

## Museum News: Noah Hubbard Corder

By C. W. (Bill) Smith

Noah Hubbard Corder was born on March 8, 1855 in Marble Falls, Burnet County, Texas, to Shepherd Bayles Corder, Sr. and Charlotte Montgomery Corder. The elder Corders were both born in St. Helena Parish, East Baton Rouge, Louisiana, but moved to Texas after their marriage with the first seven of their children. The Corder family is of unknown origin, but the Montgomerys were Scottish. The elder Corder's parents were born in Fauquier County, Virginia, coincidentally, the birthplace of Charlie Wilson's mother.

Noah married Caroline Schrier on November 20, 1878 in Kimble County, Texas, and to that union was born seven children: Josephine, Mary Elizabeth, Winnie, Eugene, B. T., Monty, Thomas and Dick. The Corders suffered two tragedies through the years. Little Winnie died at the age of eleven months from measles and their son, Tom, when he was thrown from a horse at age 20.

For several years Mr. Corder was sheriff of Kimble County, and then they moved on to Menard, Texas for a short time. Finally, in 1905, the Corders moved to Pecos County and the Big Canyon Ranch, shortly before it became Terrell County. Moving all their possessions by covered wagon and driving horses, cattle and sheep made the move grueling, especially the crossing of the Pecos River at Sheffield, Texas.

Corder bought into a partnership with four other men from Menard, Texas to purchase the Big Canyon Ranch, which had been started by Andrew and J. J. Dull, steel makers and industrialists of Pennsylvania. They had obtained the acreage by trading rails to the railroad when it was being constructed, in exchange for 109,000 acres of land comprising a huge canyon north of Sanderson, running from eastern Brewster County to the eastern side of Sanderson. When the consortium purchased the property in 1905 from the Dull heirs, they added a huge section of land at Dryden to form the Big Canyon Ranch.

Mr. Corder and his family lived at the headquarters some 26 miles north of Sanderson, a collection of some 27 buildings. Largely unfenced until the late 1920s, huge flocks of sheep were shepherded by Mexican herders in the traditional manner, moving the sheep from spot to spot and never letting them overgraze.

They hired 25 to 40 cowboys to run the cow operations, which consisted of about 5000 cattle and some 250 saddle horses. The ranch ran about 24,000 head of sheep and had many herders.

Shearing operations took place in two large sheep sheds and used shearing equipment operated by steam engine. Each shed had a capacity of 40 shearers and they worked from daylight to dark. The herders had to receive supplies to stay in the field, and they had to pick up their supplies at a well-stocked commissary every 15 days, which operated like a big general store.



The ranch was so large and complex that many men had specialized jobs. One man kept the books and financial information; one man was a "wagon boss" who kept equipment in operation and made sure supplies were updated; one man to run the commissary and keep track of inventory; one man supervised fence-building operations; one man supervised maintenance of the windmills and water tanks and assisted in drilling new wells; one man was a blacksmith who kept equipment in good repair and shod the horses, and a "sheep rustler" who kept track of the herders and rounded up stray sheep. Another person who had an important job on the ranch was the cook, who prepared meals for the cowboys, who ate in the ranch kitchen and dining room, which was a separate building from the residence. Mrs. Corder was an excellent cook, but it was too much work for one person. There were also cooks who went out on roundups with the chuck wagon to prepare meals on site.

Mr. Corder's special interest was horses. He had been taught well how to judge horse flesh and he built a fine herd to keep the ranch running smoothly. He also liked mules and began a large herd of fine mules.

The Big Canyon Ranch headquarters was about a third of the way on the trail to Fort Stockton from Sanderson. It became a favored stopover for weary travelers. The lonely ranch families enjoyed the visits and family, friends and neighbors were considered one big, happy family.

As the years moved on, Mr. Corder began to have health issues. On May 16, 1920, Noah Corder passed away in El Paso, Texas, and was buried in San Antonio. Mrs. Corder passed away in 1926 and was buried at her husband's side.

The Corders were well respected and beloved citizens. As avid supporters of our county and the ranching industry, Noah and Caroline Corder were true pioneers of Terrell County.