

[William F. Dayton]

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Folk stuff - Range lore

Gauthier. Sheldon F.

Rangelore.

Tarrant Co, Dist,. #7 [18?]

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William F. Dayton, 71, living at 1000 Ash Crescent St, Fort Worth, Texas, was born April 10, 1867 at Johnson Co, Mo. His father Nichols Dayton, migrated from Mo, with his family, to Williamson Co, Texas, in 1872. Nichols Dayton located on a tract of land [and?] developed a farm, also raised cattle. The farm was one of the first developed in the county.

The cattle herds belonging to Dayton, Stubblefield and Sterling were united into one in 1877 and driven to Llano Co, where a cowcamp was located.

William Dayton, then a boy of 10 years, was one of the workers that made this drive and remained on the Llano ranch. The herd consisted of 2000 head of cattle and were sold at the end of two years, then William returned to his home where he remained for a year. His next range work was with the 'Cross S', located in Tom Green Co. Later he worked for the Sam Henderson ranch and the which used the '4-L' brand and ended his range career working for the O.R. Harold horse ranch.

His story of [range?] life follows:

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"My place of birth was Johnson Co, Mo and the date was [April 10, 1867?]. My father's name was Nichlos [Daytonand?] he supported his family by farming. He sold his Mo, farm in 1872 and moved to Williamson Co, Texas. We traveled by train to Dennison Texas, and there father bought a team of hosses and a wagon with which we completed our trip to Williamson Co.

"Father located on a piece of land and fenced in a small tract which he farmed. The farm was among the first to be started in that County. The land has been in the Dayton family ever since and is now occupird by my youngest brother, M.F. Dayton. C.12 Tex

"When my father lit in that territory it was a cattle country. Here and there a few [?] were being fenced off and planted to crops, but in addition all the folks run more or less cattle on the free and open range. My father started to build a herd soon as we lit there and in a few years was running around a 1000 head. Our neighbors Stublefield and Sterling threw their 2 herds in with my father's which made a herd of around 3000 head that we drove to Llano Co, where we established a camp.

In the crew that took the critters to Llano Co, were Nick Brands, Jim and Clayton Stubefield, Bob Sterling, my brother and I. We were all young lads the oldest of the bunch was 18. Of course, we all had the cow work learned, because us boys had worked on our home ranch and in the spring roundups. During the spring roundup all the neighbors joined forces and worked the range as one outfit.

"We lads drifted out with that heed of 3000 longhors for about a 100 mile drag, felling more important [than?] the Ptesident of the United States, and we did a job of drifting [??] old rawhides would do. Out folks rigged us out properly with a chuck wagonand remuda. We boys were told that it was [up?] to us to make good.

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“We had no trouble on that drive and lit in Llano Co, without losing any critters. [ut?] camp was established between Castell and Valley Springs. Casrell was then a Dutch settlement and all the country around it was a cattle range.

“The first thing we lads did was to fix living quarters.

We dug a space into a bank and topped it with logs. FFor roofing we used polls covered with sod. That dugout was our home for nearly two years and our nearest neighbor was located 15 miles away. [We?] saw mighty few people, just once in a while some waddie would ride through. A few times a stranger called while we were out on the range and they helped themselves to a mess of chuck and went on their way. When we came in from the range, evidence 3 that some one had [been here?], cooked and lined their flue then [departed?]. On two occasions we lads came in a and found a meal waiting for us cooked by a stranger that had called. It was the custom for [strangers?] to help themselves, if no one was at a camp, and if it was near meal time to fix chuck enough for the crew.

Of course, that happened to the small outfits. The big outfits had cooks which stayed at the camp at all times and always fed a stranger that dropped in. We had no regular cook and our chuck was fixed by the first one which arrived at the camp for flue lining. Our cooking was not extensive. We lived on meat, beans, bread and coffee. Once in a while we would get some canned vegetables into the camp.

“Beef was our main chuck and sometimes a little wild meat, such as venison, phesant [and antelope??]. In the fall and winter when the pecans were plentiful, the [jivilina?] would be fat as butter and then the young ones were good to eat. The meat tasted about as hog meat does and was tender when taken from a fat critter. The javilina were easily killed, because a person could walk up on the animal. The javilina had one peculiar trate that I got heaps of fun out of. I never met up with one that I could kick in the rear end. I have tried it many times, but the critters would whirl and face me every time. I would start the swing of my boot and before I could land it the javilina would be facing me.

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“Some of us rode the line night and day at our Llano ranch to keep our heed together and watch for rustlers. When a storm was headed our way the whole crew would get out and ride to keep the crittees from drifting and to hold the heed in a bunch during the 4 the storm. During the whole two years we had no stampede which we could not handle, so had no loss from stampedes. We didn't lose any critters to rustlees, that we know know of, it is possible a few may have been taken. Others in the section did, however, so I reckon we we were lucky.

“The second year after we established the camp, the price of cattle went to a point that justified the owners to sell and they did sell the whole herd.

“After sale of the herd was made, mybrother and I returned home.

I then stayed on my father's farm for a couple years and then dragged out to Tom Green Co, in 1882. I joined the [??] Merchant's outfit which was known as the 'Cross S' ranch ranch.

The outfit was called the 'Cross S' because the brand was made by crossing the Ss [??]. The 'Cross S' was located near Sherwood.

Tom Green Co, has been divided since that [time?] and the town of Sherwood is now in that part of the original Tom Green Co, which is Iron Co.

“The 'Cross S' outfit run hosses and cattle. The hoss range was fenced and consisted of 4000 acres in which around 1000 head were ranged. The cattle grazed on an open range and numbered about 5000.

“W.S. Merchant did his [own?] top-screw work and the other waddies of the steady crew were, Bill Frost, Harry Clark, Gab Shout, Harvey Clark and I. There were always two or three drifting workers and at the roundups Merchant would take on four or five extra hands.

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“Harry Clark was our belly-cheeter and a good one too. The chuck that Harry dished out to we waddies was a lot different than what us lads fed ourselves at the Llano Co, camp. Us waddies on the 'Cross S' ate well cooked meat, bread and beans and black [coffee?] to our hearts content. If one of the waddies would go out after wild game, Clark would fix the meat to suit our taste.

San Angelo, 30 miles to the N. was our trading town. To reach any other town, that had any size, we had to ride around 100 miles.

There was not much to San Angelo. It was just getting a good start. The county seat was first located at the forks of the Concho River, where the U.S. Army Post was situated, Fort Chonco it was called. San Angelo took its name from an old Mexican named San Angelo, who lived where the town site is now. San Angelo made his living fixing tomas and chilies which he [sold?] to the soldiers located at the Fort.

“When I lit in that section San Angelo was a port cowtown.

There was a supply store or two and the rest of the business places were saloons, gambling and sally joints.

“Generally' when the crew had a pay day, and always after the roundups, a visit to San Angelo was in order. The boys would find accommodations for any of their wants, and at times they became a little rough. I recall one [visittus?] waddies made which stirred up some [?] excitement.

“There were, at the time, about 300 soldiers in Fort Concho and a good number of them would be in San Angelo each day. One night Clark, Forst and I went to town and called at a combination dance hall and saloon. The front part was used as the dance floor and the bar was in the rear. There were the usual bevy of wueans queans

strutting around and a good number of soldiers, in blue uniforms,

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[?] and sauntering here and there. Us three waddies walked 6 up to the bar and the bartender sais said, 'have a shot of pizen on the house'. Following this each waddie waddy bought a round of drinks and Clark and Forst doubled back. Well, by that time our hats had been pushed to the back part of our heads and we were ready for some excitement.

“Over the bar was a large chandelier oil lamp, with pretty colored glass ornaments, lit up and [?] scattered along the walls of the dance [hall?] were [wall lamps?].

“Clark turned around, places his elbows on the bar and was leaning against it. He sized up the soldiers and queans [???] and then said, 'I wonder what these soldiers are [doing in this joint?]' He than drew his gun, quickly, [?] shot out the chandelier lamp. That act of Clark's gave the [rest?] of us an idea [we?] shot out the [wall lamps?].

“It [was?] a bright moon lit night and we could see the soldiers diving through the door and windows. A couple of the soldiers were trying to get through one of the windows at the same time and were wedged. They were putting on a pretty scramble [tring?] to wiggle out. Frost stepped over to the window and shot over their heads and that shot helped the boys wonderfully and they made the riffle [pronto?].

“We left the bar and all went under a tree and stood in the [?] shade. In that shade we could not be seen, but could see the folks that were moving in the moon's light. A small bunch of soldiers came by shortly and one of them was saying, 'I would like to see one of those cowboys right now'. Clark stepped out of the shade and said, 'here is a cowboy', At the same instant he 7 shot into the air [and?] we followed by shooting also. The three soldiers showed themselves to be good retreaters and were ahead of their shadows getting away from where they were to [s me?] where else.

“Us waddies then mounted our hosses and hit for the camp, because we reckoned that the sheriff may want to have us stay with him for the night and that would spoil our plans, due to the roundup starting the next morning we wanted to be on hand.

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“The roundup started with the camp located at Leven Mountain with around 200 hands, which were the waddies working for the various outfits that had joined forces for the roundup. The second day Willis Johnson, Sheriff of the county, dropped in looking for three rawhides that had shot at U.S. soldiers. He had five deputies with him and the laws questioned the waddies, but could not find any one that saw, or knew anything about the shooting. One of the reasons the laws failed to meet up with any one that could give the desired information was that he did not question we three waddies. He was mighty careful to keep away from where we were. He [reported?] that the waddies that did the shooting must have dragged out of the country, so the matter was closed.

“Roundups in the Tom Green country followed the same routine as we did in Williamson County, but had more hands and handled bigger herds.

“I saw an unusual fight between two waddies during that roundup, [one?] of the few that I ever saw among waddies of the same working crews. However, these two men were working for different outfits and had a grudge that had been standing for a long spell of time. The grudge was fanned into white heat when the two boys met 8 at the roundup. They finally agreed on a method of settling their difference and the following deal took place: Each mounted a hoss and started to ride towards each other, from a distance, and began shooting as they started to ride. One was a stranger to me and I d don't recall his name, but one I knew and his name was “Frog Pond”.

Well, Forg made the first hit and the stranger dropped out of his saddle and died in a few minutes.

“I worked on the 'Cross S' for two years and then joined the Sam Henderson outfit, who's brand was '4-L' and called the Four Cross L brand. It was located around 15 miles N. of the

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'Cross S' outfit and run about 8000 critters. I did not stay with the Four Cross L outfit long, because my hankering was for a job with a hoss outfit and I got a chance to join the 'O H' hoss ranch and took the job.

"The 'O H' outfit run around 2000 head of hosses and my work wrangling hosses. Harvey Clark, Jim Williams, Will Carlton and two others were the crew at the time I was with the 'O H' ranch.

"The wild critters were busted, rode five or six times and then sold for gentle saddle hosses. The average price received for a busted hoss was around \$30.

"I became a top wrangler. This statement may sound wiffy, but we never tackled a critter that we didn't succeed in busting.

Harvey Clark was the best hoss wrangler I have ever seen straddling a hoss. Harvey was a rall fellow. In fact, he seemed to be all arms and legs. Saddle or no saddle, he could ride 'em as well one way as the other. I have seen him grab a hand full of mane and swing himself a-straddle of a critter' then put on as pretty piece of 9 riding one could hope to see. He would stick his long legs forward and put his toes under the animals front legs, next to its chest, and with that hold he could stay with any of the snake bloods.

As a rule 30 minutes would be ample time to put one of those critters in the mood to give up the fight, but at times we would get an extra stubborn critter and perhaps an hour's time would be required to force it to give in.

"The trick in busting a hoss lays in [knowingits?] action. Some pitches just elevate and jump forward with each jump. Such critters are a cinch, sort of a rocking chair. Some jump to one side with their elevations, some first to one side then the other, those we called the fence-rowers. The fence-rowers were the hardest of the pitches to stay with, because of

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the short time one had in which to calculate the coming move. All that a wrangler has to go by is the muscle movement that starts just before the critters make the [jump?].

By keeping one's eye on the shoulders one could catch the next move.

“The wire fence made its appearance about 1880 and then it was not long till the [ranges?] were fenced. When that took place in the San Angelo country it started a lot of trouble caused by fence cutting.

“The cutting was done by the rustlers and the small ranchers, called the grease-pots. The rustlees cut gaps to allow the critters an opening to stray out of and the grease-pots did it to provide an opening so they could have a way in and out of their camps.

“The owners of large tracts of land would [?] in fence building and [?] fence in the grease-pot. For instance, a 10 fence builded North, East, South and thence West and each distance of 15 miles or more would fence in all on the inside of this square.

Or a fence running East and West built as a drift fence, would block off folks going to any point at the opposite side. Well, them which were effected by the fence would cut their way out. They not only cut the fence, but cut the wire so it was useless for fencing again.

“[A?] lot of the fencing was done for the purpose of squeezing out the grease-pots, but most of the little fellows would not take the squeeze. The fight got real hot for a time and in some cases the legitimate fence was cut on general principles. Finally the Texas Rangers took a hand in the matter and the arguement was settled by force of the change taking place in farming displacing the ranges.

“The rustlees cut fences to make gaps for critters to drift through. The rustlers would watch the line riders and when the rider had passed a certain section the cutting would be done.

The stealing would not be discovered till the rider passed the section on his next ride.

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“When a steal was discovered, a party of waddies would try to trail the rustlees. Some times the cattle would be caught up with and taken without the rustlees being seen, and at times the rustlees also were caught. The rustlers, as a rule, were [hanged to?] a limb, if one was handy, in the absence of a handy limb the boys were branded for the eternal range. However, the rustlees made their escape more time, by far, than caught in the steal. 11 “It was quite common to see fellows [hanging?] at the end of a few feet of hemp, or laying in some draw with the eternal brand marks. Who did the hanging or shooting was never told. Fact is, it was reckoned impolite to ask questions about such doings. There was not any question asked about any kind of a shooting farcas. It was the usual way of settling [disputessand?] the fellow that won the arguement was the one that could shot true and drwa quick.

The matter of shooting causes me to recall Al Good, a waddy who worked for the Merchants outfit. He was fast and true with the gun. That waddy could lay his gun on his shoulder, pointing back, and by using a mirror, into which he looked, to see behind, he could hit a marble laying on the ground and make it jump into the air, and then hit it again before it returned to the ground. The kind of shooting he could do in the usual was, you may guess. He realy was a master of the six-gun.

“Our wages those days were around \$30 per month and I reckon [?] of it was spent for shooting material and a greater part of the \$5 was spent for amunition used in target practice.

“Besides riding my top act was roping. I could put the rope on either limb of a running critter. There were others that were able to do the same trick. To be a top hand a waddy had to be a good [hand?] riding and roping.

“After I left the 'O H' hoss ranch I returned to the Merchant outfit for a short spell. I went [home?] to spend the Christmas of 1886, with the intention of returning, but didn't do it.

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I then ended my career as a range hand and went to farming. In the later years I quit farming and took up mechanical work.