

History of the Mill Iron

The Mill Iron Ranch is made up of four individual ranches. The heart of the ranches was homesteaded by W. W. Chapman. Little is known about Chapman or when he established the ranch. In 1882 W. L. Kuykendall and his sons purchased the homestead from Chapman. The ranch was wide open, with no fences. The 1,272 head of cattle would range long distances. Kuykendall worked most of his life on improving the ranch. John M. Kuykendall, W. L.'s son, became very interested in the cattle business. He joined the Wisconsin-Wyoming Cattle Co. with the J. I. Case of Wisconsin. John soon became the "cowman" of the family. An article in the Saratoga Sun mentioned John's outstanding cattle saying, the Kuykendall bunch of cattle was the largest band in the country at the time. John Kuykendall moved to Denver in his later days, but came back to the ranch whenever the cattle were sold.

Year by year, the field for cattlemen narrowed and many ranchers sold their cattle and went into the sheep business. Letters from other early ranchers indicated that a series of severe winters and lowering of cattle prices had a huge effect on the cattlemen. The Kuykendall family struggled tremendously. They finally decided to close the ranch for the winter and permanently close as a horse ranch. The spring brought new hope to the family, and they built new buildings and stables. The new buildings were intended to help support the cattle in the coming winter.

Eliza Kuykendall, the wife of W. L. Kuykendall, was a very important part of the ranch. She was especially important during the summer months. She was a businesswoman and was manager of the family in many ways. She made the loans, bought nearby homesteads, and most likely kept the books for the ranch. She owned the first recorded cattle brand in Wyoming, the rolling M.

The Mill Iron had several owners, and in 1959 George Storer purchased the four ranches and combined them to make the Mill Iron Ranch. George Storer died in 1975 and the ranch was sold in 1976 to Coors Container Company. In 1977, Coors Container Company sold the ranch to the N. R. Petry Company, and that left John and Patty Lufkin as resident managers. In 1990 Patty Lufkin and Dave Vecchio were in charge of the Mill Iron Ranch. On July 23, 1999, it was sold to John Malone and the Silver Spur Land and Cattle, LLC.