



Joe Rosenkrans settles ranch on Dry Willow Creek in 1883

There were only five ranches on the Arickaree River in 1883-1884 including the **Rosenkrans Ranch**. From Haigler, NE to the Rosenkrans Ranch there were two ranches, the C Bar C and the Three Bar, and on the west of Rosenkrans there were the Reeck Brothers and Harry Strangways' Ranches. There were very few people and no farmers in 1884 but by 1893 the big cattlemen were gone and the farmers had moved in to take their place.

Joseph H. Rosenkrans

Joseph Rosenkrans was born December 22, 1855 in the Onondaga Valley, New York to Reverend Joseph and Eliza Thomson Rosenkrans. He was the youngest of four children, two sisters and a brother. As a result of his fighting prowess in school, he was nicknamed "Hooker" for the fighting General Hooker so he added H as a middle initial to his name. He worked in a general store but loved the outdoors and hunting and fishing.

Due to ill health, Joseph went to New England the fall of 1875 and then by a three-masted schooner around Cape Horn to San Francisco. The six-month ocean trip did not improve his health. He looked for a favorable location in California but a doctor advised him to

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THE WRAY MUSEUM

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WRAY, CO 80758

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return home. He crossed the country by train and bought the store where he had worked but he was not happy. Friends in Denver encouraged him to come to Colorado.

In 1883 J. H. Rosenkrans and a life long friend of his, Irving L. Barker, started for Colorado. Rosenkrans, however, stopped at Rochester, NY to visit some relatives and friends and therefore the two of them lost track of each other for some time. Irving Barker traveled on to Denver and went up into the mining district around Leadville. For over a year he lived in the mountains and then he met Rosenkrans again in Denver.

Rosenkrans did make it to Denver in 1883 and there met the Young Brothers who owned a sheep ranch in Arapahoe County (now Yuma County) near the Nebraska line. He came with them by train to Haigler, NE, then the only railroad depot in the area. They then traveled 12 miles across the hills to the Dry Willow Ranch, a mile from the Arickaree River. It was located in what was known as Dry Willow Creek. The creek was not actually dry but instead had a plentiful supply of water.

The Youngs were running a sheep ranch. After looking over the property, he decided to buy the ranch. The only experience he had with animals was to take care of his driving horse in New

York. The Young Brothers promised to stay with him while he learned the business. First, it was lambing, then shearing and then putting up hay for the winter. He worked at improving the place, diverting the creek with dams and ditches to water the garden, yard and meadows, where he soon had alfalfa growing. Irrigated alfalfa fields became a major crop. The Dry Willow Ranch originally had 2,000 acres of deeded land but more was added as it became available.

At the time Rosenkrans settled in this area it was a free-range cattle country. The ranch was situated at the junction of Willow Creek and the middle fork of the Republican River and was mostly bottomland. Willow Creek, a never-failing spring creek, ran for ten miles through the ranch and meadowlands. The bottoms were covered with a heavy growth of cottonwood and willow timber and furnished shelter for stock and wood and timber for domestic uses.

October 1885 blizzard

The *Benkelman News-Chronicle* reported the 1885 October blizzard as the worse for early storms on record. Rosenkrans & Larned on the South Fork had men out all night during the storm, working a band of 17,000 sheep. By keeping them moving the loss was minimal. Other ranchers suffered big losses.

Rosenkrans planted trees and built first a sod bunkhouse for the help and then a three-room sod house with a pole and sod roof for his new bride to be, Miriam Robinson. The first barn and corral on the ranch were also sod.

Editors Note: All of the following pictures, with the exception of ones marked otherwise, are courtesy of Mark Jones, current owner of the ranch



Sod home before 1898



First frame building in Yuma County

An interesting note: the Young Brothers built the first frame building in the whole of Yuma County on the Rosenkrans ranch in 1882. The lumber, the first in the county, was purchased from the Young Brothers Lumber Company in Ft. Lupton.

Miriam Robinson

Joseph married Miss Miriam D. Robinson of Middleport, New York on Feb. 21, 1887. She was born on Aug. 24, 1865. Together they lived on and made this ranch their headquarters, raising a family of three children, daughter Margaret and sons, William T. (Billy) and Robert.



Miriam Rosenkrans and two children before the addition of the 2nd story to the house.



Joe Rosenkrans and family pictured at their home in 1900. The second story was added in 1898

The home was an outstanding Spanish-Mission type home in a setting of lawn and trees fronting the rugged sandhills covered with sage and redtop grass. The ranch house had a 66-foot front with two wings projecting, and a court in the center. There were ten large rooms with a bathroom, two pantries and modern conveniences. It also featured five outside screened porches, eight outside doors and over 40 windows. In addition it had two fireplaces and three cisterns of 200 barrels each, giving an ample supply of good drinking and washing water. A brick reservoir, 10 x 35 feet connected by pipe with two

houses, furnished plenty of cool, clear water

Surrounding the buildings was a fine grove of forest trees, elm, ash, maple, basswood, box elder, etc and a small orchard of 35 apple trees and about 20 plum and cherry trees. Besides these trees there were five acres of planted timber.



Joe Rosenkrans holding baby Robert, Margaret and Billy-Notice the stairs to the second floor. They are still standing

All the children went to Onondaga Academy in New York to finish their education. William was the only one who spent much time on the ranch.



Billy, Margaret and baby Robert



Billy, Miriam Rosenkrans, her mother and Margaret



**Miriam and Joseph H. Rosenkrans
(From Yuma County History Book)**

The Rosenkrans made many improvements to their ranch over the years. They hired around 20 ranch hands and used the old frame building (pictured earlier) for a bunkhouse. Most of the men worked during the week, staying at the ranch and went home on weekends.

There was a large building for a feed mill, blacksmith shop, tool house, cow house, etc. There was also a stable and granary 32 x 64 feet. The stable had room for 24 horses and also a box stall. The cattle shed was 32 x 64 feet.

There was over 20 miles of "Page & Lamb" woven wire fencing, costing about \$400 per mile.

Three hundred acres of the ranch were covered by alfalfa meadows. During the season of 1910, 100 acres of this alfalfa yielded \$5,600 worth of seed besides several tons of hay per acre.

Hay yielded around four to seven tons and three to ten bushels of seed per acre were worth \$9.00 per bushel at that time. Alfalfa hay sold for \$8 to \$10 per ton. The land was also good for raising corn and potatoes and suitable for sugar beet growing.



Saddled up and heading for hay fields



Rounding up sheep for shearing in corral east of headquarters

Sheep were a major source of income for the Rosenkrans Ranch at the beginning. The enclosed sheep barn, 32 x 192 feet, featured a skylight and was piped with running water. There was also a sheep shed 28 x 200 feet. Corrals were fitted for feeding 5,000 sheep for market, piped with frost proof pipe and hydrants and watered by aid of three windmills and large tanks.

The Rosenkrans' Willow Creek Ranch included the Lower Horse Creek

Ranch, 160 acres of deeded land and 640 acres of rented school land; the Upper Horse Creek Ranch consisting of 320 acres of deeded land; the Upper Arickaree Ranches consisting of three separate pieces of 160, 160 and 320 acres each; the Squaw Canon Ranch of 40 acres of grass and the Upper Willow Creek Ranches in three pieces of 40, 160 and 160 acres.



Wooden corrals built with lumber from New York



Hired men sheering sheep

Joseph's mother and sister came and took homesteads or pre-emptions but sold them to him, as they did not want to stay. As Joseph's mother grew older, he went back to New York to take care of

her. The family lived in New York until about 1910.

He returned to Wray and in 1911 built a two-story house on the corner of 4th Street and Birch (the former Dave Fix home) At that time the highway came north down Main Street, then east on 4th Street to Cedar and again north a block and continued on east toward Laird.



Joe Rosenkrans home in Wray

Soon after this, the altitude began to bother him, so he built a house in San Antonio, TX in 1916. From then on he came to Colorado some summers but spent the winters in Texas.

Robert dies

Joseph and Miriam's son, Robert, was killed accidentally in 1916. **From the Wray Gazette, June 29, 1916:** "This obituary is very long and here is the verdict from the inquest. "That the said Joseph Robert Rosenkrans came to his death while attempting to cross the railroad track of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railway Company in an automobile on the public highway at a point about four miles and half east of Wray, Colorado, known as the Rife Crossing, by being struck by train No. 14 of the said C, B and Q Railway CO at about 5:50 p.m. on Saturday, June 24, 1916. Said train was in charge of Conductor Callen and engineer Hardy.

"We further find that the cause of death was not felonious. We would recommend that the public highway from the place of the said Rife crossing be changed to run along the south side of the railway track to a point where the first crossing west of the Rife crossing is located, thus eliminating both of said crossings which we consider to be dangerous and unsafe to public travel.

He leaves to mourn his untimely death, his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Rosenkrans, a brother, W. T. Rosenkrans and a sister, Mrs. Charles H. Gable. The funeral was held at Onondaga Valley Station, Syracuse, NY with burial in that state."

Judge Irving L. Barker & Rosenkrans

As previously mentioned, Mr. Barker met up with Rosenkrans in Denver and came to his ranch in northeastern Colorado. For nine months, Irving Barker worked on the ranch but he decided that he would go into the mountains again. He went to Denver and studied mining in the School of Mines at Golden getting a civil engineering degree. Thereafter he traveled around the mountains until 1893.

When Barker returned to the Rosenkrans Ranch in 1893 the big cattlemen were gone and the farmers had moved in to take their place. When he got off the train at Haigler in 1893 to go to the ranch, the town had grown so much in the years since he had been there he hardly recognized it. There were numerous small farms with little sod houses and little frame houses on both sides of the valley. When he arrived at the ranch he was surprised to see the amount of fence that had been constructed to keep the sheep and cattle on the ranch.

Never before had there been over a mile of fence in the whole county and all of the land was free land but now practically none of the good land was free as it had been homesteaded and preempted and now was under cultivation for corn and wheat. Prior to that year there probably had not been 1000 acres in cultivation in the whole country.

In 1894 Barker was appointed foreman of the Rosenkrans ranch, due to the fact that Mr. Rosenkrans' children were old enough to start school and he wanted them to be educated in the east. For over 20 years, Barker practically took charge and ran the ranch as he desired because Rosenkrans was there only half the time.

A great number of sheep were herded on this ranch. Although there were a number of cattle, the sheep were more important to Rosenkrans. At one time he had control of over 17,000 sheep, 8,000 were being fed in Beaver City, NE 4,000 in Haigler and the remaining on the ranch. In those days the ranch was composed of 3,600 acres.

Sheep were easy to make money on but it was almost as easy to lose one's whole investment. Sheep raising was a very precarious business and the younger and more carefree men took up this business. Rosenkrans made more money than anyone else in this county grazing sheep.

However, he lost most of this money building dams on the Arickaree River. He built three dams at a cost of about \$15,000 and heavy rains washed all of them out.

The valley was cut in many places by deep arroyos which when it rained did not soak up the water and let it run down into the canyon. These dams were improperly constructed in that they did

not have adequate flood control and when a large rain poured water into the valley, it put too much pressure on the embankment. With the loss of property caused by the washouts and the cost of the dams, it is unknown how much these ventures cost J. H. Rosenkrans.



Building a dam west of headquarters on north side of creek



One of the Rosenkrans dams

This dam had a canal system with pipeline to the house and three cisterns. It is interesting how even in those years, someone had the knowledge to utilize water by building a dam.

During the years of 1893 and 1894 the cattlemen and sheep men were doing very well but the farmer was not in a good situation due to a two-year drought. Many of the farmers left the country but few of the stockmen left.

When Mr. Barker first was foreman of the ranch, they shipped most of their

stock from Haigler, but later on as Laird grew they shipped from there as it was a few miles closer to the ranch. They also started trading in Laird.

Mr. Barker built the house at 530 West 4th Street in 1911 and moved his sister Eva and his parents from St. Louis, MO to reside in his home. In 1917 he moved to Wray and became County Judge. The William Rosenkrans owned the house until their deaths when David Leadabrand bought it.

Joseph and Miriam Rosenkrans continued for many years building an outstanding ranch and the home they built there became a cultural and social center for much of the community. It was common for them to host dances on the upstairs floor. Those attending stayed the night and enjoyed breakfast with the Rosenkrans.

They sold their residence in town in the early 1920s and moved to San Antonio to be near their daughter. Joseph died at the home of his daughter, Margaret, in San Antonio on Friday, Dec. 12, 1924. He would have been 70 years old on December 22. Miriam died in February of 1949 at the home of her daughter after an illness of three months.

William T. Rosenkrans

William, or Billy as he was called, was born to Joseph and Miriam Rosenkrans at the ranch on May 25, 1890. He was their second child, a daughter Margaret having been born April 13, 1889. He spent the early years of his life on the ranch near where Willow Creek and the Arickaree River meet.

About 1903 he did move back to New York with his parents for a time to take care of his grandmother Eliza, his father's mother. While they were in New York, the children attended the

Onondaga Academy where his father had gone to school. They returned to Wray around 1910. On January 1, 1914, The Wray Gazette reported that the Rosenkrans Ranch had grown to 4,400 acres in 30 years.

One fall William and his sister Margaret were invited to the annual Teachers' Reception where he met Violet Ridler. That was the beginning of their romance.



William and Violet Rosenkrans
From Yuma County History book

William married Violetta (Violet) Marie Ridler in 1915 and they lived on the ranch for several years. Violet was born September 27, 1883 in Indiana and came to Colorado with her parents in 1908. She taught school in the country and in Wray and served one term as County Superintendent in 1913 and 1914.

William and Violet had one son, Robert and one daughter, Dorothy. When they started to school, Violet went back to teaching. They moved into Wray in 1937 so the children could attend high school. She taught in Laird and Wray and, wherever a substitute was needed, until her retirement.

They lived on the ranch and managed the sheep until about 1916 when a lack of pasture brought an end to the sheep business. They continued to raise alfalfa and cattle.

The William Rosenkrans were long standing members of the First United Presbyterian Church in Wray. Violet was

one of the charter members of PEO, Chapter AA organized on January 20, 1915.

William worked for the State Employment Service, the State Road Department and the Conrad Lumber Company. Later he was County Treasurer for 16 years. In 1937 they sold the ranch to Robert L. Jones who preserved the sod house and restored some of the other buildings.

Robert L. Jones

Robert L. Jones purchased the Rosenkrans Ranch in 1937 from the Federal Land Bank through a foreclosure.

Robert (Bob) Jones Sr. and Beatrice Anderson were married in Alma, NE March 14, 1917 where they farmed northeast of Alma. In 1923 they moved with their three children, Loell, Lyle and Grant to a 1,000-acre ranch in northwest Cheyenne County, Kansas. Five more children were added to the family, Evelyn, Calvin, Raymond, Bob, Jr. and Caryl.



Robert Jones, Sr. and Beatrice Jones

Robert's parents and grandparents came west to Nebraska by covered wagon and settled in Harlan County, NE.

His parents met and were married there. They had six girls and one boy.

Beatrice Anderson's father, Charles F. Anderson, left Sweden in the 1880s and came to Harlan County, NE where he homesteaded 160 acres. Beatrice's mother came from Sweden to Chicago in 1890. In 1897 she came to Harlan County where she met and married Charles. They had two children, Beatrice and Edwin.

In March of 1938, the family moved to the Rosenkrans Ranch, 11 miles south of Laird on the Arickaree River. Soon all but four members of the family came down with scarlet fever. The entire family was quarantined for six weeks. They were milking 20 cows so the milk had to be fed to the pigs. A neighbor boy brought groceries for them. Grant, Loell, Raymond and Bea nursed the sick and took care of the chores and so they all survived.

The children were raised during the depression, one World War and two conflicts. Life on the ranch was always busy and with eight kids never boring. Bea and Bob never knew how many would come down the stairs for breakfast on a Sunday morning. Someone was always bringing home a friend or two. During the busy summer months, there were as many as 20 for breakfast and more at the noon meal.

The interest in ranching, created by their father, dominated the careers of the boys. This ranch, which began as a 2,380-acre tract grew to 8,000 acres with four sets of improvements.

Robert Jones, Jr.

Robert Jones, Jr. or Bob, as he was commonly known, was born April 1, 1934 to Robert Sr. and Beatrice Jones. He was raised on the ranch and in 1955 married Barbara Jane Parker,

daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Parker of Wray. They had two children, Mark and Sherry.

After his father retired and moved to Wray, Bob took over management of the ranch and purchased the home place in 1968. He leased more land and farmed and raised cattle.

Bob and Janie lived in the large sod house, which had recently been restored. They also did more remodeling of the original two-story home stuccoing the outside and texturing the inside walls. Glass windows were installed in the open porch upstairs.



Rosenkrans/Jones home in 1981

In 1973, Bob was preparing some ground for irrigation and uncovered some bones, which he knew were not cow bones. Mr. Miller of Sterling was contacted and recognized them as being prehistoric. His son, a professor in archeology, confirmed this. Mr. Miller and his son opened the first ten-foot square. The Smithsonian Institute and the National Geographic became interested in this site and sent anthropologist Dr. Dennis Stanford to supervise the diggings.

In the summer of 1973 a group of 25 to 30 students came to work the site.

They were from Argentina, Brazil and Spain as well as the United States. This site is the only site in the United States that the National Geographic has flown their flag over. Mark Jones recently donated this flag to the Wray Museum.

This site yielded over 130 bone and stone artifacts and the bones of around 300 ice age Bison that were butchered and processed by men of the Hell-Gap Culture. This culture flourished ten thousand years ago. This location, named the Jones-Miller site, was on lands belonging to Calvin Jones and Robert Jones Jr.



Robert, Jr. and Janie Jones 1984

Bob Jones lost his life in a tragic farm accident on October 19, 1991. Janie passed away in March of 2003.

Mark Jones

Mark Jones took over the ranch following the death of his parents. Parcels were sold over the years and the ranch now consists of 900 acres. Mark continues to farm and raise cattle. He has

updated the sod home and continues to live there.

Three generations of the Jones' men have raised cattle and farmed the same land for 74 years.



Mark Jones, Robert Jones, Jr. and Robert L. Jones

Mark commented his story is still in progress and so the Rosenkrans, Jones Ranch continues into the future.

Sources: Sutton's Southwest Nebraska & Republican River Tributaries by E. S. Sutton; The Frontier Legion by L. Ray Hersey; Wray, Colorado Centennial Book; East Yuma County History Book; information and pictures from Mark Jones including three sale flyers advertising the ranch-"J. H. Rosenkrans' Willow Creek Ranches, Description of J. H. Rosenkrans' Willow Creek Ranch, approximately 1918, Post office Laird, Colorado and J. H. Rosenkrans' Willow Creek Ranches, the Outlying Lands;

Wray Gazette, 1916; Benkelman News Chronicle, Oct. 1885.

Museum Happenings

The Wray Museum is excited to bring **Dr. Richard Stucky** to present an evening program for the community, "Ancient Colorado Ecosystems: From Tropical Forest to Ice Age Mammal Communities on the Great Plains and across the Rocky Mountains" on Monday, November 5 at 7:30 p.m. at the Wray Kitzmiller Auditorium.

The program will be about the overall prehistory of Colorado with special emphasis on local discoveries in northeastern Colorado. The program is free to the public.

Dr. Stucky will also give a program: "Fossil Elephants, Rhinos and Sabertooth Cats from the Great Plains of Eastern Colorado" for middle and high school students during the day. This program will be directly about the discoveries that have been made in Yuma and Phillips County including those near Wray and Holyoke.

Dr. Stucky is Curator of Paleocology and Evolution in the Department of Earth Sciences at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

These programs coincide with the Wray Museum's after school programs for students in second through sixth grade. Mark this on your calendar and plan on attending his very interesting program.

After School Program

The museum's after school program, "Bones, Bones, Bountiful Bones," began on Monday, Oct. 1 with "Ancient Bones." Students learned what types of animals lived here by studying their bones and other fossils. "Bison Bones" were the topic of the Oct. 15 program. There was a discussion on how

Colorado's first people hunted these large animals.

Josh Melby, with the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, presented the program on "Backyard Bones" Oct. 29. He showed the students bones of modern animals and told them how to identify some of their tracks.

The last program will be November 19 on "Ancestral Bones." Students will discover how to research their family tree and locate information about their ancestors.

Tours

Las Menoras came for a museum tour on September 13. On September 19, the freshman class from Idalia visited the museum. Friday, Sept. 21 a large number of the Pedal of the Plains cyclists stopped at the museum. Ten ladies of the Red Hat Society from Venango, NE toured the museum on September 25.

Admissions

The Wray Museum welcomed 49 visitors in August coming from the following Colorado towns: Yuma, Denver and Wray. Out of state visitors were from Nebraska, Kansas, Washington, Alaska, Arizona, Iowa, California, Arkansas, Texas and New York. A gentleman was in from Reading, United Kingdom.

In September the museum had 134 visitors coming from Eckley, Johnstown, Estes Park, Highlands Ranch, Lafayette, Denver, Idalia, Penrose, Hillside, Foxfield, Haxtun, Loveland, Breckenridge, Boulder, Golden, Colorado Springs, Lakewood, Littleton, Superior, Steamboat Springs, Parker, Northglenn and Wray in Colorado. Out of state visitors were from Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Maryland, Arizona, Iowa, California, New Mexico and Texas.

HOLIDAY HOME TOUR

Sunday, Dec. 9

1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Two historic homes will be featured this year. Tickets may be purchased at the Wray Museum beginning Monday, Dec. 3. Maps will be provided.

Tickets \$5.00

Holiday Home Tour Dec. 9
features two historic homes

This year's tour features two historic homes: the octagon house in Laird and the Rosenkrans/Jones sod home south of

Laird..

The octagon house in Laird was built by Burton Prentice in 1892 and recently restored. Owners Rex and Jody Buck have graciously agreed to allow us to show the home for this year's tour.

This October newsletter was about the Willow Creek Ranch established by Joseph Rosenkrans in 1883. Mark Jones is opening his home for the Holiday Home Tour. Don't miss this opportunity to tour this historic sod ranch home.

I will be writing about the C Bar C Ranch and the Prentice octagon home in Laird in the December newsletter. If anyone has any information or pictures of either of these, please contact Dorsey at the Wray Museum, 332-5063 or write to Wray Museum, P.O. Box 161, Wray, CO 80758.