

Answers become book

By Sharon Corcoran
The Goodland Star-News

A Goodland woman spent three years looking for answers to a 100 year old question, and she turned the answer into a book about the history of Sherman County.

Evelyn Ward, Goodland, has spent the last three years answering the question of why the Dewey and Berry families had such a feud it resulted in a shoot-out. She compiled a book from her research, "Life in Sherman County: 1902 through 1905, The Range War Years."

Ward said she had gone to a history conference on the Dewey/Berry Feud in 2003, 100 years after the shoot-out. That raised the question of why such a feud.

"You don't just go into someone's yard and shoot them over a water tank," Ward said.

She spent the next three years gingerly picking up 100-year-old newspapers to pour over.

Two things happened right after the Civil War that affected Sherman County, Ward said, the Homesteader Act in 1862 and the cattle herders coming from Texas to the rail-heads in Kansas.

The cattlemen saw the land, she said, and exclaimed, "That is the biggest darn pasture I ever saw in my life!"

At that time, pasture land extended from the Arkansas River to the Dakotas, she said, and from the Rockies to as far east as they could go before hitting settlers. There were only half a dozen cowboys to take care of that whole area, she said, and it was all one pasture, not fenced like today.

The book sells for \$30 and can be bought from Ward or Marilyn Cooper at Windwoman Originals, 812 Center. The money will pay for a sign for a historic site in Sherman County.

When the homesteaders came in 1865, Ward said, 62 people lived here. By 1885, there were 2,280, she said, and a year later there were over 7,000. They came intending to start

little farms, she said, and here were these cattle running around eating their crops.

Besides, she said, they had to have houses to meet the requirements of homesteading, and the cattle would knock down their homes. They formed a homesteader association, she said, and had an oath not to tell the cattlemen who killed "the bothersome critters."

After having the best harvest, beyond their dreams, Ward said, the homesteaders were hit with a huge drought in 1890.

Frank Rockefeller and C.P. Dewey were two of the biggest cattlemen, she said, and both had their headquarters in Rawlins County, near McDonald, close to the Sherman County line.

An article from the June 28, 1903 issue of *The Goodland News* on page 57 of Ward's book relates a dispute over land between the Rockefellers and Deweys. The article says Dewey occupied the ranch next to the Rockefeller Ranch, and Rockefeller complained that the Deweys opened the gate and chased their cattle onto the Rockefellers' land.

Chauncey Dewey, son of C.P. Dewey, managed the ranch, and Percy E. Walden, manager of the Rockefeller Ranch, said he went to Chauncey and asked him to remove his cattle.

Walden said the reply was, "I'm not going to do it. Those cattle are going to stay right there. We intend to have for our range the territory between the Rock Island and the Burlington railroads, and from Atwood to the Colorado line."

The area, the article said, is about 60 miles by 40 miles and consists practically of Cheyenne and Rawlins counties and the north half of Sherman and Thomas counties.

Dewey's men were told to put cattle on property, Ward said, with orders to shoot the first man to try to stop them — they would say they were just following orders.

W.H. McBride's commanding officers from the Civil War testified



Evelyn Ward spoke at the Goodland Senior Center Wednesday, Jan. 18, about the tension between the settlers and ranchers in the early 1900s that led to the shoot-out between the Deweys and Berrys in 1903. Ward speaks at the senior center from noon-1 p.m.,

at the trial, where he and the Deweys were charged with murdering the Berrys, Ward said, as character witnesses and said he was very good at following orders. The irony, she said, is that the very reason they were saying he couldn't be guilty may have been the very reason he was.

The Deweys would buy a quarter of land, Ward said, and bring in 500 cattle and put them on it. Then the cattle were going everywhere, she said, and Dewey's men would say they had orders to free range.

In 1902, she said, the Legislature passed a law that if you owned section after section, it could all be fenced in. There had been roads at each section.

Sherman County was caught by surprise, she said; no one here knew the Legislature was doing this. The

law was reversed in 1903. The first trouble between the Deweys and the Berrys, homesteaders, was in April 1902, Ward said.

The beginning of the feud, she said, was over a quarter of land that both families claimed. After the shoot-out, Ward said, the Department of the Interior came out to investigate complaints about cattlemen taking homesteaders' land and intimidating them. Their records showed that the Berrys owned the disputed quarter section, she said.

As for the shooting, Ward said she didn't try to figure out who was right or wrong.

"They couldn't figure out 100 years ago who shot first," she said. "I don't know how I would figure it out."

But the shooting changed Sherman County history. Many homesteaders had complained about being harassed by the cattlemen, Ward said, but the Department of the Interior didn't come out to investigate until after the shooting. The Deweys then faced criminal and federal charges, she said; they were charged with seven counts of trying to take homesteaders' land and intimidating them.

The Deweys pleaded guilty in

after lunch, every third Wednesday, on a different topic each time. February's topic will be the memories of Herb Garret, whose father opened Garret's Liquor Store in 1914.

Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

federal court, she said, and were only fined \$150 and spent a short time in jail, a small penalty for millionaires. The jury ruled "not guilty" in the criminal trial. But the legal troubles following the shooting and extending into disputes over the estate, she said, divided up the nearly 150 sections of land owned by the Deweys.

If that shooting had not taken place, Ward said, all land from Atwood and Colby west would be range land, mostly fenced. The state may have paid for a few roads through, she said, but how different Sherman County would look today!

The Deweys also made an impact by bringing long distance telephone service to the area, Ward said; they wanted to be able to call from Oak Ranch to Manhattan. Quickly, she said, the whole area had long dis-

ance phones.

The historical period is of special interest to Ward.

"I found out things about my own family I didn't know," she said.

Her family owned land five miles from the Dewey home, and Ward grew up in a sod house on the property, a neighbor of Chauncey Dewey. His son Chauncey Jr. still lives in the Dewey house. The sod house was built by Ward's great-grandfather, C.F. Butler, in 1885. He testified in the Deweys' Norton trial as a gun expert.

The Berrys had put up a water tank and other things as collateral on the loan for their land, Ward said, and those things were sold at a sheriff's auction. The Deweys bought the tank, and the shoot-out took place when they went to pick it up.

Money will be for sign

Money raised from the book, "Life in Sherman County: 1902 through 1905, The Range War Years," will pay for a marker at the site of the Battle of 1875, where white buffalo hunters were killed by Indians.

It is near the Kidder Massacre site northeast of Goodland, said Evelyn Ward, who compiled and edited the book, and the two events are the only two recorded in Sherman County in which Indians killed white men.

Research indicates there were several camps of buffalo hunters in the area in April 1875, she said; on

the upper Beaver was a well-known water hole at the side of the often-dry creek. A buffalo hunter named Sol Reese was camped near the water hole with his partner Dan Dimmit.

Reese witnessed a party of Indians attack an unknown buffalo hunter. Reese shot one Indian, and the stranger shot and killed several. As the Indians left the area, Reese and Dimmit hurried to the fallen stranger and found him dead and scalped. They took the body back to their camp for burial.

They broke camp and traveled five miles down the Beaver to an

area known as Big Springs, where they found the bodies of Daniel Brown and James Lucas. They buried them near Big Springs. Research indicates that Lucas' body remains buried a few yards north of Big Springs along the bend of the Beaver Creek to the west of where the bridge on the Bird City and Edson road crosses the creek on County Road 28. The camps and burial site are on the present day Kuhrt Ranch.

TONIGHT 7:00
YOURS MINE & OURS (PG)
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City meets Friday morning

A special meeting of the city commission will be held at 8 a.m. on Friday because there would not be a quorum to hold the meeting on Monday.

Opening the meeting there will be a public hearing to close out the economic development grant for Aircraft Seal and Gasket Corp., which went out of business in March. The city had helped the company qualify for a \$200,000 economic development grant.

Following the hearing the city commission will approve the close out of the grant.

In other business the commission will:

- Approve payments to Evans, Bierly, Hutchison and Associates and Sporer Land Development for work completed on the airport runway safety area project. The commission will request reimbursement from the Federal Aviation Administration for the work completed on the airport runway safety project.
- Consider adopting a new city health insurance policy.
- Approve a resolution to agree to be part of the joint city/county highway project to rebuild the portion of North Caldwell from Armory Road to north of the airport.
- Approve a contract with Evans, Bierly, Hutchison and Associates for engineering services for crack

filling at the airport and painting the north-south runway and apron area.

- Approve renewal of the Southwestern Bell telephone franchise.
- City Manager Wayne Hill will update the commission on the negotiations with Sunflower Electric, and his trip to Topeka to testify today about the proposed city/county sales tax plan to improve streets and roads.

The commission meets upstairs in the Administration Building, 204 W. 11th.

corrections

In an article on Big Brothers Big Sisters on the community page (6b) in Friday's edition of *The Goodland Star-News*, one of the "Big/Little Sisters" pairs was listed as Kelci and Lindsay. Kelci's mother called; her name is spelled "Kelcie." The mistake was due to incorrect information given to the paper.

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The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

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814 Harrison
Great eastside location. This home offers three bedrooms, bath, living room, dining, kitchen and laundry on the main floor. The basement is finished with 2 more bedrooms, bath and family room. Attached garage, central heat and air, fenced yard. \$64,000. Please let Donna show you this home today.

326 Sycamore
Great family home! This large home boasts formal living room and dining room, kitchen with skylight, new hardwood floors, appliances, guest suite with separate sitting room and bath, master bedroom with bath, large closets, office and guest bath. The second floor offers two nice bedrooms and bath plus the basement is finished with family room, big laundry and storage room. 2 fireplaces, central heat and air, maintenance free deck, sprinkler system, attached double garage add to this home making it one of the finest available for sale in Goodland. Please call Donna to view this home.

These are just a sampling of the homes I have listed for sale, please feel free to give me a call to discuss any other homes you might be interested in. It would be my pleasure to assist you in finding the right home for your needs. Thanks, Donna Moore

	Terry Richardson 899-3093 terryr@eaglecom.net		Donna Moore 899-6159 donnam@eaglecom.net		Cynthia Butts 899-3944 gldrealtor@yahoo.com
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