



Frederic Remington (1861-1909) bought a small ranch in Butler county in 1883 and lived in Kansas about a year as a "holiday sheepman." Neighbors later recalled the burly young man who was popular with local sportsmen but was less well liked by the more sober set who resented his extravagance and careless management.

FREDERIC REMINGTON, THE HOLIDAY SHEEPMAN

PEGGY AND HAROLD SAMUELS

MARCH 15, 1883, Frederic Remington was holed up in room 16 of the hotel in Peabody, Kan.¹ He was hiding himself and would allow no one to see him but Jim Chapin, a young stockman. Remington's depression was severe, a melancholy beyond anything the townspeople had heard of. They feared he might do away with himself.²

The innkeeper's wife, Mother Duvall, tried to calm him. She said it was the worst case of the blues she had seen. She worried over him, washed his clothes, brought up to him the crackers and milk she knew he liked. Remington thanked her but did not touch the food. Mrs. Duvall took no pay for her services although Remington had been a stranger to her.

Even the children in town knew about the recluse. The 10-year-olds said it was because his father had died.

The morose young man in the Peabody hotel was certainly different from the blithe Remington who had come into an inheritance of almost \$10,000 on his 21st birthday the previous fall. Then he was still in Albany, N. Y., a clerk in the employ of the state government, the protegee of his influential Uncle Mart Remington who was determined to settle him down as a politician and journalist. Remington's father, Col. S. P. Remington, had died February 18, 1880.³

In Albany Remington had been in touch by mail with Robert Camp, a Milwaukee, Wis., native who had been a Yale undergraduate while Remington attended Yale Art School

This article is rewritten from the chapter on Remington in Kansas contained in the full-length biography of the artist that the authors have in process. The authors solicit additional materials relevant to Remington for the purpose of using the information in their forthcoming book. Credit will be given. The authors also are compiling the catalogue *raisonne* of Frederic Remington's paintings and drawings and ask that data for the catalogue and information for the book be sent to them at S.R., Box 1281, Corrales, N.M. 87048.

1. Myra Lockwood Brown and Robert Taft, "Genius Wasn't Enough" (unpublished manuscript, 1952), p. 2, in "Robert Taft Collection," manuscript dept., Kansas State Historical Society. The largest repository of material on Remington in Kansas is the Kansas State Historical Society's "Robert Taft Collection." Where references are not otherwise cited, they are in this collection.

2. Myra Lockwood Brown and Robert Taft, "Frederic Remington, Kansas Rancher" (unpublished manuscript, 1945), p. 5.

3. Papers in the authors' files.

1878-1879.⁴ Camp had been in ill health and was looking for an outdoor activity. He had purchased a small sheep ranch 11 miles south of Peabody and had moved there about August 24, 1882. Camp owned 900 sheep and called sheep raising "the boss business."⁵

Remington discussed Camp's situation with Uncle Mart. Before Remington could think of spending the rest of his life in an indoor sedentary job in a city, he had to have a try at establishing himself in the rugged West. He had seen Montana in 1881 and knew a little about livestock. Kansas he expected to be like the cowboy capital, Dodge City. Stock raising was in the midst of a boom. The winter of 1881-1882 had been very promising for ranchers. Mid-summer of 1882 saw the full strength of the prosperity. The winter of 1882-1883 was still favorable.

The boom was in sheep as well as in cattle, and according to Camp, sheep ranching was available for an investment within Remington's grasp. Wool had advanced steadily in price since 1879. Sheep had been a dollar a head in New Mexico in 1875, then \$5 for good graded sheep in 1880.⁶ Sheepmen had wild visions of wealth. Any doubter was told that \$6 was cheap for sheep that would soon bring \$10. Large stock ranches were being bought at their asking prices. Ranch houses were being remodeled to add conveniences for comfortable occupancy. Men from the East and from Europe swarmed into the ranch country, extravagant in their management practices and insistent on a personal good time. Ninety percent of the new investors were "holiday stockmen," gentlemen who left the ranch business to local managers.

Kansas seemed especially favorable. The bluestem grass in Butler county was great pas-

4. John C. Gregory, *History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin* (Chicago, S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1931), v. 4, p. 186.

5. Robert Taft, *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, 1850-1900* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 199.

6. James W. Freeman, *Prose and Poetry of the Live Stock Industry of the United States* (National Live Stock Association, 1905, reprinted 1959), p. 646.

turage. It was part of the tallgrass prairie that in 1800 had extended over 400,000 acres to form a sea of big bluestem grass as high as the herds of buffalo that lived there with elk, antelope, coyotes, and foxes, before the land was grazed or plowed.⁷ As yet there was no push towards sheep raising as there had been in other states like Colorado. While sheep in Kansas had increased from 106,000 in 1875 to 311,000 in 1879, the total was far less than the two million sheep in Colorado and did not compare to the million head of cattle and the million and a quarter hogs in Kansas.

The boom was so strong that land swindlers were all over. Robert Camp would be able to protect Remington and arrange for the purchase of good land at a fair price. And in Kansas there was no stigma to raising sheep. In Texas where cattlemen and sheepmen contested the open range, it was said that any man engaged in walking sheep was "a Mexican." There was no open range in Kansas. Pastures had legal boundaries.

By February, 1883, Camp had arranged for Remington's purchase of the 160-acre quarter section that was immediately south of his own place. The area had been part of a large holding bought previously by a rich Chicagoan named Crane who imported a Scotchman, Reed, to manage the breeding of blooded cattle. That business failed and was sold by the sheriff at auction to Henry Blakesley of Peoria, Ill. Blakesley then resold part of the parcel including the ranches of Robert Camp and two other young college men, Cecil Wickersham from England and Oxford and James Chapin from Illinois.⁸

Remington in Albany would have sent Camp a deposit on the purchase price of \$3,400 for what was the southwest quarter of section 26, (Fairmount) township 23, range 3, owned by Johann and Maria Janzen.⁹ The price was close to the average for improved quarter sections advertised in the *Emigrant's Guide to Kansas* in April, 1883.¹⁰

In Canton the *St. Lawrence Plaindealer*, February 28, 1883, contained the note: "Fred Remington, son of the late Col S P Remington,

has resigned his Government position at Albany, and is now in Canton, visiting his mother and other friends, and making preparations to start for Dakota in a few days." Remington's father had owned the *Plaindealer*. The descriptions of Remington's destination must have sounded like the Far West he visualized, to have had the paper pick Dakota rather than Kansas.

When the burly Remington stepped off the Santa Fe passenger train to be greeted by Robert Camp,¹¹ however, he did not see his verdant North Country of New York or the Montana mountains he expected. Peabody was brown Kansas with the only trees alongside empty watercourses. To him the town was devoid of New England charm. Although the stockmen rode horses and wore chaps, the cowboys and the outlaws had left with the moving frontier 10 years ago. Dodge City, the cowboy capital, was 150 miles west.

When Remington went to inspect Camp's ranch, the ranch house was a hovel compared to houses in Canton, where Remington had been born. There was no evidence of the finer things Remington relished, the comfortable homesteads with urban conveniences, managed by the family women and their hired girls. Operating the ranch as Camp did was simply hard work. And the sheep stank, although Camp was in the process of clipping about 7,000 pounds of wool for a profitable sale.

Remington went back to the Peabody hotel and the Duvalls but he did not know what to do. Raising sheep was exactly what Camp had told him it would be and it promised a fine return on his investment but it was ugly. Should he forego his deposit on his ranch and return to the despised Albany job he had quit with scorn? Should he go ahead with buying his workaday ranch and live through the ugliness and get used to the stink? He could not decide. He had the deep blues for the first time in his life and there was no uncle on hand to find an alternative for him. He could not even tell the people around that he could not bear to look at them or to smell them, so he said his father had died. It was all he could think of.

His solution took care of itself. April 2 was the scheduled date for the purchase of his

7. Bayard Webster, "Preserving a Piece of the Prairie," *New York Times*, March 15, 1978.

8. Victor Murdock, "Of Frederic Remington and of the Halt He Made on Prairies of Kansas," *Wichita Evening Eagle*, February 16, 1939.

9. Corah Mooney Bullock to Robert Taft, February 16, 1944.

10. Unpublished papers of bookseller Helen Card.

11. David Dary, "Frederic Remington in Kansas," *The Prairie Scout*, Abilene, v. 1 (1973), p. 79.



Remington's sheep ranch was 10 or 12 miles south of Peabody, the nearest town on the railroad. When the young Yale man stepped off the Santa Fe passenger train to be greeted by his college classmate, Robert Camp, he saw a "brown Kansas" with the only trees alongside empty watercourses and a town devoid of New England charm. This photograph of Walnut street in Peabody was taken in 1879.

section. The day came, he paid the balance of the price, and he owned a ranch. He hired two younger men Bill Kehr and William Grandom Scrivner, called Grand, as hands and began work.¹² His depression was over. It did not return to the same degree at any time in his life, although his last years were sometimes melancholy.

The ranch house had three rooms. Downstairs was the living and eating room. Above it was the sleeping room. Attached on the north side was a shed with a gable roof that was the kitchen. There were a water well, two barns each larger than the house, and a corral. Bill Kehr lived at the ranch with Remington. Across the Whitewater river three miles was Plum Grove, a hamlet comprised of three houses, an old stone schoolhouse that doubled as a church, Hoyt's general store, and a blacksmith shop.¹³ Room 16 in Ike Duvall's Peabody hotel remained Remington's when he was in town. Twenty miles south was the county seat, El Dorado.

Remington's year in Kansas is told in episodes. Perhaps 20 stories have been recorded through a government project in the 1940's to record oral Kansas history, through interviews Robert Taft arranged with Camp in the

1940's, through material collected for Remington biographies that were never completed, and through more than 20 newspaper and magazine articles retelling Remington's Kansas experiences. Anyone who had shared Remington's flapjacks and bacon would have been very old in 1940 when most of this data was compiled. Today there is no one left.

The theme of the episodes is consistent. Remington was a poor rancher, a holiday stockman who fit the stereotype precisely. His goal was to have fun.

In the beginning the mustachioed, five-foot, nine-inch Remington whose weight was up to 220 pounds, spent his days at Camp's ranch to learn the business before he began operating his own place. A Kansas judge, C. M. Clark, recalled that:

Camp told me that one spring [1883] he had been working day and night with the lambing ewes. Each morning Camp would ride a mule to hunt weak lambs. He carried a gallon coal oil can of milk for the tiny creatures which were too weak to stand. If he found them in time and poured milk down their throats the lambs usually were saved. This morning was raw, with a sharp wind driving rain when Camp started out.

He found twin lambs, so weak they could not have lived. Camp saw the lambs had to be wrapped in blankets and warmed as well as fed. He got one under each arm, the reins of the bridle in one hand with his precious oil can of milk in the other, started back to the house to get the lambs wrapped and put back of the kitchen stove.

But when he approached the barn who should come

12. Peabody Centennial Committee, *Peabody—the First 100 Years* (Peabody, Peabody Gazette-Herald, 1971), p. 55.

13. Myra Lockwood Brown to Robert Taft, January 5, 1945.

walking forth but Frederic Remington and carrying, of all things, an umbrella. One look at that umbrella was enough for the mule and away he went, Camp holding a lamb under each arm, the oil can of milk in one hand and trying to stop the mule with the other. He said he nearly squeezed the life out of the poor lambs before he got the mule stopped, turned around and headed back to the house. Remington and other ranch hands greeted Camp from the doorway with a vivid description of how he looked on a runaway mule.¹⁴

There is a drawing of Camp and the lambs in Remington's Kansas sketch book. For all his savvy about horses and the West, Remington's open umbrella was as tenderfoot a move as was that of Theodore Roosevelt who once told his cowpunchers during a roundup to "hasten forward quickly there."¹⁵ It did not even help that Remington had been concerned about sickly Camp out in the cold rain and had wanted to shelter him.

Grand Scrivner, the master of Remington's sheepfold, served as a model in a similar unplanned circumstance. He started riding for the house with a lamb under each arm, guiding his mount with his knees, when the horse began pitching with head and tail down, back arched. Outside the ranch house stood Remington with board and crayon to catch the peak of the performance in a sketch he later

presented to Scrivner.¹⁶ That sketch has not survived.

The next episode related by a Peabody old timer occurred the same month:

The first time I ever saw Remington, he rode into town from Bob Camp's ranch one day and his attention was attracted to a gathering of men in the middle of the street. In the midst of the group the town bully was tormenting an undersized, timid appearing man. Remington jumped out of the saddle, handed the reins to a bystander, pushed through the circle of men, caught the little man by the shoulder, and said: "Are you a stranger here."

On being told that he was, he said, "I thought so." Turning to the other, he said: "Now I will settle this matter with you. Clear your decks for action." And he thrashed the bully well. . . ."

On his ranch Remington assigned the heavy work to Kehr while he did the cooking for the hired hands and himself. Much of the food was from tins but the menu also ran to pancakes and beefsteak. They ate game they had shot, antelope and geese.

Lucinda Clifford remembered the young Remington as always riding a bucking, galloping pony and waving his sombrero with a free hand. Her mother, Vilinda Shriver, sent her over to the Remington ranch with fresh bakings of bread, cookies, and doughnuts.¹⁸ It was Mrs. Clifford who found Remington dumping

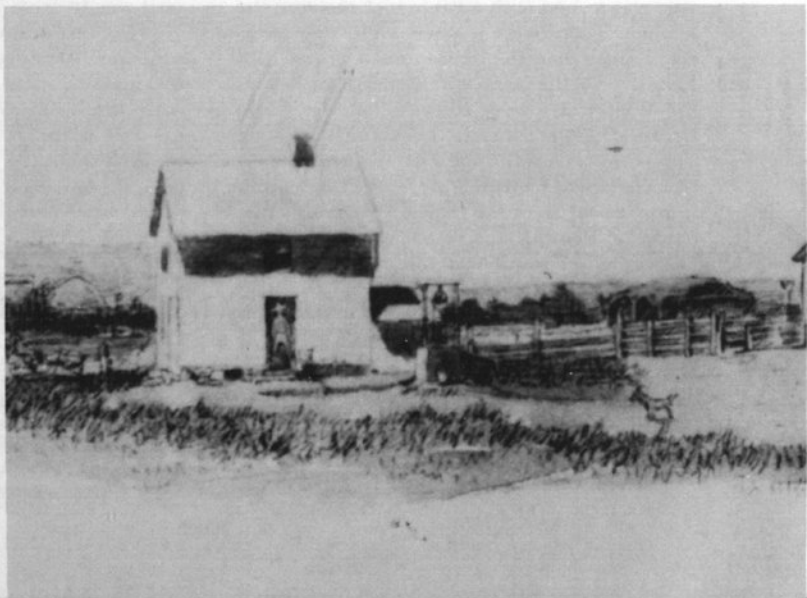
16. Victor Murdock, "Kansas Horse in Action Which Caught the Eye of Frederic Remington," *Wichita Eagle*, March 9, 1945.

17. "Remington a Kansan Thrashed a Bully at Peabody During the Cowboy Days," *Topeka State Journal*, December 28, 1909.

18. Corah Mooney Bullock, "This Story of Frederic Remington," *Butler County News*, El Dorado, September 5, 1963.

14. "Cecil Howes . . . Relates a Visit by Frederic Remington . . . to Kansas."—*Kansas City Star*, March 6, 1942.

15. Hermann Hagedorn, *Roosevelt in the Bad Lands* (Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), p. 101.



dirty potatoes into boiling water. "Mr. Remington," she said, "don't you wash potatoes before you cook them?" Gravely, he replied, "I should say not. I've tried them both washed and unwashed, and they taste better unwashed. Have you ever eaten boiled, unwashed potatoes? Tell your mother to try them this way."¹⁹

In combination with Camp, Remington bought horses. They were said to have had 50 brood mares, a typical extravagance after Ike Duvall had recommended they buy only 20. They also had saddle horses. Remington's favorite he described in an 1887 article: "Terra-Cotta was a nervous little half-breed Texas and thoroughbred, of a beautiful light gold-dust color, with a Naples yellow color mane and tail."²⁰ Camp had an interest in the fast trotter, Joe Young, that grazed in his pasture. Remington also raised cattle, but the claim that his main interest was mules is erroneous and thought to have come from misreading the word "miles" in Remington's careless handwriting.²¹

19. Myra Lockwood Brown and Robert Taft, "Remington Found Kansas" (unpublished manuscript, 1945), p. 3.

20. Frederic Remington, "Coursing Rabbits on the Plains," *Outing*, New York, May, 1887, p. 111.

21. Catherine W. Taggart, "Remington Release," *Ogdensburg Journal*, August 22, 1962.

Camp was from a banking family. He arranged credit for Remington who was enabled to buy his sheep for part cash, the remainder being owed to the Peabody Bank in the form of installment notes.

May 16, 1883, Remington wrote to his Uncle Horace Sackrider, the coexecutor under his father's will, on Peabody Bank stationery:

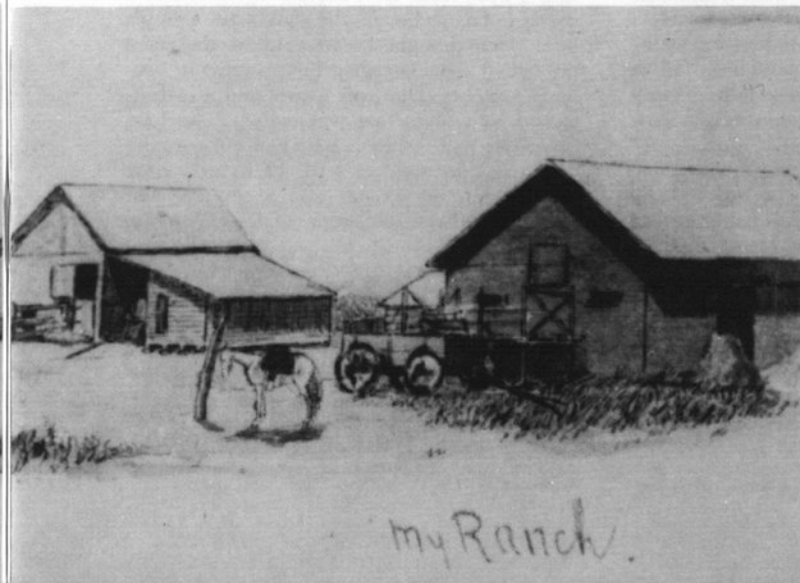
My account with this bank is within a hundred dollars or so of drawn up and I have this day made a draft through them on the St Lawrence County Bank for one thousand dollars. My sheep sheds are going up and I want the money. Have no delay as I would not have my draft dishonored for the world.

The Mo Land papers came duly to hand and I sent them on.

Remington's investment to this point was \$3,400 for the quarter section, plus the money that was originally in his Peabody account that covered his supplies and wages and part payments for the horses and sheep, plus this thousand dollars for sheep sheds, a total of about \$6,500.

The Missouri land papers he mentioned would have been his transaction with the Canton lawyer, W. A. Poste, to whom he also wrote the same day: "Papers came all right—are the cheese—man just shot down street—must go."

Remington made this sketch of his Kansas ranch in 1883. Compared to houses in Canton, N.Y., where he had been born, the ranch house was a hovel and there were none of the finer things he relished. He found the operation of the ranch hard work and the sheep stank. From a watercolor sketch, original owned by the Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, N.Y., all rights reserved.



These presumably related to a sale of land Remington's father had bought near Greenfield, Dade county, Missouri.

When Poste received this note, he was so annoyed at its brevity that he tore it up, according to his daughter Alice Gunnison. Then he realized its value in connection with Remington whose future importance he was sure of. He pasted the note together again by backing it to another paper. Mrs. Gunnison observed that "the fact that Remington wrote it in the greatest possible hurry is shown by the blotting of the *entire* note on the bottom of the sheet as he folded it together. . . ." ²² As a Kansan, Remington's biographer Robert Taft could not believe that a man had been shot in the street in Peabody in 1883. He checked all of the newspapers in the area for the period and found no such shooting. ²³

That May Remington who had not yet taken any great interest in his ranch had the opportunity to double his holding by acquiring the unimproved quarter section immediately to the west. May 31 he obtained title from Charles W. and Sara Potwin to the southeast quarter, section 26, township 23, range 3, for \$1,250, a fair price. ²⁴ His total investment was then about \$7,750.

In addition to serving as cook, Remington undertook the chore of watching the sheep herd. When he had anything better to do or he was bored, he hired a young boy with a dog to substitute for him. He gave boys the run of his ranch and was very popular with them. One day Remington bought candy for Hervy Hoyt who was handicapped. Remington knew the other boys teased Hervy so he told him, "Make them pay." Hervy shared the candy by tossing it in the air for the other boys to catch in their mouths. ²⁵

Remington was equally popular with some of the neighbors, the ones who enjoyed the boxing, wild steer riding, and drinking that took place on his ranch. He had been a varsity football player and a boxer at Yale. The more sober set resented his lack of thrift, his careless management, his ability to buy everything that appealed to him, while they worked hard. They called him a "hot sister," an overenthusiastic playboy not subject to the usual economic

controls. ²⁶ The activity at the ranch was the tough masculine variety. No woman was mentioned as involved, except that Camp went with a school teacher in El Dorado until, as he said, "Charlie Ewing beat my time."

The Peabody *Gazette* in its Plum Grove notes made occasional mention of Remington. The June 21 item was, "Mr. Remington on the 'Johnson place,' is building a large sheep barn." This was the second shed, the one at the top of the slope above the pasture.

Another personal note appeared July 5. Remington and George Shepherd of Peabody were taking a prospecting trip to the "southern part of the State." Remington made a second trip later in the year. Ed Duvall remembered both of these trips as having been to Colorado. South of Kansas was Indian territory, usually entered from Caldwell by a stage road and the cattle trail that went to Fort Reno. Remington was gone most of the summer, leaving the ranch to his young employees.

Remington's Kansas sketchbook still exists. It is of Peabody scenes rather than Indian territory. The drawings are clean lines but tenuous and poorly proportioned. They are innocent, untutored, without a trace of Yale Art School training.

Camp remembered that Remington sketched a great deal, putting down promptly anything that was of interest. ²⁷ Other neighbors recalled sketches of Preacher Dooty, Mother Duvall, a blooded bull with Ed Duvall holding the rope in the nose ring, the Peabody Library, and a carving of a cowboy on the wall inside Camp's barn. Some thought that illustrations that were published years later had their origins in Peabody sketches. One was a cow and a calf attacked by wolves that was called "The Last Stand" so that residents who had not seen the drawing confused it with "Custer's Last Stand." Another sketch was a cowboy that could have been the origin of the "Broncho Buster." ²⁸

Rolla Joseph said that Remington had been taking care of a boy who had been a problem to his Eastern parents and who had been given into Remington's care "to make a man of him." Remington kept a small black diary about the

22. Alice Poste Gunnison to Robert Taft, July 25, 1943.

23. Taft, *Artists and Illustrators*, p. 201.

24. Bullock to Taft, February 16, 1944.

25. Brown and Taft, "Remington Found Kansas," p. 11.

26. Myra Lockwood Brown to Robert Taft, July 25, 1945.

27. Questionnaire, "Robert Taft Collection," manuscript dept., KSHS.

28. Myra Lockwood Brown and Robert Taft, "Painter of the Rip-Roaring West," *Country Gentleman*, Philadelphia, v. 117, no. 9 (September, 1947), p. 17.

size of an ordinary pocket notebook. One day the diary was open on a table in the downstairs room, and two of the neighboring Lathrop men read the page that was written, "You can't make a man out of mud."²⁹ This diary is now missing.

There were huge parties the bachelors attended at the ranch and at a clubhouse they kept in Peabody. Boxing matches were held evenings and Sundays. Camp said that Remington had hoped to go far as a boxer but had been disillusioned by a knockout.³⁰ For one of the parties Remington as cook roasted a whole pig. It proved not to be edible. Remington had not known to dress it so he literally roasted the pig whole.³¹

The government-sponsored interviews with people who had known Remington were conducted by Myra Lockwood Brown as registration number 1808-3831, project number 7763. One was headed "Judge R A Scott, Eldorado, speaking—"

Camp introduced me to Remington on the street one day. He was a big fellow, fine looking and easy, jovial and popular.

Here is a little incident about Remington. He and I were sitting on a box in front of the drug store in Peabody one day during the summer of '83 when two ladies came by. Fred had on a rough suit, and a cow boy hat that didn't fit him any better than the suit he had on. I didn't know he was acquainted with the young women. When they were nearly past he nodded. I didn't get up. It was a little late for that. If I'd a seen them sooner— But Remington popped up and swung off that hat of his with the grace of a potentate. Later when they had gone and we were both seated again, he said pensively, "People might think I don't know how, but I do." One of those young women has been Mrs. Robert Scott for the past fifty six years.³²

The theme of all of the interviews is the recurrent picture of a man having a good time, spending his own money as freely as he did his windfalls as an Albany officeholder. J. H. Sandifer, the El Dorado postmaster, recalled:

Sunday was a big day up there on his ranch. The Daily boys, John and Will from Chelsea, both big Irishmen, and Peder Paulson, and a lot more, used to gather in and round up horses and have races. There'd be bucking and running and plenty of fun. In those early days Fred was just an eastern boy full of life and out for a good time.³³

What was there about Remington that made him the catalyst? This is Rolla Joseph speaking again:

I was only ten or twelve years old, but I used to go out to his place lots. There was several of us kids who used to go out there. . . . Remington was the cook. I've eaten lots of meals there. There used to be a lot of boxing on this ranch too. Remington and Jack Smith were both pretty good. Billy Kerr, Al Mathiat, and some fellows from over at Peabody used to box too. It was a regular evening passtime. On the shed lined hills of that ranch . . . Remington kept his sheep. I've seen as many as two or three thousand there at one time. My half brother, George Garrison, used to work up on the Camp ranch. One time he brought home a rough pencil sketch Remington had done. It was on rusty brown paper, and showed a cow and her calf with a wolf ready to attack. We like it. That picture went all around Plum Grove. Everybody saw it. Remington was awful well liked . . . popular! Remington was always doing pictures of people. Once at church at the Plum Grove school house, Remington sat on a bench in the back and while a tall fellow preached he sketched. When the fellow was done Remington had a picture of him. It was passed around at school for a long time after that. . . . Fred was a little reckless at times, used to drink some, but people liked him. . . .³⁴

The quantity of two or three thousand sheep is more than the several hundred usually mentioned.

September 5, 1883, Remington sent a wire from Peabody to his Uncle Horace Sackrider: "Can I draw for one thousand dollars telegraph reply." That would have made about \$9,000 invested, almost equal to the amount of his inheritance. Whatever additional funds Remington needed he would have to borrow or earn.

He certainly tried borrowing. Cousin Ella Remington wrote that Remington returned to Albany at one period to see her father, Remington's Uncle Bill, to ask for money to buy more land for his sheep ranch. Her father said, "Not a cent," until Remington was willing to settle down seriously to art. Uncle Bill in contrast to his brothers believed Remington had been born to be an artist.³⁵

The beginning of October, 1883, Uncle Mart who had become overtired from work in Albany, came out to visit the sheep ranch. This was Remington's 22d birthday.³⁶ They were riding back from Peabody one day when they were caught in a heavy rain. Drying out before an open fire did not help Uncle Mart whose

29. Myra Lockwood Brown to Robert Taft, January 5, 1945.

30. Brown and Taft, "Frederic Remington, Kansas Rancher," p. 3.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

32. Myra Lockwood Brown, WPA project, pp. 1-2, "Robert Taft Collection," manuscript dept., KSHS.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

35. Ella Remington Mills to Robert Taft, May 4, 1943.

36. Peter H. Hassrick, *Frederic Remington* (New York, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1973), p. 21.

"lung trouble" was aggravated.³⁷ The Peabody *Gazette* for October 18 reported that "Fred Remington's father started for his home in the East, last Monday morning." Father obviously meant uncle. By the next year, December 12, 1884, Uncle Mart was dead of tuberculosis at the age of 36. The Albany *Morning Express* in its obituary wrote, "His was a condensed life."³⁸ The Albany *Weekly Express* said, ". . . He was a peculiar, but very original man, and, all things considered, one of the most unique features ever seen in Albany Journalism. . . ." In this sometimes short-lived family, Mart's brother, the colonel, had died at 46.³⁹

Soon after the unfortunate Uncle Mart left Peabody, Remington experienced the kind of day that would be expected from a "holiday stockman." This was the subject of his May, 1887, article published in *Outing, the Magazine*, "Coursing Rabbits on the Plains." The day began with a mounted troop of the stockmen, owners and hands, using dogs to chase rabbits. This was a more rustic excursion than one of the formal meets of the American Coursing Club in Kansas but it served to excuse the men from ranch cares for another day.⁴⁰ "Coursing Rabbits" is all action, all interplay between people and animals, with little attention to landscape or background. The conclusion is the loss of a wager on a horserace with a working rancher that serves to point up the animosity of this group against Remington and his friends: ". . . I hain't got the money that you fellers down in the creek has. . . . I've been a layin' fer you fellers ever since I came inter these yar parts. . . ."

Losing the wager meant Remington was parted from his favorite pony Terra-Cotta, a mare. There was apparently no loss of face in riding a mare in Kansas, as there might have been for a Western cowboy. "Coursing Rabbits" was Remington's only story based on his Kansas experience.

Remington's Halloween pranks were equally poorly suited to endear him to the Plum Grove people. November 1, the preacher found his

buggy on top of the church and his cow inside the front door. One of the residents recalled that "Fred Remington paid for getting that buggy down, cleaning up the church, giving it a fresh coat of paint and made the pastor a present of \$10 or \$15."⁴¹

Another prank that was talked about with ill-feeling occurred at a party. Remington slipped behind the Englishman Cecil Wickersham and fired his revolver. Wickersham's calm was unruffled. "Put up that gun," he said. "You might hurt some one, Frederic."⁴²

The final prank was one where the fact that no one was hurt was only through luck. It finished Remington in Kansas.⁴³ The quotation is from Jacob DeCou who observed the whole episode:

When Christmas came the Plum Grove people planned a big entertainment to be given in their school house. It was a large building with double doors at the end and windows along the side like portholes.

Christmas Eve arrived. They had the usual program. A little girl all in a flutter in a white dress recited "Hang Up the Baby's Stocking" and all the rest, you know.

People like DeCou had driven for miles to attend the affair. The building was jammed and children were standing in the windows. Remington and four friends had ridden to town but they had stopped first at the livery stable where they could buy liquor. When the five entered the school, they saw in front of them the bald head of Squire Nathan Duncan against whom Remington nursed a grudge. The five threw paper wads and other things at the bald head until the Squire had them ousted from the school.⁴⁴

The feature, though, was the Christmas tree. As soon as the program was out of the way, all the lamps were turned off and the tapers on the tree were lighted for the coming of Santa Claus.

Remington and his cronies had gone into Hoyt's store where they had more drinks. Remington took a box of excelsior. They brought it into the schoolhouse yard and set fire to it.

Squire Duncan, a good old man, was the Santa Claus. He wore a buffalo robe which concealed his bald head, and false whiskers dangled from his chin. He had just started in to distribute the presents when the double doors swung open and someone shouted "Fire!"

37. Robert Taft, "The Pictorial Record of the Old West. V. Remington in Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Topeka, v. 16, no. 2 (May, 1948), p. 129.

38. Albany (N. Y.) *Morning Express*, December 13, 1884.

39. Albany (N. Y.) *Weekly Express*, December 11, 1884.

40. *Harper's Weekly*, New York, December 18, 1886, p. 825, "The Meet of the American Coursing Clubs."

41. Dary, "Frederic Remington in Kansas," pp. 86-87.

42. Murdock, "Of Frederic Remington and of the Halt He Made on Prairies of Kansas."

43. *Wichita Eagle*, November 26, 1943.

44. Brown and Taft, "Frederic Remington, Kansas Rancher," p. 6.

Men and women lost their heads and began rolling out windows. . . . An old maid became caught in the sash so she could neither get out or back in again. Dr. Seaman jumped to a seat, waved his cap and commanded, "Sit down. There's no danger!"

After the crowd got out, it found that the fire was caused by the dry goods box right in front of the door. The affair was laid to Fred Remington and his gang.

Great indignation prevailed.

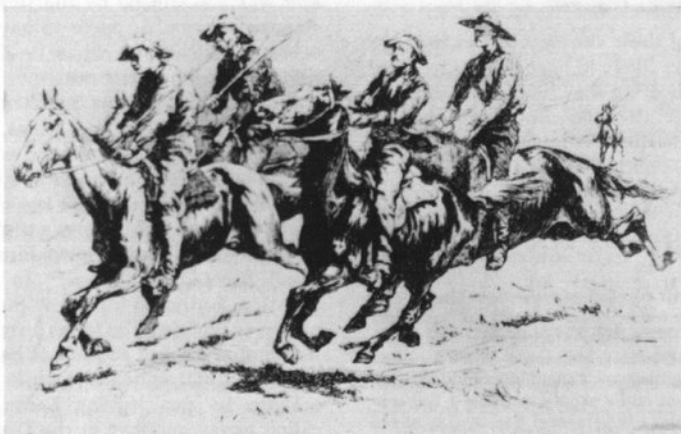
The episode was commented on in the *Walnut Valley Times*:

Some of the youngsters up in Plum Grove, on Christmas eve, at an entertainment in the school house, behaved in a most unseemly manner, judging by report, and got up a row which assumed almost the proportions of a riot. The matter has culminated by suit in the district court; Fred

all but Remington, Allen sent out for a bushel of apples and cigars which the jurors enjoyed during the long Sunday, watching through the windows the slow moving traffic in the mud of the unpaved streets.⁴⁶ At the end of the day the jury was still in disagreement.

The judge, Charles Lobdell, who became a public figure in Kansas as a publisher and the speaker of the house wrote his version:

We have just discovered what we think a genuine claim to greatness. In the early part of our brilliant career we occupied the lofty position of justice of the peace of El Dorado township in Butler county. One day there came to our office a complaint that four young men had disturbed a religious meeting, and a warrant was issued. When Con-



This sketch by Remington, showing Remington, Billy Kehr, Jim Chapin, and Robert Camp moving out onto the open range near the artist's Kansas ranch, appeared in *Outing* magazine, May 1887. It illustrated Remington's article, "Coursing Rabbits on the Plains," the only story he wrote based on his Kansas experience.

Pennington, Wm. Kehr, John Smith, Chester Farni and Chas. Harriman being the defendants. The first trial resulted in the disagreement of the Jury. Another trial is set for February 4th. The boys are a little "wild and wolly" occasionally in the northwest.⁴⁵

Pennington was of course Remington. All of the names and even the number of defendants varies with the accounts. There was no retrial.

One of the jurors in the trial was the same Jake DeCou. Throughout the trial Remington was called Billy the Kid. According to another juror, Frank S. Allen, Remington was blamed for everything. When one juror wanted to free

stable Cory returned his warrant he brought in three country boys, who had grown up in the county, and a bright young Englishman, with heavy fur overcoat and a laughing face . . . his name was Fred Remington. . . . After a two day's trial the jury disagreed and the case was dismissed upon payment of the costs, which, along with attorney's fees and all other expenses were borne by Remington. He only stayed in Butler county a short time after that, quitting his ranch to win fortune and fame in his profession, and we feel quite sure that we have the distinction of presiding over the only court in which he ever appeared as a criminal defendant.⁴⁷

The next week William Allen White, the Kansas sage, corrected Lobdell: "This is all

46. *El Dorado Times*, November 24, 1943.

47. *Kansas City Tribune*, October 29, 1897.

45. *Walnut Valley Times*, El Dorado, January 11, 1884.

very true excepting that Remington was an Englishman and that he left Butler county 'to win fame and fortune in his profession.' He went to Kansas City where he entered the saloon business."⁴⁸

The final word was from Jacob DeCou:

Years afterward, after Frederic Remington had begun to be famous, I met him in Kansas City. He was the same Fred. He asked me to go to dinner with him. I said, "Fred, tell me the truth about that Plum Grove Christmas entertainment."

Remington now fuller and richer of his experiences, laughed. "You heard the evidence and decided I had nothing to do with it, didn't you," the artist replied.

"But, oh say," and he laughed and laughed. "The sight of the old maw who got stuck in the window, and the way she wiggled her legs to get loose, wasn't that a terrible thing for a modest man to see?"⁴⁹

As in the rest of these stories, one has to judge whether they are likely to have been true. Here there is no indication that Remington entered the schoolhouse after the commotion, just as the tale about roasting the hog whole would be unlikely for a young man experienced as a hunter in the Adirondacks.

By December 29 Remington was finished with Kansas. He wrote to Arthur Merkly, a friend, that he was

. . . trying to sell here and go somewhere else . . . and when I get my money out of this scheme I am going further West . . . and there tackle some business. I don't care whether it is stock, Mercantile—either hardware or Whiskey—or anything else. I should like nothing better in the world than to find a partner in whom I had confidence and who had a little money. You are acquainted with the hardware biz, I believe. Why not start a hardware ranch out West?

Merkly apparently knew Remington well enough to avoid the partnership.

With his land for sale, Remington wanted to get out of Kansas as quickly as he could. According to Judge Scott, Remington

. . . advertised the sale of his stock and equipment. There were sheep, horses and cattle. I took over the notes for them. At that time he was flat broke. His money was gone. . . .⁵⁰

Buyers at the sale would have assumed the remaining obligations on the notes. Some of the notes would have come due after the stockraising boom had burst so they were worthless. Scott felt that Remington should have paid the balance on the notes but he did

not. Scott was said to have for that reason retained personal animosity towards Remington, although if Remington had been legally responsible, Scott as the Peabody banker would have been obligated to press the claim.⁵¹

Remington left Peabody around the end of January, 1884. According to the Butler county register of deeds, his half section of land was sold February 18 to David W. Green of New York for \$5,500.⁵² Green took possession May 31 and found the walls covered with Remington sketches. The price would have reflected improvements of \$850 in addition to the \$4,650 Remington paid. In light of the crash in stockraising values that began in July, 1884, and was a stampede by the summer of 1885, Remington would appear to have been omniscient in getting out when he did. The other holiday stockmen lost out.

Most of the serious ranchers like Robert Camp survived the bad times. Camp must surely have been disconcerted when the Remington he brought to Kansas turned out to have been irresponsible. At the age of 82, though, Camp still had in his room a picture of a rider he said Remington had given him, along with a small Remington bronze.⁵³ In answer to a question during an interview then, he was reported as replying, "as far as he remembers Mr. Remington did not acquire, if he ever did, the habit of drinking heavily, while in Kansas."⁵⁴

When he was leaving Kansas, Remington called to say goodbye at the Duvall farm. He waved off having the gate opened for him and vaulted over the five-foot barrier.

The *St. Lawrence Plaindealer* for February 27, 1884, carried the item:

Mr Fred Remington is on a visit from Kansas to his friends in these parts. He arrived in Canton on Tuesday of last week. He is an enthusiastic admirer of Kansas, not as a home, but as a place to make money. He has recently sold out his lands there and appears to have done well. He will return, making only a few days visit.

Remington was said to have returned to Peabody twice. The first was in 1885 as Rolla Joseph thought back to it:

. . . it was in June when we had the big hail storm that I saw him last. . . . Remington was there, I remember. . . . In the fall after that the first train came through. Remington was a fine fellow. But we never ex-

48. *Emporia Weekly Gazette*, November 4, 1897.

49. David Arnold, "Remington in Kansas," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, March 31, 1974, *Midway Magazine*.

50. Brown, WPA project, p. 2.

51. Brown to Taft, July 25, 1945.

52. Bullock to Taft, February 16, 1944.

53. W. I. Barth to Robert Taft, March 29, 1943.

54. *Ibid.*, August 11, 1943.

pected him to become famous. I couldn't believe it was him at first.⁵⁵

The second time was in 1886 on his way east after his first Southwestern trip as a special artist commissioned by *Harper's Weekly*.

The boxing gloves that had hung in Camp's barn were eventually taken down. The sketch Remington made of the Peabody Library hung there for many years before it disappeared. On file at the library, though, is the original deed to Remington's first quarter section, signed by

the Janzens. Other drawings Remington gave away are missing. The Butler County Historical Society had an unfulfilled Kansas centennial project in 1960 to restore Remington's ranch home.⁵⁶ The Frederic Remington Rural High School was dedicated near Plum Grove in 1962 but the hamlet itself is gone except for the cemetery.⁵⁷ The buildings on the Remington ranch have all been replaced. There are operating oil wells near by, and 20 miles east is the Kansas turnpike.

56. *Emporia Gazette*, April 22, 1960.

57. *Ogdensburg Journal*, August 14, 1962.

55. Brown, WPA project, p. 5.