

History Of Miller Land & Livestock

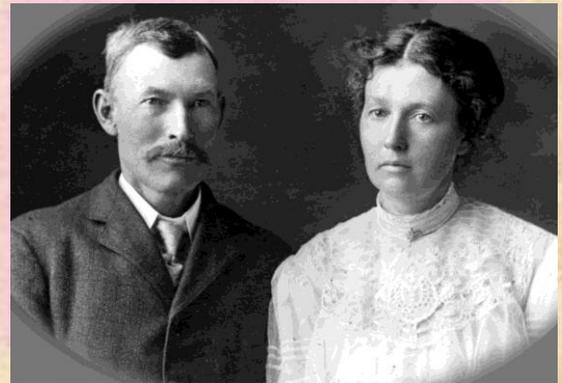
Part II: Jim Mickelson Familyby Tara Miller, March 2010



James Mickelson

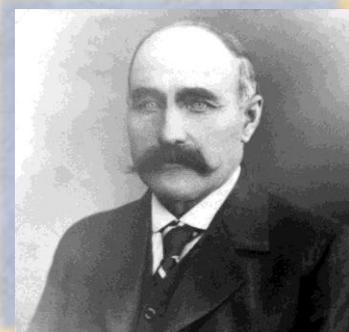
Ella lived to be 92 years old, a very ripe old age for back then! She died within a year of her three sons. Mikkel and Ella are buried in Aarhus, Denmark, in a beautiful Protestant churchyard over four hundred years old.

James Mickelson was born 'Jens Mickkelsen', meaning Jens, son of Mickkel. His father, Mikkel Rasmussen, was a Danish soldier in the war between Denmark and Germany, then a woodcutter. Mikkel and Ella Rasmussen had four children: Rasmus, Soren, Jens, and Anna Marie. Jens, later the ranch's James Mickelson, was born in Tinning Denmark on August 1, 1866.



Mikkel & Ella Rasmussen

In 1882, at the age of 16, James sailed to America, landing at New York City with 5 cents in his pocket. He worked his way to the home of relatives in Nebraska and then onto Rock Springs, Wyoming to join his brothers Soren and Rasmus. Here he worked on the railroad, where Soren was an engineer, and in the coal mines with Rasmus. With his savings, Rasmus built homes to rent to the miners. Still searching for a life that suited him, he struck out for the LaBarge country to work on cattle ranches. There he first worked for Ariel Hanson and then N. S. Miller, fellow Danes. A lasting friendship was formed with these families.



Rasmus Mickelson

Rasmus left the mines in Rock Springs with and joined James in 1884. Both brothers took up claims on Labarge Creek (where Lundis lived).

While homesteading, James also worked for the Spur Ranch as a cowboy, making improvements on his place and starting his own cow herd as he also drew a wage from the large Spur outfit.

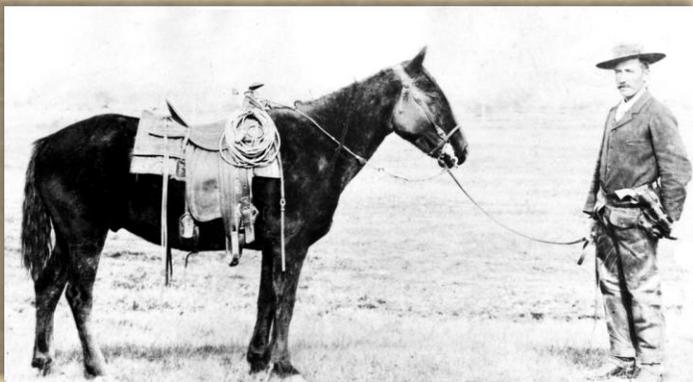


The Spur Ranch was formed by M.E. Post and Francis E. Warren (elected as Wyoming's first State Gov., soon resigning to serve the U.S. Senate). The Spur brought about 15,000 head of their cattle from around Cheyenne into the Green River Valley in 1882. The Spur Ranch employed many cowboys. The Spur cowboys often enjoyed gambling games in the bunkhouse after a long day of riding.



Cowboys were (and are) vigorous men of skill and daring. Cowboying is hard and dangerous work for men with adventuresome spirits.

Cowboys have always had a lingo of their own. Here are a few examples; Airin' the Lungs- - cussin, Dally-- half-hitch on horn, Flea Trap-- bedroll, Greasy belly-- cook, Gut hooks--spurs, Kack-- a saddle, Maverick-- unbranded calf, Tasting gravel-- thrown from a horse, Gunsel-- anyone not liked. Cowboys had great sayings also. And Cowboys have always been big on having a lot of 'Try'.



James Mickelson

to boss. On fall roundup, the cook, Wm. Wilson, called "Old Tug", would have as many as 40 men to feed, men from as far as Bear Valley and Ft. Bridger came riding for strays.

Prices were good for the cattle that made it through the bad storm years. Numbers were down, grass was abundant and cattle herds were built back quickly. With the railroad to deliver cattle, the cattle business grew. The Green River Valley did not have the bad range wars between large and small cattlemen that you read about in Wyoming History. But for a short time there were a lot of sheep being brought in from Utah to graze in the Wyoming and Windriver mountains in the summer. The ranchers banded together and raided the sheep camps to drive them out before they took over the range.

Some of the early settlers were a bit possessive of the freely used public domain and would get riled up as newcomers moved onto where they had been grazing their cattle. At times men got a bit tough acting and tried to run off new arrivals, but when the newcomer showed their claim the homesteaders would settle down and usually become friends and good neighbors. The fact that there were not yet many barbed-wire fences helped ranchers get along; they would drift their cattle together on the large open range, without the excluding fences. Ranchers had to get used to change as it came along slowly, the land being legally taken up, surveyed and fenced in. And they had to continually depend more upon their own land.

It was in everyone's best interest to get along with one another, to have help with difficult jobs, hard times and lonesomeness. To build a community to everyone's betterment.



The Green River Valley missed the notorious winter of '86- '87, but went through a terrible freezing winter of 1888-89. The death loss throughout the Green River Valley was tremendous. James, like many, lost most of his start, leaving his homestead field scattered with frozen carcasses. Only 800 head of the Spur cattle were rounded up. After gathering survivors, James continued working for the Spur outfit and in 1890 became its foreman. He had around 20



In ranching, it has always been very important to get along with your neighbors. If neighboring ranchers start fighting, it causes a lot of undue trouble. There is no end to the mischief ranchers can cause each other. Pulling deeds like not gathering or watching over each other's stock, not closing gates or keeping up fences makes it hard on everyone. And getting into war over water has been deadly. Smart ranchers truly try to be on good terms with their neighbors, helping each other out makes things run smoother, life easier and the ranch a pleasanter place on which to live.



Wyoming became the 44th State in 1890, barely passing the minimum population of 60,000. But it was the home of over 3,000,000 head of cattle, horses, and sheep. It had great mineral wealth mostly in coal but oil started taking off in the 1880's, not hitting Sublette Co. until after the turn of the century. Grass, water, timber, and wildlife were the rest of Wyoming's assets. Also, there was a bit of tourism.



←James taught himself to write in English. He adopted the American way of spelling Jens Mikkelson and became an American citizen on April 4, 1892 at Evanston, Wyoming. His friends called him Jim.

Still foreman for the Spur, for several years Jim would go to Utah and buy a few cows for himself from several different Mormons, putting a herd together and then trailing them back to Wyoming until Bringham Young put an end to this, saying they needed their cattle. Jim was out trailing a herd in from Utah when he heard that the Otto Leifer place was for sale. Jim knew of Leifers' fine place and was very anxious to get back to Wyoming, hoping for a chance to buy the Circle Ranch.

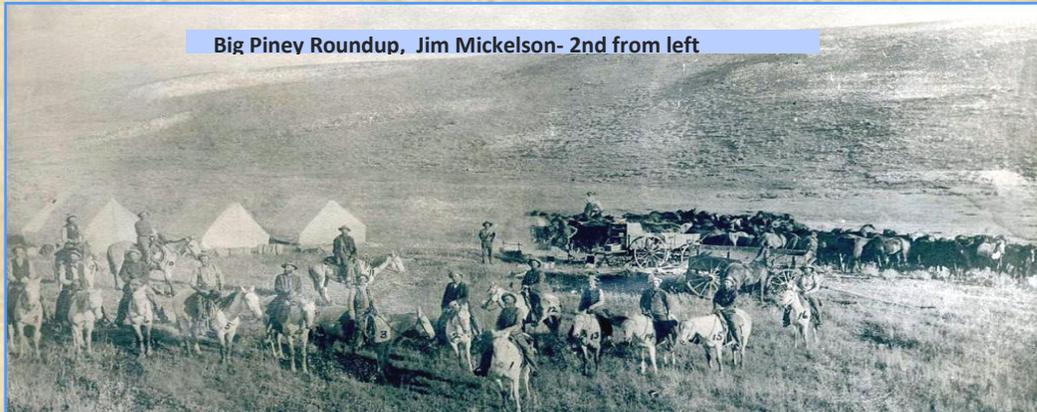
Jim was able to strike a deal. In November 1895, with his savings and a loan from his brother Ras, Jim was able to make the required down payment on Otto Lifers' Circle Ranch of \$14,790.88. He received the ranch, buildings, brand, cattle, horses, wagons, etc.. At this time cattle had great value and in two years James had the Circle paid for, at the total price of \$40,000.

Jim moved to the Circle and for the time being also kept his LaBarge holdings. Rasmus continued to ranch on LaBarge creek. Ras had saved some money from working in the coal mines and whenever he got ahead, he would invest in real estate at Salt Lake City.



There is a story of a gentleman coming by the Circle and speaking to Jim about investing in something or the other. After politely listening, Jim replied in his Danish accent, "I tink I stick with de cows". Stick with them he did and it paid off. He continued to increase his holdings and build up a very fine spread.

Homesteading ranchers increased their land by purchasing from others that gave up, and by their wives and relatives taking up homesteads, or hired men taking up homesteads and then buying them out.



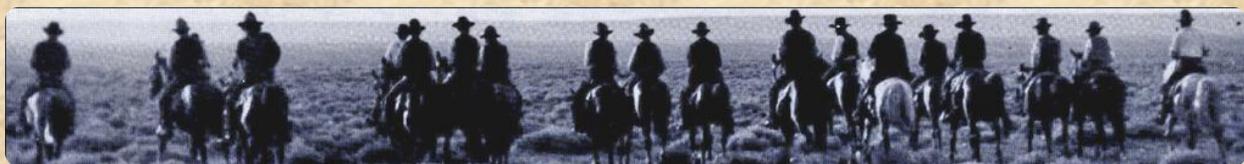
Gordon Mickelson was told that the reason they all rode a white horse on this roundup was so that at night, when raiding a sheep camp, they could see and identify one another.

The cattle business was good and there was plenty of hired help. The ranchers turned their cattle out together on the Roundup Association to make their yearly drift to the desert to calve, then into the Windrivers behind Boulder, back around Cora to the Wyoming Range and onto Big Piney in the late fall. Jim would help the drift hands when they needed him and tend to his ranch with irrigating, haying, making improvements .

These early ranchers were busy creating the beautiful hay fields we have now. They continually cleared the land of sagebrush; using a hand grubbing hoe, hand raking and burning the brush, plowing it with a horse-drawn plow, then harrowing and dragging it with a wooden drag. They then planted the ground with oats and meadow grass. Not only had the winters taught them to store hay for the cattle, open land was steadily being taken up and they needed to rely more on their own ground.



Ed Herschler brought the first mowing machines into the area in the early 1890's. He had four of them shipped on the train to Opal. Ed and his help took sixteen horses down and hooked onto the mowers, riding the mowers all the way back to his ranch on Fontenelle!



In 1899, James, now 33 yrs. old, was looking for a wife to complete his life and ranch. He found a superb lady when he found Mildred Olive Avery. Mildred was born January 1, 1869 in Leon, Iowa. Her father, F.N. Avery, owned a hardware store and was a mortician. Her mother was from a large family of farmers and their home in town was the meeting place for the clan. Mildred went to college at Indianola, Iowa then taught music at Simpson college in Iowa. She was an accomplished pianist with a wonderful voice. Mildred had been betrothed to a young man who sang tenor in operettas with her and sadly died at twenty-one from pneumonia .

Mildred Olive Avery come to Piney to visit her cousin, Jessie, who was married to Frank A. Fear and lived at the Fear ranch (where John Fear lives now). This was in 1889, and one evening they went to the Charles Holden's place (where Will Miller lives now) to socialize. James Mickelson was also a guest. Mildred had heard that the Danish rancher, Jim Mickelson, was looking for a wife, so she ignored him the best she could. When the Fear party were leaving and going to get on their horses, James went to help Mildred as she hurriedly tried mounting her sidesaddle by herself. She caught the horn in the buttoned opening of her jacket and was stuck, needing his assistance. The romance began and they were married on November 30th, 1889 in Leon, Iowa. They returned to Wyoming by train spending several days each at Omaha, Denver and Salt Lake City.

Mildred was tall for that time, 5'8" and slender, James was 5'11" and rather stocky. Jim was just getting over Jaundice at the time of their wedding, he was still gaunt in their wedding photo.



Jim, Mildred, Maxie

→ Mildred taught children music and lessons at the ranch. She became "Millie" to her friends and family. James and Mildred were both very active in community affairs. A community center/ dance hall was built at the Budd settlement around 1892. The Mickelsons enjoyed gala events and worked to improve the community. There was a lot of kinship among the Pioneers. Through their honesty and kindness, Jim and Millie had many dear friends.

Jim and Mildred's first son was stillborn and at Mildred's request, James buried him on the hilltop south of their house so she could easily see across the willows to his grave. This was the start of Big Piney's cemetery. (Mickelsons donated part of the land that the cemetery is on and in later years Jim and Mae Mickelson planted the pine trees in the family plot. The sons, Polly and Gordon, had to carry buckets of water

from South Piney to the top of the hill for years until the trees were established.)

Maxie Mickelson was born in 1901, a beautiful boy. Then their darling son, James Francis, 'Jim', was born on August 20, 1903 (the same year the Wright brothers flew their first plane). Max and Jim were rambunctious, happy boys. They enjoyed the ranch life and their parents took great joy in them.

Once, the young Mickelson boys and their mother, along with her cousin, Stella Budd, and her children returned on the train to Illinois to visit relatives. Two old German men were a few seats in front of them, each had a bottle of beer opened and sitting by their seats. The men dozed off and the boys slipped up and put their thumbs over the bottles and gave them a good shaking, beer squirting all over the old men and surrounding passengers. This all happened before their mothers realized what they were up to, very close eyes were kept on the mischievous little guys for the rest of the trip.

Jim would take Mildred and the boys to Salt Lake City for part of the winter where they had purchased a home near Swans and Leifers. Here he would leave them with a carriage to get around in. From old letters it is determined that Mildred and the boys would get homesick for the ranch and Jim would miss them. But also felt it made the winters easier on Millie and the boys in the warmer climate.



The cattle in the Green River Valley were usually trailed to Opal to ship. Jim would ride with the cattle to the Omaha stock yards. The ranchers would ride on the caboose and check their cattle at every stop. They would sit on benches and dose off when they could and get a bite to eat at Laramie, Scotts Bluff or other stops along the way. At Omaha they would stay a few days to see the cattle sell and collect the funds. This was their pay day of the year. The Union Pacific would give the cattlemen a drovers ticket to ride in a coach on the trip back to Opal where they had left their horses at the Opal stockyard.

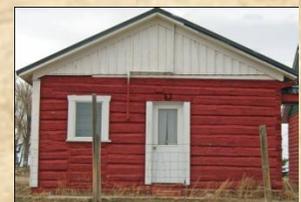
In 1905, James and Mildred had their big ranch house built which is still the Main House on the ranch (remodeled in the 1940's). It had soft yellow wooden clapboard siding and a dark roof. There was a coal room (presently the plant room) and coal furnace, also a wood/coal cooking stove and wood heating stove. There was an indoor bathroom. At some point, the house had electricity supplied by a generator, it also had coal oil lamps throughout the house.

The carpenters and all the materials were shipped from St. Louis Missouri to Opal where James and his help met the train with wagons and hauled the project to the ranch. The carpenters camped on the ranch all summer and built the beautiful home. These Missourians may have built the log cellar, pump house and old buck house, for they were reported in the State archives as also being built in 1905. The larger cabin of Leifers was turned over as the cookhouse where a cook and her family lived and served meals for the men in the buckhouse. (The cooks husband was usually the chore-boy who fed the livestock in the corrals, took care of the chickens and pigs -that also got the leftovers, milked the cows, cared for the bum calves, cleaned the barn, helped with butchering, did repairs around the ranch, etc.)

All this building was a real spruce up on the ranch and reflection of the ranches' success.

Circle Ranch House in Original State - When remodeled in 1940's, the rooms were changed from many small rooms to fewer large ones, the fireplace was built, the wood heating stove was taken out but the old cook stove remained next to a modern one (young Mildred liked cooking on her mother's stove), & the porch taken off . The outside walls were covered in grey wood shingles, and roof in wood shingles (same shingles on roof remain in 2010).

House as built in 1905



Old Buckhouse

Meat House-built 1927 Celler- built 1905 (Pictures taken in 2010) Pumphouse-built 1905

The old bunkhouse was likely built before 1905. It had bunkbeds to accomodate several men and was the main bunkhouse until the newer bigger one was built in the 1940's (boy if those walls could talk!). All the cabins were left unpainted for years. They all had wooden shingle roofs at one time. The celler has an inner and outer wall, both of log, with 2 ft. between. This double insulated wall keeps it cool inside all summer and does not freeze things in the winter unless extremely cold out. Logs absorb heat in the day then at night the warmth is driven inside by the cold, & the opposite during the day.



Built before 1900



Old Meat House



Chicken Coop

The old cabin was either a bunkhouse or a barn, it was built before 1990. The cabin was later used as a pig pen and then for storage. The original meat house had screens over the openings, it was relocated in the 1980's becoming a 'hunting camp' for children.

After the house was built, Mildred went on a big furniture buying spree at Salt Lake City. The banker at the time was Albert Larson, whom Jim had recently recruited. When the check for \$4000 came in, Mr. Larson returned it, not believing that Jim would spend that much on furniture. Oh boy, Jim heard about

that from Mildred, it must have really embarrassed her. Jim told Albert that they had better not return any more of Millie's checks!

Tragedy struck the family with young Max dying on March 5th, 1908 of Scarlett Fever. Jim was cowboying near Cora and upon receiving the sad news of his son's death at 2 am., Jim took off horseback and rode home alone through the snowdrifts, arriving at 6am. - 4 hrs. (told to Gordon M. by Jimmy Jensen who was there)



The Mickelson household was totally distressed over losing their son Max, and Mildred could not seem to get over this, after also losing two infant sons that had died at birth. Though she cherished her little Jim, there was still an emptiness felt.

The Stepp family was working for the Mickelsons at the time; they were the only black people around. Mr. Stepp was a very good, reliable cowboy and Mrs. Stepp was wonderful help in the kitchen and known as a fortune teller. She cheered Millie up by predicting that she was going to have a daughter that would fulfill her life and bring them all joy and happiness. Along came little Mildred on March 20, 1910. Little Mildred's mother was 40 yrs. old, her father was 44yrs. old, and big brother Jim was 6 1/2 yrs. old when Mildred was born. (Mrs. Stepp also told Mildred that she could see oil under the hill near the cemetery - a good sized field was discovered near there in the 1960's, but not in the exact area -perhaps there is more.)



The large horse barn that is still a source of pride on the ranch- pictured here in 2009



The barn was built in 1910 by local craftsmen, a Dane named Nels Christensen and another gentleman thought to be named Brant. Much of it is axed level by hand and it is out of very strong old wood. The metal roof was put on in the 1980's. South of the barn is the old slaughter house which had a hoist (now a horse shed). West of the barn was the milk cow barn (burnt down in late 1970's and replaced with a homestead house moved from the Turtle Ranch of Tobe Hustons on South Beaver).

Up until Jim Mickelson helped establish the Big Piney Bank, he had been the area banker. By financing them, Jim helped many businessmen and ranchers get their start. His biggest boggle in financing was turning down J.C. Penny who came from Kemmerer seeking a loan to open a department store and offering Jim controlling interest; Jim was nervous of this deal as J.C. had gone broke twice before. In Jim's ledgers of loans, some of the names that may still be familiar are Jewetts, Oscar Beck, Jim Jensen, Frank Burney, Curtis, Nobles, Fish, and Springmans. Jim operated on his word and handshake, which you could count on.

Daniel B. Budd's blossoming town was called Big Piney. The entire upper Green river area had been called the Big Piney area because of railroad ties harvested out of the big pines at the tie camps and floated down the river. It is also told that the Indians used to meet by a grove of big pines somewhere around the area. Also, when the Big Piney ranchers rounded up their cattle in the fall they would often meet at the 'Big Pines' to separate them (old John Chrisman said this was just above the Webster Place). Anyway, Daniel B. Budd called his little town Big Piney.

In the early 1900's, Dan B. Budd's son Charlie (he had 6 boys and 1 girl), wanted his Dad to move his town up on the hill out of the soft ground and swamp. It was very hard going for wagons and a mess during many times of the year. Charlie tried to convince his father that the higher ground was superior to found a town. His father would not budge from his homestead, he had already built a few buildings and would have nothing to do with moving. Charlie then moved up on the hill, homesteaded, and founded his own town, Marbleton. Soon there were 2 stores, 2 banks, 2 towns. Big Piney was incorporated in 1912.



Mildreds Pictures of the Ranch Yard

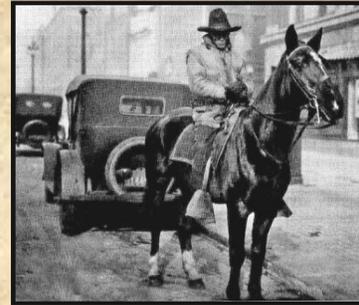


Jim Mickelson Branding

The brother and sister, Jim and Mildred, shared a deep love and strong bond all their lives. They had the same kind spirit and both adored animals and the ranch life. The children went to school in Big Piney, tutored on the ranch for a couple of years and then riding horseback to and from school in town. When it was cold they took a sleigh with hay to snuggle in. The ranch had a nice garden, milk cows, chickens, pigs, sheep, ducks, and of course the cows and horses. The children resembled their father in many physical attributes but had their mother's extra height. They both worked with their father learning about ranching, riding, working cattle, branding and haying. Jim was a strict father but he liked having his children with him. The family was well balanced with the influence of their caring Mother who kept a beautiful home full of music, domestic art and graciousness.

When young Jim Francis Mickelson was 8 or 9 years old he had a bad accident that stuck with him for the rest of his life. It was about dark and after unhitching a team of horses, Jim spanked one on the rump with a lead rope to shoo him out of the barn. The horse kicked him in the head knocking him

unconscious and injuring his face. Jim senior drove him to the doctor at Kemmerer and had quite a time getting there in the dark. They could not get up the hill at Fontenelle and had to back the vehicle up the hill. The doctor could not do much and Jim lost most of the sight in his left eye.



← Jim in front of the Big Piney Post Office

Automobiles made their way to Wyoming around 1905 (not too many until the 1920's & the Model A's & T's). Before they came along, the Pioneers rode to Opal or took the stage that ran through to Opal, there you could hop on a train. Telephones were arriving, by 1907 no place in Wyoming was over 100 miles from a telephone. There were several stills around the country. Jim always kept a wooded barrel of whisky in his basement.

Horses could not be replaced on the ranch; they were used for all the haying, feeding, cowboying, and fencing. The ranch raised many horses that were known for their good quality. Back then, the same horses were used for every job, riding and pulling. Jim brought in Morgan horses which proved to be very versatile, good riding horses and work horses.



Wolves caused a lot of damage to livestock. One morning when Jim took the children out to see the baby colts that had just been weaned, they found 6 dead from wolves and 4 hamstrung. The horns were left on cattle for their protection, dehorning did come along until the wolves were gone. The ranchers and government worked hard at eradicating the wolves, hunting, trapping and then with the government hiring trappers.



Hereford cattle were infused with the original Shorthorns, now the Wyoming herds were predominantly Herefords. No one breed of cattle is best under all circumstances but for the hard conditions when herds were grazed on the open range, Herefords could not be beat for their hardiness and rustling quality. They were the most efficient cow at turning range grass into beef under the undependable adverse climatic conditions on the range. Herefords have an extra layer of fat that makes them dress out superior as grass fed beef, (grass fed beef was all anyone ate before the mid-1930's). Since the bull is 'half the herd', Jim was very choosy in his choice of bulls and built a nice herd of cattle.



The cows were well cared for and never forgotten, for basically, they are what built the ranch even though Jim also made money in financing and investing in Salt Lake City real estate. As Jim and Mildred prospered, they continued to increase the size of the ranch and were very fortunate to have a lot of good ranch help. The men were called 'ranch hands', most of the women help were cooks, though during haying when it took such a big crew, occasionally a woman would join the hands in the field.

Mickelsons were able to buy out several ranchers who wished to retire or gave up their homesteads (small homesteads were hard to make a living on). Adding onto their holdings the two Swan Places, the Fish Ranch, the Nichols Place, the Sykes Place (now belonging to Tim Thompson), the Dunham, the Winkleman Ranches, the Flying V and a few small places.

All of the land around Leifers original ranch, the various homesteads that were added onto it, became known as the Circle Ranch. Something that made it (and still does) a very good ranch is the early water rights attached to the nice hay meadows. The meadows continued to be improved upon and were watered well from the Piney Creeks.

The Mickelsons used the O Circle brand and at times, the C Bar N (a brand Jim had gotten with some cows, Mike remembers it being on a few cows even in the 1960's). A fellow from around Rock Springs told Jim that he was using the O brand in his county and if Jim didn't like it he would have to buy the brand from this fellow. Jim said to heck with that and put the C Bar N on his cattle. It turned out that the fellow never was able to file on the O and Jim went back to using the O Circle as his main brand.

In 1915, James was the largest individual taxpayer in Uinta County which included the present Uinta, Lincoln and Sublette Counties. He was assayed at \$239,144.00, mostly land and cattle.



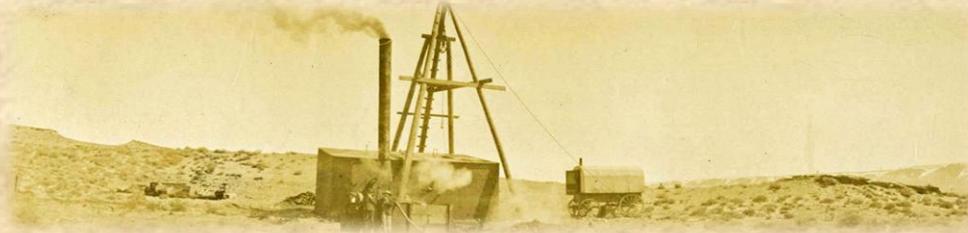
The Big Piney Roundup Association and other small roundup groups around joined and formed the Upper Green River Cattle and Horse Growers Association in 1916. (The name was changed to Upper Green River Cattle Ass. in 1925. It runs 150 miles and is known as the Green River Drift.) Since it is on the National Forest, the Forest Service became involved for its proper management.



The food was very important on a Roundup Association, crews were known to quit over the cooking. A great old Cowboy, Reeves Holcomb, A Virginian that worked on ranches around Wyoming and who had learned to cook in his 40's in WWII (having joined since he had never served his country), had a sign over his wood stove in his little home on the Mule Shoe, it read, 'God sent the food and the Devil sent the Cooks'.

The state flag designed by Mrs. A.C. Keyes of Casper was accepted in 1917. Wyoming's pride kept swelling along with its towns and counties. Also in 1917, the Indian Paint Brush was adopted as the official flower (it is abundant in the Wyoming Range). In 1921 the State Seal was settled upon. The Meadow Lark was approved as the State Bird in 1927 (they often visit the ranch). The likeness of a top-notch bronc rider from Lander, Albert 'Stub' Farlow was put on the license plates in 1936 where it still advertises 'The Cowboy State'.





With the U.S. becoming involved in WWI in 1917, there was great demand for oil. The oil industry in Wyoming boomed and has stayed strong ever since. Beef and horse prices along with other Wyoming products went up as they were needed to help supply the war.

There was a bad flu epidemic that hit the Green River Valley in 1918, claiming many lives. Jim Senior, Millie, and young Mildred all got very sick. Young Jim cared for and doctored his family for 6 weeks.



The Mickelson children loved to go visit their uncle Ras who remained a bachelor at his LaBarge homestead which had a charming creek trickling by not far from the door of his cabin. Ras enjoyed the family and often came up to stay and visit. He would sometimes tell Millie, "you need to spank those kids, but not too hard". Rasmus died of pneumonia at the age of 64, leaving a great deal of property he had invested in at Salt Lake City. Jim sold all of Rasmus' property and sent the money back to the family in Denmark. (Brother, Soren and his wife Andrea had previously returned to Denmark to become a successful merchants.)

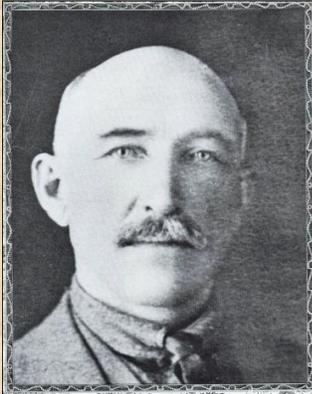
Jim and Mildred were very active in community organizations. They helped form the Big Piney Bank and the Congregational Church, which some of the family still attend. There were not that many people in Big Piney and the sense of civic duty was strong, forming a sturdy and enriching society and town.

Mildred belonged to the Artist Guild (one can find her contributions in its early publications), Twentieth Century Club (a literary & musical club), and the Eastern Star (also its organist). Millie became a Christian Scientist but was still active in the church, people said that she had an inner peace about her. Often entertaining these organizations and friends in her lovely home, she was very hospitable. Millie was thoughtful and kind to those less fortunate than she, Mickelsons had kinships from all walks of life.

Jim was a State Representative in 1916-1917. Jim was chosen Presidential Elector in the Harding election. For 24 years, Jim was in the Masonic Lodge, this meant a lot to him, at first riding horseback 130 miles to Evanston to attend meetings until a closer Lodge was established. (Mickelson Men are still active Masons in Big Piney.) Jim also served on the school board, and as President of the Big Piney Roundup Association. In 1918 he was the President of the Big Piney Bank. (He was also Vice Pres. of the Evanston bank and a director of the Pinedale bank.) Jim was a cowboy, stockman and businessman.



James Mickelson died on his ranch of stomach cancer on September 17, 1921, at the age of 55. Local doctors had diagnosed this with an x-ray and Jim went to John Hopkins in Maryland where he was one of the first people to undergo radiation therapy. He returned and was active up until two weeks before his death when he became terribly weak from his stomach not being able to function properly. He astounded the doctors because he said he had no pain which is generally very severe with his condition.



James Mickelson's obituary reads ..." Mr. Mickelson was a man of astound judgment and of foresight, as his great success in life was attributed to the fact that his plans were always laid in advance and he met everything as it came, whether for good or bad, and taking him all in all he was a wonderful man. He was an up-builder both in the town and country, ever willing to help his neighbor and fellow man. Jim, as he was called by friends and associates was a kind, loving husband and father, a true friend, and he will not only be missed by his family but by a multitude of friends."

The services were at Jim's home on the ranch. It was a very large funeral with the line of cars to the cemetery over a mile long.



At the time of his death, James Mickelson was the largest land and cattle holder in the state with 20,000 acres and 6000 head of cattle. (And probably over 200 horses.)



Haying on the Circle Ranch

Mildred continued to run the expanded Circle Ranch with the help her son Jim and their foreman, Jimmie Jensen. Her deep religious beliefs helped her through her tough times. She was a very competent business woman and carried on Jim's affairs without hesitation.

The 'Booming Twenties' was an era of prosperity and progression. These were the years after WWI. Wyoming, not having the factories that generated great prosperity in much of America did not share in the prosperity as much but did share in the countries progress. The telephone was becoming popular, autos were better and more accessible with the coming out of Model A's and T's. The radio was extremely popular (coming into Wyoming in 1922), and was a large source of entertainment. Motion pictures were greatly enjoyed when visiting the cities. Flappers were the rage and lightened people's hearts. Electricity was reaching more homes and all the many changes that came with it, not only brightening lives but making them easier with electric washing machines, irons, vacuums etc. Canned goods were easily available. The oil boom was well under its way in Wyoming (Casper was the oil capitol of Wyo.) Tourism was also booming in Wyoming and the first cars were bringing visitors to Yellowstone Nat. Park, & Devils Tower (which the great conservationist, President Theodore Roosevelt, had made the first national monument in 1901). There were other attractions as well, like just seeing the open spaces, blue skies and cowboys. 'Dudes' and hunters were coming to dude ranches and hunting camps in the Green River Valley. In 1925 a Wyoming Game and Fish Commission had been

established to protect the wonderful wildlife .

Many Wyoming products needed during the war dropped in demand in the twenties, beef and farm products among them. This was hard on the homesteaders and many of them failed.



In 1928, Mildred married Jimmie Jensen.

James P. Jensen, 'Jimmie', came to Wyoming from Nebraska, though born at Cheyenne in 1882 where his pioneer father had been employed by the Union Pacific Railroad. Jimmie went to school at Omaha Nebraska. Jimmie's mother, Julia was Jim Mickelson's cousin. Jimmie Jensen came out to work for Jim on the ranch when he was 16 years old. He started out cowboying bareback until he could afford a saddle. It was a year later that he ordered one and was so anxious for its arrival that every time the mail went through, Jimmie would go check to see if his saddle had arrived. One day Jim was giving Jimmie a hard time and said that the mail was coming through and if the mailman hadn't brought that saddle he ought to whip him. Jimmie rode down the lane bareback to check and he must have gotten smart with the mailman because Ray Daniels, the mailman had to kick him and send him home with his tail between his legs. His saddle finally came and he made himself a fine cowboy.

Jimmie left the ranch for a while to be a Pioneer Forest Ranger, becoming one of the first rangers from Piney to Jackson. He checked the forest and camped with a pack outfit. The Forest Service wanted to send him to Washington DC to work but Jimmie would not leave Wyoming.



Jimmie homesteaded between Pinedale and Cora (where McAlisters live). He later returned to Jim Mickelson's ranch and became an accomplished rancher and Mickelson's foreman. He took care of the ranch for Jim when he was busy with other things and when Jim became ill. Jimmie was later State Senator on the Democratic ticket, he was a director and vice-president of the State Bank of Big Piney, a Mason, a county commissioner, a member of the school board, and chairman of the Livestock Committee for the Wyoming Livestock Growers Association. Jimmie was recognized as an authority on Livestock.

When Jimmie and Mildred were wed in 1928, Mildred had sold her house in Salt Lake City that they had maintained since the boys were young and she bought a lovely winter home in Glendale, California at 1542 Valley View Road. Jimmie and Mildred often spent part of the winters there.



Mae, Jimmie, Mildred, Jim M. Jr., Bob and Mildred Miller

Jimmie had a Thoroughbred stallion that he crossed on the Morgan mares. (Mildred Miller reports-)
"The colts were beautiful, mostly all sure a bay color and had unlimited stamina. In those days this was

a requirement as there were many miles to travel and cattle to work, without horse trailers or trucks to transport. The sire of these well known horses was 'Zev", a half Morgan and half Thoroughbred horse."

All the bulls on the ranch were now registered Herefords.

Mildred Jr. married Bob Miller in 1931. They leased the Mickelson's Holden Place. (Much more on the Millers in Part III.)



James Frances Mickelson split off from his father and mother's ranch in 1932. He told his Mother that there was she and his sister to have the ranch and he would be happy to separate and start his own place. (Jimmy Jensen was quite spunky and running Millie's ranch.) Jim bought the 67 ranch from P.W. Jenkins who had inherited it from the early pioneer, A.W. Smith. His mother gave him the Sykes place, and part of the Winkleman Place. Jim built on his ranch as his father had on his. The Mickelson's used the O Circle brand which had been Jims fathers though their ranch was known as the 67. He gave his sister the 67 brand when she got married which is still used on the old home place called the Circle. That is how the brands and names got switched.

For a few years, Mildred was tutored at the ranch. A very impressive young woman from Colorado was employed to teach Mildred and another 12 yr. old girl that lived in the cookhouse. Her brother Jim was the lucky cowboy that snared this lovely school marm, Mae Stewart.

Jim and Mae married and had four children, Tharon, Polly, Gordon, and Bette. The first son, James Francis, whom acquired the nick name Polly since when he was little he jabbered like a parrot. Polly was out on the roundup wagon with his father and the cowboys when his appendix ruptured, not knowing what had happened, he wanted to stay on roundup and underplayed his discomfort. By the time Jim got Polly back to town, Doc Looney could do little without modern antibiotics like penicillin and Polly passed away, he was 13 years old.



Polly Tharon Mae&Bette Jim&Gordon

Both girls, Tharon & Bette grew up to be absolutely beautiful, wonderful women, and dear mothers. The youngest son, Gordon, grew up to be a prominent rancher, his father's partner, and well respected man (he served 3 terms as State Legislature, a delegate to the rep. convention, was a lifelong Mason, for 12 yrs. was a U.of Wyo. board of trustee, and served on various other governor appointed committees).

When Jim got older, he and Gordon joined ranches and together in the 1960's and 70's the Circle O Cattle Company (located at the 67 ranch) had around 60,000 acres, 200 horses (draft and riding), 4500 cows and also ran yearlings .

The Mickelson's continued on to have a large and rich family history. (Before Mildred died she told her grandson Gordon that since he was the last of the Mickelson surname, he should have 5 sons to carry on the name, he had 4 sons and 3 daughters.) Jim and Mae had 14 grand children.

Jim Jr. →



For Mildred's 9th through the 12th grades, Millie moved to Salt Lake in the winter for Mildred to attend the Rowland Hall School for Girls. Then Mildred went onto the University of Utah for a year.

Millie and Mildred traveled throughout the U.S. and Canada. They embarked upon a World Cruise together in 1929 but Millie got terribly sea sick and had to get off early in the journey. Mildred continued this tour of many foreign countries. She enjoyed this trip a great deal, seeing different countries and cultures, keeping a scrapbook that indicates the great time she had. Still she was ready to come home: nothing beat being on the ranch to young Mildred.



Mildred Avery Mickelson died on August 24, 1943, at Kemmerer, with what began as a throat ailment. She was 74 years old.

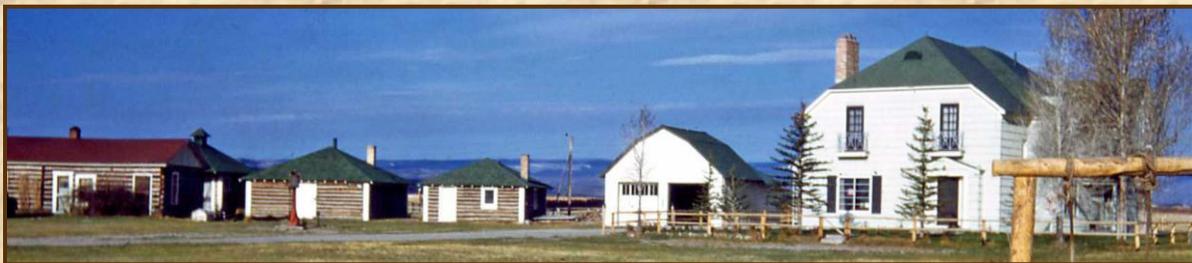
Mildred was a loved and well respected woman, her obituary reads "Her social life was of the highest character, living in all life which is above reproach, a lovely woman, beloved wife and mother, and true friend and neighbor, who has helped make this world better in that she lived for the good of others as well as for herself and family.

James P. Jensen died March 6, 1969, he had remarried to Anna May Hicks. After Mildred's death, Jimmie bought the Muleshoe and ranched on it. He also spent quite a bit of time at Cheyenne with politics. James P. Jensen was a very well known and well liked man in Wyoming.

This had been an extraordinary era for Miller Land and Livestock. Under the Jim Mickelson management, the Circle Ranch had grown into a very fine and large outfit. There was a lot of obtainable ranch land that could eventually be paid off with running cattle. There was plenty of hired help that worked very hard. Jim and Mildred had lived through a great time for cattle ranching and saw many changes. They were well remembered and able to leave a great legacy for their descendents.



Coming Next- Bob and Mildred Miller- Circle Ranch expands to Miller Land & Livestock



How Ranch looked
in 1950 - logs not
painted, notice red
gas pump out front