

# John Middleton:

**"The most desperate looking man I ever set eyes on"**

**By Mike Tower**

John Middleton, once a comrade of the infamous Billy the Kid out New Mexico way, was also a part of the ranching drama on the plains of Kansas. Not much has been written on that part of his life probably because the Colcord family, his old south aristocracy in-laws, avoided providing information to early historians as they believed the man was little more than blight on the family name—a fact born out by Charles Colcord's refusal to name Middleton in the final version of his autobiography.<sup>1</sup> On the face of it, this censure of Middleton seems to be somewhat harsh. But was it? After all, even now very little is known about the man above a description of a beefy, dark complexioned, black eyed and haired, 23 year old sporting a huge black mustache.<sup>2</sup> And, what little is known of his character is also a mixed bag.

John Henry Tunstall wrote his parents that: *"Middleton is about the most desperate looking man I ever set eyes on (and that is not saying a little.) I could fancy him doing anything ruffianly that I ever heard of, that is from his appearance, but he is mild and composed as any man can be, but his arms are never out of his reach...."* A later mention in the same letter credits Middleton with being the primary factor assuring the return of cattle illegally removed by the Casey family. Tunstall also described how Middleton's truculent manner was sufficient to bluff a band of outlaws. These images make it obvious Tunstall considered Middleton to be mature, decisive, possessed of good crisis judgment, and capable of command—what one would call a 'steady hand.'



**John W. "Jack" Middleton, late 1920s**  
(Mike Tower Collection)

And, Tunstall's confidence in Middleton was not misplaced, for when Tunstall was shot to death in February, 1878, Richard Brewer, Tunstall's highly praised foreman and bosom buddy Rob Widenmann fully aware that men with few morals and little sense were in pursuit, were not standing by to protect Tunstall. Instead, they were a half mile away hunting turkey. Nor was the teenaged sociopath, Billy the Kid looking out for his boss; he was too busy saving his own hide. Middleton alone made an effort to save the doomed Brit and his affidavit regarding the moments before the shooting portrays a man ridden with guilt. *"...Tunstall and I were on the side of a hill about 700 yards from some horses we were bringing from the Feliz ranch to Lincoln... I was within 30 steps of Tunstall when we heard the shooting first. I sung out to Tunstall to follow me. He was on a good horse; he appeared to be very much excited and confused. I kept singing out to him, "For God's sake follow me..."*

On the other hand, Middleton had a darker side, dramatically highlighted when he was one of a posse which pursued, caught, and executed Billy Morton and William Baker. These men were known to be part of the group which killed John Tunstall, but they were also men who trusted Middleton and considered him a friend. In addition, when the posse exacted revenge, a posse member named William McClosky, another man known by Middleton, may have also been executed by the posse. Middleton's role in the affair seems to be marginal as he is not specifically named as shooting any of the victims. However, he did not disassociate himself with the posse, as one would expect were he upset with their actions. Instead, he held to the party line that the prisoners were killed trying to escape and that McClosky was killed by the prisoners in their escape. Therefore, his participation may not have been as passive as most contend.

That Middleton was capable of viciousness is verified by his participation in the April 1, 1878 premeditated assassination of Sheriff William Brady and Deputy George Hindemann. Yet, while the actual mechanics of that ambush are contemptible, Middleton can be admired for exhibiting a cool courage during the street fighting which followed. An act told by the Rev. Taylor F. Ealy illustrates: "... *John Middleton, while riding away, deliberately got off his horse and took rest upon his knee, and fired back at a crowd which was firing at him and his companions.*"<sup>3</sup>

These metaphors, not quite damning evidence of a flawed character, do reveal a man full of contradictions. Therefore, it's possible something more was in play, and, as will be seen later, that extra something may be that Middleton was a mean drunk. And, if that characterization is accurate, the Colcord bias may have some foundation in fact.

No one knows exactly when or why Middleton wandered into Lincoln County. Many hold that he worked the Texas Cattle trails and arrived in Lincoln County in 1872 as a fugitive after having shot a man in Bastrop County, Texas. However, the earliest the man can be factually placed in New Mexico is by his own statement that he began working for Tunstall in October, 1877.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the evidence seems to refute the drifting cowboy folklore because former regulator Frank Coe, in two interviews, was clear in stating that Middleton arrived from Kansas.<sup>5</sup> Supporting the Kansas origin is that prior to his arrival in Lincoln, Middleton had supposedly been employed by a cattle firm known on the Kansas plains as Hunter, Evans and Evans with the second listed Evans being Jesse Evans, a nephew of senior partner Albert G. Evans. And, although these men generally worked together; each of had independent operations. Therefore, a strong case can be made that Middleton worked for Jesse Evans, rather than the parent company.<sup>6</sup>

Jesse Evans, originally from North Carolina, was a short, ambition driven man who at an early age got involved in the cattle trade in North Texas and New Mexico.<sup>7</sup> His ascension in that business was phenomenal, for by 1870, while still only 17, he was running cattle under his own brand in south central Kansas.<sup>8</sup> Jesse's marketing plan was to push cheaply bought Texas cattle into Kansas where he held them on open range until the market rose. Then he sold the fattened animals at premium prices. Within three years, was wintering a herd of 800, the base asset for what would become a permanent ranch.<sup>9</sup> Over the next four years Evans parlayed his gains into a sizeable holding.

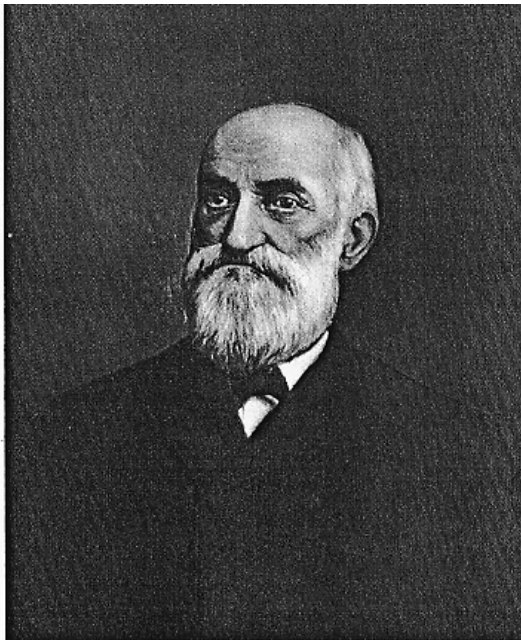
Middleton may have begun his relationship with Evans through the seasonal employment of the drover end of this business. Or, since Evans kept a permanent camp, he may have come on-board as a permanent ranch hand. The simple truth is that his position and relationship with Evans is not clear, but the confidence Middleton expressed when mentioning Evans in later events transcends that of casual feelings and is suggestive of steady employment.

Another possibility for their connection is that Middleton may have been part of the fifty man crew Evans hired to remove the first herd of Chisum cattle obtained when the Hunter-Evans group bought, or as some believe, swindled Chisum out of his herd in 1875.<sup>10</sup> Supporting this possibility is that many of the Hunter-Evans paid warriors later defected from the project to join either the McSween or Dolan factions.<sup>11</sup> With those facts in mind, it is possible Frank Coe may have been working from flawed perception when he speculated Middleton was one of a group of men who were sent to Lincoln by Chisum. One has to remember that the removal of the Chisum cattle took several years. So, even though Chisum's Jingle Bob cowboys were moving cows around, technically, the animals belonged not to Chisum, but to the firm of Hunter, Evans and Evans Company who also had riders in the field. And, to the outsider, distinctions such as to which stockman a particular begrimed cowhand owed fidelity was often hard to ascertain.

At the same time the cattle were being located and moved out, rustlers, supposedly orchestrated by Jimmy Dolan and partners of Lincoln, were stealing as many of the floppy eared critters as they could find. Middleton may have come to Lincoln to find the culprits behind the thefts as a representative, not of Chisum, but of the fiery Jesse Evans. Furthermore, if Middleton was an operative, he may have tried to inveigle his way into one of the Dolan cow camps. This hypothesis would explain the suspicion that Middleton may have worked for the House in some capacity before joining Tunstall—a notion which arose from claims made by the rustler Billy Morton, just before he was executed, that he had no fear of Middleton because the man was a friend.<sup>12</sup>

Supporting the theory that Middleton had an association with rancher Jesse Evans is a mysterious letter Middleton wrote from the Bosque Grande ranch dated August 30, 1878. In the body of the letter, written at a time when the war was winding down, was the cryptic passage... *“Old Uncle Jesse Evans is doing all he can for us. This, say nothing about whatever you do.”* This phraseology has perplexed writers for years; however, if one views the passage with the understanding that Middleton was a cattle detective for Jesse, it begins to make sense.

Whatever Middleton's status, the New Mexico conflict was a fiasco for the fracas ended in a stalemate. The whole thing simply stopped in 1878 when according to George Coe *“About the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, all of us that got out went to Fort Sumner. There we parted...”* Middleton was named as being in the company of survivors who made the journey.<sup>13</sup> Then, on September 1<sup>st</sup>, the Fritz Ranch below Lincoln was hit by members of the Regulator group. Fifteen horses and 150 head of cattle were driven off. Most sources have Middleton in the neighborhood when this theft occurred as a part of a company assisting in moving the Scurlock and Bowdre families to Ft. Sumner. Those events marked the end of Middleton's activities in Lincoln County.



**W. R. and Maria E. Colcord**  
(Mike Tower Collection)

During the winter of 1877/78, several events were in motion in Kansas which would have a direct bearing on Middleton's future. The most important was that Jesse Evans was sufficiently fixed to move his family from Texas and devote more time to his Kansas operation. He was also in a position to team his fortunes with another ambition driven stockman, William Rogers Colcord,<sup>14</sup> a man destined to become the future father-in-law of John Middleton.

The Colcord family migrations leading them from Kentucky to Kansas began during the Civil War. An officer for the Confederacy, Colcord, for their safety and his convenience, moved his wife and children to Georgia and then New Orleans. After the war, Colcord decided to not return to Kentucky and sold his

interest in the family farm to his brother, using the resultant capital to purchase a sugar plantation north of the "Big Easy." Colcord's eldest son, Charley, then about ten years of age, began suffering from malaria which the family believed was a reaction to the climate. The elder Colcord, determined to provide his son relief, contacted Charles Sanders, a family friend who owned a ranch near Corpus Christi, Texas and in 1869, sent Charley to live there.

Once he hit Texas, Charles Colcord was about as manageable as a calf on ice, a fact his father discovered in 1873, when the elder Colcord opened a ranch near Corpus to raise horses. W. R. found his son, having experienced freedom, refused to bend to his father's domination. To prove the point, Charley defiantly ran away to work as a cowboy, an employment choice which indirectly led to the family's move to Kansas.

Although still a teen in 1875, Charley was sent by his employer on a cattle drive to Baxter Springs, Arkansas. This was followed by a buffalo hunt on the western prairies where the boy learned of a severe need for horses in Central Kansas and, on his return, informed his father of this marketing possibility.

The following year, W. R. teamed with Hines Clark to trail 1200 mares, managed by a half dozen riders, including Charley, north to pens in the Cherokee Outlet. As raw and untamed as the new country was, W. R. liked the prairie lands so much that according to Charley: *"In the fall of 1877, father moved the rest of the family up from Texas and we built three or four fine big dugouts for them... near the mouth of Red Fork, about five miles from the head of Jug Mott Creek, three miles from Evansville, and about twenty-five miles southeast of ... where Coldwater, Kansas was afterward built."*

Charley went on to say that the Colcord home was a string of good-sized rooms about five feet deep in the side of a hill, open at the down hill end. Two or three tiers of cedar logs were placed atop for a roof. At the open end, which was closed logs, were a door and window with real glass in the windows. At the other end, a fire place. The interior, dirt walls and log walls were plastered with burnt gypsum. According to Charley's way of thinking the line of dugout rooms was considered a very fine house. It certainly must have been comfortable for the family lived in these rooms for the next several years.

At some point, the senior Colcord combined forces with R. C. Campbell, Bob Campbell, Billy Carter and Frank Thornton in an outfit called the Jug Cattle Company with Charley Colcord employed as range boss.<sup>15</sup>



**The "Jug" Branding Iron, mark of the Jug Cattle Company (Tower Collection)**

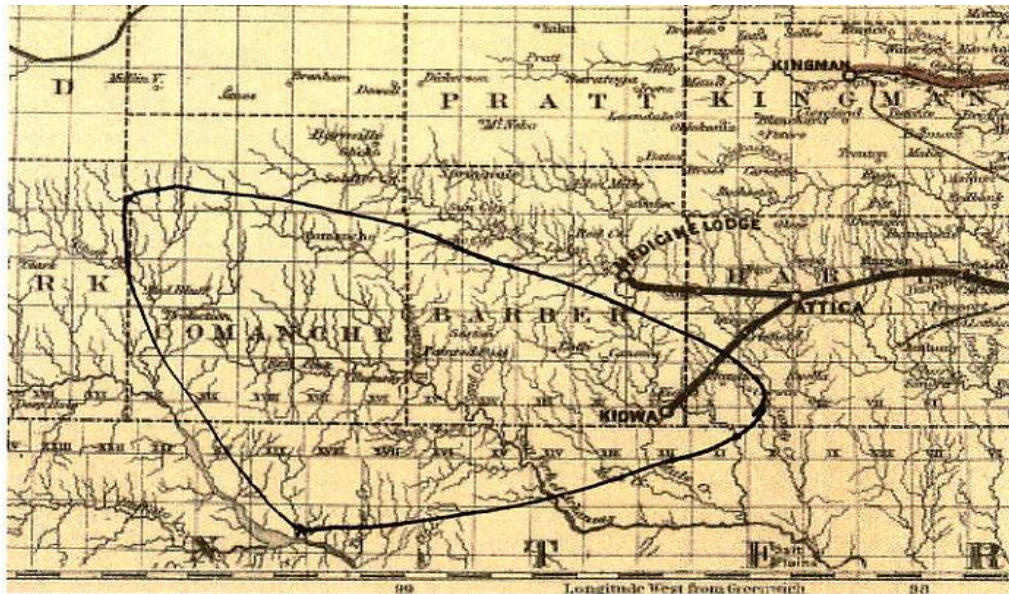
The same fall the Colcord family arrived, Jesse Evans and Major E. B. Kirk returned from Texas with a herd of cattle. While driving the cattle to pasture they discovered the Colcord set up along Spring Creek. The men naturally got together to decide how they were going to work out as neighbors. The upshot of their discussions was a decision to pool outfits, with the thought that by doing so, everyone could make more money. An agreement was reached and a partnership formed. Other ranchers and



cattle companies in the area heard of the venture and tossed their collective hats into the ring and the conglomerate ranch which came to be called the Comanche Pool was born.

Probably one of the first corporate ranches in the southwest, the Comanche Pool was started with one great common herd of 26,000 head of cattle. It was located on a range of approximately 75 miles square between Big Mule Creek on the north and the Cimarron River on the South. The east line was the beginning of Major Drum's spread located between the Medicine Lodge and Salt Fork of the Arkansas Rivers. The west line ran from the mouth of Buffalo Creek on the Cimarron north to the head waters of Big Mule Creek, near Coldwater, Kansas. A headquarters, called Evansville,<sup>16</sup> was located in the rolling hills 28 miles southwest of Medicine Lodge, Kansas.<sup>17</sup>

Over time, other ranchers joined and by 1881 the pool had 15 members including: Col. Albert G. Evans,<sup>18</sup> Robert G. Hunter,<sup>19</sup> Wylie Payne,<sup>20</sup> Richard Phillips,<sup>21</sup> W. E. Campbell,<sup>22</sup> and Major Andrew Drum.<sup>23</sup> A board of directors was formed with Payne as the treasurer and Drum as the commissary for supplies outfitting the Pool's three principal camps. Expenses and profits of the organization were decided by direct proportion to the number of cattle an individual owned as compared to the whole. Billy Blair was given the task of general foreman, and a Mr. Sampson was the bookkeeper who drew up balance sheets every six months. The Pool grew to control nearly 11,000 acres and within a few years of inception, was running a herd of over 400 saddle horses and shipping over 20,000 beeves to various markets annually. According to Charles Colcord, the sheer scope of operations staggered the imagination.... *"This Comanche Pool was the biggest outfit anywhere. It had from sixty to eighty thousand head of cattle belonging to the various pool members, which ran all over the country; in our annual roundup we used to come as far south as Sacred Heart Mission on the Little River, (near present Shawnee, Oklahoma,) sometimes even to the Red River, ...west as far as the west end of the (Oklahoma/ Texas) Panhandle."*<sup>24</sup>



**The area circled is the approximate area used by the Comanche Pool**

It was on a round up that Colcord first saw the man who would become his future brother in law. According to Colcord, he was in the Texas panhandle when Billy the Kid arrived with some other New Mexico cowboys.<sup>25</sup> Colcord does not mention Middleton specifically as being among the riders. However, it's known that in October, 1878, Middleton accompanied the Kid, Fred Waite, Henry Brown, and Tom O'Folliard, as they drove a band of stolen horses to the raw prairie community of Tascosa, Texas to sell. It's also known the Texas ranchers informed the outlaws they had not asked for horses, did not need horses, and would not buy stolen horses. Consequently, the small band idled away its time peddling ponies to strangers, drinking, dancing, and getting on each other's nerves.

A description of Middleton during his stay in Tascosa was preserved by Dr. Henry F. Hoyt,<sup>26</sup> a young man making his way there as a part time mail carrier, part time cowboy, and part time physician. According to Hoyt,

*"Middleton was drinking heavily one day at Howard & McMaster's store when he began to get ugly, evidently looking for trouble. Others present were in a similar condition and it began to look squally... In this particular instance old John seemed to be taking the initiative, profanely and vociferously declaring to the world just what a very bad man he was. He had his hand on his gun and during his boasts glared fiercely around hoping some one would give him the slightest excuse to begin hostilities. Just at this juncture in walked Billy the Kid, in a mild voice that contained, however, a curious note of challenge as well as command, said, "John Middleton, you damned idiot, light out for camp and stay there till I come."*

*Wheeling toward him, Middleton, his eyes flashing, replied, "Billy, you'd never talk that way to me if we were alone. You think you're showing off."*

*"If that's the way you think just come with me out behind the store and we will be alone," was Billy's quick reply, as he backed toward the door, hand on his gun.*

*Middleton's face turned an ashen color, his lower lip dropped, and with a sickly grin he stuttered out, "Aw, Billy, come off, can't you take a joke?"*

*"You bet I can," said Billy, "but this is no joke. You heard me. Get for camp and get quick." And old John shuffled out the door like a whipped dog.<sup>27</sup>*

It's obvious from Hoyt's depiction of this incident that he had a boyish, hero worship for the Kid; however, there are other interpretations of this event than the one placed on it for Middleton was not a man to back down from anyone. Loss of blood to the face and the dropping of the lower lip are also expressions of anger in some men. It's possible that Middleton's chiding Billy about showing off should be taken as a literal rebuke. And, as to Middleton's last comment about his challenge being a joke—one has to consider that Middleton had tried to find a graceful way out of shooting a comrade in arms, but, when faced with no choice other than to shoot or leave; Middleton left. Such is not cowardice, but the exercising of mature judgment.



**James McMaster's store in Old Tascosa.**

**McMasters is standing at the post in the center.**

**l-r with horses: LS cowboys Tobe Robinson and Frank Valley**

Middleton's capitulation, however, was not the end of this incident, for within a matter of days the group solidarity evaporated. The Kid expressed a desire to return to New Mexico to steal his enemies'

blind and urged the others to follow his lead. Tom O'Folliard supported Billy. However, Fred Waite, who along with Middleton had been a part of Tunstall's original crew, was tired of the privation. Waite informed the group he was returning to the Chickasaw Nation in Indian Territory where he had family, land, and position. Middleton, who had maintained contact with his former employer, Jesse Evans,<sup>28</sup> decided he would rather return to Kansas to work as a cow hand than become a minion to a sociopathic child bandit. Henry Brown also declined.<sup>29</sup>

In 1879, Charley Colcord's camp was located at the juncture of Buffalo Creek and the Cimarron River in the Cherokee Outlet. In the draft of his biographical manuscript Colcord records: *"Henry Brown... and with him, John Middleton, perhaps the worst and most blood thirsty of the Kid's gang, came in with another (Chisum) herd. Brown was sick and Middleton was still suffering from a bullet wound through his chest... and they stayed at my camp for several weeks."*<sup>30</sup>

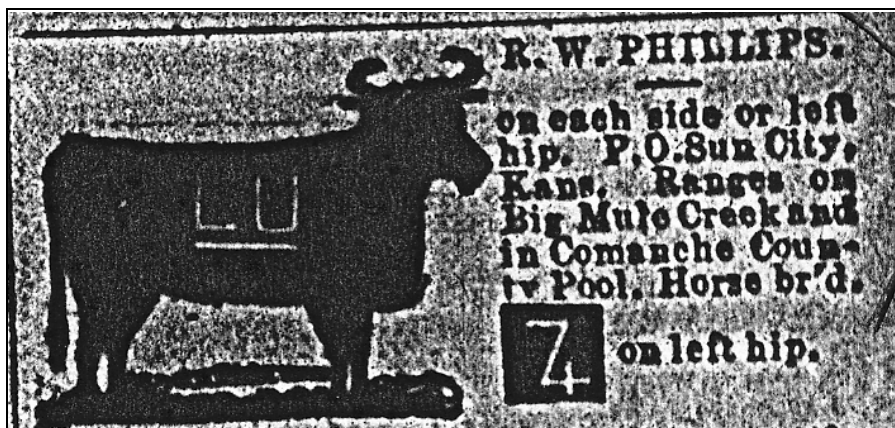
The wound referred to occurred when Frank Coe, a Regulator, and William Roberts, a member of the Dolan forces, were sitting on the steps of the Indian Agency office at Blazer's Mills talking about why it would be a good idea if Roberts rode away fast rather than attempt to collect a sizeable reward placed on the Regulator's heads. Then, when a trio of regulators attempted to disarm Roberts, he, instead of surrendering, began a rapid fire with his carbine which Coe claims was the fastest shooting with a rifle he had ever seen. According to Coe, *"...Middleton appeared... and it looked like Roberts hit him just above the heart. The bullet went through at an angle and nearly reached the hollow..."* Although this wound was promptly treated by the Fort Stanton post surgeon, Middleton suffered lingering affects for years.<sup>31</sup>

The best information on Middleton's activities in Kansas comes from correspondence conducted with J. P. Tunstall, the father of John Tunstall, between June, 1879 and February, 1881.

The first letter gave Middleton's post office as "Sun City," a community along the northern reaches of Barber County, Kansas. In it, Middleton tells the elder Tunstall that he expected to be in Sun City for the rest of the year as he had received some money from Jesse Evans and had opened a small grocery.

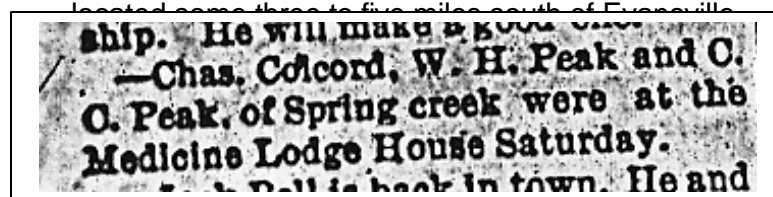
It seems Middleton tried to glamorize the next two letters with exotic place names. Dated September and October, 1879, and addressed "Mule Creek" and "Spring Ranch," each missive contained a post script telling Mr. Tunstall that the postal address was still Sun City. In the letters, Middleton tells Tunstall that he intends to get married, but fails to mention his intended's name. However it's known that the girl was 15 year old Maria H. "Birdie" Colcord. Charles Colcord provided a motivation for the marriage in the draft of his biography by writing: *"Middleton was a handsome, magnetic kind of fellow, and my sister fell in love with him and married him."*

After reviewing period maps to see if the locations mentioned were actual communities near the Comanche Pool, it was found Mule Creek was probably near or at the ranch of pool member R. W. Phillips along a creek of the same name.



1883 brand advertisement for R. W. Phillips giving location of ranch

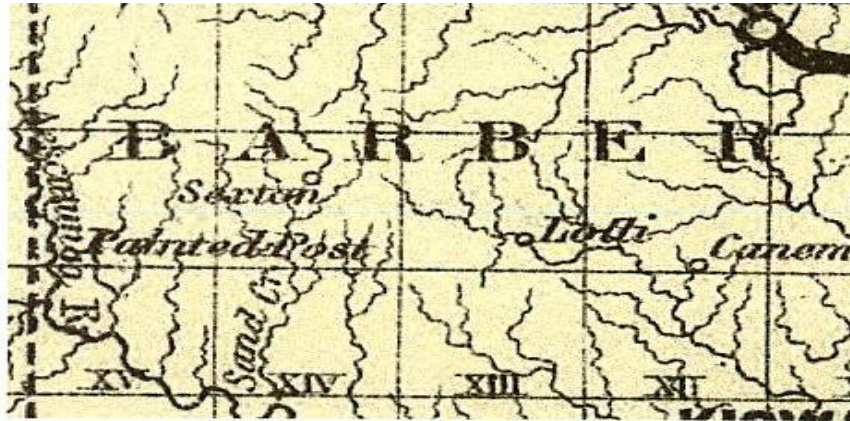
A news item from the 1883 Medicine Lodge Cresset verifies that Spring Ranch is the Colcord home place.





Between January, 1880 and October, 1881, Middleton wrote four more letters from a location given as Rancho Grande. Since such a place can't be located, the title may be an aggrandized synonym employed by cowboys working for the Comanche Pool. But, as the first letter had a post script to direct return mail to Painted Post, it is assumed Middleton was living near there.

Painted Post was a real community and is a community located by the enlarged 1886 map section below on the border between Comanche and Barber Counties, smack in the middle of the Comanche Pool.



In the first Rancho Grande letter, written in January, 1880, Middleton informed Tunstall he had married on December 18, 1879, and thanked Tunstall for a bridal present. He advised him that he was staying with his mother-in-law. Then, after filling Tunstall in on the latest gossip regarding Lincoln County, Middleton complained that Jesse Evans' assistance turned out to be a short term loan. And, that paying Evans back had left him in a tough strait. In the next letter written sometime in February or March, 1880, Middleton elaborated on his troubled financial status by explaining he had spent his last \$40 on leaving New Mexico to purchase a gun for one of the men still there. Middleton then recounted how he had saved Jesse Evans' horses from bandits while Evans was on a buying trip to New Mexico. Evans, he said, had promised him a reward for his assistance. Upon his return, Middleton approached the rancher who gave him \$300 in goods which he used to open a grocery in Sun City. Later, when Evans demanded payment for what Middleton had thought a loan, Middleton was left without a cent, and was living on the charity of his new in-laws. Middleton then asked Tunstall for help. The third letter from Rancho Grande, written in April, 1880 is a complaint that Middleton had not heard from Tunstall since January. The letter following was written in June, 1880, and made no pretense of being informative; it was a flat statement of what Middleton felt the Tunstall estate owed him. By October, 1880, the date of the next letter, Middleton had apparently had enough of living with his in-laws and was back on the range, working cattle for Hunter and Evans at \$25 a month, and was *"so far from any place that I scarcely ever see anyone..."*

As one can see, most of Middleton's letters were attempts to get the elder Tunstall to advance him money.<sup>32</sup> However, before judging Middleton too harshly, it should be pointed out that poverty and unemployment caused by ill health, coupled with the worries of a new bride and living in the home of in-laws who despised him, has been grounds for lesser men to seek relief.<sup>33</sup>

The last Tunstall letter was written by Middleton in February, 1881, from Evansville, the headquarters for the Comanche Pool ranch.<sup>34</sup> The tone and content of this communiqué was less self centered and more focused on normal news and events, including the fact that he was still married, indicating that his life and humor was better.<sup>35</sup> However, the Colcord family considered Middleton shiftless and uncouth. They did not hide their bitter opposition to the marriage; consequently the union did not endure.<sup>36</sup>

Middleton's history gets lost after the winter of 1881 with the traditional theme being he was a cowboy for the Hunter-Evans firm for several years. The problem with that is that he was not in good physical condition. If he was a cowhand, he would have had to rely on an employer who would take that into consideration. It's certain he was not working for Jesse Evans for the affair with the loan had ended that relationship on a sour note. And, too, Evans ended his association with the Comanche Pool in the



summer of 1882 by selling his cattle and interests the Evansville Merchandise Store to devote his entire energies to a commission house associated with the Kansas City Stock Yards. One possible employer was Emil Joe Bowers, who had a tenuous connection to the Regulators and was one of the range bosses for Hunter & Evans.<sup>37</sup>



From  
Medicine Lodge Cresset  
1883

The early years of the 1880's were deceptively successful for the western cattle business. Prices remained high and buyers were plentiful. The members of the Comanche Pool optimistically continued building its herd. Then in the spring of 1885, managers reported the range overstocked, hinting that the available pasture would not carry the numbers through another season. To make matters worse, the Federal Government ordered cattlemen to remove their herds from the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reserve in the Indian Territory. Hunter and Evans were among those forced to move out of the Territory and of necessity many of their cattle were trailed to Kansas; a move which forced more cattle onto the overcrowded range.<sup>38</sup> By the fall of 1885, the Pool cattle numbered nearly 84,000 head, far more than the range could successfully support. But as prices were high, members were disinclined to reduce their volume.

Then the terrible blizzards of winter struck. Cattle drifting before the wind came to the fences erected to mark the ranch boundaries and piled up; snow sifted and drifted around them, freezing entire herds standing in place. Livestock losses were severe, but Pool members decided a reduction of numbers was a good thing and looked forward to expected profits the coming year. Unfortunately, 1886 was not a good year either. The summer was unusually dry, with grass scant and poor in nutrients, and the already gaunt cattle did not gain sufficient weight for marketing. The Pool members made another mistake by holding most of the herds over for another year. A fall with only light rains and a winter even more severe than the year before hit the plains.

The Pool was devastated by this double whammy; nearly 85 percent of the herd died during the 18 month period described, reducing Pool assets to a mere 13,000 head. The small ranchers were completely wiped out, and many of the larger owners, including Hunter and Evans, moved their operations to Montana, Colorado, or Indian Territory. Frank King, the last foreman, drove the last surviving Pool cattle to lease land in the Cherokee Strip.<sup>39</sup> The Colcord family, much to their disadvantage, continued with the Pool until its collapse.

Although W. R. Colcord had to scale back, he survived the passing of the Comanche Pool partly because of the good management principle of not having all one's eggs in a single basket. According to Charley, his father bought a ranch in southern Kingman County, Kansas, and stocked it with high grade and thoroughbred cattle from which he raised bulls for range herds below.<sup>40</sup> Charley, and his brother, William, however, were less fortunate, and were required to leave Kansas in 1885 to take over management of a ranch in Arizona. The following year the brothers were joined by their mother, younger brother and sister. From this statement, it can be concluded that John Middleton's marriage to Birdie Colcord was over and that Middleton played no role in the subsequent history of the Colcord family.

In 1889, the Colcord family was a part of the Oklahoma land run. Charley and his father settled first in present Oklahoma City. Then, in 1893, Charley made the Cherokee Strip run, settling in Perry. In both places he was a respected deputy U. S. Marshal. Later, Charley got involved in the Oklahoma petroleum industry, wildcatting fields near Cromwell. He became fabulously wealthy, influential, and esteemed, not because of his wealth, but because of his strength of character and his role in founding the state. On the other hand, Colcord's former brother in law, John Middleton, disappeared from the drama of the plains.



**Famous Deputies at Perry, Oklahoma Land Office**  
**Fourth man from left, Charles Colcord – Fifth man from left, Bill Tilghman**  
**Last man standing on front row right, Heck Thomas**  
 (Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma)

As to the demise of Middleton, several theories have been advanced. The first is a half baked idea that he was one of the consorts of the infamous female outlaw Belle Starr and that he was shot and killed by a jealous Henry Starr way down in Indian Territory. But, there is no direct evidence and the whole idea simply rings hollow on examination. A probability advanced by Robert Utley is that Middleton died in 1885 from the effects of the wound received at Blazer's Mill. But, the explanation does not state where that death occurred or who claimed it to be true. The last theory, first authored by Maurice Fulton, claims W. M. Cavanaugh of Fort Sumner related that Middleton went to old Tascosa, but left there in the spring of 1884 or 1885 and that he died of smallpox about forty miles west.<sup>41</sup> But, Cavanaugh has been wrong in other claims he made. Author Frederick Nolan affixes the location of the smallpox death as San Lorenzo New Mexico, and the date as November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1882. Unfortunately, none of the 30 graves in the cemetery at San Lorenzo bear a legible name; so it is impossible to verify this story.

Nolan also adds a bit of macabre humor by giving the rumor that before he died Middleton confessed to killing a black man at Jim Weaver's Ranch in Bastrop County, Texas, and invited anyone interested in claiming the \$1200 reward to take his body back there for identification.<sup>42</sup> Nolan's assertion that Middleton was a wanted man is not the first hint of that status as an anonymous letter in the April 20, 1878 *The New Mexican*, maligning some of Tunstall's supporters, accuses Middleton of being an escaped jailbird from Texas. Interestingly enough, in 1873 in Bastrop County, Texas, a *Charles Middleton* was bound over on a bond of \$2,000 on the charge of murder, and though pending in December, 1873, the case was not carried forward on the published docket.<sup>43</sup>

The last speculation as to John's fate comes from the modern extended Middleton clan. Even though none have panned out, several branches have oral traditions that their John Middleton is the dude who rode with Billy the Kid. The latest, authored by Don Middleton, is that his grandfather John Whitfield Middleton, who was born in 1850 and died in 1941, was involved in the New Mexico range war.

While it's true that his great grandfather John Washington Middleton was a principle figure in the Regulator-Moderator War of Texas, the leading authority on Middleton's in America states emphatically that John Whitfield Middleton was not the Kid's bud due to the birth dates of his children.<sup>44</sup> And that brings us to the purely speculative.

Deductive reasoning holds that when all other options have been examined and discarded, that which is left is the most likely answer—regardless of how improbable it might appear. Therefore, having found the above theories on Middleton's outcome as too vague to be credible, this writer decided to explore a line of evidence hinting John may have died of old age as a solid, respected citizen.

That trail is centered on Middleton's occupation as herder or cowboy. It's known from the letters he wrote that in 1881 John was working for Hunter and Evans and receiving his mail at Evansville, headquarters for the Comanche Pool. But, shortly after, he drops off the map and most assume by their inability to find mention of him that he left the area. But, what if Middleton stayed; perhaps under an alias?

Although, most have dismissed the misnomer as a common nickname for John, J. P. Tunstall, in letters to Sam Corbet, referred to Middleton as "Jack." Tom Dyer made a list of the cowboys he knew in the various "pool" ranches of Southern Kansas and the Cherokee Outlet in the early 1880's. The list has no John Middleton; but it does have a Jack Middleton and also contains Charley Colcord and Joe Bowers, individuals Middleton knew and who interacted with him.<sup>45</sup> It being highly unlikely Dyer would fail to mention that he worked with two men of the same name, the writer undertook a search to see if John and Jack Middleton were the same. A Jack Middleton was located who was interred in the Riverview Cemetery, near Kiowa, Kansas, a town located southeast of Evansville, the last known address of John Middleton. And, as will be seen, this man's story picks up exactly where John Middleton's story ends.

Jack Middleton's obituary reveals that John William Middleton, commonly known as "Jack," died on October 15, 1942 at the age of 84 years, ten months, and 18 days. According to the obituary, Jack was born November 27, 1857 in the state of New York, where he grew to manhood.<sup>46</sup> In summarizing his life, the obituary asserts Jack arrived in Kansas around 1875 and worked on various ranches in Barber County. This is in keeping with Frank Coe's assertion that John Middleton was from Kansas. A significant gap in the obituary omits any history of the next five years.<sup>47</sup> But, then the obituary reports that about 1880 Jack settled in the Kiowa area, which is in keeping with John Middleton's move to Evansville. Jack's memorial then says Jack, on moving to Kiowa, worked for Ewell and Justice, who were among the many ranchers utilizing the Cherokee Outlet.<sup>48</sup> This would mean Jack was stationed in the wilderness of Oklahoma Territory.

According to his obituary, when Ewell and Justice dissolved around 1890, Jack "went into his own business, in which he was joined by William V. Harkreader." The story of that partnership is tied to the 1893 Cherokee Outlet land opening, in which Jack secured a place on Yellowstone Creek in present Woods County, Oklahoma. Map references place the homestead near the southwestern edge of the old Comanche Cattle Pool. In other words, Jack settled on land very close to the old line camp where John Middleton first met Charles Colcord.<sup>49</sup> Jack was later joined on the farm by Bill Harkreader and a partnership of long duration began.

According to the best information available, the partners sold out and returned to Kiowa, Kansas in 1911. Jack's life there is tied to the only mourners mentioned in his obituary, Pearl Bunton and Mrs. Bill Harkreader.

Pearl is the son of Clark Bunton, another Dyer named cowboy who worked in the Territory, east of Jack's farm, for an outfit called the Eagle Chief Pool. It's not established as to how Clark and Jack became acquainted or how close they were. But, from their respective time lines, it's known that for years both were living within Indian Territory and within a day's ride of each other. Therefore, it is more than possible they became acquainted via ranch work. It is also known that in 1906, Clark became the city marshal for the town of Kiowa. His tenure in that office lasted through 1922. Jack's obituary states that soon after his return to Kiowa, he hired on as the city's night watchman. Madolin O'Brien Gordon, a Barber County, Kansas old timer, recalled her father often substituted in the early 1900's for Jack Middleton, the night watchman for Clark Bunton.<sup>50</sup> Jack held this position until his retirement in 1939. His ability to hold the job beyond Clark's term of office was aided by the fact that in 1924 Clark's son, Pearl, was appointed Chief and held the position past Jack's death.<sup>51</sup>



The only information in Jack's obituary regarding family is that he had none in Kiowa at the time of his death and had made his home with the Harkreader family. Charles Fritz Shuster, of Medicine Lodge, Kansas, is Bill Harkreader's grandson. Fritz, who was born in 1924, the year after his grandfather Harkreader died tells a story which varies some from the above rendering. Fritz informs that it was his understanding that Jack was one of Harkreader's cowboys, rather than a partner. He was quite surprised to learn the obituary insisted his grandfather and Jack were partners. Fritz's knowledge of movements is that the family arrived about the time the railroad was built to New Kiowa, (August, 1885). That is probably correct, but we already know Jack was in the country a good ten years earlier. Fritz further relates that the family first lived in a dugout about five to six miles northwest of Kiowa. Fritz is not sure of the year his grandparents and Jack moved to town but, after Harkreader's death, Jack continued live with the widow. Fritz did know Jack personally, having lived on his grandmother's property between the years of six and ten, and from frequent visits thereafter. Fritz described Jack as "a great fellow, gifted with an amazing strength."<sup>62</sup> Significantly, Fritz had no recollection of any tales regarding Jack Middleton and Billy the Kid.

In point of fact, there is no direct statement in any source examined that the John Middleton, sometimes called Jack, who was in the Lincoln County War, is the same man named John W. Middleton, and commonly called Jack, who, arrived in Kansas in 1875 and was living within the range of the old Comanche Pool in the 1880's. But, dang, it's hard to believe in coincidence which dove tails the lives of two men as closely as this.

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> The Charles F. Colcord Collection, Western History Museum, University of Oklahoma holds the draft and final version notes of the Colcord autobiography. While the draft acknowledges Middleton, the final, privately published version does not.

<sup>2</sup> Notes on John Middleton, Mullin Collection, Haley Library and History Center, Midland TX; 1880 Comanche County, Kansas census showing Middleton a 26 year old white male born in Texas and his parents born in Mississippi.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Ealy, April 1, 1878 diary notation

<sup>4</sup> Middleton affidavit

<sup>5</sup> Frank Coe to J. Evetts Haley, Feb. 20, 1928: "John Middleton a Kansas raised boy and had been working for Chisum; came up at beginning of the war." Frank Coe, August 14, 1927, speaking of Blazer's Mill battle: "The man who was standing guard on the horses, John Middleton, was a stranger to the country. He had just come in from Kansas and did not know anyone. He just happened in and joined our party and went through the war with us." Census of, 1859 show John R. Middleton in Bourbon County; census of Bourbon County for 1860 and 1870 show James Middleton as a resident of the Scott Township.

<sup>6</sup> It's not known for sure when Jesse Evans became associated with Hunter-Evans and Company but one reference says Evans met Robert Hunter while transacting business at Dodge City in 1876, while a second says that Evans, Hunter and Evans lost 100 head of steers to a Cheyenne Indian raid the 1875-76 season.

<sup>7</sup> Harry E. Chrisman, "Lost Trails of the Cimarron," (Sage Books, Denver: 1961) pp. 180-185 Evans was described as hard bitten and driven. He stood 5 feet, 1 inch in height and weighed in at 150 pounds, but what he lacked in stature he made up for in gun savvy.

<sup>8</sup> Bliss Isley, "Rulers of the Kansas Range," Reprinted in Kansas Teacher, May, 1958, p 25; also Alma Rayfield, "The West That's Gone,"

<sup>9</sup> J. W. Berryman, "Early Settlement of Southwestern Kansas," (Kansas State Printing Plant: 1928) Ruben and Riley Lake assisted Colcord in wintering the herd.

<sup>10</sup> Chrisman, p.181ff; William Hunter McLean, "From Ayr to Thurber, Three Hunter Brothers and the Winning of the West," (Printed by News Printing Company: Fort Worth: Copyright by Fort Worth Genealogical Society, 1978). Chrisman tells of a near swindle when Bob Hunter bought up all of Uncle Jesse's old promissory notes and then paid Chisum off with them. The Hunter family also recalls, without adding any detail, that Chisum was indebted to the Hunter firm. So, there may be some truth to the tale.

<sup>11</sup> McLean, p.72ff

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Morton, 1877

<sup>13</sup> George Coe interview, March 22, 1927; Frank Coe interview, February 20, 1928 gives the date of departure as October, 1878

<sup>14</sup> W. R. Colcord, born in 1826, hailed from Bourbon County, Kentucky where he and his brother operated a prosperous farm. Colcord was married to Maria E. Clay, daughter of Wm. Green Clay and Patsey Bedford Clay of Bourbon County, Kentucky. The children born to W. R. and Maria Colcord were: Charles Francis, William, Harry, and a daughter, Maria L., affectionately called "Birdie."

<sup>15</sup> Reminiscences of Charles F. Colcord, *the Chronicles of Oklahoma*, March, 1934, p 5-18

<sup>16</sup> Though Evansville dates to 1878, the first legitimate post office was not started until 1882 and was closed in 1883 as the only buildings were used in conjunction with the Comanche Pool. In 1885, the post office of Rumsey relocated to the Evansville site, after the Comanche Pool sold its holdings in Kansas. But, as the railroads bypassed the community, by 1891 only 15 persons were living there and by 1893 the post office closed. A post office was re-established between April, 1895 and August, 1896. In 1980, the town was the site of the Merrill Range headquarters; the town's log hotel and a grave yard south of town were the only reminders of the town left. (Comanche County History by Dave Webb and Alzina Baker, pp. 26 & 27)

<sup>17</sup> *The Autobiography of Charles Francis Colcord, 1859-1934* (N.p. Privately published by C. C. Helmerich, 1970); *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. 12, p 16-19

<sup>18</sup> Albert G. Evans was born about 1833 in Evansville, Washington Co., Arkansas. At the age of 61, Albert G. died in St. Louis, Missouri, 24 Dec. 1894. He was married to Cayloma Walker on 2 May 1860 in Gonzales County, Texas. In 1872, he was a partner in the firm of Pattison, Evans, and Company, a livestock commission firm associated with the Kansas City stock yards. Early in 1873, R. D. Hunter joined the firm and in 1874 Pattison withdrew from active management. W. L. Tieding replaced Pattison and the company changed its name to Hunter, Evans and Company with offices in Ft. Worth, East St. Louis, Illinois and Kansas City. In 1876, the company established the first beef canning house in St. Louis. By 1888, the firm had handled more than 700,000 cattle, 800,000 hogs, and 350,000 sheep. The gross profits of Hunter-Evans between 1874 and 1888 averaged nearly \$500,000 annually.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Dickie Hunter, known as Col. R. D. Hunter, was born in 1833 in Ayrshire, Scotland. In 1844, at age nine, he and Brothers William and David immigrated with his parents to Mount Olive, Illinois. Hearty and adventurous, the Hunter Brothers were eager for excitement. David, the youngest of the three, joined the Union Army in 1861 at the age of 17 and fought with Gen. William T. Sherman during the historic March to the Sea. Robert, the eldest, and his brother William prospected for gold in Colorado and Arizona during the Gold Rush years of the mid-1860s. By 1865, the three Hunter Brothers had returned to the Midwest, where they were eventually recruited by William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody to hunt buffalo needed for hungry workers laying railroad tracks across the continent. As an adult, R. G. Hunter turned to the cattle business. He quickly won a reputation as a raiser, trader, and commission-broker during and after the Civil War. In 1873, he joined with Capt. A. G. Evans to form the Hunter-Evans Company. In the late 1880's, Hunter, owing to declining sales, sold his interest in the company to Evans and invested in the Johnson Coal Mining Company of Strawn, Texas. In 1888, Hunter took control of the company and founded the Texas and Pacific Railway, which included lands amounting to 23,014 acres. As the turn of the century drew near, Robert directed cattle marketing and ranching ventures; William worked out of the Ft. Worth office as a cattle buyer traveling by horseback from Montana to Mexico while David managed the Hunter brothers ranching operations, including the H3 ranch. The trio remained close throughout their lives. On retirement, Robert Hunter organized the Hunter-Phelan Savings and Trust Company and served as director of the National Exchange Bank of Dallas, Texas. R. G. Hunter died in 1902 and was buried at St. Louis, Missouri. It's not known for sure when Jesse Evans became associated the Hunter-Evans and Company but one reference says Evans met Robert Hunter while transacting business at Dodge City in 1876.

<sup>20</sup> E. W. Payne, banker, stock-dealer and grower, was born in Missouri in 1847, and reared in the agricultural profession, and received a business education. He was left an orphan at the age of six years. He worked on farms in different places, and attended school winters until sixteen years of age, when he went to Nebraska City, Nebraska, where he was engaged in the freighting business two years. He then returned to Missouri, and purchased a farm, which he operated until 1877, when he came to Kansas, and settled in Comanche County, and engaged in the stock business, which continued four years, after which he came to Medicine Lodge, and organized the Medicine Valley Bank in 1882, of which he was elected president. In 1876, he was elected to the Legislature of Missouri. In April of 1880, Mr. Payne associated himself with Messrs. Hunter, Evans & Co., of St. Louis, R. W. Phillips of Chicago, and several other men, for the purpose of ranching cattle, and now controls a ranch forty-five miles square, and known as the Comanche Pool. The company now has about 51,000 head of cattle on their ranch. Mr. Payne is Treasurer, and is one of the Directors of the association, also an individual ranch of 1,000 acres deeded land with range privileges, stocked with 900 cattle, which is under fence. The company own about 8,000 acres of land deeded. The increase of this monstrous herd is about 15,000 annually. Mr. Payne owns a pasture of 320 acres adjoining the town of Medicine Lodge; owns five and a half acres in the town, owns a bank building, and was one of the organizers of the Live-Stock Strip Association, and is one of the Directors of the same; is editor and proprietor of the Barber County Index, an eight-page eight column paper, devoted to live-stock interests, which is Democratic in politics. Mr. Payne is a member of the Freemasons. In 1866, he was married to Miss Susan A. Payne, of Missouri, by whom he has nine children - Edward B., Mary A., Estella, H., Charles T., John M., Eliza H., Laura, Lefa T. and William W. E. W. (Wylie) Payne died from a gunshot wound received during a robbery of the Medicine Valley Bank, April 30, 1884. This is the same robbery committed by Henry Brown, another regulator and friend of Middleton who was at the time of the robbery the town marshal of Caldwell, Kansas. That story can be found in the Medicine Lodge Cresset, Thursday, May 1, 1884.

<sup>21</sup> Col. Richard "Dick" Phillips was one of the old settlers of Barbor County, Kansas. Phillips was backed by his father, Henry W. Phillips, a prominent businessman of Chicago, Illinois, when he entered the Comanche Pool. After the big "die-off" in 1885-86, Phillips moved his operations to Montana. Later in life he moved to Chicago where he died at age 72 in 1916. (Obituary of Col. Dick Phillips, *The Western Star*, June 30, 1916)

<sup>22</sup> Wilbur Emery Campbell was born on a farm near Brownsville, Pa., January 26, 1847. While still a small child, his parents moved to a farm in Iowa. He saw service in the Civil War as part of the Third Iowa Cavalry, was wounded three times, and captured twice. After the war, he found employment on the Union Pacific building westward from Omaha and helped lay the rails into Cheyenne, Wyo., arriving there in November, 1867, where he heard glowing accounts of the possibilities southern and south-western Kansas offered as cattle-producing areas. These reports interested him greatly, and early in 1868 he and a young friend arrived at the trading post of Wichita. In 1868, Mr. Campbell settled Cowskin, creek nine miles south of Wichita, and two miles southeast of the present village of Oatville. This was still a part of the Osage Indian trust lands and Campbell did not get legal possession until after it was ceded to the federal government in 1870. Campbell was a pioneer livestock breeder of southern Kansas and Indian Territory. He was one of the first to trail cattle from Texas in 1868, and one of the first to fatten them corn and hay before going on to the cow-town markets. In the early 1870's he maintained ranches in Indian Territory along the Chisholm Trail route. Then he began the development of a ranch in the southern portions of Barber and Harper counties in Kansas. Campbell married Emily Duncan of Wichita, January 21, 1871, and they reared six children. It's not been determined where Campbell made his home from 1871-79, probably near Wichita, Kansas, but after 1879, his home was established the home near Caldwell, Kansas. At its peak, the Campbell ranch consisted of 48,000 acres. It included a portion of the so-called "Three-Mile-Strip," an area near the border of Southern Kansas which because of a faulty survey, was disputed as to its ownership by Kansa and the Indian Territory. In 1884, Campbell purchased a part of the strip from Dr. John Hartner, extending some 15 miles east from the west boundary of the present town of Kiowa. In August, 1884, hearing that a railroad was being built to Kiowa, Andrew Drumm, A. W. Rumsey, F. H. Shelley, O. P. Y. Ewell, and Campbell organized the Kiowa Town Company. The Kiowa Town Company purchased approximately 5,000 acres off the west end of Mr. Campbell's portion of the "Three-Mile-Strip" and located the town at the extreme west edge of this purchase. As soon as the town of New Kiowa became a reality, Mr. Campbell began the development of a ranch headquarters a mile east of this new town. In 1885, Campbell moved his family to a new ranch, called Rose Wood Park. Because of his introduction of Shorthorn and Hereford bulls to the range and militant advocacy of their superiority, Campbell became known as "Shorthorn" Campbell. Campbell was also active in mineral development including a zinc mine in northeastern Oklahoma. In 1903, Mr. Campbell retired from ranching and devoted his attention to the Campbell Oil and Land Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma until his death in 1907.

<sup>23</sup> The U-Drumm Ranch was established in 1870 by Major Andrew Drumm with 150,000 head of Texas Longhorns grazing on 150,000 acres lush grasses between the Medicine Lodge and the Salt Fork of the Arkansas Rivers, in Indian Territory and covered the area which is present day Alfalfa and Major Counties. The ranch headquarters is designated today with the Drumm marker located north of Cherokee, Oklahoma. In March 1883, the Cherokee Strip Livestock Association was organized. Major Andrew Drumm was elected president of the association and Charles Eldred secretary; with headquarters of the organization in Caldwell, Kansas. The organization signed an agreement with the Cherokees to lease the entire Outlet for five years at \$100,000 a year. Each year a wagon load of silver dollars was hauled from Caldwell to the Cherokee capitol at Tahlequah where it was counted, dollar by dollar, into the hands of the Indians. Ranches were then leased by the livestock association to stockholders. In 1890, the Federal government decided that the Cherokee did not have the right to lease the outlet, as they did not own it, and President Harrison ordered all cattle to be removed from the Outlet by the end of the year. Association members were ordered to remove every fence, every house, and every improvement of any land. The Army was sent in to ensure the order was carried out. On Sept. 16, 1893, in the greatest land run ever held, the vast grassland was opened for white settlement. Drumm later incorporated the Texas-5 Ranch located at Carmen, Oklahoma.

<sup>24</sup> Reminisces of Charles F. Colcord, *the Chronicles of Oklahoma*, March, 1934, p 5-18

<sup>25</sup> Draft of manuscript, Colcord Collection, Box 25, Folder 25-5, Western History Museum, University of Oklahoma, Norman

<sup>26</sup> Henry Hoyt was from Minnesota and as a young man traveled extensively over the west. In 1877-78, he was a part time mail carrier and part time doctor at Tascosa. While there, he met Billy and the remnant regulator band. Hoyt departed Tascosa before the Regulators and, as a parting gift, the Kid presented to him a race horse, complete with bill of sale that had once belonged to Sheriff William Brady of Lincoln. Hoyt was Commissioner of Health for the city of St. Paul, Minnesota and later served as a Surgeon in the Philippines during the Spanish-American war. Hoyt published his life remembrances in a book entitled: *A Frontier Doctor*, in 1929.

<sup>27</sup> Henry Hoyt, *A Frontier Doctor*, Edited by Doyce B. Nunis Jr., (The Lakeside Press: R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company: Chicago: Christmas, 1979)

<sup>28</sup> John Middleton to Robert Widenmann, August 30, 1878. Although Jesse Evans is not the Evans of Hunter and Evans, there is some evidence that he was associated with the firm of R. D. Hunter and A. G. Evans.

<sup>29</sup> Hoyt claims the Kid told him Brown went to the Indian Territory with Fred Waite and others; Brown stayed on at Tascosa and became the town constable. Charley Siringo also says Brown went to the Territory. Rufe LeFors says Billy, Brown and Waite took the horse herd to Waite's home at Pauls Valley and sold them. Still other references have Middleton going to the Territory. There is no established record of the men save Waite, who went to the Indian Territory; if any did, they didn't stay long, for within months their activities can be fairly well documented in other places.

<sup>30</sup> Colcord is mistaken in the time frame for Middleton's appearance on the Kansas Plains because he also claims that the Kid had already been killed, and that while the men were in his camp, Mike Meagher, City Marshall of Caldwell, Kansas, was killed (December 17, 1881) and that his father, W. R., recommended Brown as a replacement. Colcord claims that the



Caldwell town fathers sent for Brown, while he was still in the Colcord camp, and gave him a job as deputy city marshal. However, Brown was given the Caldwell deputy's job on July 5, 1882 by Bat Carr, who was appointed town marshal in June, 1882, shortly after the murder of Marshal George Brown. The dating is probably accurate for Brown. However, it's known from a letter written in June, 1879 to J. P. Tunstall that Middleton was in Sun City, Kansas. The only way to account for this misleading statement is that Colcord despised Middleton so much that he is not mentioned once in the final version of his autobiography, and this is a weak attempt on the part of the autobiographer to "jazz up" the story.

<sup>31</sup> Frank Coe, March 20, 1927 interview, Haley Library and History Center, Midland, Texas; Charles Colcord confirmed that Middleton had a "bleeding in the lungs" while he lived in Kansas from 1879 to 1881, and could not do much riding. Correspondence from Maurice Fulton to Charles Colcord, 2-21-1934, Box 43, Folder 435, Charles F. Colcord Collection, Western History Museum, University of Oklahoma

<sup>32</sup> J. P. Tunstall to R. A. Widenmann, July 19, 1880 (Nolan, "The Lincoln County War"): The elder Tunstall advises Widenmann that he had received several letters from "Jack Middleton, --- all on the begging strain," and that Jack had married a 15 year old girl; he had sent them \$25 as a wedding present. Keleher, in "Violence in Lincoln County," claims Middleton, in letter after letter, tried to wheedle various sums of money from the elder Tunstall.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Maurice G. Fulton to Charles Colcord, February 21, 1932, Colcord Collection, Box 43, Folder 435, loc.cit.

<sup>34</sup> It's doubtful that this was Middleton's return mailing address as Evansville did not have a post office until 1882, and this station lasted only a few months before being closed because it only serviced the ranch. In 1885, another post office was opened at the location and continued until after the turn of the century.

<sup>35</sup> Letters from John Middleton to J. P. Tunstall, Colcord Collection, Box 43, Folder 435, loc.cit. (Copies of these letters were, according to the correspondence, provided to Colcord by Maurice Fulton)

<sup>36</sup> Charles Colcord in correspondence with Maurice Fulton flatly stated he did not care for Middleton. In the story of his life, Middleton is never mentioned by name. Charles F. Colcord Collection, Western History Museum, University of Oklahoma, Box 43, Folder 435

<sup>37</sup> This Joe Bowers was in actuality Emil Bowers, who was the constable who drove the stolen Tunstall herd back home after it was located in the Seven Rivers region. He may, or may not, have been present when Lawyer Chapman was shot down by the outlaw Jesse Evans. But, he did drive one of the herds obtained from Chisum to the Hunter-Evans range in Kansas. He remained employed by various members of the pool until 1885 when he became town marshal of Coldwater. Bowers was killed in a tornado in May, 1899. Coldwater, Kansas *Western Star*, for May 12, 1899

<sup>38</sup> "The Cheyenne-Arapaho Country," By Edward Everett Dale, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume 20, No. 4, December, 1942, Page 360 ff. In 1882, Edward Fenlon, R. D. Hunter, William E. Malaley, H. B. Denman, J. S. Morrison, L. M. Briggs, and Albert G. Evans, were granted a lease to Cheyenne lands, a total of a little over three million acres for a term of ten years at an annual rental of two cents an acre payable semi-annually in advance. The Indians demanded that the first payment be made in silver and Colonel R. D. Hunter brought over thirty thousand silver dollars on pack horses from Caldwell, Kansas. The Secretary of Interior refused to approve the leases, but publicly stated he saw no harm in them, so under this tenuous arrangement, the leasers continued to hold their cattle on Indian lands. In 1885, reacting to allegations of bribery and fraud, President Cleveland ordered all cattle removed from the reservation within forty days. The order was carried out and fences destroyed. The ranchmen, left with no choice, moved 210,000 head of cattle to the already over stocked ranges of the adjoining states, where most died in the winters of 1885-86.

<sup>39</sup> *The Autobiography of Charles Francis Colcord, 1859-1934*, loc.cit., pp. 62-64; Mary Einsel, "Kansas, the Priceless Prairie, Chosen Land-Barber County Kansas," p 8. Charles Colcord never did get over the destruction of the cattle caused by the severe winters of '85-'86; nor did he ever stop blaming fences as the cause, and completely ignored the fact that the range was over stocked and could not support the load. To his dying day he believed that had there been no fences the cattle would have simply drifted before the snows to better pastures and the Comanche Pool would have survived.

<sup>40</sup> Reminiscences of Charles F. Colcord, *the Chronicles of Oklahoma*, March, 1934, p 5-18

<sup>41</sup> Colcord Collection, WHM, University of Oklahoma

<sup>42</sup> Nolan, "Lincoln County War," bio notes; *Silver City Enterprise*, December 7, 1882: There was a John Middleton Jr., described as being about 35, who was indicted for cattle stealing and horse rustling in Hood County, Texas in 1874; however no connection to this man and John Middleton of Lincoln has ever been established.

<sup>43</sup> From the *Bastrop Advertiser*, August 9, 1873 and January 23, 1874

<sup>44</sup> RootsWeb Message Board, Middleton, [URL:http://boards.ancestry.com](http://boards.ancestry.com) response dated November 18, 2002 by Jamie Kay Taylor, Editor of Middleton Newsletter

<sup>45</sup> The Dyer roster, as alphabetized by Jim Barker, [www.okielegacy.net](http://www.okielegacy.net) and [www.rootsweb.com/~ksbarber/bibliography.html](http://www.rootsweb.com/~ksbarber/bibliography.html)

<sup>46</sup> Kiowa News, October 19, 1942, p.1, c.3 & p.4, c.5; Jack may have married as there is a child, Annabelle, 1890-94, buried in the same cemetery.

<sup>47</sup> That the obituary fails to mention any time in New Mexico or any association with Billy the Kid is not that unusual. Neither of the obituaries of Fred Waite nor Joe Bowers made a revelation about that episode. Statements highlighting a man's life tend to not bring up his past indiscretions.

<sup>48</sup> O. P. T. (Y.) “Print” Ewell was one of the original developers of the town of Kiowa, signing the incorporation papers filed August 4, 1884. His partner was called Crate Justice. The Ewell and Justice outfit folded its tent shortly after President Harrison ordered all cattle removed from the Outlet by December 1, 1890.

<sup>49</sup> Stan Hoig in “The Northern Cheyenne Exodus and the 1878 Battle of Turkey Springs,” (Chronicles of Oklahoma: spring 2002, p.4ff) described the Cheyenne escape route as “leading up Eagle Chief and Little Eagle Chief Creek to the headwaters of Yellowstone Creek. In 1878, that little known region was the leased grazing range of the Colcord family...”

<sup>50</sup> Barber County Historical Society, *Chosen Land: A History of Barber County* (BCHS: Medicine Lodge, KS: 1980) p199.

<sup>51</sup> Clark Bunton was foreman of the Eagle Chief Pool. According to Pearl Bunton’s obituary, after he finished school, he was engaged in the cattle business with his father in Woods County, Oklahoma; the same county where Jack Middleton and Bill Harkreader had their farm.

<sup>52</sup> Personal correspondence with Charles Fritz Shuster, of Medicine Lodge, Kansas, grandson of Harkreader.

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