

JOHN J. WALK

Billings Gazette, Date Unknown

Nearly 50 years ago, John J. Walk and A. A. Ellis brought 1,600 head of cattle from Oregon to the Lake Basin, taking more than three months to trail them through. The herd was the first to be turned out on the open range in that region and was among the first bunches of cattle on the Yellowstone. This was in 1880 and three years later they brought in 2,000 more head from Oregon.

The two men had come to Montana from Colorado to start in the cattle business and their families stayed at Bossman while they were trailing the animals through. When they came to the Gallatin river, Mrs. Walk rode out to see the herd at the crossing and nearly fell in the river from her horse when she became dizzy looking at the swift river. Two cowboys who saw her danger, got on either side and brought her safely out of the stream.

The Walk and Ellis families moved to Billings shortly after the town was established and each built a large house in Foster's addition in the north part of the town, then separated from the rest of the city by a slough where the Great Northern tracks are now. There were only a half dozen houses in that section for several years.

Mr. and Mrs. Walk still live at the same residence, 703 North Broadway, although now the street is substantially built up and the slough and white alkali flats have long since disappeared. Mr. Walk's partner, Mr. Ellis, is now a resident of the Red Lodge country.

When the Walk family first came to the Yellowstone in 1880, they took up a ranch on Canyon Creek, which later became a part of the Billings ranch. There was a stage station on the creek, which, with the postoffice, boarding house and saloon, was conducted by Sid Erwin. There was one or two other buildings, including a blacksmith shop, owned by Dr. W. A. Allen.

Among the first settlers in that district who are still living are George Danford, Dan Sullivan and Frank Summers.

Slough Divided Town.

The families living north of the slough in Billings built footbridges across in order to get to town. There was also a wagon bridge on Twenty-seventh street. In the spring the melting snows often left the bridges in a precarious state and once or twice carried them away.

Often ducks come in on the slough and Mr. Walk says that more than once he has gone there and killed enough ducks for a meal. Water was brought in barrels from the river by Ed O'Donnell at a price of 50 cents a barrel. The water was kept in a barrel at the back door. Sometimes they would find a fish floating around in it.

Snows were often deep and Mr. Walk had a snowplow with which he made paths for the children from that part of town who attended

school in the Lincoln building, now used to house the school administration. The building was early condemned as unsafe and every time there was a windstorm there was fear that the building would tumble down.

One of the first social events in the Walk home after it was built was the marriage of Miss Lucy Baker who had been the school teacher at the Canyon Creek school and had boarded with the Walks, to Samuel R. Salisbury, who had a ranch at that time near Canyon creek. They had met after Miss Baker came to Montana to teach.

According to Mrs. E. E. Sayer and Mrs. W. B. Peckham of New York City, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Walk, one of the chief family events of those early days was the purchase of a fine spring wagon with two seats, which was the family equipage for a number of years. Figures of yellow deer as decorations greatly enhanced its attractiveness to juvenile eyes.

Yellowstone Round-up.

The Yellowstone round-up was organized by Walk and Ellis and other cattle owners in the district between the Yellowstone and Musselshell. Each spring and fall a round-up was held to brand calves and separate those to be taken to market. The round-up had corrals in the Lake Basin and also in the Hailstone Basin and at Canyon Creek and Park City, and drives were made from the surrounding districts to these corrals. Then they finished up by going across the river on the Crow reservation and driving back strays. Sam Garvin, who was foreman for the Jeffries and Waynard outfit, was the captain of the round-up for many seasons.

The largest cattle owner in the district was Nelson Story with the Oxyoke brand. His headquarters were at Bosman but most of his range stock was kept in the Lake Basin. There were also a number of large Texas outfits in the district and on the Musselshell. The first cattle were brought into Yellowstone county by Hoskins and McGill, about 1879, a year before Mr. Walk came here. Ed Cardwell began in the cattle business on the Yellowstone at Merrill shortly afterward. Mr. Walk was considered one of the best ropers on the round-up. At local fairs until of recent years, he always took part in roping contests and few could win from him.

When the railroad was built through the Yellowstone valley, Mr. Walk took a contract to furnish beef to the construction gangs, receiving \$16 a head. There was little profit because buffalo hunters could furnish cheaper meat because they were at no expense in raising their meat, and the buffalo was almost as palatable as beef.

Rabbits Men Out.

One year, Mr. Walk recalls, the rabbits were so thick in the Lake Basin country that the range grass was practically eaten up by them and it was necessary to drive the cattle out and find other places for them to feed.

In later years, Mr. Walk ran cattle on land leased on the Crow reservation. Besides the lease rentals the Indians expected occasional gifts of fresh beef, and as they helped themselves if the leaseholders were not fairly generous, it was considered the best

policy to be on good terms with them, as Mr. Walk ranged his cattle on Blue creek and Pryor creek. Mr. Walk has a high regard for Chief Plenty Coos, whom he knew well during the years he was on the reservation. He and the chief are of the same age. Chief Plenty Coos was a man of magnificent physique in the prime of his life. The father of the chief was killed by the Sioux on the land owned by the chief and it has long been his desire to end his days there, too.

Mr. Walk says that once when he first knew Plenty Coos he told him to stop at his camp at any time for something to eat. The chief was to show his watch to Mrs. Walk as a sign of who he was, but Mr. Walk forgot to tell his wife of the arranged signal. When Plenty Coos pulled out his watch and asked for bread, Mrs. Walk, who had been bothered with begging Indians, refused him. Plenty Coos was much offended, but when the cause of his coolness was discovered, Mr. and Mrs. Walk made amends by inviting the chief to dinner at their home and his dignity was appeased.

Chief Painted Circle.

Plenty Coos became a great favorite with the two small Walk girls. Once when they were with their father he took them and fixed their hair in the fashion of Indian maidens, adding a yellow paint mark down the parting. Then he gravely looked them over and said, "Itsek Bot-sets," the Crow for "very good."

Once while they were on the Gallatin, a band of Piegans stole some horses from the Crows and from the settlers. Several men went with a band of Crows in pursuit and killed some of the Piegans. The Crows held a scalp dance which lasted several days in celebration of their victory. One of the men named Harrison had promised to bring Mrs. Walk a souvenir, and when he returned, he dropped a pair of ears which had once belonged to one of the Piegans in her hand. Unlike most cattlemen, Mr. Walk never carried a revolver and seldom except for hunting or in times of Indian troubles, a rifle.

Mr. and Mrs. Walk, as a newly married couple, crossed the plains in a covered caravan from Missouri to Colorado, about 1872. The other members of the party consisted of brothers and sisters of Mr. and Mrs. Walk and their families. For several years Mr. Walk was a buffalo hunter, killing the bison for their hides, the top ones bringing \$2.75 each. Mr. Walk's record kill was 38 in one day. The headquarters to which the hides were brought after they had been cured in the sun came to be known as Walk's camp and was situated on the headwaters of the Republican river.

Indian Scares.

While in Colorado they had number of scares from bands of Sioux and Utes. The women in the district would go into Denver for protection at each scare. Once when there was a rumor of Indians coming, Mrs. Walk refused to go. One afternoon while Mrs. Walk was resting in the house, an Indian entered the room. Hyster-

ical with fright, Mrs. Walk began to laugh. The Indian looked at her astounded and said, "Hoop, brave squaw," and left the building. Mrs. Walk lost no time when he was gone in getting to the railroad station. Two neighbors were killed by the Indians on this raid.

Mr. Walk earned a stake from his buffalo hunting to start raising cattle. Then when the subduing of the Indians started the cattle men in eastern Montana, he decided to come here. Mr. Ellis, who cast his fortunes in with him at that time, had been a telegraph operator in Colorado. They went to the Grande Ronde country of Eastern Oregon for cattle because they were cheaper than in western Montana, where everyone was trying to increase their holdings. Considering that it took nearly a year for the round trip, including the locating and buying of cattle, little money was gained by the move however, Mr. Walk says.

At the time of the Souther mining boom at Independence in the early 90s, Mr. Walk was interested in the North Star mine there with David Pratt. He spent one winter there, superintending the work of two crews of men. He also put in a stage line from Big Timber to the mines with three relay stations. At one time there were 1,500 men in the camps around Independence.

Then the hard times of 1893 came and the boom as suddenly collapsed. "All that I ever got out of the mine was a gold ring apiece for myself and wife, made out of the nuggets and a cough that I have had ever since," he relates. His stage line horses he took to the Dakotas and sold but the price was so low that he had barely money enough to get back home.

JOHN J. WALK, 87, DIES

With only 14 days remaining before his eighty-eighth birthday, John J. Walk, early Montana cattleman and pioneer resident of Billings, succumbed at his home, 703 North Broadway, early Friday morning. Death was attributed to his advanced years and came after an illness of two days.

He settled here in 1880 building the residence that still stands in the rear of 708 North Broadway. In 1886 he built Billings' first hostelry, the Grand hotel, which he later sold to David Pratt.

Born in Harrison county, Indiana, on Oct. 18, 1847, he moved to Hugo, Colo., as a youth and became interested in the sheep and cattle business. Like many young men of the period, Walk turned to buffalo hunting in the winter, killing as many as 600 in a single season.

In 1879 he sought greener fields, and leaving his wife, Emaline Davis Walk, in Colorado went to Oregon. Not satisfied with the grazing country there, he bought a herd of 1,300 cattle and headed for Montana. Traveling with the beasts was slow and tedious work, and the party only made five or six miles each day. He is credited with trailing the first cattle herd into the Lake Basin country.

Joining his wife in Bozeman in the fall of 1880, he set the animals to graze in the Lake Basin. That winter Mr. and Mrs. Walk made their camp near Canyon Forks. One of their neighbors was Calamity Jane whom Mr. Walk described as "bighearted" and whom he said "drank whisky but did not gamble."

Later he moved to Billings, building a home and the Grand hotel. He lived in the original home until seven years ago when he and Mrs. Walk moved across the street to live with their daughter, Mrs. Edith E. Sayer.

Mr. Walk credited his health and vigor in his advanced years to his early life on the range. He maintained a constant interest in current affairs and was fond of reminiscing about early days in the city.

Surviving are his widow, two daughters, Mrs. Sayer, and Mrs. Alice Peckham, both of Billings, three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, and a sister, Mrs. Cinderella Newman, also of Billings. Two brothers, Pete and Sam, live in Kansas.

Funeral services will be held Sunday afternoon at 2 o'clock in the Smith funeral chapel with the Rev. George S. Sloan, pastor of the First Congregational church here, officiating. Burial will be in Mountview cemetery.

MR. AND MRS. JOHN J. WALK

February 16, 1871, Mr. and Mrs. John J. Walk were married in Missouri, near the city of St. Louis, and their wedding trip was across the plains in a covered wagon from Missouri to Colorado where they lived until 1880 when they moved to the Yellowstone valley and settled at the place which is now known as the city of Billings.

Mr. and Mrs. Walk crossed the plains with a caravan of relatives who were bound for the west. February 16, 1929, when they celebrated their fifth-eighth wedding anniversary, they were the last of those brothers and sisters who 58 years before had come west with them to settle this country.

They observed their wedding anniversary by a family dinner at their home, 703 North Broadway, where they live with their daughter, Mrs. E. E. Sayer. They have another daughter, Mrs. W. B. Peckham of New York City, and a grandson, Austin Sayer. Nephews and nieces who are sons and daughters of those other men and women who had crossed the plains with Mr. and Mrs. Walk wished them many happy returns of the day.

Mr. and Mrs. Walk have lived on North Broadway for 44 years and both Mrs. Sayer and Mrs. Peckham were raised in Billings. Mr. Walk was one of the first cattlemen in the Yellowstone valley, coming here two years before the advent of the railroad, which crossed Montana in 1882. He sold meat to the crews of men who were building the first transcontinental railroad, and he built one of the first houses in what is now the city of Billings.

Mrs. Walk's girlhood home was in Virginia and Mr. Walk claims Indiana as his birth state, but Montana as his home. The Walks have lived here 69 years. On their trip from Missouri to Colorado they left the former state in the early part of March, 1871, and did not reach Colorado until June, taking three months to make the trip with prairie schooner and oxen.

Mr. Walk retired from business several years ago, but until that time he was active in the sheep and cattle business in this part of the state. Mr. Walk is 81 years old and Mrs. Walk is 79.

Mrs. John J. Walk

Billings Times, May 21, 1937

Complications caused by her advanced age, brought death Monday evening to Mrs. Emmaline Davis Walk, 87, long-time resident of Billings and widow of John J. Walk, prominent Montana pioneer cattleman and building contractor. She died in the home of her daughter, Mrs. E. E. Sayer, at 703 North Broadway.

She had resided in this locality since the fall of 1880 and made her home at 708 North Broadway, the original Walk residence, until about nine years ago when she and the late Mr. Walk moved across the street to reside with Mrs. Sayer. It was there that Mr. Walk died Oct. 4, 1935.

Mr. and Mrs. Walk were married at Wellsville, Mo., Feb. 16, 1871 at a double wedding ceremony at which her sister, Dorcas Davis, was wed to Martin Walk, brother of John J. Walk. A week later the two couples started west in a prairie schooner. They were three months en route and first settled at Pueblo, Colo.

Mr. and Mrs. Walk came to Montana in 1880 and within a few months located here.

The family home at 708 North Twenty-eighth street was built in 1894 and was one of the first residences in the northwest part of the city. Two years later Mr. Walk constructed the Grand hotel, Billings' first brick hostelry, which he later sold to David Pratt.

Born at Sistersville, Va., Oct. 26, 1849, Mrs. Walk was a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Davis. She resided there until she was 22 years of age, when the family moved to Missouri. She was a member of the Congregational church.

Surviving are two daughters, Mrs. Sayer and Mrs. Alice Peckham; three grandchildren, Mrs. Richard Ginn, Harold A. Sayer and John Walk Peckham, all of Billings, and six great-grandchildren. Five of the great-grandchildren reside here.

Funeral rites were conducted at Smith's chapel Wednesday afternoon, the Rev. George S. Sless, pastor of the First Congregational church, officiating. Interment was in Mountview cemetery.

Mrs. Ellen Swearingen sang "It is well with my Soul" and Mother's Evening Prayer." Pallbearers were Arthur J. Hart, Thomas P. Clewov, Earl O. Horse, Frank A. Horse, W. P. Nixon and Joseph L. McClellan.