

Another Western Pioneer Passes On

By KENNETH R. COPPOCK, Calgary, Alta.

(Editor's Note: Here follows the concluding installment of an article written by the Editor of CANADIAN CATTLEMEN to outline briefly the life and accomplishments of and to pay tribute to that fine cattleman and friend, the late Senator Dan E. Riley.)

WHEN Senator Dan Riley passed away in a Calgary hospital on April 27th in his 88th year, he left thousands of friends from every walk of life to mourn their loss. His departure was a genuine loss to Western Canada and to Western Canada's Beef Cattle Industry. Since 1883 he had been a part of the West and a leading citizen in High River, Alberta. With Fulton Thomson, his brother-in-law in a partnership bound only by verbal agreements and understandings, he had developed a livery and implement business in town, and farming and ranching interests in the High River community. He had taken a keen interest in community life, being elected the village's first Mayor and was the first President of the United Farmers of Alberta. His chief interest, however, lay with cattle ranching and the experience he had gained as land sales agent for the Calgary and Edmonton Corporation later became a valuable asset as a Director and President of the Western Stock Growers' Association in the successful negotiations with Ottawa for 21-year crown grazing leases.

In 1914 the partnership of Riley and Thomson was terminated and his main business was concentrated on the Riley farm south of town and the ranch, the nucleus of which was secured in 1904 when the partnership had purchased the Dickson place which then included a section of deeded and four sections of lease land. The ranch, situated west of Nanton about 25 miles, has since been expanded. It specializes in choice Hereford cattle which carry the R Bar brand and in good saddle horses with the Flying U brand. It is operated by Neil Riley, one of the sons.

The Riley sons, five of them, Claude, George, Neil, Kenneth and Dan Jr., had been born in High River and by 1914 the eldest were growing to young manhood. In 1913 Dan Riley had been elected a Director of the Western Stock Growers' Association which then operated from Medicine Hat. On April 5, 1921, he became President of the Stock Growers' Protective Association of Western Canada, which organization had been formed with offices in Calgary for the main purpose of cleaning up mangle among range cattle. Also it functioned to protect other interests of stock raisers and it was during the early twenties his energies, together with those of his associates, were turned to obtaining 21-year grazing leases from Ottawa. The U.S. Fordney-McCumber tariff following free entry into the U.S. from 1913 to 1922 was having a depressing effect on the cattle industry and Dan Riley made numerous trips to Ottawa in connection with grazing leases and cattle markets. He came to be known as an authority on agriculture and on cattle matters in particular. His honesty and integrity, his good

humor and his natural ability as a raconteur of Western lore made him popular not only with his fellow cattlemen but with high Government officials with whom he came in contact. On April 1st, 1921, the Protective Association and the Western Stock Growers' Association were merged and shortly afterwards the name of the latter was assumed. Headquarters were in Calgary. For 16 years, or until May 27, 1937, Dan Riley was President of the Association. It was only after his insistence that he was permitted to relinquish his high office. The presidency was assumed by James Mitchell of Medicine Hat and Dan Riley became Honorary President, a distinction he held until his death.

During his long tenure of office he and his associates went through the troublesome period of the early '20's, and again when the U.S. Hawley-Smoot Tariff of 1930 was enacted and its onerous rates prevented the export of cattle to the U.S. and it was necessary to experiment with shipments to the United Kingdom which barely returned the shipper his expenses. Those years following 1930 until 1937 were years to try the steel of men. He headed the Association through its most trying period and fought unreservedly against the compulsory features of the Natural Products Marketing Act which was enacted at the beginning of the R. B. Bennett administration.

Senator in 1926

But I am a little ahead of my story. In recognition of the standing of Dan Riley in agriculture, and because of the man's sound characteristics, the Rt. Hon. W. L.



The Indian Medicine Tree may still be seen on the old Riley homestead, now owned by C. W. Roenisch.

MacKenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, in 1926 named Dan Riley to the Canadian Senate. This high honor came as a surprise to the cattleman but to his friends and his fellow cattlemen who had made strong representations to Ottawa for an agricultural man to be appointed, it was no surprise. In their judgment he was "a natural" for the appointment and their judgment was soon vindicated. He never missed a Session and on Western agricultural matters he was soon recognized by his colleagues as an authority. The eulogies expressed by many of his fellow Senators after his passing were evidence of the esteem in which he was held by them.

To his many friends in the West he was still "Dan" and to those wishing to com-



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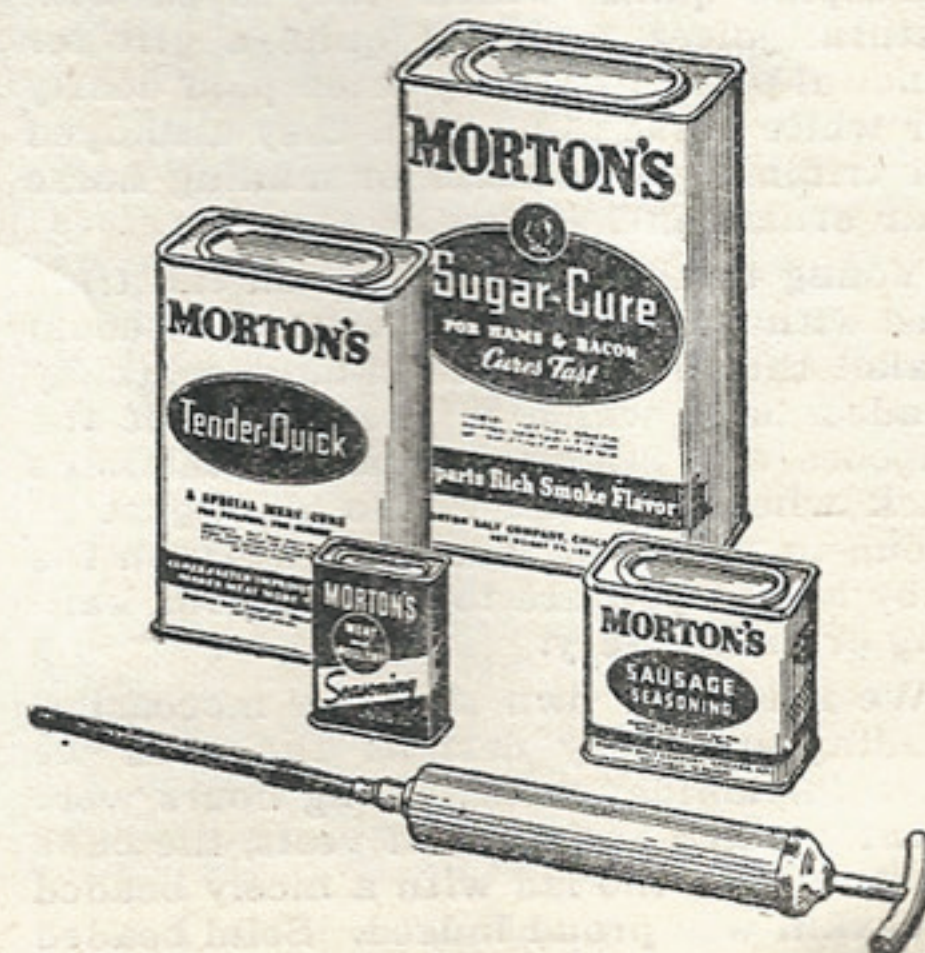
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bine both affection and respect he was "Senator Dan". He still had open house for his friends. Oldtimers whom he had not seen for years still dropped in at his High River home, and his Indian friends, of whom he had many, who had childlike confidence in him, never failed to visit him when possible. Truly there was never a more democratic man placed in high office and it is said that his unknown benefactions in deeds and monetary contributions to those in need ran into the hundreds. Never was one in dire need turned away unassisted.

In 1930 the Senator suffered a heavy loss when his helpmate, whom he had returned to Prince Edward Island in 1890 to marry and bring West, passed away. She had been with him through the early years, had borne him five sons, had helped him through many anxious periods. His grief was never inflicted on others, however; such was the character of the man. As his friends have said, "He never left anyone sad".

If I may, I would like for a brief moment to relate a few personal experiences which endeared the Senator to me. It was in 1916 when my family established a home in High River. My younger brother soon was due to arrive and my parents believed my sister, older brother and I should have better educational opportunities than those at the old Glenmede Country School which was nearly three miles from the family ranch west of High River. Accordingly, the Dickenson house in High River was purchased and we were duly enrolled in the public school on the eastern edge of town. It was not long before we became conscious that there was a family by the name of "Riley" in town. Young Dan, by brother Clifton and I were in the same class, and too, my mother's maiden name being Riley, we were not long in wondering, as kids would, if we were related 'way back somewhere.

We were never able to establish relationship, but in later years as we came to know the Riley family and they ours, my mother always felt a special pride in Dan Riley and he has honored me many times by saying my mother was one of the finest and most intelligent women he had ever known. We soon met Dan Riley, as he frequently came in from his Nanton ranch, and we felt we had much in common, our father being a rancher. He always dressed in cowboy boots, looked fresh out of the saddle and when he told us some hunting experience or some of his Indian stories we, as with our elders, were enthralled.

And when 1917 came along and Dan Riley was the Liberal candidate for the Provincial Legislature, and despite the fact that Dr. G. D. Stanley, his opponent, was our family doctor, and one of his



A group of High River High School chums on a fishing trip up the Highwood in 1920. Left to right: K. R. Coppock, Kendall Bower, Grant Laidlaw, Jim Stewart, Dan Riley, Jr., Clifton Coppock, Roy Fowler, Dan Riley, Fred Driver, and seated, Gerald Coppock.

daughters, Muriel, had more than her share of beauty and personality, I would sing with gusto the Liberal campaign song written by Ruth McKay, the daughter of our next door neighbor, and adapted to the tune of "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp the Boys are Marching". I believe the campaign song went something like this:

"Vote, vote, vote for Mr. Riley,
We are working hard and fast

And will surely win at last

Then Conservatives will be inanimate."

It was a hard-fought campaign which resulted in Mr. Riley being defeated by a close margin.

Interest in Young People

My brother arrived on January 14, 1917, and he was named Gerald Wilson Coppock. My brother Clifton, my sister Dor-

(Continued on page 78)



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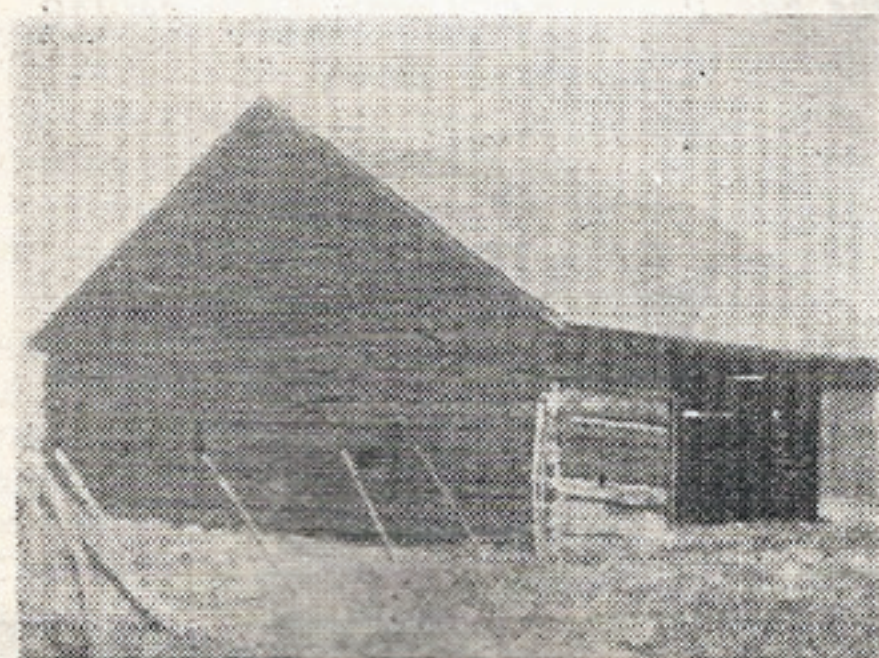
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The original Riley cabin is now used as a machine shed.

ANOTHER PIONEER (Continued from page 75)

othy and I had new home duties to perform but my brother and I did find time for hunting and fishing. It was in 1920 that a group of High School chums who are shown in the picture on another page went up the Highwood River on a ten-day fishing expedition. The site of our camp was on the ranch of the late Ed. Marsden. We had the usual supply of food, but in particular we had about 12 dozen eggs packed safely in a box of bran and this we had placed in the shade near the river to keep cool. In due course cattle appeared undetected and consumed both bran and eggs and an atmosphere of despondency settled over the camp. A week of incessant rain did not raise our spirits. It was with great enthusiasm that we greeted my father and Dan Riley when they came up to return us to town. We related our grievous loss of the eggs and came in for considerable ribbing from Dan Riley. He then related many hunting and camping trips he had been on in the early days, one in particular when his only food item was salt. He was a great fellow; we all liked him. He was always interested in young men and boys.

In 1919 H.R.H. the Prince of Wales visited High River. George Lane had interested the Prince in visiting the famous Bar U and subsequently induced his Royal friend to purchase the Frank Bedingfield ranch, later to be known as the EP. It was while on this trip that the Prince met Dan Riley and it was not long before the Prince was impressed by the breadth of knowledge of his new acquaintance. The tales of the early days and the early pioneers completely impressed the young Prince, and Riley was regarded ever afterwards as a friend.

Prince Edward visited his ranch on several occasions, once in 1923 and again in 1941 when as Duke of Windsor he brought the Duchess to the ranch for a visit and rest. It was concluded that the Western Stock Growers' Association, of which His Royal Highness was a life member, should present a lined buffalo robe as a souvenir of their visit. So it was arranged that Senator Riley and I should make the presentation and at the same time an opportunity would be afforded me to take color motion pictures of the presentation and their Highnesses for inclusion in a historical roll of ranch films I was then collecting. I met Senator Riley at High River and we drove about 18 miles to the EP Ranch where the Duke and Duchess awaited us. On the way out the Senator related that in 1923 the Prince was at the Ranch and was due to motor to Calgary to open some function, he thought it was the Chinook Race Club meet. That morning the Senator's phone rang. It was the Prince.

"Hello, Riley! What are you doing?"

"Oh nothing, I guess", the Senator casually returned.

"Then come on out; I would like to see you," came the Prince's voice.

When the Senator arrived at the ranch in his old car, the crowd was all assembled ready to depart for Calgary. Despite other seating arrangements, the Prince insisted he was riding with Riley.

"This is a pretty old car; you'd better go with them", Dan said.

"Not on your life; what is good enough for you to ride in, is good enough for me. Let's go", came the quick reply.

"Well", the Senator related, "the road to Calgary was not paved in those days, only gravel and dirt—mostly dirt, and in

the old car, (I think it was a Chevrolet, might have been a Ford), we were taking quite a dusting from a truck up ahead. I debated at length whether I should hazard passing it. I decided to step on the gas, and just as I was about even with the truck a car coming towards us swung around a corner in the road and loomed ahead. I just did get past the truck. My knees shook and I almost went limp as I realized the chance I had taken and the danger in which I had placed the Prince. I suddenly came to as I felt several pats on my shaking right leg and the Prince said, 'You did just right, Riley; you did just right.' Believe me I was certainly relieved. As we neared Calgary, the Prince said, 'You know, Riley, I have to open this show and I don't know what to say.' I suggested that he tell them the difference between a rancher and a rawncher, and this he did."

(A rancher is one who operates a ranch as a livelihood and for profit; a rawncher is one who tries to do the same but invariably results in losses.)

Well to get back to our 1941 visit to the EP and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. We had no sooner been introduced than the Duke plunged into an enthusiastic conversation with the Senator.

"Do you remember our trip to Calgary in your old Chevrolet?" inquired the Duke.

"I certainly do! On our way out I was telling my friend about it but I couldn't remember if it was a Chevrolet or a Ford" beamed the Senator.

I could go on and on repeating stories the Senator has related to me; how LaFayette French, one of the early settlers, knocked the bottle from Chief Crowfoot's hands as he was putting it to his lips and how the irate Chief was finally convinced that what he was about to drink was poisoned liquor. It was necessary to sacrifice a dog's life to prove it but once proven, Chief Crowfoot and LaFayette French became lifelong brothers and Chief Crowfoot's advice to his Blackfoot warriors to stay out of the Riel Rebellion in no small measure resulted from the counsel of LaFayette French.

Senator and Lemon Mine

Senator Dan was part of the legend of Lemon Mine and probably spent thousands of dollars trying to locate the fabulously rich gold mine found and left by a very early pioneer and prospector from Montana by the name of Lemon. Reams have been written on circumstances surrounding its discovery, the ambush and killing of Lemon's partners by Indians, and Lemon's own dangerous escape to Montana with his gold and a rough map and memory to guide him back. But he never came and others, including LaFayette French and Senator Dan, made repeated but unsuccessful attempts to locate the mine.

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One could relate stories surrounding various cattle roundups; shipments of cattle to distant markets; how the late C. E. Wynn-Johnson of Alkali Lake, B.C., purchased sight unseen over 300 two-year-old steers in 1936 at 3c per pound. Purchase was made solely upon the Senator's representation and when the purchaser's foreman arrived, they were better than expected. Such was the honesty and integrity of the man.

I shall be ever grateful to the Senator who, in late years at the Senate, was a kindly father and adviser to me on my trips to Ottawa in connection with new Income Tax principles, tariff briefs and markets. While he had many friends in Ottawa and among his fellow Senators, he was never more happy than when someone from the West visited him and he was able to talk cows and early days.

He hated dishonesty and hypocrisy wherever he found them, yet it was not in his makeup to be uncharitable to those who bitterly opposed him. He was straightforward in all of his statements and actions and there was no doubt where he stood. He had seen the West develop from its infancy through the courage, vision and hard work of the early settlers, and his unalterable view was that progress comes only through application of the safe time-proven formula. He had no patience with a panacea which would eliminate honest and intelligently applied human industry and if there was one trend in the Canadian political scene which disturbed him, it was the drift towards state ownership and the dependence of the individual on the state. "We soon will, like the Indians, become wards of the state and that is not good" he has often stated.

Senator Dan is no more. On May 1st he was returned to Mother Earth in the small High River Cemetery where lie so many of his friends including the colorful cattleman, George Lane. Memories of him will, however, always live in the hearts of those who were honored to count him as a friend.

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