their efforts, Pepperd continued sinking the shaft at an angle in vain hope of avoiding cave-ins. Either he ran out of capital or enthusiasm or both, and, like the others, abandoned this latest opportunity.

While it lasted, C.C. and the local citizens had become thoroughly infected with coal fever. The *Coldwater Review* had seen in the "rich resources of Comanche County" a new prosperity, which would bring the county "to the front in great shape [during] the coming year." "Look out," the editor boasted, "for a season of unprecedented prosperity."⁶⁷ The *Review* had found the prospects glowing indeed and headlined stories with bold-faced print: "EUREKA! . . . Black Diamonds Show Up in Superior Quality. . . ." The editor predicted that "a good coal mine in Comanche county would be equal to a good gold mine." The *Review* also carried the prediction of the *Larned Chronoscope* that the discovery would "annihilate the dreadful state of affairs, a coal famine" and would keep "untold millions of money in the state."⁶⁸ For C.C. it was to be the last of the long series of frustrating experiences. The bright prospects of his early ranching ventures had been eliminated by the rush of homesteaders who settled in large enough numbers to destroy the range but not in sufficient numbers to cause Wilmore to flourish. Kansas and its prospects had failed him once again.

Through this transitional period, C.C., the rancher, had followed a pattern of textbook predictability. So close was he to Webb's description of "the typical ranchman" that Pepperd's life can be cited as a case study and near exact example. An excerpted version of the continuing adjustments made by Webb's ranchers reads:

To sum it all up, the collapse of 1885 converted ranching from an adventure into a business. . . . Let us consider the ranch established on the streams. . . . one day it was reported that a new outfit was coming into that part of the range and would try to "horn in" along the river. . . . So he [the rancher] bought up and down the stream until his money was gone. . . . he continued to acquire land that he had fenced.

Then came a hard winter followed by a dry summer. The range had been overstocked, and the cattle had tramped down or eaten out all the grass near the river.

Then opportunely another Chicago agent appeared. He

was selling windmills, and pointed out to the suffering ranchman that if he would sink wells and erect windmills . . . he could bring the water and grass together and save his cattle.

More expense! But the wells were put down. . . . In the meantime the railroad was coming his way: it would, in fact, extend through his ranch, and he would have stock pens, from which his cattle could be loaded on the cars. Settlers were coming, taking up the land all around him, turning under the precious grass, and turning over soil of which the right side was up in the first place. His business acumen asserted itself. Why not establish a town site on the ranch and sell off a part of his pasture? The site was selected with reference to the railroad. Pine houses went up, and the measured thud, thud of the well-drill sounded all the day. Soon windmills were whirling gayly in the stiff Plains breeze, and puny gardens appeared in the sod of dead grass roots.⁶⁹

Unfortunately at this point reality, not case study correctness, caught up with Pepperd. Webb has his typical rancher build a town, get control of the bank, send his sons off to college, and retired as the "oracle of the community." If C.C. had stuck it out this might well have been his scenario also. But it was not to be.

COWMAN: RANCHER-COWBOY

CERTAIN sociologists contend that through its effects upon a specific environment, culture is able to influence the experiences and through these the personality of individuals.⁷⁰ By the time C.C. arrived in Comanche county he had absorbed, through his association with cattlemen and other Western types, a pattern of behavior and a set of values which were consistent with his environment and would not vary greatly over the years. He was, from all accounts, thoroughly attuned to the culture of the cattle range of that time.

He was wiry and agile, of medium height, probably weighing in the neighborhood of 165 pounds. He kept his shock of dark hair well into his 70's and, as was true of most cattlemen, wore a prominent mustache. He was physically rugged enough to stand the rigors of the open range and mentally tough enough to accept the hardships of that era with pride and confidence. Never flamboyant in dress, he was more rancher than cowboy in fashion which was closely dictated by an unwritten but strict dress code. "He always wore a black Texas style hat. Not a sombrero, but more of a flat top

67. *Ibid.*, December 30, 1887.

68. *Ibid.*, October 28, December 2, 1887; *Larned Weekly Chronoscope*, November 25, 1887.

69. Webb, *Great Plains*, pp. 240-244.

70. Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936), pp. 469-471.



C. C. Pepperd was involved in a case in district court in which a cross section of famous Dodge City citizens testified for him including Hamilton "Ham" Bell (1853-1947), *above*, and "Prairie Dog" Dave Morrow (1837-1893), *left*. Bell was a businessman, peace officer, and mayor of Dodge. Morrow was a Dodge City policeman, Dodge township constable, and friend of Bat Masterson.

job with a modest brim. His clothing usually consisted of a conservative dark-colored suit and white shirt."⁷¹

Although born and reared in poverty, through marriage he was related to some of the more prominent families of Virginia and Texas. He knew many of the "bad men" of the Kansas cowtowns as well as the law men and pillars of the community and seemed able to associate with all on equal and easy terms.

As was true of most of his associates, he was primarily a man of action, and his philosophical positions seemed to come naturally and were held in common, if not identically, with other cattlemen. Aggressive, perhaps even pugnacious, he remained absolutely convinced of the correctness of his own standards. His contemporaries judged him to be a good, jovial companion and generous host, although he was also described, with good reason, as "a dangerous man when aroused." As was true of others in that era, the contradictory sides of his personality were never far from the surface nor under tight control. When one of his practical jokes, undertaken in the best of humor, backfired, his temper flared. A friendly card game might suddenly turn to violence. Life on the range, even at its most peaceful, was said to be "quick and sudden." A successful survivor in such an environment recognized the necessity of instant adaptability but always within the bounds of accepted behavior. Even the most basic values were shaded by circumstances. For instance, dishonesty in personal dealings was abhorrent. A man's hand shake was as good as a signed contract. But it was also accepted that a man had the right, even obligation, to elaborate on the bare details in order to make a story or an account of his own exploits more entertaining. Dealings with remote, nonpersonal entities, such as the government, also tolerated a looser code of accuracy.

Such automatic, apparently untutored, reactions to life were bound to breed contradictions. C.C.'s attitude toward the law was a case in point. There were frequent involvements with frontier justice, both formally and informally, and on both sides of the docket. In spite of these confrontations with lawmen, he held that one of the greatest needs in the West was

the firm and consistent enforcement of laws. It is true that his own court cases found him usually on the winning side.⁷² The one time he did stand for office as the enforcer of the law ended in a quick, if questionable, defeat and was borne by C.C. with good humor. The incident became a part of the "tall tale" legends of the community and was repeated years later by "The Old Timer" as an example of the rough, informality of the early government.

Things were not done exactly "according to Hoyle," but it was a convention bubbling over with the spirit of the pioneer stockmen. As an illustration of the way the convention transacted some of its routine business, may be recalled that in voting for the candidates, the chairman announced, for instance, "All in favor of Joe Bowers as our candidate for sheriff, line up on this side of the house, and all in favor of Cap. Pepperd, line up on the other side." Pepperd was asked first to announce the number of his followers. I think there were about 75, and on the other side of the house there appeared to be about an equal number. When Bowers was asked to report, he arose promptly and announced "79" or some number a little higher than Pepperd's. And so it went. They told it on Bowers that he "simply outcounted the other fellow."⁷³

In most matters C.C. accepted the commonly held morality of the early range. Typical of his values were those associated with gambling, an illegal but generally accepted form of entertainment and profit sharing. Gambling, according to one popular version, "was as prevalent in the West as dust storms, cowboys and sudden death."⁷⁴ Certainly there has never been a time or place in our national history when betting was more widespread or more socially accepted than in the cow country frontier. Men gambled on cards, the throw of dice, horseracing, roulette, prize fights, lotteries, mines, and town lots. Life, itself, seemed at best a gamble, the details of how and where were only incidental.

C.C. was a gambler. Like most in his day, he bet on what came to hand. When his old rival, Joe Bowers, ran for office, C.C. bet and won a \$100 on Dave McIntire who became sheriff of Comanche county.⁷⁵ But like most cattlemen his favorite passions were cards and horses, probably because they were readily available.

72. These included a long contest within his own family. The case ended in district court against Patrick Pepperd with C.C. the winning plaintiff.—Coldwater *Western Star*, January 8, July 23, October 6, November 12, 1887.

73. "Comanche-co. Thirty Years Ago and Now," *ibid.*, January 5, 1917.

74. Time-Life Books, ed., *The Gamblers* (New York: Time-Life Inc., 1978), p. 17.

75. Coldwater *Western Star*, November 12, 1887.

71. Clair L. Pepperd to the author, September 16, 1978.

Of these horses were far more exciting and, for C.C. at least, far less dangerous.

Whether one accepts the premise that a cowboy thought more of his horse than anything or anyone he was associated with and looked after the horse's comforts before his own, or accepts the idea that the working pony was treated "about the way a modern farmer treats his truck: with just enough care to keep the thing running, but with no time to spare for pampering or affection . . .," there is no denying the ubiquitous character of the horse on the cattle range.⁷⁶ A good horse was important and the relative merits of the string was subject of much debate in the bunk house, the cattle king's clubs, and around the cattle-trail camp fires. Some horses were just naturally, it would seem, better for roping, cutting, or riding than others. Not so obvious, however, was which horse was faster. Each spread, and nearly every cowman, was under the impression that it or he owned the fastest pony in the West and was willing to back up that assumption with cold cash.

C.C. was one such convinced owner. Over the years there were a number of fast horses in his corral including a "handsome team of Kentucky bred flyers," but his favorite was a quarter horse named Don Carlos. With Don Carlos he won enough races to warrant a solid reputation and support. When the horse did lose, the local newspaper noted cryptically, "a good deal of money changed hands on the result."⁷⁷ But before Don Carlos, there was another unnamed but not untried racer, whose biggest race, undoubtedly came in a match with Bill Tilghman. The event is described by Charles F. Calcord:

There was a big rodeo held at Sun City near the head of Medicine River. A great many cowmen had come in from all parts of the country for their rodéo and Tilghman had come from Dodge City with his horse which he called Red Buck. Captain C.C. Pepperd from Big Mule Creek was there with Tom Willmore, his foreman, who matched one of his horses in a race with Tilghman's Red Buck. Willmore had arranged with me to ride this race, but at the last minute he became very nervous about it and decided to

ride the race himself. Tilghman beat him by only a few inches and most of us felt that Tom lost the race by overweight and that if I had ridden I would have won it. I weighed one hundred twenty-two pounds and Willmore weighed one hundred and sixty. They ran this race for a stake of five hundred dollars and there were a great many side bets. I know almost every puncher on our range was broke after that horse race.⁷⁸

The rodeo featured one other aspect of horsemanship that C.C. knew from first-hand experience. Few cowboys enjoyed it, but all found the breaking of horses an uncomfortable necessity. "There ain't no horse what can't be rode; there ain't no man what can't be thrown," had special meaning to any working cowboy. But as one's eyesight dimmed with age, miraculously the memory of earlier prowess as bronc buster tended to sharpen. In this, C.C. followed a long line of whittlers and tall-tale spinners. Late in life he confided, in all modesty, to his nephews that he had been a top hand in the breaking corrals while working in Texas.

According to Kit he was one of the best when it came to riding bucking horses. He had a high disdain for the riders of my time who stuck their high heeled boots through the stirrup clear up to their heels before they allowed the bucking to start, and rode throughout on their insteps. In his method he would have someone place a silver dollar between the ball of his boot and the stirrup on each side, and by the time the bucking horse had been subdued the two silver dollars would still be in place, demonstrating that his dollar had never been disturbed throughout the horse's violent performance.⁷⁹

No aspect of the early cow country character is in deeper dispute than whether or not the cattlemen were more prone to violence than others of that era. The patina of romance which has been painted with such a lavish brush over that age from the days of the contemporary dime novel to television's exploitation of "Gunsmoke," makes it difficult to uncover the plain, unadorned truth. Frequently old cattlemen who spent their life on the range denied the existence of excessive violence or even the common presence of guns. Many of the authentic cattle kings such as John Chisum, I.W. Iliff, and Murdo Mackenzie avoided carrying guns. Certainly the working cowboy could not be burdened down in his strenuous daily task

76. Everett Dick, *Tales of the Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 344. Mari Sandoz, *The Cattlemen: From the Rio Grande Across the Far Marias* (New York: Hastings House, 1958), pp. 406-407. William H. Forbis, *The Cowboys* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1973), p. 99.

77. Coldwater *Western Star*, May 29, July 17, 1886; Coldwater *Review*, July 16, 1886.

78. Charles Francis Calcord, *The Autobiography of Charles Francis Calcord, 1859-1934* (Tulsa: 1970), p. 61.

79. Pepperd, "The Pepperd Family History," p. 10.



Chauncey B. Whitney
(1842-1873)



with the heavy and awkward gun and holster.⁸⁰ The traditional picture of the "wild and woolly" cowtown as an arena for almost unlimited homicide is certainly the product of fertile imaginations unrelated to the facts of the case. Robert Dykstra demonstrated statistically that "the cattle town people largely succeeded in containing the lethal tendencies" and "the average number of homicides per cattle town trading season amounted to only 1.5 per year."⁸¹ Hardly the picture of blood soaked front streets depicted by Hollywood.

80. See a discussion of this point in Atherton's *Cattle Kings*, pp. 40-43; "Early Day Cowhand Carried No Six-Shooter, Veteran Says," *Denver Post*, March 6, 1938; Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 112-148. Representative of this position was Mattie Haywood, of Meade county, reminiscing about her husband's cowboy days. He carried a pistol only once, she said, and even then he simply strapped the cartridge belt and holster to the saddle horn where it could be plainly seen. The problem was Indians. "It seemed like every thicket he went by an Indian would pop out and say, 'Hi, John. . . . Dad thought they would be more civilized if they could see his gun. So at noon he strapped the gun on the saddle horn and didn't see any more Indians that day."—Haywood, *On My Father's Side*, p. 31.

81. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*, pp. 146, 148.

Still, there is no denying considerable personal violence did mark the early cowtowns and the cattle drives. Men did thrash, maim, and occasionally kill one another. If "gun play" has been somewhat overemphasized, fist fights and brawls were common; so common, in fact, they were scarcely noticed. At one point the *Ford County Globe* reported: "Street fights too numerous to mention for the past week, police business light."⁸² The absence of adequate law enforcement, the abundance of young, unattached men, the climate of moral laxity which followed the Civil War, and the image, even in their own time, of cowboy reckless bravado provided a setting where violence was bound to occur.

C.C. was a product of his times. He had served in the war; he loved gambling and frequented the haunts of gamblers; he was partial

82. Floyd Benjamin Streeter, *Prairie Trails & Cow Towns* (Boston: Chapman & Grimes, 1936), p. 176.

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GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION.

WHEREAS, C. B. Whitney, Sheriff of Ellsworth County, Kansas, was murdered in the said county of Ellsworth, on the 15th day of August, 1873, by one William Thompson, said Thompson being described as about six feet in height, 26 years of age, dark complexion, brown hair, gray eyes and erect form: and Whereas, the said William Thompson is now at large and a fugitive from justice:

NOW THEREFORE, know ye, that I, Thomas A. Osborn, Governor of the State of Kansas, in pursuance of law, do hereby offer a reward of FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS for the arrest and conviction of the said William Thompson, for the crime above named.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name, and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Kansas, this 12th day of August, 1873.

THOMAS A. OSBORN.

W. H. SMALLWOOD, Secretary of State.



Billy Thompson
(1847-?)

Chauncey B. Whitney, sheriff of Ellsworth county, was gunned down by the drunken William "Texas Billy" Thompson August 15, 1873, in Ellsworth. C. C. Pepperd was a witness and testified later at the trial, helping convince the jury that the killing was accidental.

to Texans at a time when they were not particularly popular in Kansas; and he was cocky enough and aggressive enough to face trouble when it came. But like many other cowman, he made no claim to being a gunfighter.

To the contrary he voiced the utmost contempt for those who lived by the gun, such as Bat Masterson, the Earps, Doc Holliday, Luke Short, and others. He remembered all of them and could describe them in detail, and in his opinion they were all a bunch of no good sos and sos who were just as likely to be on one side of the law as the other.⁸³

A good fight was quite another matter. C.C. confessed that Robert M. Wright had him "pegged about right." "Pepperd was one [cattleman]," Wright wrote, "whom the officers disliked to see come to Dodge. Invariably rows began then, and he was in all of them." And, according to C.C., he won them all too, al-

though he denied ever starting a single one. He just would not back down.

By his own account he took them on as they came, big or little, and while it seemed possible that there might have been times when he came out second best, he did not bother to tell me about any of them. However, Kit specifically denied to me that he ever started any of these fights. His version was that they all came about because he had something of a reputation along those lines, and, therefore, every cowboy who came to town and got drunk would try to add to his own reputation by licking Kit Pepperd. Kit admitted to me that he won lots of his fights by bluff. He said that, even if he were shaking in his boots, he would walk up to some big bully, slap him on both cheeks and kick him on the kneecaps and that in most instances the fight was over.⁸⁴

There are, however, at least three recorded occasions when more than fists were flying. Wright records two of these incidents, although, according to C.C. he had them somewhat garbled. In the "Allen incident," for in-

83. Pepperd, "The Pepperd Family History," p. 11.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

stance, Wright was mistaken as to cause. Since it proved to be a nonfatal affair, there is little recorded to clarify the matter, but C.C. had no reason to confuse the issue. Apparently while Peppard was still a trail hand, he and his boss, remembered only as Allen, "fell out." The quarrel came to climax in the Saratoga Saloon in Dodge City when C.C. grabbed a shot gun loaded with buck shot and unloaded it in the general direction of Allen. Fortunately, the boss was agile enough to duck behind an ice chest which took the full force of the blast. The scars remained in the chest and the counter of the bar for sometime, serving as a pleasant conversation piece for many an old-timer explaining the West to a greenhorn. The affair may have resulted in C.C. being tried before the district court. He was a defendant in one case but little is known of the particulars, except that he had a cross section of famous Dodge citizens testifying for him including Hamilton "Ham" Bell and "Prairie Dog" Dave Morrow.⁸⁵ F.B. Streeter did indicate that C.C. was in a criminal case. The cause might well have been the Saratoga shooting.⁸⁶

The other fracas reported by Wright had C.C. on the receiving end of the gunfire. It began as one of the typical pranks played on a greenhorn who the old-timers thought needed some sort of comeuppance. The stranger would be invited on an antelope or buffalo hunt which would take them some distance from town. While the hunting party made preparation for the excursion, a number of local cowboys in Indian costume would slip out ahead. These "Indians" would hide in an arroyo or creek bed awaiting the hunters. Meanwhile, the old-timers would regale the victim with stories of recent Indian depredation and display considerable anxiety over signs of hostile Indians they found along the way. At the appropriate moment the phoney Indians would burst out of their hiding place with blood-curdling screams and begin firing just over the heads of the hunters. Feigning mortal wounds the perpetrator of the hoax would abandon the stranger to what appeared to be certain death.

He naturally would spur on his horse with the "Indian" in close pursuit back to the safety of the town, arousing its inhabitants to the imminent danger. When the nature of the prank was revealed, the victim, now properly mortified, would be toasted by his tormentors at the nearest bar. C.C. engaged in a number of these episodes in Dodge City. One such incident, however, backfired. In Wright's words "they got the wrong rooster," who instead of running, this one turned and began shooting at the "Indians." "Peppard said he heard one bullet whiz right by his head, and had enough and quit. After Peppard got in, he said it was a put-up job to get him killed, and wanted to murder the whole outfit."⁸⁷

C.C. came even closer to death in Medicine Lodge a few years later. He and Dave Spear, a sporting man, were playing "seven-up" in the back room of a saloon when a quarrel developed. A bystander, Nick Roberts, seeing that a fight was imminent, grabbed C.C. by the lapel to restrain him, "knowing that the Col. [sic] was a bad man when aroused. . . ." The unrestrained Spear drew a pistol and began firing. The first ball went through the hand holding C.C.'s lapel but missed Peppard. The "lights were extinguished" by Spear's second shot, and the gambler made it out the back door. Although Marshal Johnson made a concerted and immediate effort to head him off, even telegraphing neighboring towns a description of the fugitive, Spear made a clean getaway. The local papers played down the incident, calling it a "small sized shooting," one of "those diversities common in gambling places. . . ."⁸⁸

The marshal's efforts to arrest Spear confirms Mari Sandoz' contention that the law favored the rancher in such cases. According to her, "only half-wits and greenhorns" failed to realize that Western gunmen avoided shooting "important people" because the officers, the courts, and the citizens were all on the side of men of substance. Retaliation was certain to follow.⁸⁹ As a neighboring rancher in town buying cattle, C.C. was an important man. So important, in fact, that the newspaper pro-

85. Ford county district court cases (1874-1910), criminal appearance, docket A., case no. 23, manuscript division, mss. box 808, Kansas State Historical Society.

86. F.B. Streeter to W.S. Campbell, February 13, 1951, "Walter Stanley Campbell Collection," manuscripts division, University of Oklahoma, Norman (microfilm copy at Kansas State Historical Society).

87. Robert M. Wright, *Dodge City: The Cowboy Capital and the Great Southwest* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), pp. 206-207.

88. *Barber County Index*, March 26, 1886; *Medicine Lodge Cresset*, April 1, 1886; *Coldwater Western Star*, March 27, 1886.

89. Sandoz, *The Cattlemen: From the Rio Grande* . . . p. 319.

moted him from captain to colonel. Spear simply had tangled with the wrong man. But he had been wise enough to realize it and, if he did make good his escape via a freight passing through town at the opportune moment as the marshal surmised, he didn't make the second error of getting off while still in cattle country.

C.C.'s other brush with death and the district court involved another gambling affair. This time he was only a witness but it was to one of the most notorious killings in cowtown history—Billy Thompson's shooting of Sheriff C.B. Whitney, August 15, 1873, in Ellsworth. Although C.C.'s testimony favored the Texas faction, he indicated he was then a resident of Sun City, but he could not have been more than months away from his trail-herding days. His testimony followed fairly closely the events as described by others, with an emphasis on the careless handling of the gun by Thompson and the assailant's contrition once the deed was done. Much to the surprise of the roused citizenry of Ellsworth, the final verdict was not guilty.

C.C.'s testimony must have played a large role in convincing the jury of the accidental nature of the killing. His testimony in its entirety is included here as an example of his syntax and his prejudices.

I was present at the shooting of C.B. Whitney by William Thompson on the 15 day of August 1873 at Ellsworth Kansas. I was then acquainted with both said parties & with Ben Thompson—Shortly before the shooting took place, perhaps fifteen or 20 minutes, maybe longer Happy Jack and John Stirling said to Ben Thompson & other Texas men there, "Get your guns you damed Texas sons of bitches." Ben Thompson at that went & got his gun up at Jake News place & went north of the railroad, near the depot. about this time Billy Thompson went across the street with another gun towards Ben Thompson, about this time C.B. Whitney went to where Ben Thompson was standing. After Billy Thompson came up all three in a friendly way & manner crossed the railroad to the south side & went to Jo Brennans Saloon, just after they got to the Saloon, some one called out "here they come, look out," or words to that effect. The ones referred to as "Here they come," were Happy Jack & John Stirling. They, Jack & Stirling, were then coming rapidly down the street towards Jo Brennans saloon with arms. Ben Thompson stepped on to the side walk and as Happy Jack and Stirling were advancing upon him with weapons in a threatening manner, Ben fired towards Jack. Just then Whitney was on the walk towards the alley near Beebes Store & Billy Thompson was at or near the Saloon door & had his gun in his hand down below his breach as I thought at or about as low as his hand would allow the gun to be held, he then was standing still. At that time Happy Jack had his pistol out in his left hand & was advancing towards Bill and Ben

Thompson in a threatening manner. Billys eyes were fixed on Happy Jack & at that moment Billys gun exploded or went off. The parties, Billy Thompson, Whitney & Jack were then in a triangle—As the gun went off Ben exclaimed something about shooting best friend, just what I did not fully understand. Billy said, "I know it, I am so sorry." Whitney said, "He did not intend to shoot me, send for my wife & child." At the time the shooting took place Whitney was looking towards Jack & Stirling & not towards the Thompsons."

The most notorious brush C.C. had with the law and one which forever confirmed his opinion that lawmen were generally incompetent, remains one of the more bizarre episodes in Dodge City's gaudy history. The nearest contemporary account of that affair was the brief two-line recital taken from the premature report of Pepperd's death in the *Dodge City Times* which used the incident to eulogize Pepperd's good qualities of "head and heart" notwithstanding a "headstrong and impulsive" nature.⁹⁰ Thirty years later when great-nephew Clair read Wright's account of the event to the old cattleman, C.C. agreed to the general description except for the initial cause. He claimed Wright had mixed the separate incidents and thus wrongly impinged his character. He had not wanted, he insisted, the principal in the case dead.

Apparently during the time Pepperd was establishing his ranch in Comanche county, he had a Negro cook who crossed a Texas cattleman. The quarrel ended when the cattleman put a bullet squarely between the cook's eyes. The Negro was given a decent burial and there it might have ended as simply another violent but insignificant incident on the prairie, if Pepperd had not decided that justice in this case needed to be served. Accompanied by his foreman, Tom Wilmore, Pepperd rode to Dodge City to report the murder and to get the authorities there to issue a warrant. Whether the sheriff knew of C.C.'s propensity for practical jokes or was truly concerned about jurisdiction is not known. In any case, he refused to follow up on the report since, he said, there was no proof of death, "no corpus delicti."

90. This is the longest, and about the only, direct quote extant of C.C.'s exact words. As could be expected, they reflect a direct, slightly colorful pattern. "Testimony and Records in the Case of State of Kansas vs. William Thompson," records of the Ellsworth county district court, manuscript division, mss. box 173, Kansas State Historical Society; see, also, Streeter, *Prairie Trails and Cow Towns*, pp. 115-142, Nyle H. Miller and Joseph W. Snell, *Great Gunfighters of the Kansas Cowntowns, 1867-1886* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), pp. 444-448.

91. *Dodge City Times*, October 27, 1877.

ANOTHER BOLD MURDER.

Mr. C. C. Pepperd, a Well Known Cattle Man, Killed by the Desperado Henson.

Week before last we made mention in these columns of what was reported to us to be a fact, a cold-blooded bill of particulars—the alleged killing of Mr. C. C. Pepperd, a prominent cattle owner and a gentleman well known in Dodge City, by Dan Henson. Thus another notable of Dodge City has passed away. The account was published by our citizens, Mr. P. will long be remembered affectionately and otherwise by our citizens, marks of his shot-gun play with the still linger in the counter and ice-chess the "Saratoga," and his remarkable mortem examination of the negro head, after being split open with an axe, was chopped off by Peppard and brought to Dodge in a gunny sack, that a mortem might be held—the burial of the head 35 miles from the body—and a comical funeral still lingers among the pleasing memories of our Dodgers.

Mr. Pepperd was a large cattle owner and though headstrong and impulsive, had many good qualities of head and heart. We sympathize with his family who are affectionately remembered by all who know them. Henson, after the murder, mounted his horse and escaped.

C. C. Pepperd's first and only obituary in the Dodge City Times, October 27, 1877, was retracted on the newspaper's front page November 10, 1877. Pepperd had sent the Times a post card pointing out the error, and the editor apologized, blaming an informant for the mistake. Despite its inaccuracies the obituary was one "of which any dead gentleman should be proud," said the Times in its retraction.

A Mistake and a Retraction.
The account was published by our citizens, Mr. P. will long be remembered affectionately and otherwise by our citizens, marks of his shot-gun play with the still linger in the counter and ice-chess the "Saratoga," and his remarkable mortem examination of the negro head, after being split open with an axe, was chopped off by Peppard and brought to Dodge in a gunny sack, that a mortem might be held—the burial of the head 35 miles from the body—and a comical funeral still lingers among the pleasing memories of our Dodgers.
Mr. Pepperd was a large cattle owner and though headstrong and impulsive, had many good qualities of head and heart. We sympathize with his family who are affectionately remembered by all who know them. Henson, after the murder, mounted his horse and escaped.
Mr. Pepperd's entire approval, we venture to say, had he really pulled up stakes and crossed the Styx to those elysian fields where whisky flows as freely as water and free lunches are a part and parcel of the daily programme. But Mr. Pepperd wasn't dead—that fact we have from a source we dare not dispute, the alleged dead gentleman sends us a postal card to the effect that he missed Sharon's ferry boat and was therefore compelled to remain in the land of the living until the next train for Pluto's dark dominions comes along. Furthermore, the heretofore mentioned postal card goes on to state, with considerable and unmistakable emphasis, that he'll settle the bill usually charged for the publication of obituary notices with us when the first opportunity offers. Of course the time is now approaching, in fact we may say it is fairly upon us, when overcoats are a necessity, but as we don't want to wear such an article of apparel made of mahogany or pine, we hasten to pen this retraction and let our readers know that Mr. Pepperd is not dead, and that the bill for the obituary notice can be considered as settled. Whether with malice aforethought and intent to get us into trouble, Mr. Gryden gave us the alleged reprot of Mr. Pepperd's non demise, we of course do not pretend to say, but if any individual craving further particulars regarding the killing which did not occur, and of which the above article is a retraction, will apply to Mr. Gryden, the detailed facts of which is proved to be a probably unintentional

Infuriated that his word had been questioned, Pepperd and Wilmore rode back to Mule creek and exhumed the body to bring that evidence to the authorities. However, when the body was exposed, they saw that it was in a state of rapid decomposition. It was summer and some time had passed since the burial. They decided they could never make it back the 50 or 60 miles to Dodge City with the whole evidence, so Pepperd chopped the head off with an axe, put it in a gunnysack, and started back to see that justice was done. By this time, the head was "so ripe," according to Pepperd, that the scent attracted coyotes who followed them all the way to town. Since they had to camp out overnight on the trail, Wilmore hung their grisly burden in a tree, but the stench and the racket of the coyotes forced them to move camp on up the trail a full mile away from the gunnysack. The next day they rode in to Dodge City and rolled the head out on the table in front of the startled sheriff. There was now no denying the cook was dead. Wright's account of the inquest says more about cowtown justice than about Pepperd's character.

At last it was produced in court with the bullet-hole in the skull, and the perplexing question was sprung on the court as to its jurisdiction to hold an inquest when only a fractional part of the remains was produced in court. The case was ably argued, pro and con. Those in favor of holding the inquest maintained that the production of the head in court included the other necessary parts of the anatomy, and was the best evidence on earth of his demise, and that the bullet-hole was a silent witness of his taking-off. The opposition argued that if the court had jurisdiction to hold an inquest on the head, there was no reason why the courts of Comanche county and other localities could not do the same on any other fractional part of the anatomy which might be found scattered over their bailiwick. The court, after mature deliberation, decided to give continuance until such time as the rest of the remains could be produced in court. Peppard left the town disgusted with the decision, and, for all I know to the contrary, the case is still docketed for continuance.⁹²

There also followed a "serio-comical funeral" for the severed head placed at rest some 60 miles from the torso. The exact nature of the funeral has escaped recorded history, but lingered on as a tall tale to tell visiting Easterners for many years. Pepperd never saw the humor of the affair. Thirty years later, his nephew recalled, Pepperd still was disgusted with the Dodge City officials and swore that they were totally incompetent.⁹³

92. Wright, *Dodge City*, p. 181.

93. Interview with Clair Pepperd, May 30, 1978.

FINAL DAYS

C.C.'s declining years might well have inspired Edward Everett Dale's description of the final, pathetic days of many a ranchman who had clung too long to a way of life that had passed him by. The elements conspired against the ranchers, as did the developing technology which made other, newer methods of producing beef more profitable. But in the end it was the early recognized enemy, the homesteader, who was their nemesis. The homesteaders pressed in upon them—not only upon their grazing land, but upon their sense of values and their way of life. Dale observed:

At last the cowman realized that the older order was gone and, in many cases, broken in fortune, he accepted the inevitable and set to work at strange tasks often with only his two hands with which to earn a living for himself and family. . . . Occasionally one of these men who has not yet accepted the new order may still be seen. Such an individual stands like a blackened tree trunk in the midst of plowed fields, a mute reminder of a bygone era. Janus like, he looks in two directions—toward an old world that has gone forever and toward a new one which he does not even remotely understand.⁹⁴

Just when and with what certainty the full realization came to C.C. that life as a cowman in Kansas was over is not known, but it is certain that by 1888 financial pressures were heavy upon him. In September of that year, he sold one piece of land to S. Gibbs⁹⁵ and the next year the local papers noted that "the Honorable B. Gibbs, ex-lieutenant governor of Texas, a relative of the Capt." was visiting the Pepperds.⁹⁶ Gibbs was a wealthy real estate investor from Dallas.⁹⁷ It is probable that some arrangement was made at the time of his visit to Coldwater to dispose of Pepperd's Kansas holdings and move his assets to Texas.

The record is far too sparse to indicate precisely why C.C. sold out. Clair Pepperd believed that it was ". . . a combination of the blizzard of 1888 and the 'herd law' that put Kit Pepperd out of the cattle business. . . ." ⁹⁸ The family tradition of the blizzard date of 1888 may be the correct one, although the more infamous blizzard of 1886 is generally credited with ending open range

94. Edward Everett Dale, *Cow County* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), pp. 234-235.

95. County land records, Comanche county courthouse, Coldwater.

96. *Coldwater Review*, April 12, 1889.

97. L.E. Daniell, *Personnel of the Texas State Government With Sketches of Representative Men of Texas* (San Antonio: Maverick Printing House, 1892), pp. 51-53.

98. Pepperd, "The Pepperd Family History," p. 12.



Capt. Christopher Carson Pepperd (1839-1921) was photographed in 1915 surrounded by a gaggle of his grandnephews and grandnieces. C. C. by this time had sold his ranch and moved to Texas. On this last visit to Kansas he spent the summer of 1915 with his nephew, William Pepperd, in the old Mule creek neighborhood. He was 76 and full of remembrances, delighting the children with stories of cowboys, fights, and horses.

ranching in Kansas. In actuality there was a series of severe winters and in December, 1887, a blizzard caused much damage in Clark, Ford, and Meade counties, as well as Comanche county.⁹⁹ Undoubtedly both the requirements for fencing range land and the blizzard, or series of blizzards, had taken their toll, but it is also true that C.C. had been very active in those years immediately prior to 1888 in attempting to diversify his operation. How much of his money went into the Mule creek coal mine is hard to estimate but it was a significant sum. The investments in Wilmore were also considerable. These nonranching gambles had not paid off. Whatever his deal

⁹⁹ *Clark County Clipper*, Ashland, December 29, 1887, January 5, 1888; Ethel Etrick Watkins, *Annie Child of the Prairie* (Lake Village, Ark.: Prairie Printers, 1975), p. 128. The stories were used by one "con-man" in attempting to obtain contributions for "suffering pioneers" of the area. Both the *Coldwater Western Star*, December 31, 1887, and the *Coldwater Echo*, December 29, 1887, denied the severity of the storm but it might well have been the final straw in Pepperd's declining fortune.

with Gibbs, it must have seemed more promising than more winters of killer blizzards, barren coal mines, overstocked stores, and empty hotel rooms.

In the long run, Pepperd fell victim to the same forces that closed Caldwell and Dodge City to the cattle trade. The weather, the herd law and the resulting state quarantine which put Kansas off-limits to the Texas cattle, the burgeoning westward movement with the increase in rural settlement, and the ravages of splenic fever destroyed the cattle industry as Pepperd knew it. The specifics of his particular losses were only part of a larger attack on the range industry. In holding on until 1889, he had accomplished more than many of his contemporaries.

In June, 1889, son Richard visited Texas and the *Coldwater Western Star* reported the next week that Mrs. Pepperd had left for her "new home at Dallas, Texas. Capt. Pepperd left sev-

eral weeks ago with his cattle, driving them through."¹⁰⁰

Texas was not to treat the Pepperds well. From the moment they left Kansas, their collective fortunes seemed to wither. What assets were salvaged from the Kansas ventures were soon gone. By 1905, when he applied for a Confederate pension, he was living in Mineral Wells, Tex., in poor health and without funds. There was no income, he testified in his petition, and he possessed nothing of value. The family's only possession was a house and lot in his wife's name, valued at \$600.¹⁰¹ The petition was at first denied, but through the work of the United Confederate Veterans and E.B. Ritchie, an attorney in Mineral Wells, it was reactivated successfully four years later. At that time, Pepperd's wife and son both were ill and the house barely adequate for shelter. Ritchie reported that for some time Pepperd had been eking out "a few dimes" by vending hot tamales on the streets of Mineral Wells.¹⁰² It was a long way down from the \$100 election bets, \$18,000 cattle deals, and coal fever talks with high railroad officials.

In 1912 he moved to Fort Worth and was living there in 1915 when he paid his last visit to Kansas and spent the summer with his nephew, William Pepperd, back in the old Mule creek neighborhood. Apparently his wife and son, who were ill at the time he applied for a pension, had died. He was 76 that summer—still hale, healthy, and full of remembrances of the good times of the old days. He delighted his grandnephews with stories of cowboys, fights, and horses. Vigorous enough to back up his "brags" by taking on his 23-year-old kin in a "rough and tumble tussel," he confessed, he was not the man he once was when he could take on all comers.

C.C. thoroughly enjoyed the summer. William reoriented him to the country and his grandnephew read the papers to him. The highlight, however, came with the reading of Robert M. Wright's *Dodge City: The Cowboy Capital* which brought back his more prosperous, younger days. Throughout the summer he soaked in the Kansas sun and smoked his "cigareets," as he called them, and let time slip

lazily past. Much of what their uncle did and said intrigued the younger generation and the "cigareets" as much, or more, than his tales of derring-do.

He rolled his own and he rolled them in his own way. He would take a cigarette paper, fold it about a third of the way lengthwise, and lay it along the finger of his left hand. Into this he would shake some Bull Durham with his right hand, pull the bag shut with his teeth, and put it back in his shirt pocket. Then he would fold the paper around the tobacco, double the end back, and light it up. He never "licked" or applied his tongue to a "cigareet," and he thought it was just a very nasty, repulsive habit for anyone to do so. He would tell me, "they say 'cigareets' will kill you, but I have smoked them since I was fourteen and look at me. Thereupon he would give several right and left whacks upon his chest with his fist, and my recollection is that his chest still gave out with a pretty good boom."¹⁰³

He returned to Texas in the fall and never contacted his Kansas relatives again. The Kansas part of his life was over and whether he recognized it or consciously thought about it, he was, in the new urban setting, as out of place as Dale's "blackened tree trunk in the midst of a plowed field." The visit had been, in fact, a near tragedy because he had been out of the state long enough for his Confederate pension to be once again in jeopardy. It was necessary to turn to "strange tasks" and he became an employee of the Northern Texas Traction Company which operated "an inter-urban line" between the cities of Dallas and Fort Worth.¹⁰⁴ He did those kinds of odd jobs old men with only their two hands, their memories, and their pride can do. There remains no record.

On August 28, 1921, he died alone and unmourned, in a local sanitarium far from the cattle lands of Kansas. An effort to locate relatives was without success.¹⁰⁵

An old frontier saying has it: "No man deserves two obituaries." Although this may have meant that no one should be put in such dire circumstances that they have to confront death twice, in C.C. Pepperd's case, it meant literally that. He had had one obituary, nearly 44 years before his death. He was to get no more. On

100. Coldwater *Western Star*, June 22, 29, 1889.

101. Confederate pension application, September 8, 1905.—Texas Archives.

102. E.B. Ritchie to Capt. E.A. Bolmes, January 24, 1909.—*Ibid.*

103. Pepperd, "The Pepperd Family History," p. 12. Clair Pepperd recalls the summer as that of 1917, however, the official petition is dated 1915.—"Petition for Continuance of Pension," August 23, 1915, Texas Archives.

104. The street-car line was for many years an important passenger transport for that area.—See Rod Varney, ed., *Texas Electric Album* (Glendale, Cal.: n.p., 1975).

105. "Death Records," Bureau of Vital Statistics, Department of Health, Texas Archives; Fort Worth *Record*, August 29, 1921.

October 27, 1877, the Dodge City *Times* carried the "startling news" of his death.

ANOTHER BOLD MURDER
MR. C.C. PEPPERD, A WELL KNOWN
CATTLE MAN, KILLED BY THE
DESPERADO HENSON

The startling news reached us this morning that the well known cattle owner, Mr. C.C. Pepperd, was on yesterday shot and killed at his home in Comanche county, by Dan Henson. Thus another of the notables of Dodge City has passed away. Mr. P. will long be remembered affectionately and otherwise by our citizens, the marks of his shot-gun play with Allen still linger in the counter and ice-chest at the "Saratoga" and his remarkable post-mortem examination of the negro, whose head, after being split open with an ax, was chopped off by Pepperd and brought to Dodge in a gunny sack, that a post-mortem might be held—the burial of that head 35 miles from the body—and the serio-comical funeral still lingers among the pleasing memories of our Dodgers.

Mr. Pepperd was a large cattle owner, and though headstrong and impulsive, had many good qualities of head and heart. We sympathize with his family, who are affectionately remembered by all who know them.

Although the paper later carried an elaborate retraction, for Christopher Carson Pepperd the obituary of the Dodge City *Times* would have to stand as the one public document. Considering only his Kansas career, it was a just assessment and, as the retraction observed, it was

an obituary and an account of his life, of which any dead gentleman should be proud, and which would have met with Mr. Pepperd's entire approval, we venture to say, had he really pulled up stakes and crossed the Styx to those elysian fields where whisky flows as freely as water and free lunches are a part and parcel of the daily programme.¹⁰⁶

106. Dodge City *Times*, November 10, 1877.