

ANOTHER

WAGON

STORY?



THE NAMES OF CIMARRON, particularly when it is used in connection with the word trail, and Dodge City have always fascinated your editor, and so when I received a letter from Cousin Odessa La Rosh which included a story using them both I simply had a wonderful time.

They occur in a book, "Lost Trails of the Cimarron" by Harry E. Chrisman and Cousin Odessa writes:

"I correspond with Mr. Chrisman of Denver, Colo. in connection with the history of our area. I am compiling the history of our county and our historical society hopes to publish a book when I have finished. Mr. Chrisman was kind enough to send me a copy of his book and has given me permission to quote from it. The following will be of special interest to you since it must be about the son of Dr. Welborn Barton mentioned in the article "The Wagon Train Story" in your Easter 1972 Barton Bulletin, page 18."

"The Santa Fe Railroad reached Dodge City, Kansas in September 1872. That same summer, a trail herd from Texas reached the Arkansas River and were thrown along the river bottom west of Dodge City that Fall. With this herd came D. Welborn (Doc) Barton. Doc arrived in April, ahead of the railroad bringing the herd up the Chisum Trail because of fear of trouble with the Indians who were bothering the drovers in the Indian Nations that Spring. Doc's brother Alex and 6 other cowboys accompanied the herd of 2,300 head of two and three year old steers.

Doc Barton was born in Bertram, Burnet Co., Tex., December 22, 1853, one of a family of 10 children. There were seven boys: Doc, Al, Clay, Henry, Dick, Bill and Walter. There were 3 sisters who later became Mrs. John Bryson, Bertram, Tex.; Mrs. Kate Willett, San Antonio, Tex.; and Mrs. Wyatt Bailey, Austin, Tex. The Bartons came from old South Carolina stock, Doc's parents having reached Texas in 1848. Of tough pioneer stock, Doc Barton once remarked of his mother, "Never did we hear her make a complaint against her isolated ranch life in the new land of Texas."

In 1873, Doc Barton selected range near the town of Pierceville and in this region he and his brothers operated for several years. When too many of the Cheyenne Indians came south from the Pawnee River to the Arkansas River in 1877, Doc moved his herds to Crooked Creek, further south. He also ran cattle in Lipscomb Co., North Texas.

Doc had married the former Belle Vandever in Texas in 1877. Now he brought her north with a trail herd, she driving a light spring wagon by herself. Once in Colorado, when she was stuck on the muddy bank of a creek, a band of young Cheyenne braves swept down upon the helpless woman from a range of nearby hills. Belle was a girl with good nerves but she afterward confessed that she thought this to be her last day on earth. Her husband, from a distance at the point of the trail herd and much too far way to help her, looked back, heard his wife scream once. He realized what had happened, but knew that he dared not show fear or concern lest Cheyenne bravado feed upon it and the Indians would be tempted to murder his wife. So he rode boldly on ahead, trying to hold his head high and pay no concern, though he quietly loosened the Winchester in his saddle scabbard.

To the relief and amazement of all the cowboys who watched and waited for a signal from the trail boss, the Indians only whooped and hollered and rode around the team and wagon at breakneck speed. Finally, in a charitable moment, caused by what impulse no one would ever know, the leader dropped off his pony and gave the wagon a big heave, starting it up the muddy creek bank. Now all the Indians jumped off and pushed the wagon so hard that the team was in a lurch when they reached the top of the creek bank. Mrs. Barton gave the team full rein, hurrying toward her husband. She never looked back after calling out "Thank You!" to the band of Indians. The Indians mounted and rode off, chattering and laughing. The trail boss turned, cut out a thin halter that had been securing and signaled the Indians to come back and take the animal.

The Barton brothers consisted of Doc, Alex, Al, Clay, and Henry Barton, but D. Babank, Tom Council and Mike Langate were with them in business for many years. Many cowboys worked for the "Barton outfit" at different times. The Bartons made many trips to Texas for both cattle and horses. A, Clay, and Doc held range south of the Arkansas, receiving mail at both Cimarron and Pierceville. The brand book of 1888 lists only brands of the latter three -- Cross H, T O Bar, and O S Bar -- but brother Henry managed the ranches for them, listing no brand for his own. Like all ranchers who were constantly buying, selling and trading, they listed a sackful of other brands associated with their operations.

The Bartons were sanguine businessmen, buying many more Texas drovers to Dodge City with their herds. The Barton herds once numbered 12,000 head, but they lost all but 500 in a fierce blizzard.

Doc Barton was a cattleman first, last and always. He served a term as Gray County Sheriff. He died January 11, 1916 at Dodge City, 93 years of age. "He was the first cowboy to arrive, the last to leave."