

JACOB BLACKBURN DEAN

The entire independent career of Jacob Blackburn Dean has been passed in Morton County, where, classed among the early settlers, he has worked his way from modest circumstances to substantial prosperity and a position among the leading ranchmen of this section. His advent into Kansas occurred March 5, 1886, when the family came by rail to Syracuse, being headed by Mr. Dean's father, George W. Dean, from Wayne County, Iowa. There, at Corydon, Jacob Blackburn Dean was born October 12, 1870, and his education, commenced in the public schools of his native place, was completed in public schools of Richfield, Kansas. He has in later years served as a member of the board of directors in school district No. 12. His father entered as his homestead the northwest quarter of section 9, township 31, range 41, just north of Richfield, and there the family home was maintained until J. Blackburn Dean was of age. The senior Dean lived for a time at Syracuse, where he purchased a farm and conducted it for three years, when he disposed of it and returned to Morton County and resumed his farming and stockraising there. He was also in the Star Route mail service from Syracuse to Richfield for a period.

George W. Dean was born at Mount Ephraim, Ohio, December 22, 1834, and about 1840 accompanied his parents to Iowa, where he resided in Van Buren and Wayne counties until coming to Kansas. His father William Dean, of English birth, who married Eliza J. Smith, and they are buried in Wayne County, Iowa. The old parents were farming people, although William Dean was by trade a shoemaker. Their children were: George W.; Lizzie, who married Starkey Bracewell and resides in Southern California; Jacob, who met his death while serving in an Iowa volunteer regiment during the Civil War; Francina and Fannie, twins, the former of whom married Lewis Hammock and died in McPherson County, Kansas, while the latter is the wife of Perry Hill, of Cherokee County, of this state; Maggie, who was first the wife of Houston Moore, but died at Renfro, Oklahoma, as Mrs. M. E. McCart; Janie, who married Hiram Van Felt, of Mitchell County, Kansas; and Isaac N., who is a farmer in Missouri.

George W. Dean secured a common school education and as a young man was engaged in teaching school in Iowa. The Civil War came on to interrupt his activities in this direction, and he enlisted in Company D, Twenty-Third Regiment, Iowa Volunteer Infantry, Colonel Kinsman being his first regimental commander. Mr. Dean, who was orderly sergeant of his company took part in the battle of Duvall's Bluff, Champion Hill and Big Black and the siege of Vicksburg, and was detailed with others to take 3,500 Confederate prisoners north, and later his regiment was sent down the Mississippi River to New Orleans and across the Gulf of Mexico to Texas, where at Fort Esperanza he was mustered out of the service and honorably discharged. He was neither wounded or captured during his three years service. After the war he joined the Grand Army of the Republic and attended numerous encampments, state and national. Mr. Dean's political history was somewhat diversified, for he voted for Ben Butler for president, for General Garfield, for Mr. Bryan, for Colonel Roosevelt and for Mr. Wilson. He was treasurer of Wayne County, Iowa, for two terms and in Kansas was on the board of his school district. His religious faith was that of the Methodist Church.

George W. Dean was married in Wayne County, Iowa, to Serephina Moore, daughter of Samuel Moore, a farmer and ante-bellum settler of Iowa. Mrs. Dean died in 1872, having been the mother of the following children: George W. who died at Chickamauga Park, Georgia, as a soldier during the Spanish-American War; Elnora, who married W. D. Richey and died at Caldwell, Kansas; Sam M. of Baca County, Colorado; J. Blackburn, of this notice; Serephina, who married Will Olinger for her first husband, but is now Mrs. Lawson Whitehead of Baca County, Colorado. George W. Dean for his second wife married Martha

M. Shipley, who died at Dodge City, Kansas, having borne her husband the following children: Jesse, of Baca County, Colorado; Mary Nettie, who is Mrs. James Davis, of Syracuse, Kansas; Mabel, the wife of Jesse Morgan of Morton County; Oliver Berry, of this County; Colonel Kinsman, of Baca County, Colorado; Harry Simpson, also of that county; Leona Maud, the wife of Herschel Kriegh, of Los Angeles, California; and James Alva of Baca County, Colorado. The father of the children died August 7, 1916, and is buried by the side of his wife, Martha M. at Syracuse, Kansas.

J. Blackburn Dean, who is everywhere among his friends known as "Bug", continued as a part of the parental establishment until he had passed his majority, and when twenty-one years of age took a homestead northwest of Richfield, where he lived in a little shanty, 12 by 20 feet while proving up, and while complying with the law in the acquirement of a deed worked out for what living his claim failed to produce.

Part of the time was spent working on the range, making a couple of trips to Montana with trail herds for O-Is and Union Beef Company, and working on the "round-up" for Beatty Brothers O O outfit and C C C's. He was in Oklahoma territory at the time the Sac and Fox country was opened up, also when the Cherokee Strip was opened, made the race from Orlando, but was prevented from filing because of his Kansas rights already exercised.

The report of gold discoveries in the Yukon country caused him to seek Alaska, and he sailed from Seattle to Juneau, found work with a quartz mining company, and returned home again in seven months.

He finally sold his homestead for \$55 and then settled in his present locality, Section 31, township 31, range 43. He has improved this property from raw prairie and the house which shelters him and his family was built of buildings moved out from Richfield and added to at various times. Money was decidedly scarce with Mr. Dean when he came here, but he was better off than some of the settlers, owning a team and being associated with his father in the ownership of a bunch of cows. To supplement his farm earnings he hauled posts from the cedar breaks of Colorado, freighted a little from Syracuse, and on the claim endeavored to grow feed for his stock. A few years after they came to this locality Mr. Dean and his father bought fifteen quarter-sections of land at \$30.00 a quarter, a county sale of delinquent tax lands, most of which now forms the Dean Ranch. Later Mr. Dean and brother Sam. M. developed the present Dean Ranch of about thirty quarters lying astride the Kansas line, improving the property in 1908 with one of the largest barns in Morton County, built of cement blocks, a structure 32 by 100 feet, 14 foot ceiling with mow capacity of 100 tons of feed. For several years they bred Aberdeen-Angus cattle of the grades but subsequently changed the blood to White Face and Shorthorns. Their experience with cattle has justified their opinion that they have been the salvation of the settler here. The ranch is still owned by the Dean Brothers,

Mr. Dean was county commissioner for the third district for eight years, being first elected in 1908 and leaving office in 1916. He served with Commissioners Ira Milburn, William E. Moore, John McGuire and Gilbert Mangels. The work of most importance while he was on the board was a suit to recover fees from the ex-clerk of the District Court which belongs to the county and which suit was a partial success. The murder of Sheriff Moore caused the board to take official notice of the act and hire a lawyer to prosecute the case against the murderer, with the results of conviction against five people.

Mr. Dean was married at Syracuse, Kansas, February, 28, 1910, to Lydia Anna Watson, who was born in Butler County, Kansas, November 12, 1877, a daughter of Jacob M. and Olive (Chenoweth) Watson. Mr. Watson, who was a school teacher and farmer, came from

Ohio to Butler County, Kansas, in the early 70's. He was one of the organizers of the present town of Leon, Mrs. Dean being the first baby resident. Mr. and Mrs. Watson had three other children, Thomas D., Charley J. and Nelle V. The family moved to Morton County, Kansas, in March 1887, and later across the line into Baca County, Colorado. Several years previous to her marriage Mrs. Dean taught in the rural and graded schools of Kansas and Colorado. Mr. and Mrs. Dean have one child, a son, Jacob Bertram, who was born at Coolidge, Kansas, December 24, 1910.

MARY OLIVE CHENOWETH was born in Dark County, Ohio, March 18, 1857. When she was very young the family moved to Logan County, Illinois, near Atlanta. Here she spent a happy childhood with her brother and five sisters. Her mother's death occurred when Olive was eight years old.

In 1871 the Chenoweth family and two other families, traveling in covered wagons, migrated to central Kansas and took claims in Butler County. Here they lived the life of all pioneers on the plains, not long before inhabited only by Indians and buffaloes. Even at this time, buffalo were plentiful a little farther west. The lumber to build their homes was hauled from Leavenworth.

Here Olive Chenoweth grew to womanhood, taught one year of "subscription" school. The following winter Jacob M. Watson, a young man from Ohio, who was her teacher, also taught her to love him. Christmas eve, 1874, they were married, when she was seventeen.

Their struggle was the same as that of any other young couple building a home on the frontier. Drouths, grasshopper year, cyclones and Indian raids are all recorded events of that period of Kansas history.

Later they moved to the new town of Leon, of which Mr. Watson was one of the founders, living there until 1887, when again it was Westward Ho! This move was made by train to Syracuse, thence sixty miles by team and buggy to the pre-emption in Morton County, Kansas, near Richfield.

The sod house was comfortable and roomy, floored with boards. Such floors were few, and the neighboring young people welcomed an opportunity to gather on occasions and enjoy an old fashioned square dance. The roof, alas! like all flat roofs would leak, and how it rained that summer of '87. At such times the bedding, clothing and "small fry" had to be shifted around and stowed compactly into the few dry spots. Thus mother and children held down the claim, while the father ran a livery business in Richfield.

Kansas had a herd law, so it was decided to move to Colorado, where there was free range and try the cow business. The new county of Baca had just been organized August 23, 1889. The move was made this time by ox team hauling the household goods. Other possessions were five cows with calves, a team of Indian ponies and a spring wagon.

The new home was a "dug out" in the bank of the creek. The well was scooped from the bed of the creek and water dipped with a bucket. There they planted trees and garden; raised sorghum and made molasses; milked cows and sold butter, as low as five cents a pound.

We experienced the ups and downs of every day life, as lived in those days. We were no better nor worse off than our neighbors. There was plenty of work, but we also had our good times.

Ours was a stopping place for freighters going to and from Syracuse. Men taking their herds to shipping points to market; cowboys from the trail herds camped nearby; the district school teacher, the preacher on his circuit of the county all found a hearty welcome, as well as food and lodging.

Neighbors were few and far between. Sometimes they "dropped in" for a visit of two or three days and we had glorious times. Regardless of how many came or how long they stayed, my Mother always managed. How she did it, I never knew. If we had no coffee, cornmeal and molasses, mixed together and browned in the oven, made a good substitute. She always made the hominy, sauce from the humble pie melon and a marvelous spread she called "egg butter." If the coal oil gave out she made a grease light,

using a cloth wick and melted tallow. Mountain sage tea cured all our ills. "Chips" from the bed grounds of the trail herds solved the fuel problem.

Of the six girls and one boy in the Chenoweth family, all have passed to the Great Beyond except the youngest, Mrs. Viola Ham of Stillwater, Oklahoma, now well beyond eighty.

Mary Olive Chenoweth was the mother of six children. Five were born in Butler County and two were buried there. Laura Bell the firstborn and Mary Kanola, the third child succumbed during an epidemic of diphtheria. The sixth child, Nelle Viola, was born in the sod house in Morton County.

Jacob M. Watson passed away in 1915  
Mary Olive Chenoweth in 1941, age 84

All honor to the Pioneer Mother, whose dauntless courage and unwavering faith blazed the trail for those who are trying to follow in her footsteps.

The foregoing was written at the request of Mrs. Mae Mundell, member of the Walsh Civic Club, (Walsh, Baca County, Colorado) and read at their Pioneer Mothers program, March 1943.

by Mrs. J. B. (Anna) Dean

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