

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY OF HISTORIC RANCHING AT  
GRANT-KOHR'S RANCH NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE,  
WITH APPLICATION TO CURRENT PARK BUSINESS PLANS

by

Brandon M. Chapman

and

Matthew S. Carroll

DENVER SERVICE CENTER  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
DENVER, COLORADO

For Con and his ancestors



## PREFACE

After arriving in Montana in the early 1860s, Conrad Kohrs and half-brother John Bielenberg quickly established meat supply shops for western Montana's mining populations and eventually built one of the largest ranches of the nineteenth century U.S. west through the subsequent five decades. Kohrs and Bielenberg (K&B) weathered the short-lived drops in prices and population of cattle through the "hard winter" of 1886 and 1887 with fewer losses than other western stock-raisers for whom the winter marked their end in the profession. For nearly a century, the western history of ranching literature has emphasized a grand narrative and case studies of a failed cattle industry and the abrupt end of free-grazing due to the "hard winter" environment. In this study, we show why K&B were resilient compared to other ranching outfits. K&B were forward-thinking decision-makers concerning investment diversification (e.g. mining, horses, banks, stocks, bonds, other cattle businesses), delegation of ranching duties, allocating winter hay and ranch-hands to protect high quality cattle, and accessing credit through multiple long-term banking partners. Records of payments, returns, and bank account entries in K&B ledgers housed at the Grant-Kohrs National Historic Site (GRKO) and the Montana Historical Society (MHS) provide the data to explore this dynamic case study.

The prevailing narrative in the western history of ranching literature says that the transition from open to closed rangelands and the spread of formal grazing rights was one of the most impactful economic and social changes in the history of the U.S. west. K&B, however, show us a different story. While their experiences parallel the initial "boom" years of the 1870s and early to mid-1880s that saw them and many of their

contemporaries earn increasing financial returns and expand the quantity of their claimed rangeland acreage, K&B did this with unique management strategies while privy to the fortune of accommodating circumstance. For the larger western literature, this report will clarify how a prominent cattle business endured moreso in terms of investing in multiple economic ventures, practicing sound delegation of authority, mixing open with closed ranging techniques, and accessing credit through long-term financial partners across most of their existence as a ranching outfit. In this sense, the report is more a proactive local, regional, and company story than what is prominent in the literature, a national story of reactions to railroad expansion, market prices, and environmental challenges.

Besides the interest of academic historians and western history researchers, we hope this report finds interest from friends of the ranch, relatives of Kohrs and Bielenberg, western history enthusiasts visiting the park, and Montana historians and residents as it elaborates on the story of a prominent business and family of the then burgeoning U.S. west. We anticipate the report will help inform park interpretation practices at GRKO. Guided tours, printed handout materials, and timeline displays in the museum can benefit from further evidence of resource and financial management during the growth decades of the outfit. The report will provide current GRKO staff a synthesis of previously used natural resource and economic management techniques such as how winter feed was supplemented in the early years of the business and shaped K&B's success, how ranchers often held informally recognized rights to specific rangelands through water rights, how K&B were comparatively successful and long-enduring due to investment diversification, knowing how to delegate duties to ranch-hands to spread out work, accessing credit to

speculate on cattle, buying from regional and local butcher shops and cattle companies to build herds, and using “mixed range” (simultaneously maintaining fenced range feeding for winter grazing and open range grazing for the remainder of the year) strategies to thwart harsh winters.

More needs to be said in tours, handouts, and displays at GRKO about prominent players at the ranch besides Kohrs, especially Kohrs’ partner and eventual full-time ranch manager John Bielenberg. Bielenberg’s estate worth was comparable to Kohrs immediately after their respective deaths and Bielenberg managed the ranch from the 1880s-1920s, over-seeing cattle transactions and shipping while Kohrs gradually retired and focused on managing other investments. Tom Hooban, an experienced freighter and trader before employed by K&B, is the other crucial figure in the history of the ranch who deserves more notice as an early foreman who supervised cattle drives during the initial growth years of the outfit and a manager of open range outposts holding thousands of cattle hundreds of miles from the home ranch.

In focusing on the K&B era of GRKO, the 1860s through the 1920s, this research supplements two previous works on GRKO. John Albright’s *Historic Resource Study*, *Cultural Resources Statement*, and *Historic Structure Report* published in 1979 has served for decades as the initial report and analytical history of GRKO for the National Park Service (NPS). Albright covers more scope including the Johnny Grant years pre-K&B and a thorough outline of the Warren era through the mid-twentieth century. We expand and specify on earnings, financial holdings, and investment diversification through the K&B era. While we focus more on analysis and details of economic

management during these decades, Albright has numerous transactions, especially cattle purchases and sales, through the 1870s that are not re-produced or analyzed here.

Researchers should consult Albright's report if looking for more particular information on that decade. The other work we build off of is Anna Rosenberg's 1996 University of Montana masters thesis *Hard Winter Endurance: Conrad Kohrs' Cattle Raising Operation, 1887-1900*. Our work is similar to the chronological formats of Albright's and Rosenberg's works with elaborated economic data and new arguments on innovation, investment diversity, and decision-making. These two works are counceled and cited where they confirm or add to points in this report.

An immense amount of new data is represented in this report extracted from ledgers, journals, and correspondence of K&B held at GRKO and MHS. A majority comes from GRKO, where archival materials were consulted first-hand through late 2006, late 2007, and early 2008 to document K&B's financial allocations. Portions of these materials also exist on seven reels of microfilm, which were donated to the NPS in 1972 and prepared by University of Montana archivist, Dale Johnson. MHS materials consist of Kohrs' incoming and outgoing correspondence and a ledger and journal covering the 1890s and early 1900s. These were also counseled first-hand in the early months of 2008 and a portion of these are also accessible on microfilm. A guide to the contents of all the K&B materials used in this study from the MHS are available online under the title "Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, 1892-1928" through the Northwest Digital Archives at Washington State University (<http://nwda-db.wsulibs.wsu.edu>) and the MHS Research Center (<http://mhs.mt.gov/research/default.asp>) websites. This report

also relies on Kohrs' autobiography, which was dictated to his daughter, Anna Kohrs, in 1913 and published by Con Warren in 1977.

Con Warren was Kohrs' grandson, who continued the family legacy managing the ranch from the 1930s until it was sold to the National Park Service in 1972. Warren kept many of the records now at GRKO including 150 lbs. of original material as he noted in an interview with Cheryl Clemmensen in 1981. In the interview, Warren expressed concern about having original ledgers in his house rather than in more secure storage considering one ledger he had recently brought out had cracked and torn slightly along the bound edge. Warren and his wife Nell "did have a common interest, and that was the preservation of the Kohrs materials" noted Thelma Shaw in a 1999 interview with Marta Kukal in Deer Lodge.

Warren dreamed of a project similar to this report. In reference to the K&B ledgers, Warren explained in an interview with Montana historian Rex C. Myers:

"I always thought it would be a whale of an idea to take that autobiography and research these books and then write a book and have two columns. In one column have the autobiography, and then have all of the facts and figures in the other column taken right from the books to substantiate what he says, showing the cattle sales... in the books it shows how many they shipped and what they brought. They were very meticulous bookkeepers. Johnnie Bielenberg wrote a beautiful hand. It was just like script, you know, and perfectly legible."

Although not intending to write it in a "double-column" format as Warren suggests, this research does attempt to fulfill his wishes by showing how K&B survived economically

and through providing increased specification on when and how K&B allocated earnings.

We have attempted to follow the wishes of Warren and his family as much as we can discern their approval from interviews and writings. This report centers on financial data of the Kohrs and Bielenberg families and thus focuses on sensitive information. Pieces of these finances, especially taxes, were public knowledge as published in *The New Northwest*, the newspaper of Deer Lodge at the time of K&B's operation. While Warren would have perhaps desired this archived financial data to be published, Kohrs' wife Augusta may have had a different perspective. Augusta was a private woman keeping family matters, such as finances, within relatives and close long-time friends. Concerning Augusta's privacy of Kohrs' autobiography and other records, her grandson Warren states in an interview with Rex Myers that "It's like when I first suggested to her that Arthur Leonard wanted to publish that autobiography, she said, "It's nobody's business but ours."" In publishing this report, we may not be staying faithful to Augusta's wishes or even be denying them. We hope that in treating their finances in purely analytical purposes in a business and resource management style that contributes to arguments about their place in U.S. western history and more accurately telling their story to interested visitors, that Augusta would, if not appreciate it, at least understand its importance.

Brandon M. Chapman  
Matthew S. Carroll  
Washington State University  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES, PHOTOS, AND TABLES.....	xi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	xviii
<u>SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY</u> .....	1
CHAPTER I: THE GRAND NARRATIVE.....	2
A.    A Brief History of Ranching’s Spread West.....	5
B.    Environmental Determinism in Western Ranching History.....	13
C.    The K&B Case Study.....	18
D.    Thesis and Outline of Report.....	25
CHAPTER II: ESTABLISHMENT.....	29
A.    Kohrs’ Early Success Settling, Working, and Partnering.....	33
B.    Bielenberg Arrives and Kohrs Builds Business on His Own.....	40
CHAPTER III: EARLY GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION.....	54
A.    Establishing Winter-feed, Land Acquisition, and Banking Partner Strategies.....	62
B.    The Beginning of Large Returns in Ranching and Mining.....	67
CHAPTER IV: TRANSITIONING AND STAYING LOCAL.....	82
A.    Increasing Earnings of the PCC and Labor Costs, 1887-1891.....	87
B.    Mining Expansion, Returns, and Operating Costs, 1887-1892.....	96
CHAPTER V: DELEGATING AND LATER GROWTH.....	107
A.    Boardman Takes Over the Eastern Ranch.....	107
B.    Managing Large Assets with the Costs of Mining and Ranching.....	113
C.    Increased Spending for the Eastern Ranch and Ranch Labor.....	121
D.    Growth Through the Late 1890s and Boardman’s Cattle Management..	128
E.    Growing Returns From the Mines.....	136
CHAPTER VI: MANAGING ACCUMULATED EARNINGS.....	140

A.	A Series of Healthy Assets.....	143
B.	Ranch and Mine Labor Costs Through the Early 1900s.....	150
CHAPTER VII: SLOWING DOWN AND WINDING UP.....		160
A.	Incorporation and Liquidating the Mines.....	160
B.	Bielenberg Continues as Home Ranch and Mines Manager.....	165
C.	Kohrs as Investor and Financial and Resource Management Advisor...	168
D.	Final Investments, K&B's Passings, and Company Dissolution.....	179
CONCLUSION.....		183
FOOTNOTES.....		191
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....		213



## LIST OF FIGURES, PHOTOS, AND TABLES

### Figure

1. U.S. population density maps for 1820, 1840, 1870, 1890, 1900.....	12
2. Map of western railroads in 1883.....	12
3. U.S. population density map for 1920.....	12
4. Sketch of the ranch house at K&B's home ranch, n.d.....	19
5. Map of Oregon Trail in the western territories.....	31
6. Maps of the Territory of Montana's counties in 1865, 1879, 1885.....	31
7. 20 <sup>th</sup> century map of the Deer Lodge Valley.....	32
8. Daily balance at Hank Crawford's butcher shop in March 1863.....	36
9. Daily returns at Hank Crawford's butcher shop in March 1863.....	37
10. Major mining settlements across the western territories, 1858-75.....	41
11. Total returns, average returns per week, and return on largest order for Kohrs' thrashing, 1867-72.....	45
12. Map of western Montana noting the 1879 and 1880 Hooban-led cattle drives...	60
13. Sketch of K&B's home ranch, horses, and surrounding land as of 1880.....	70
14. Map of prominent 19 <sup>th</sup> century cattle ranches across Montana.....	74
15. PCC monthly labor costs, 1887.....	89
16. PCC total monthly costs, 1887.....	89
17. Regression and equation of PCC total expenses and PCC labor expenses, 1887.....	92
18. Larabie Bros. bank account, credits compared with debits, 1885-1901.....	110
19. Regression and equation of Larabie Bros. bank account debits and credits, 1885-1901.....	111

20. Proportions of various investments of K&B's aggregate wealth, 1892.....	114
21. Expense account credits and debits, 1892-1893.....	120
22. Debits from John Boardman account, 1892-1894.....	122
23. Proportions of worth of holdings in various animals, March 1897.....	131
24. Total balance in Rosenbaum account, 1895-1904.....	146
25. Interest accrued per month in Rosenbaum account, 1904-1906.....	158
26. Monthly mine labor costs, 1914.....	167

#### Photo

1. Hay feeding off a horse-drawn wagon at a K&B range, n.d.....	4
2. Cattle herd enclosed in a fenced range at the K&B home ranch, n.d.....	4
3. Roundup at "Big Dry" that included K&B cattle, 1906.....	9
4. Cattle herd of K&B along a stretch of fenced range, n.d.....	15
5. Cattle herd of K&B on a closed rangeland, n.d.....	16
6. Middle-age portrait of Kohrs, n.d.....	19
7. Middle-age portrait of Bielenberg, n.d.....	19
8. The ranch house at the K&B home ranch, n.d.....	19
9. Portrait of Bielenberg as a young adult, n.d.....	21
10. The eastern ranch and adjacent rangeland, n.d.....	24
11. Storefront of Highland City Meat Market, n.d.....	39
12. Portrait of Bielenberg at age 23.....	41
13. Portrait of Tom Hooban, n.d.....	51

14. Original cover of one of Hooban's notebooks.....	52
15. Pioneers of Montana.....	53
16. Portrait of Bielenberg, 1883.....	55
17. Bielenberg on horseback during his later years, n.d.....	55
18. Mitch Oxarart, n.d.....	60
19. Portrait of Kohrs, 1872.....	60
20. Missouri River and surrounding range in eastern MT.....	61
21. Cowboys crossing a river on horseback with cattle herd in front.....	61
22. Hydraulic mining at Pioneer Gulch, n.d.....	68
23. Portrait of Kohrs at age 45, 1880.....	70
24. Portrait of Kohrs at age 51, 1886.....	78
25. Bielenberg and Kohrs together standing near fence, n.d.....	84
26. Portrait of Kohrs, 1889.....	95
27. Mine laborers and water supply at Rock Creek, n.d.....	102
28. Laborers and supplying water for hydraulic mining, n.d.....	102
29. Boardman in front of barn, n.d.....	108
30. Boardman on horse, n.d.....	108
31. House at the eastern ranch, n.d.....	108
32. Buildings at the eastern ranch, n.d.....	108
33. Cattle herd on Prairie Elk Creek, n.d.....	109
34. Portrait of Kohrs, 1889.....	115
35. Portrait of Kohrs, likely during the 1890s, n.d.....	128

36. Line of cowboys on horseback, 1904.....	136
37. K&B bunkhouse, n.d.....	136
38. Hereford bull of K&B's, 1911.....	141
39. Hereford cattle in fenced pasture, n.d.....	142
40. Cattle of K&B's and George Lane's in pens at Chicago stockyards, n.d.....	149
41. Cowboys herding K&B cattle, 1910.....	152
42. Cowboy on horseback with cattle at eastern ranch, n.d.....	153
43. Log building at the eastern ranch, n.d.....	153
44. K&B cattle herd in fenced pasture, n.d.....	163
45. Bielenberg with horse, 1915.....	164
46. Kohrs during a visit back to the home ranch, 1906.....	170
47. Kohrs at age 75, 1910.....	170
48. Kohrs and others attending roundup at eastern ranch, n.d.....	175
49. Church and building in Oswego, n.d.....	175
50. House and outbuilding at eastern ranch, n.d.....	175
51. Boardman with hunting dogs, n.d.....	176
52. Portrait of Boardman, n.d.....	176
53. Portrait of Kohrs at advanced age, n.d.....	180
54. Portrait of Kohrs at advanced age, n.d.....	180

## Table

1. Number of cattle across western territories in 1860, 1880.....	6
2. Per capita production in 1850 of wheat, corn, and a combination of the six most	

produced cereal crops by U.S. region.....	6
3. Amounts of key food and drink products exported in total from the west between 1839-1853 and the percentage of that total shipped to various U.S. regions.....	7
4. Daily balance at Hank Crawford's butcher shop in March 1863.....	36
5. Daily returns at Hank Crawford's butcher shop in March 1863.....	37
6. Total dollar worth of gold retrieved from various western mining spots.....	42
7. Summary of Kohrs' thrashing activity, 1867-72.....	46
8. Recapitulation for the DHS, 1883.....	73
9. Recapitulation for the DHS, 1885.....	74
10. DHS and PCC Manager's Report balance sheet as of January 16, 1886.....	79
11. Loans acquired and used by K&B, 1863-1888.....	86
12. PCC monthly labor costs, 1887.....	89
13. PCC total monthly costs, 1887.....	89
14. Mine purchases, 1888-1889.....	99
15. Larabie Bros. bank account, credits compared with debits, 1885-1901.....	111
16. Expenses for the RCDMC, Pioneer, and French Gulch mines, 1891-1896.....	117
17. Expense account credits and debits, 1892-1893.....	120
18. Credits and debits from Boardman account, 1892-1901.....	123
19. Total and average per month debits for the RCDMC, Pioneer Placer, French Gulch, and Illinois mines, 1894-1897.....	125
20. Earnings and balance for "range cattle" account, 1895-1900.....	131
21. Earnings and balance for various K&B mines, 1891-1910.....	138
22. Total balance in Rosenbaum account, 1895-1904.....	146

23. Mine labor costs, 1914.....	167
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## SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY

## CHAPTER I: THE GRAND NARRATIVE

The open range is one of the most grand and pervasive ideas in writings on western history.<sup>1</sup> Narratives in anthologies and volumes of western expansion, accompanying sketches of cowboys riding trail, and poems on the beauty and hardship of ranching life consistently refer to a vast series of mountain valleys and a “sea of grass” on the adjacent plains grazed by herds of a burgeoning 19<sup>th</sup> century industry.<sup>2</sup> It is where pioneer settlers came to breed up cattle, make millions, and in some cases lose it all a few years later. Some were substantially backed and even owned entirely by venture capitalists from the east or Europe who poured in funds from a distance and would share in the losses having not even set foot on the rangelands.<sup>3</sup> It is where fortunes were made and lost due to the harsh high plain and montane environments to which the settlers adapted themselves the best they could. It was adventuresome, risky, majestic, and thus romantic.<sup>4</sup>

This is the story that much of the history of western ranching literature paints, but recent case studies are beginning to show the framework needs adjusting. Financially successful ranchers did not exclusively utilize open rangelands for stock grazing, rather, prominent cattle raisers supplied winter feed in fenced pastures prior to the infamous “hard winter” of 1886-1887. That winter serves as the marker noting the transition from free grazing to fenced rangelands, from reckless loaning to subdued economic planning, from the boom era of monstrous cattle sales to financial bust and gradual rebound, and from the large-scale spreads with thousands of head to the family-operated ranch and farm combinations.<sup>5</sup> The following study of one of the largest 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century ranches, that operated by Conrad Kohrs and John Bielenberg (K&B), debunks this model in each aspect. Their

management strategies, results, and chronology of events takes a different path; one that may provide guidance for a new structuring of western ranching history. Certainly, there were ranches heavily financed from eastern bankers that follow the old narrative; a few of which offer the most thorough and specific case studies of single ranches and their management.<sup>6</sup> Additional large stock-growing enterprises did exist, however, without eastern backing to create them. Like their counterparts, these ranches helped grow the western U.S. economy during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>

An updated and alternative model is needed. The study of K&B that follows shows how fortunes did not always follow a boom and bust pattern nor were economic trends caused by sudden environmental or climatic turns. Ranchers were not prospering only from their herds, but also as a result of their diverse investment portfolios that often included prominent stakes in mining, banking, and real estate ventures. Overseeing multiple business partnerships, along with stockraising, required a daily diligence for observation of animals, accounts, and ensuring completion of numerous tasks while maintaining a month-to-month and annual vision of where finances needed to be positioned. This was not the romantic story of cowboys and eastern “dudes”, but the sometimes monotonous management style that got financial results. Ranchers dealt just as much with the business side than with the “outdoors” environmental side through organizing numerous accounts, researching potential sales and buys across a wide range of economic sectors, and financing monthly costs by calculating current and projected earnings. They dealt with balancing herds according to age, quality, and type of breeds along with ensuring adequate ranch-hand labor and hay feed was on hand for the stock. These economic and resource management qualities are what resulted in long-enduring ranches like that of K&B, which

operated before, through, and after the 1886-1887 winter. Diversity in investments and diversity in rangeland management are the key concepts explaining K&B's resiliency. Before delving into their thorough chronicle and explaining their organizational strategies, however, a review of how ranching started in the western U.S. west will provide context for this study.



Photo 1. Hay feeding off a horse-drawn wagon at a K&B range, n.d.  
Courtesy of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site (GRKO), Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 2. Cattle herd enclosed in a fenced range at the K&B home ranch, n.d.  
Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

## **A. A Brief History of Ranching's Spread West**

The story of the western U.S. open range takes form south of modern-day San Antonio down through the Nueces Valley of northern Mexico. During the 1700s, Spanish settlers introduced additional herds of longhorns into what would eventually become parts of Texas and a cradle of the stock-growing industry.<sup>8</sup> The Spanish acquired longhorns from the Moors of North Africa who invaded them in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The longhorns evolved across tropical Africa making them slender and well-adapted to the sub-tropical plains of Texas. Once migrant farmers from the eastern U.S. brought their milch cows south, cross-breeding ensued and resulted in four types of cattle that would be the primary varieties found across the west. Settlers began to consider the advantages of the mixed breeds for migrations north since they had the milchen thick coats for winters, while also being slender and able to endure hot summers like the longhorns.<sup>9</sup> Across Texas into the 1800s, Europeans and Mexicans learned to herd on horseback, an indispensable skill for the eventual spread north.<sup>10</sup>

Trailing began in the 1840s across south Texas as herdsmen drove hundreds of head at a time to southern ports such as Galveston and New Orleans prior to the Chicago “beef boom”. At that time, the Chicago stockyards grew with almost every firm having a railroad connection for shipping meat and live animals east by the 1850s.<sup>11</sup> Over the following three decades, prices per pound and per head for beef cattle increased to meet rising consumer demand while stock-growing operations expanded across the western rangelands.

From the 1850s to 1880s, stockraising moved north out of Texas utilizing immense rangelands stretching across the great plains up to Dakota territory and west extending

through the Rocky Mountain corridor. Some of these ranchers were experienced cattlemen who drove their herds emigrating in various directions from Texas while others were traders, prospectors, drifters, or businessmen already settled out west.<sup>12</sup> Acquiring abandoned or exhausted cattle from migrants along the Oregon Trail was a strategy used by these new western ranchers to nurse on wide open grasslands and buildup herds for little cost. Ranchers were pioneers of numerous territories, such as Johnny Grant of Montana.<sup>13</sup> By the end of the Civil War, 5,000,000 cattle roamed Texas, many as unbranded “mavericks” due to their owners and claimants being away at war during the preceding years. Annual roundups would formally mark their ownership once ranchers and ranch-hands returned.<sup>14</sup>

#### THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI FRONTIER

	CATTLE IN 1860	CATTLE IN 1880
KANSAS	93,455	1,533,133
NEBRASKA	37,197	1,113,247
COLORADO	none	791,492
WYOMING	none	521,213
MONTANA	none	428,279
DAKOTA	none	140,815

Table 1. Number of cattle across western territories showing the growth and spread from the central plains to the central and northern Rockies. Adapted from Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*, 682.

	WHEAT	CORN	SIX CEREALS
NEW ENGLAND	0.4 bushels	3.70 bushels	7.99 bushels
MIDDLE STATES	5.75 bushels	9.11 bushels	26.15 bushels
SOUTH	2.47 bushels	30.83 bushels	37.92 bushels
WEST	7.52 bushels	44.14 bushels	59.62 bushels

Table 2. Per capita production in 1850 by region of wheat, corn, and a combination of the six most produced cereal crops illustrating the importance of western food production. Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*.

	AMOUNT		PERCENTAGE SHIPPED TO:		
	EXPORTED		NORTHEAST	EAST	SOUTH
WHEAT	1839	2,000,000 bushels	97	—	3
	1844	4,000,000 bushels	96	—	4
	1849	5,500,000 bushels	92	—	8
	1853	11,000,000 bushels	99	—	1
FLOUR	1839	800,000 barrels	40	7	53
	1844	1,500,000 barrels	63	6	31
	1849	3,000,000 barrels	63	6	31
	1853	3,000,000 barrels	62	10	28
CORN	1839	1,000,000 bushels	2	—	98
	1844	1,500,000 bushels	10	—	90
	1849	6,000,000 bushels	60	—	40
	1853	8,000,000 bushels	63	—	37
PORK	1839	300,000 barrels	12	19	69
	1844	800,000 barrels	7	12	81
	1849	1,500,000 barrels	9	11	80
	1853	1,500,000 barrels	18	24	58
WHISKEY	1839	10,000 barrels	—	4	96
	1844	100,000 barrels	1	4	95
	1849	200,000 barrels	8	25	67
	1853	250,000 barrels	11	33	56

Table 3. Amounts of key food and drink products exported in total from the west between 1839-1853 and the percentage of that total shipped to various regions. Food production increased from 3-8% across these products leading up to the 1850s and western products were increasingly consumed by the northeast. Adapted from Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*, 401.

At the hub of expanding railroad lines in the early 1860s, Chicago passed Cincinnati to become the largest meat-packing city in the world partially due to the high meat demand for the Union army in the first few years of the war. Cattle trailing from Texas was still paramount, but the fattening of herds on the west's open valleys and plains eventually brought western stock-growers prominently into the market.<sup>15</sup> Following the Civil War in 1865, with the re-opening of transport across the Mississippi River and the Pacific Railroad reaching the plains of Sedalia, MO, western ranchers increased their shipments towards Chicago. Pork, which was popular on dinner tables across the U.S. prior to the war, increasingly switched to beef after 1865.<sup>16</sup> Western stock-growers experienced their



first “boom” during the late 1860s due to these continued expansions. Prices paid from Chicago rose to \$40 per head. Cross-breeding of the four longhorn-milch mixes with Hereford and Angus bulls occurred across Kansas in the 1860s offering a heavier and rounder belly cattle apt for consumers.<sup>17</sup> Cattle drives to Sedalia provided exorbitant returns. After expenses, 3,000 head brought \$100,000 profit. Drives with over 1,000 head returned an 80% profit margin.<sup>18</sup> The “get rick quick” booster literature encouraging western settlement was proving correct. Open ranges, freely available with a homesteaded property, and a few cattle provided cheap startup with much of the inputs at low or no cost. The wilderness was said to be “free” and one’s cattle could multiply in quality and quantity through boundless grass and breeding.

The open range was not completely free-graze, however, where any outsider could homestead a farmhouse or squat and begin roaming herds without consequence or negotiation. Neighboring ranchers organized and made agreements in some cases about whose rangeland was whose, where each should graze, and sanctions for rulebreakers or unwanted outsiders entering their domain. The open range in this sense was not “open-access”, meaning it was highly vulnerable to a “tragedy of the commons” where ranchers would use all and any unclaimed lands available to them.<sup>19</sup> Unwritten rules enforced by the local ranchers themselves existed; part of an informal code of ethics telling how one should act in operating on and claiming rangelands. For example, if a rancher regularly grazed herds along water such as a river or creek, he could claim water rights to where he pre-empted the source along with the surrounding land running back to the divide or highland that separated his water from the other nearest source. Informal rights only went as far as those who recognized and could enforce them, however, so it is difficult to determine how

often trespassing occurred along unfenced areas. Line-riding, when cowboys rode along the edge of a land claim looking for outsiders or signs of trespassing, was a method to monitor water rights. Ranchers also arranged annual round-ups where calves born over the winter and other maverick cattle on the range could be branded to indicate ownership. All cattle within the ridden stocks of the rangelands claimed by the organizing ranchers were herded to one spot by their ranch-hands to ensure each animal was marked. Stock-growers associations would increasingly organize these functions and develop rules for their members through the open range years.<sup>20</sup>



Photo 3. Roundup at “Big Dry” that included K&B cattle, 1906. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

The following note from well-known 19<sup>th</sup> century Montana pioneer and rancher Granville Stuart, displays the type of organization and management of tasks concerning ranchers and ranch-hands involved in a roundup during this period.<sup>21</sup>

It was moved and carried that every stock owner have one vote for each rider furnished and employed by him on the range, and that all persons having one thousand or less cattle on the range be required to furnish one rider, or in lieu thereof pay the roundup fund \$2.00 per head for branding and marking their calves, that being the price fixed for branding calves for those not attending. And that all owners having more than one thousand cattle on the range furnish one rider for each one thousand head or fraction of five hundred or over.

W. C. Burnett was nominated for Captain of the roundup and was unanimously elected, with pay at the rate of \$2.50 per day from beginning to close of each roundup, to be paid out of roundup fund.

It was decided to send one man to the Musselshell to bring back any cattle from this range found there and to brand and mark all calves as found. It was decided that one man tally all calves branded and to see that there are turned out by their respective owners seven bull calves, to each one hundred heifer calves. N. J. Bielenburg was elected to attend to the same.

All mavericks were to be sold to the highest bidder at the corral, branded and marked and turned with the purchaser's herd. Only cattle owners on the range could purchase these calves. The money received from sale of mavericks shall be turned in to the roundup fund.

The spring roundup for 1882 is to begin on the north side of the range May 30. It was decided to begin the fall calf roundup Sept. 1 on the north side of the range, and the beef roundup to begin October 1 on the north side of the range.

It was decided to pay the day and night horse wranglers and the wood hauler out of the roundup funds. The men sent out to attend other roundups were also paid out of said fund.

On motion the meeting then adjourned.

GRANVILLE STUART, Sec.

With large informally claimed territories and ideal cross-breeds to graze them, ranchers and their venture capitalist financiers reaped immense returns. Western ranches grew to

become the largest suppliers of beef products to Europe and the U.S. east of the Mississippi through the 1870s. The extension of railroad lines into Ft. Kearney, NE, Dakota territory, and central Colorado along with the recently completed transcontinental line and the introduction of refrigerator cars, specifically the Swift car invented in 1878, to better preserve meat on cross-country shipments made growth possible.<sup>22</sup> The booster literature not only proved correct for the possibilities of growing wealthy on the range, but it was also effective at attracting new settlers from the east to enter the cattle industry. In 1879, for example, cattle were valued at \$8 per head in Texas, but within three years the demand for herds from beginning western stock-growers raised the price to \$35 within the state and up to \$60 in Wyoming. From 1882 to 1884, the number of head sent from Texas to stock western ranchers equaled the quantity shipped east from the west. Even with local banks and private lenders charging up to 2% per month or 1% per day compounded interest on loans for startup capital on ranches, migrants continued to populate the growing western ranching arena.<sup>23</sup>

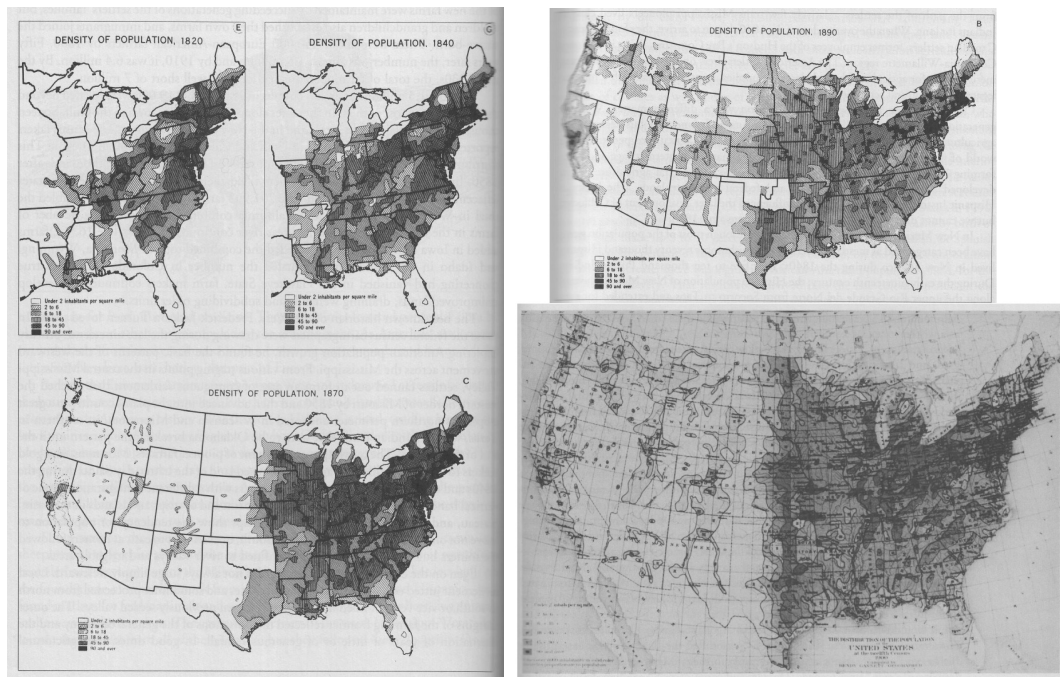


Figure 1. . Population density maps for 1820 (upper left), 1840 (upper middle), 1870 (lower left), 1890 (upper right), and 1900 (lower right) based on U.S. Census reports for the respective years illustrating the rapid migration, especially after 1870, of settlers west. Adapted from Carlos A. Schwantes, “Wage Earners and Wealth Makers,” in the *Oxford History of the American West*, edited by Clyde A. Milner, Carol A. Connor and Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

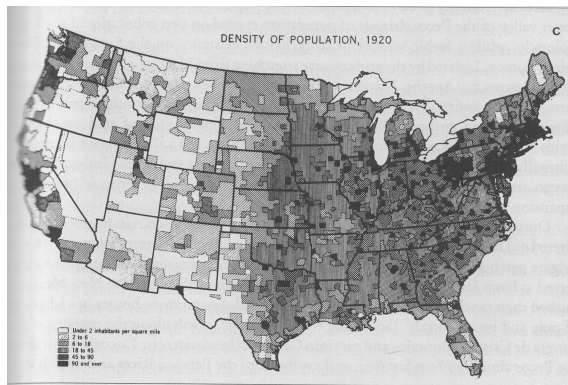


Figure 3. Population density map for 1920 showing the continuing settlement of the west. Schwantes, “Wage Earners and Wealth Makers”.

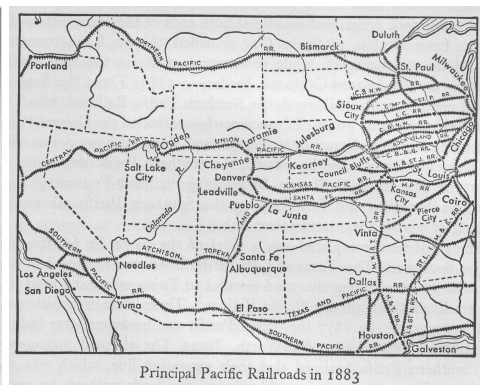


Figure 2. Map of western railroads in 1883. Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*.

The open range was attractive and was growing saturated with stock-raisers and their cattle. Per pound price of beef paid by the Chicago stockyards climbed to 8 and 9 cents during the early 1880s. Twenty cattle corporations formed across Wyoming in 1883 with

a net worth of \$12,000,000.<sup>24</sup> Some of these incorporations were stock-growing outfits fully financed by eastern or European investors who forwarded the necessary startup capital to hire enough ranch managers and cowboy labor for an open range operation. Charles Goodnight, manager of the JA Ranch in the Texas panhandle and bankrolled by his partner John G. Adair, profited \$600,000 in just ten years. Adair increased his initial investment of \$360,000 to \$3,000,000 over his lifetime.

All this wealth created and transferred due to the attraction and economics of the open range. The vast west was, however, starting to feel environmental and population strain. In August 1885, a Presidential decree ordered white settlers who leased Native American lands to vacate those areas. Western ranchers used leased Native American ranges to further spread their grazing during the preceding boom years. As a result, ranchers relocated hundreds of thousand of cattle to rangelands already grazed with approximately 200,000 of those cattle moved into Colorado, Kansas, and Texas.<sup>25</sup> In combination with the breeding and shipping of more cattle from Texas, the open range was approaching a limit even its own immense size could not contain.

## **B. Environmental Determinism in Western Ranching History**

Then came the “hard winter” at the end of 1886 into early 1887. This grizzly winter preceded by an arid summer is the symbol of environmental catastrophe for the 19<sup>th</sup> century cattle industry. Across the Rockies and plains thermometers plummeted with some spots down to 68° below zero. Parts of the northern Rockies experienced “snow storms and blizzards almost daily during the months of December, January, and February”.<sup>26</sup> Snow accumulated on the open range to where cattle could not paw to the grass beneath, while

cowboys huddled in isolated cabins on their rangelands sometimes for months with low supplies. Often not able to graze, cattle turned to tree bark of which there was not enough to last an entire season.<sup>27</sup>

Cattle died across the west at higher than average rates. Western ranchers suffered a range of losses from as low as 30% of a stock-growers' herd to 90% and 95%.<sup>28</sup> Many cattle that did not perish barely survived the harsh winters and exited the season in a condition of low consumer quality. Desperate and in some cases liquidating ranchers dumped their degraded range cattle on the market shipping much of their remaining herds east. Prices sank from just a few years prior. Chicago purchasers who paid an average of \$30 per head in 1885 before the hard winter lowered to \$10 and \$8 through 1886. By 1887, Chicago prices for grass-fed beef plunged from those levels.<sup>29</sup>

Suddenly, ranch managers, many of whom were operating on immense loans, did not have enough animals needed for an average seasonal return on sales. Simultaneously they experienced shrinking received payments from which they could re-invest and build up their herds again. Frightened by these dips and with the availability of cheaply produced barbed wire, ranchers began fencing off the range. Increasingly, federal and state governments began allocating land and water rights to developing cities and hamlets, which included rancher-used open rangelands.<sup>30</sup> Two of the largest western stock-raisers, the Swan Land and Cattle Company near Laramie, WY and the Niobrara Company with grazing from Montana to Nebraska declared bankruptcy in the midst of the bust in 1887.<sup>31</sup> No longer did the open range pay, it was rapidly overpopulated by settlers and their stock, run on unsustainable heavy speculation, and was subject to harsh climatic fluctuations. The western literature declares the open range closed the year following the



hard winter. This is the consensus narrative in much of the U.S. western history literature. Once again in the story of U.S. history, the environment determined the fate of food-raising enterprise.<sup>32</sup>

The literature continues on saying that within a decade, the cattle industry rode through a millionaire-making boom then bankrupting bust where prices, the number of ranching outfits, and population of range cattle ascended, then tanked. Through the 1890s, the closed range led to an industry rebound. Those that survived the perils of the infamous winter, so the story goes, did so because they adapted by fencing off their once bountiful and wide-open rangelands. The environment determined the status of the range, which in turn determined whether the ranchers were wealthy or closing shop.



Photo 4. Cattle herd of K&B along a stretch of fenced range, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.





Photo 5. Cattle herd of K&B on a closed rangeland, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

On the open range, so the story goes, the cattle industry experienced rapid increases in wealth, used large tracts of land sometimes informally claimed, did occasionally provide winter fodder for stock animals, and had bountiful credit lines invested from eastern financiers. On the closed range in response to the lessons of the hard winter, the industry changed to smaller-scale outfits, consisted of fenced government and privately-held rangelands with smaller total areas to graze, and matured into more sound practices through less risk-taking and speculation. The narrative states the environment dictated this transition as the hard winter is the turning point in western ranching history. Even to writers who emphasize the importance of economics, such as access to eastern creditors that built the industry's wealth, the environment was still what fundamentally changed it. Few could overcome the harsh north and those that did got smart and started fencing.

When economics does come into the picture, it is through the second big theme of the western literature, which is the “top-down” story. Ranchers were not making management decisions such as which cattle to purchase and sell or when to buy stock in a neighboring mining outfit based on the ranchers’ own previous life experience, cultural teachings, or local happenings. Choices, rather, were made due to larger forces. Railroad expansions provided the market access. Rising eastern demand for beef set prices and forecast when cattlemen would drive for shipment. Eastern creditors determined when ranchers invested in their businesses or outside ventures even when the ranch was not managed by a distant board of trustees.

What gets lost and is starting to be found in this story are the company and individual aspects; how ranchers themselves made choices concerning economic and resource management. Warren Elofson in particular has done a thorough job recently on comparing the range management techniques by Alberta provincial ranches of the period focusing on their horse operations.<sup>33</sup> He begins to highlight outfits that survived the 1886-1887 winter and how they used a mix of free grazing and hay feeding methods. Still, Elofson’s story is that the environment was what ruined other stock-growers through a later series of hard winters across western Canada, along with the predatory wolf. The simultaneous grazing of stock on open rangelands with the remainder on fenced pastures with feed or the alternating of these strategies between consecutive summers and winters, a style we term in this report “mixed range” management, came in the mid-1890s, which is after when the western literature decrees the open range “dead”.

### **C. The K&B Case Study**

Thankfully, there is much preserved documentation for early western stock-growing to look at questions of ranchers' decision-making during this period of expansion and transition in the industry. Conrad Kohrs' and John Bielenberg's stockraising partnership centered in Deer Lodge, MT presents an intriguing case study from a prominent ranch operation with adequate primary sources to address the grand narrative of the open range and western expansion. Little is written about K&B compared to their western contemporaries.<sup>34</sup> This despite their running one of the largest open range companies of the era, in terms of acres seasonally grazed upon, bringing in some of the highest sales returns before and after the industry's economic downturns, and being honored with the ranch houses' conservation at GRKO, the one National Historic Site preserving 19<sup>th</sup> century ranching materials. Leaders of the industry and western food production acknowledged the accomplishments of K&B, such as President of the Union Stock Yard Company of Chicago, Arthur Leonard. Having overseen most of the cattle of the era crossing through Chicago for its sale or shipment further east, Leonard stated in the late 1920s that Kohrs shipped more cattle to Chicago than anyone else in the industry earning the accolade "King of the Cattlemen".<sup>35</sup>

When writings on western ranching history discuss Montana, usually it is Granville Stuart who receives mention despite his self-admitted and elsewhere discussed failings in the industry. In more popular literature and media, Stuart is branded the pioneer Montana rancher and his quote on how he would "never wanted to own again an animal that I could not feed and shelter" after seeing the results of the hard winter on cattle is included in discussions on the demise of the open range.<sup>36</sup> The history of western

ranching literature, especially early works, use the cattle outfits and corporations of Wyoming, like the Swan Land and Cattle Company and the Union Cattle Company that fit the narrative nicely.<sup>37</sup> Despite the lack of interest from western scholars, K&B were dynamic and innovative.



Photo 6. Middle-age portrait of Kohrs, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 7. Middle-age portrait of Bielenberg, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 8. The ranch house at the K&B home ranch, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Figure 4. Sketch of the ranch house at K&B's home ranch with surrounding spread, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

The K&B materials show that ranchers relied on regional and in-state markets for managing herd composition along with occasional large purchases and sell-offs. Railroads were accessible through the west, but it was the lengthy and skilled labor of ranch-hands and their mapping and navigation of trails that brought herds to the railcars. Ranchers, like K&B, had their own rail stops adjacent to their quarters and shipped based on breeding times and regional herd acquisition, not always in direct response to Chicago prices or railcar fees. A rancher's own cultural background teaching him how to graze and feed stock in addition to experiences with other industries such as mining drove his decision-making on when and where to spend time and money. Personal relationships with creditors who did not manage the cattle company directly or import ranch managers, like banker Joseph Rosenbaum in K&B's case, enabled ranches to establish trust and draw on funding when downturns did occur. K&B, although following the grand narrative in a few respects, demonstrate a series of sizable snubs to it as well.

The K&B story is one of partnership, endurance, and financial success through the beginning and eventual fluctuations in the first half-century of Montana ranching. It begins with what would become Kohrs' permanent settlement in the territory during the spring of 1862, after running low on provisions during a gold prospecting venture across Montana and Idaho. He met Hank Crawford who ran a butcher shop in Bannack, MT where Kohrs negotiated a job after his adventures and settled.<sup>38</sup> There he learned the meat supply business that included occasionally driving cattle to the shop from out of town and furnishing the region's miners and mining companies with provisions, which provided Kohrs initial experience and contacts he would call upon over the following years. Kohrs also engaged in mining these initial few years setting up a small operation in neighboring

Pioneer, MT.<sup>39</sup> The young Kohrs already showed a keen interest in enterprise, a propensity to diversify investment of his energy and capital in money-making ventures, and the willingness to learn different trades.

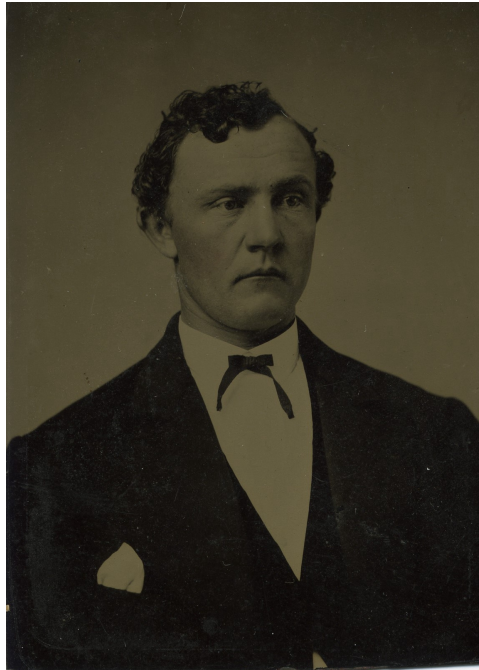


Photo 9. Portrait of Bielenberg as a young adult, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

On word from Kohrs, his half-brother John Bielenberg traveled overland to Montana in 1864 from the German immigrant family's outpost in Davenport, IA.<sup>40</sup> Bielenberg arrived with the intention of settling and quickly became established managing a meat supply shop of his own; Highland Market in Last Chance Gulch, MT.<sup>41</sup> Bielenberg established himself in regional food delivery and cattle trade. Kohrs had as well since Crawford abandoned the Bannack shop in the spring of 1863 due to a threat on his life. Having solidified contacts and a business in the area, Kohrs purchased the large ranch house of Johnny Grant, then rancher and trader of Deer Lodge, along with a threshing machine, outbuildings, and 200 to

400 cattle for \$19,200.<sup>42</sup> The Montana gold rush fizzled by the late 1860s, however, leaving Kohrs with a growing herd of surplus cattle.<sup>43</sup> With a dwindled local market for beef, Kohrs began trailing his herds over the next ten years to Ogallala, NE and Wyoming for sale and shipment commencing a lifelong journey as a rancher, although he did not have much training as a cowboy.<sup>44</sup>

K&B soon partnered in stock-raising and the younger Bielenberg increasingly handled trailing duties while Kohrs hired reliable ranch-hands like Tom Hooban and Jim Wells to drive and watch over additional herds.<sup>45</sup> By 1887, Bielenberg was in charge of the home ranch tending to most of the daily operational tasks including bookkeeping, breeding horses and cattle, and deciding on horses to buy, while Kohrs scouted cattle to purchase and offered advice on which sectors to place investments.<sup>46</sup> K&B grew in their annual financial earnings and size of their herds and total rangeland claimed through the 1870s and 1880s with increased shipments and returns.

The drops in cattle population and prices were short-lived across Montana after the hard winter of 1886-1887 and K&B weathered the downturn. Although it ruined many of their contemporaries, K&B lost only \$30,000, which was out of an estimated total of \$14,000,000 in capital and eastern investments across Montana ranches at that time. K&B lost nearly 66% of their cattle while other companies' herds decreased up to 90% and 95%.<sup>47</sup> K&B contributed to the ranching rebound across the state during the subsequent two decades by purchasing 20,000 acres in thirteen years following the harsh winters and shipping an average of 8,000 to 10,000 cattle per year from 1888 to 1913 ranging from \$15 to \$62.50 per head.<sup>48</sup> The decades immediately following the famed hard winter were the most profitable for K&B peaking in 1909 with their largest gross

annual sales of \$550,000 (\$12,790,700) at an average sell of \$40 per head.<sup>49</sup> Through this period, Bielenberg cross-breed horses and brought in sizable supplemental income for the ranch selling work, stage-coach, and race horses.

As some of their contemporaries did, K&B also provided hay feed in winter near their ranch headquarters for years prior to the hard winter. K&B, however, wintered the highest quality cattle near the house with readily available fodder, a strategy to ensure superior calves for the following summers. Kohrs even presented a similar potentially profitable technique at a Montana Stock-growers' Association (MSA) meeting in 1885, a year preceding the winters that killed others' herds almost completely off. He suggested that ranchers winter feed half their bulls as insurance of an adequate spring herd and when turned out by June, bulls would be in good breeding condition and produce quality calves. K&B's most trusted ranch-hand, Tom Hooban, constructed cabins and barns while providing hay feed at their grazing area along the Snake River in Idaho as far back as the 1870s.

In years preceding the hard winter, K&B had a strategically organized operation of winter hay feeding that paralleled later fenced rangeland methods of western ranches. Mixed with an immense open range that encompassed millions of acres across Idaho, Wyoming, and the entire state of Montana allowed K&B to give ample care for their herds year-round. They continued a combination of winter feeding and open range techniques on immense, yet reduced free-grazing areas, through and after 1886 and 1887. Besides the ranch house headquarters in Deer Lodge, K&B owned a house on their eastern Montana rangeland claims near the town of Oswego and adjacent to the Fort Peck Reservation. The half-brothers made numerous visits there as it became an important station from which



cattle were driven and traded. Kohrs hired his son-in-law John Boardman upon Boardman's marriage to Kohrs' daughter Anna in 1891 to run daily operations for the "eastern" headquarters. Boardman received trusted authority to trade cattle on the eastern ranges, hire ranch-hands, and organize shipping schedules. Delegation of appropriate tasks needed at distant outposts from the Deer Lodge headquarters allowed K&B to maintain expanded rangelands and herds within their company while promoting confidence and trust in range managers like Boardman and Hooban through a wide scope of needed duties. As Hooban had his own careers outside of K&B, so did Boardman as he had been a rancher himself owning the Redwater Land and Livestock Company.



Photo 10. The eastern ranch and adjacent rangeland, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

K&B operated on public domain open rangeland and fenced off portions of their

territory by the mid-1910s. Kohrs, the creative investor, speculator, company promoter, and delegator of the partnership, increasingly left daily management operations of the ranch in the mid-1890s and through the turn of the century. Bielenberg, the knowledgeable cross-breeder, herd caretaker, and range manager expanded his administrative duties at the ranch while Kohrs stepped aside supervising it until his death in June 1922.<sup>50</sup> Their fifty-fifty partnership through the decades paid off. The estate was worth over \$2,000,000 upon disbursement to Kohrs' heirs after his widow Augusta died.<sup>51</sup> Both were millionaires during much of their life in ranching. Kohrs had amassed a lifetime of investments including mining claims, local water rights for resale, corporate bonds, liberty bonds, oil stocks, and shares in other successful Montana cattle companies.

#### **D. Thesis and Outline of Report**

The goal of this study is to tell the story of pioneer ranching and to identify economic and resource management strategies utilized by long-enduring cattle companies from a more human dimension than previously done in western history literature. Economic change through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries did not simply occur at the national or state level and “out east”. There were certainly those factors that helped “booms” to occur aiding western ranch development. Distant factors, however, like price increases at Chicago and railroad networks, could not have been accessed without effective management of capital, labor, herds, and rangelands by stock-growers themselves. Differences between how individual ranchers themselves made decisions were significant in which outfits endured through “larger” economic forces. Montana stock-raisers, such as K&B, offer a thoroughly preserved, yet little researched case study of such issues.

Our thesis is that K&B were forward-thinking decision-makers concerning investment diversification (e.g. mining, horses, banks, stocks, bonds, other cattle real estate), delegation of ranching duties (e.g. Kohrs was company promoter, Bielenberg was driver and breeder), allocating winter hay and ranch-hands to protect high quality cattle (mixed range strategies), and accessing credit through multiple long-term banking partners. Performed in the manner they were by K&B, these qualities set them apart from other prominent Montana cattle companies of comparative size. Fortunately, the preserved journals and ledgers of K&B explicitly outline monetary payments, returns, and bank account transactions through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries enabling verification of the thesis. The GRKO museum's preservation of Kohrs' personal papers, a portion of which are also available on microfilm, include data on the half-brothers' mining companies, early butcher shops, and outside cattle partnerships.<sup>52</sup> The Montana Historical Society (MHS) in Helena houses K&B's full ledger covering bookkeeping entries inscribed between 1892 and 1901.<sup>53</sup> In addition, the ledger provides accounts received, paid, quantity of shipments, investment portfolios, monthly and annual returns, and loans received. Their correspondence papers provide more qualitative insight into decision-making processes throughout their ranching days as they discuss investment choices, stock-growing tasks, ranch-hands, and credit transactions with colleagues and partners.<sup>54</sup>

Through the remainder of the report, we expand on our thesis and the financial and resource data in chronological format of K&B's operations from the 1860s to 1910s. This covers their individual beginnings in Montana eventually leading to their partnership and through to the end of much of their open range grazing. Discussion of national and regional economic and natural resource issues such as railroad rates, cattle and land prices, and

westward migration by easterners and southerners are interspersed throughout chapters in parts where these aspects are theorized to be significant. Chapter two starts with the earliest years of K&B in Montana, from initial setup at the Deer Lodge headquarters and forming the partnership, to early mining ventures and pitfalls, ranch-hand hires, and cattle driving. Chapter three covers the initial decade-and-a-half of K&B's growth from 1870 to 1885. In chapter four, we look at the years of and immediately following the hard winter and the slight downturn and quick recovery of K&B toward a second era of growth. Acreages purchased after the winters, locations and cattle supplied with hay, open rangelands utilized, seasonal returns from shipments, cattle breeding practices and trades, and from whom credit was obtained are covered. Chapter five expands on the delegation of the eastern ranch to Boardman and the growth in earnings through the 1890s into the early turn of the century years. The winding up of K&B's operation is reviewed in chapter six with the retirement period of Kohrs from the home ranch and the official full-time management period of Bielenberg. We conclude with a summary of the results, what the case study helps in understanding about the literature on the history of western ranching, and recommendations for implementing the findings into GRKO visitor tours and museum presentations.

The extraordinary quality of management strategies by K&B should be emphasized more in GRKO site tours and in visual materials presented to the public. The site currently focuses on unique characteristics of the ranch house, outbuildings, and other ranching materials, but could show how K&B were a distinct ranching operation through their economic and resource management. In ways, K&B are representative of the early western cattle industry: they operated on open rangelands, shipped cattle to Chicago, and

garnered immense profits during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even concerning the aspects of our thesis in general, many western ranchers did diversify their investments and finance cattle purchases and shipments based on credit. It is in the particulars of these economic strategies, however, that separates K&B from their contemporaries, made them unique, and drove their success. It is our contention that K&B were quite exceptional and this should be emphasized in the future.

## CHAPTER II: ESTABLISHMENT

Decades prior to K&B and other so called “pioneer” Montana ranchers’ beginnings in the industry, there were cattle-raisers scattered across western portions of the territory. Small-scale stock-growing began in what is today Montana as early as the mid-1840s. The Jesuit mission, called St. Mary’s, organized by Father Pierre Jean De Smet in 1841 in the Bitterroot Valley near present-day Stevensville had planted wheat, potatoes, and began raising cattle by 1846. De Smet settled there to proselytize the Salish, but evacuated the mission in 1850 after conflict with the Blackfeet Indians over attempts by the Jesuits to religiously convert the natives.<sup>1</sup> Major John Owen, a trader on the Oregon Trail, purchased the remnants of St. Mary’s and began fixing the saw and grist mills while expanding the remaining cattle herd. De Smet’s and subsequently Owen’s cattle were not the longhorns that the western ranching history anthologies claim were the breeds driven to the northern Rockies from Texas providing the initial herds for Montana stock-growers. Rather, these were shorthorn breeds descended from English and northern European cattle.<sup>2</sup> Owen’s shorthorns would spread and dominate grazing in the Bitterroot Valley through the next two decades.

Just prior to Owen’s settling at St. Mary’s, Hudson’s Bay Company chief trader Richard Grant moved cattle into Beaverhead Valley, just west of Deer Lodge, in the winter of 1849. Bringing sons James and John with him to Montana, Grant knew the region well through his career as a western trader and he began acquiring foot-sore and worn-out cattle from migrants along westward trails, such as the “Immigrant Road”. Grant found numerous trekkers desiring to lessen their burden of caring for cattle that

increasingly grew weary along the westbound journeys.<sup>3</sup> Westward migrations of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century were lengthy and tiring such as the Oregon Trail, which started at Independence, MO and ended at the Willamette Valley. Travelers covered 2,000 miles in an average of 150 to 180 days on this trail.<sup>4</sup> Besides dumping unexpectedly tired cattle, others wanted to sell excess cattle just before arriving at their destinations in the Oregon territory or California.

One of Richard's previously mentioned sons, John, became a skilled trader along the western trails and acquired a cattle herd of his own through the 1850s. Similar to his father's strategy, Johnny claimed he regularly would "trade one fat cow for two poor ones" with migrants along the trails. He utilized the free grazing of the period to nourish the large quantity of cattle he obtained so that "in the spring I had a fine herd of cattle". By 1859, the still young Johnny Grant, in his late twenties, settled in Garrison, MT at the north end of the Deer Lodge Valley, constructing a house there.<sup>5</sup> Grant, by that point, already had experience shipping cattle and hiring cowboys. The summer prior to his initial Montana settlement in Garrison, he paid \$1,000 to an unnamed man to trail 175 of his cattle to sell in California. Within his first year in Montana, Grant built up an impressive herd of 800 head along with 250 horses. Improving his stock, he sold 30 cattle for \$2,600 in 1860 to a local buyer, which averages to over \$86 per head. The quality of his cattle was noticed by travelers through the area such as James Harkness who "saw several hundred cows and calves belonging to Grant, the finest I have seen in America".<sup>6</sup> By the 1860s, Montana possessed a local market for cattle and contained pockets of stock grazing across valleys claimed by various pioneer settlers.

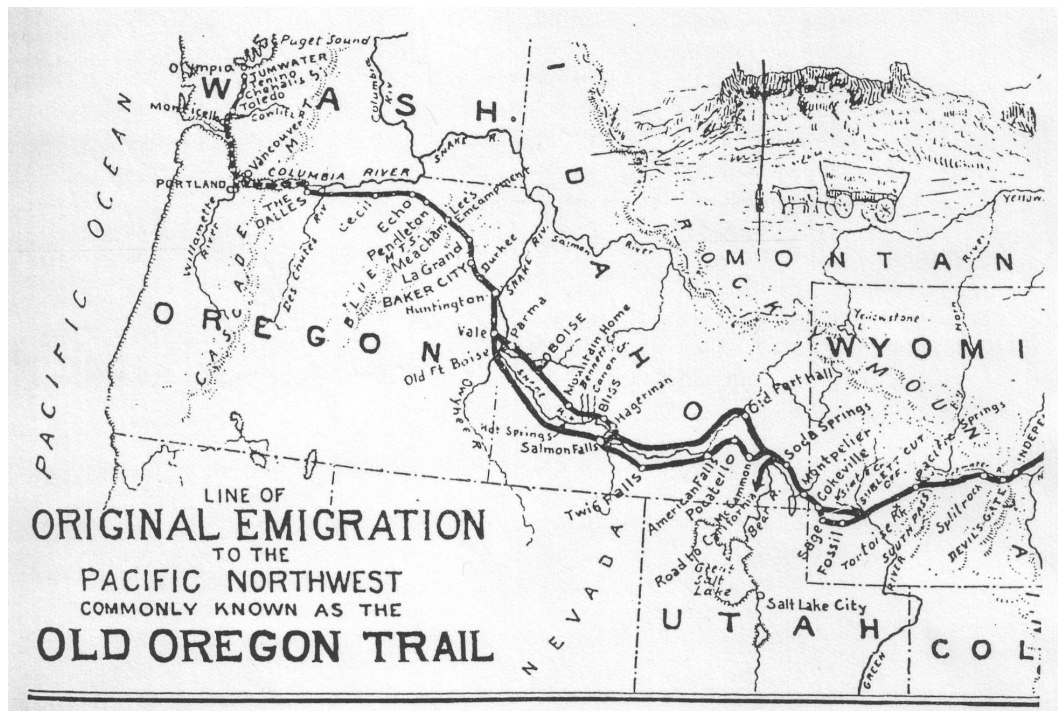


Figure 5. Map of Oregon Trail in the western territories with communities along the voyage.

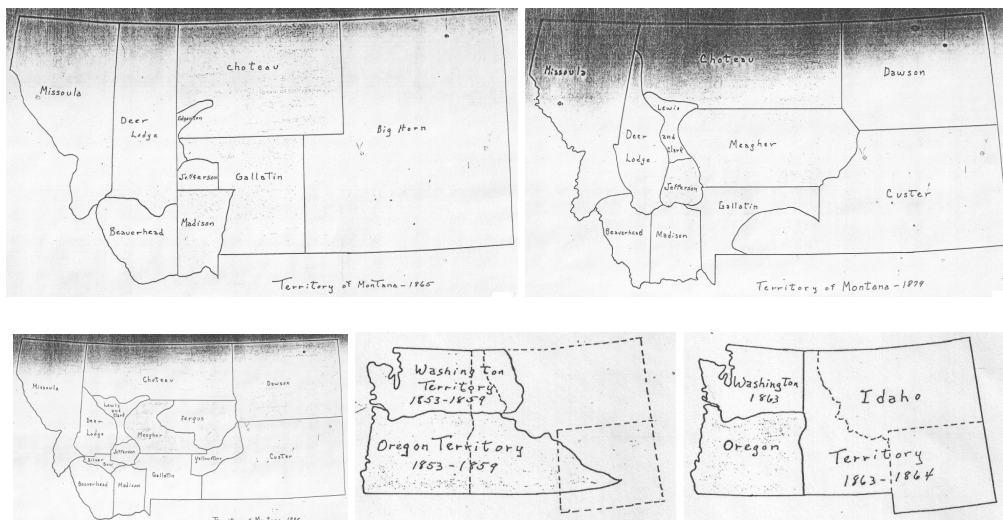


Figure 6. Maps of the Territory of Montana's counties in 1865 (upper left), 1879 (upper right), and 1885 (lower left) evidencing the increase of counties in especially central MT. In the lower right are maps of WA, OR, and ID territories in 1853-9 and then 1862-4 respectively showing the establishment of WA, OR, and ID as representing what would eventually become the state of MT. Adapted from Virginia Lee Speck, *The History of the Deer Lodge Valley to 1870*, (MA thesis, Montana State University, 1946).



In the fall of 1862, Grant upgraded and built a large farmhouse in Cottonwood (what later became Deer Lodge) on squatted land, which still sits at the GRKO site, and moved in that same year.<sup>7</sup> He continued life as a stock-grower and trader through the subsequent years in Deer Lodge, but grew tired of the vile example the vigilantes and “robbers and gamblers that are generally met with in a mining country” presented to his children during the Montana gold rush.<sup>8</sup> By August 1866, Grant accepted an offer of \$19,200 for a purchase of his farmhouse, 200 to 400 shorthorn cattle from his herd, threshing machines, corrals, haystacks, and the informal claims to graze the surrounding open range. The offer came from an acquaintance of his, a butcher shop owner from nearby Bannack named Conrad Carsten Kohrs, who he had sold cattle to as early as 1863.<sup>9</sup>

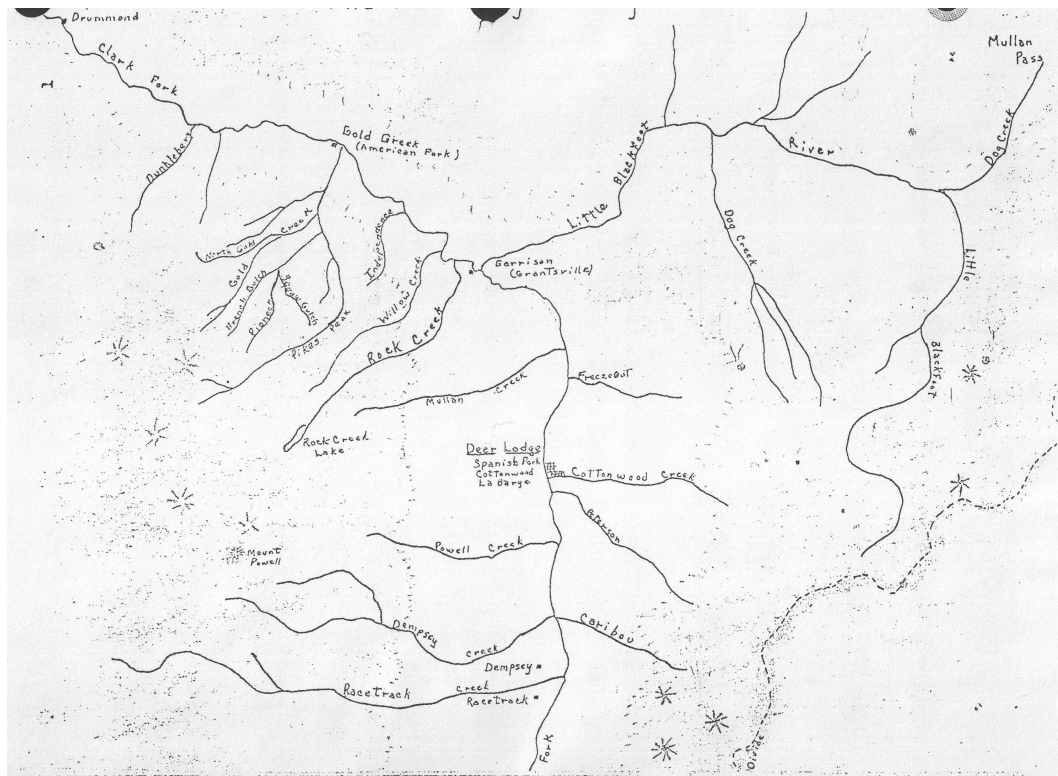


Figure 7. 20<sup>th</sup> century map of the Deer Lodge Valley with towns and waterways referred to in this report including the community of Garrison where Grant first settled, here also marked as “Grantsville”. Adapted from Speck, *The History of the Deer Lodge Valley to 1870*.

### **A. Kohrs' Early Success Settling, Working, and Partnering**

Kohrs led an adventurous life as an early adult before settling in Montana. He labored on trans-Atlantic ships as a cabin boy, was once abandoned in Buenos Aires, Argentina after severely injuring his leg-throwing anchor on ship, and journeyed from St. Paul to New Orleans on the Mississippi working as a traveling salesman. Arriving in Denver in the early 1860s from prospecting attempts in California and the Columbia River Basin, Kohrs caught wind of placer fields in Montana. After months living off mostly boiled fish and running low on food supplies in a party of prospectors searching for remaining gold deposits across Idaho and Montana, Kohrs settled in Bannack during the spring of 1862. He landed in Bannack after traveling by horse and foot throughout portions of eastern Idaho and western Montana, then collectively part of Idaho territory, with fellow prospectors earlier in 1862. The party Kohrs was in setup camp at Cottonwood during this time as a jumping off point to try for gold at Gold Creek, just west of Cottonwood, where they met some of the earliest amateur sluice operators searching for riches such as Granville Stuart. Kohrs and party continued onto Pike's Creek and eventually tributaries near the town of Boulder, resulting in little to no mineral returns for the men.<sup>10</sup> The Deer Lodge Valley and immediately surrounding area enthralled Kohrs upon these initial experiences searching for gold and camping there. One can see Kohrs' first positive evaluation of the region for stockraising and environmental quality as shown by his reminiscence of his first journey near the Deer Lodge Valley.

“About twenty miles above Deer Lodge our trail led along a river of the same name. It was a beautiful stream, the water clear and sparkling and alive with the finest trout,

and the same was true of every small stream we crossed. The valley was full of antelope and many herds of fat cattle belonging to the mountaineers who lived there.”<sup>11</sup>

While Kohrs was still a part of his prospecting party, Hank Crawford, a local butcher shop owner, offered Kohrs a starting salary of \$25 per month for driving cattle to miners and mining outfits, along with butchering provided Kohrs supplied his own saw, scale, and knives.<sup>12</sup> Within his first year in Montana, Kohrs developed contacts with miners and learned cattle driving by doing regional treks across the territory, skills and networking that would become the basis of his later ranching operations. He was also fortunate enough in obtaining experience with driving cattle while working for Crawford, which involves a set of skills that would later help him initially build his ranching business through the 1870s. Kohrs briefly describes in his autobiography one such drive for Crawford of 120 miles delivering heifers from Cottonwood to Bannack in 1862. On this drive, Kohrs drove the cattle the total distance in three days to their destination with doing almost all the work alone and helped recognize cattle of different brands and separate the different brands upon arrival to their destinations.<sup>13</sup> Kohrs displayed keen abilities early on concerning which cattle to purchase and financial record keeping with Crawford substantially raising Kohrs’ monthly salary from \$25 to \$100 after Crawford left the shop in Kohrs’ hands to go retrieve cattle at Cottonwood.<sup>14</sup> Kohrs was also fortunate in this sense, to have numerous opportunities in the early days of the cattle-raising industry and be placed in charge of a butcher shop for both cattle purchases and daily line item bookkeeping.

During these initial years, he continued to cultivate his previous experience in what brought him to the northern Rockies, prospecting and mining, by setting up a placer mine in the neighboring town of Pioneer.<sup>15</sup> Mining became one of Kohrs' most enduring financial ventures. This mine at Pioneer would be one of Kohrs' longest held investments as he retained ownership of the Pioneer Placer mine through to and after his death in 1920.<sup>16</sup>

In his first four years settled in Montana, Kohrs displayed a propensity to focus energy towards entrepreneurial ventures. Some of these early and later enterprises came upon Kohrs in a manner that could be called "luck", such as Crawford's abandonment of the butcher shop leaving Kohrs to build up the business on his own and develop relationships with local creditors.<sup>17</sup> After all, he did not have the funds or decide to buy out Crawford nor was he in a position to ascend to ownership with him there. Kohrs benefited from a circumstance not of his own making. Kohrs would start to refine his network of creditors and friends that would lend him startup capital for cattle purchases and he also furthered his cattle trading experience during his running of Crawford's shop in the early 1860s.<sup>18</sup> Other business undertakings, however, like the placer mine were organized by Kohrs based on information he heard or actively gathered from his customers, business associates, and acquaintances. Similar to contemporaries like Granville Stuart, Kohrs evidenced an early diversification of investments. In September 1863, during the beginning months of his owning the butcher shop, Kohrs had "collected quite a little money" in Bannack and was already the possible target of robbers perusing the region for travelers and holders of mining riches.<sup>19</sup>

There is some evidence, specifically covering March 1863, for the sales made at Crawford's butcher shop, which provide a small snapshot of what daily business and profits were like there. From eight days of entries from March 18 through March 26, the Bannack butcher shop brought in \$1,006.05 total earnings for the week. This is an average of \$125.76 per day, but daily accounting shows there were often high and low days for sales as fluctuations between days were high. The largest day for sales was \$237.09 with a couple other days bringing in between \$150 and \$200, while the smallest days returned only \$42.21 and \$59.43. While there was one customer purchase totaling \$100, the majority of buys were small one or two dollar purchases with many ranging only in cents. The Bannack shop exhibits a consistent number of customers buying items each day. Assuming mid-March as an average barometer for sales, then the Bannack shop would have earned approximately \$45,901.03 (\$778,000) in 1863.<sup>20</sup>

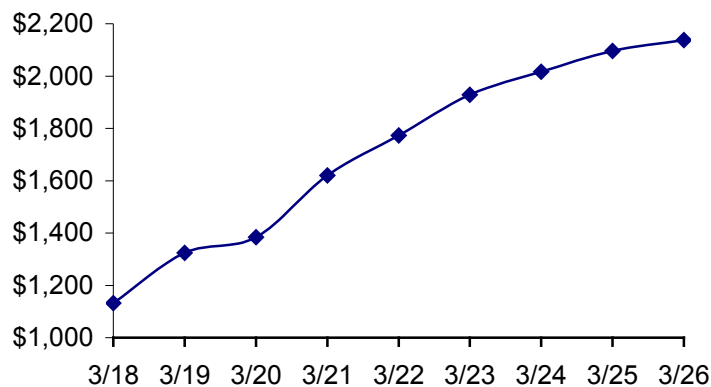


Figure 8. Daily balance at Hank Crawford's butcher shop in Bannack from March 18-26, 1863. Day Book 1 for butcher shops in Bannack City, Virginia City, and Summit City.

Date	Balance	Balance (2008)
18-Mar	\$1,131.74	\$19,200
19-Mar	\$1,324.16	\$22,400
20-Mar	\$1,383.59	\$23,500
21-Mar	\$1,620.68	\$27,500
22-Mar	\$1,772.67	\$30,000
23-Mar	\$1,928.08	\$32,700
24-Mar	\$2,016.66	\$34,200
25-Mar	\$2,095.58	\$35,500
26-Mar	\$2,137.79	\$36,200

Table 4. Daily balance at Hank Crawford's butcher shop in Bannack from March 18-26, 1863. Day Book 1 for butcher shops in Bannack City, Virginia City, and Summit City.

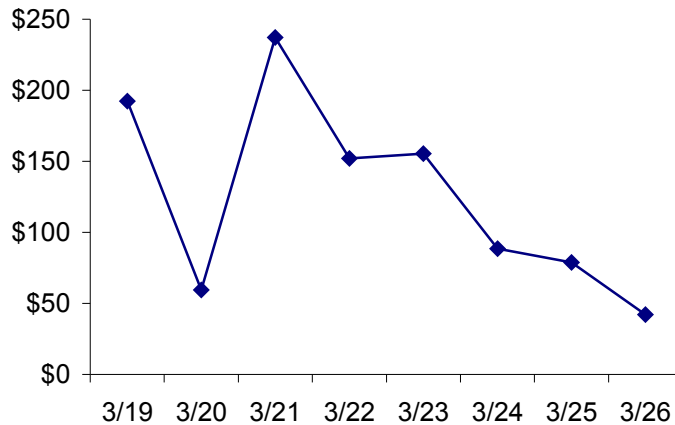


Figure 9. Daily returns at Hank Crawford's butcher shop in Bannack from March 19-26, 1863. Day Book 1 for butcher shops in Bannack City, Virginia City, and Summit City.

Date	Returns
19-Mar	\$192.42
20-Mar	\$59.43
21-Mar	\$237.09
22-Mar	\$151.99
23-Mar	\$155.41
24-Mar	\$88.58
25-Mar	\$78.92
26-Mar	\$42.21

Table 5. Daily returns at Hank Crawford's butcher shop in Bannack from March 19-26, 1863. Day Book 1 for butcher shops in Bannack City, Virginia City, and Summit City.

In the summer of 1863, gold was struck at Alder Gulch, which took much of the population away from Bannack. Kohrs followed the prospecting “fever” over to Alder Gulch where he met up with his acquaintance Ben Peel. While there, Kohrs and Peel decided to start back into butchering since Virginia City was nearby Alder Gulch with a sizable population. They secured a loan from George Gohn, who was traveling through Virginia City at this time and would become a friend of Kohrs for years to come. Kohrs and Peel started their first shop together, called “Con and Peel” by using the loan from Gohn to buy cattle being driven through Alder Gulch.<sup>21</sup>

After realizing riding on the trails up to their shop in Virginia City kicked up too much dust, “Con and Peel” moved to another butcher shop and began operating out of Summit City by 1864.<sup>22</sup> One of the only surviving sources of data on this shop is a ledger in Kohrs’ personal papers with nearly 400 pages of customer names listed next to how much they had in standing credit or debt with the store as of 1864. Individual and business

customers range in their “accounts” with the shop from a few dollars up to \$100. The ledger, which covers February through October 1864 provides a look at the sizable amount of customers purchasing items through Con and Peel’s shop and how many customers had items extended on credit.<sup>23</sup>

Similar evidence exists for Con and Peel’s butcher shop in Highland City a few years later through 1868 and 1869. While the range of credit and debt in customer accounts and quantity of customers is similar to the Summit City records, there are a higher number of accounts showing “mid-range” totals between \$30 and \$70. The Summit City shop had more totals near the bottom end below \$30 or in single digits.<sup>24</sup> Con and Peel likely experienced a slight rise in prices of their items through the decade or had a larger number of customers at Highland City that purchased more goods. Healthy business was further evidenced by Kohrs and Ben Peel buying the ranch west of Deer Lodge along Race Track Creek in 1864.<sup>25</sup> Besides the retail business end of the shop in Summit, Con and Peel also profited from furnishing some of their cattle to fellow butchers in the Highland district by 1864, which would be the eventual location of their shop.<sup>26</sup> Cattle sales to other shop owners were likely not included in Con and Peel’s shop ledgers, but Kohrs indicates in his autobiography that live cattle may have constituted a large portion of their profits during this period, especially by 1865 after their cattle supply increased.<sup>27</sup> Kohrs continued to gain experience at the Con and Peel shops with buying and selling cattle looking for high meat quality for butchering and also cattle for resale value. By 1864, Peel and him were purchasing cattle raised locally and steers brought in from locations as far away as Utah. Kohrs claims he was the one specifically in charge of selecting cattle to buy and sell for the shop.<sup>28</sup> Much of chapter nine in Kohrs’

autobiography is dedicated to him mentioning the various cattle purchases he negotiated at below average market prices during his tenure with Peel. In addition, Kohrs and Peel were making decisions on which rangelands to place newly purchased cattle on since by then they had in their possession additional spreads at Race Track Creek.



Photo 11. Storefront of Highland City Meat Market, owned by Con and Peel, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

Kohrs continued to help enlarge his and Peel's business by accessing loan capital through established friends and acquaintances. One was George Forbes, a rancher who had Tom Hooban as his foreman during the mid-1860s before Hooban would become Kohrs' foreman years later. From Forbes, Kohrs received \$12,000 on loan early in 1865 at a rate of 5% per month. Combining this with other capital, Kohrs made a large swoop of cattle purchases across the area buying 1,000 head of cattle, which constituted a large portion of the local cattle supply. As he purchased the rights to these cattle, the herds were kept with various rancher friends across the territory through the spring of 1865 when they were fattened and able to be brought for butchering or resale.<sup>29</sup> Kohrs was cultivating his skills of managing multiple cattle transactions and herds across different



areas of the territory along with developing a keen ability to know when to access loans for investment in herds for the cattle market. There is also indication that by 1865 in these early stages of learning cattle-raising, Kohrs was familiarizing himself with cultivating oats and barley, potentially as winter feed for the herds. It is possible that Kohrs may have learned the use of feed from his early business partner Peel as Peel was managing the Race Track Creek land by early 1865 and that is where oats and barley were sowed. Whether he learned oats and barley agriculture and irrigation from Peel or whether on his own, Kohrs was at least familiar and had experience with the practice of cereal agriculture as early as 1865.<sup>30</sup>

#### **B. Bielenberg Arrives and Kohrs Builds Business on His Own**

While Kohrs and Peel were partnering and enlarging their business, John Bielenberg settled in Montana on encouragement from his half-brother Kohrs. Bielenberg's father had married Kohrs' mother back in Germany and the two had known each other since childhood growing up together. Bielenberg arrived in 1864 from the family's settlement in Davenport, IA and became manager of one of Con and Peel's butcher shops; this one at Last Chance Gulch. Over the next two years, Kohrs along with Bielenberg supplied meat consumed by miners across southwest Montana.<sup>31</sup> Profits were so high from the Highland shop, that Kohrs and Peel sold their shop in Summit for one final undisclosed profit in 1865.<sup>32</sup> Miners and prospectors had flooded western Montana by this period. A map of gold rush areas across the western U.S. through the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century shows that the "fever", which began with the 49ers in California spread inland to Virginia City, Nevada by 1859 and the Idaho panhandle by 1861. Gold Creek, Bannack, and Last

Chance Gulch of western Montana experienced sharp increases in miner populations from 1862 to 1864, the same time of the half-brothers' managing their respective butcher shops.<sup>33</sup>

The mining populations were crucial for beef sales, which were largely territorial in the early and mid-1860s. In 1862, brothers James and Granville Stuart, known as two pioneers of Montana territory, discovered gold dust in their sluices at the headwaters of the Missouri River. Prospectors migrated to Gold Creek that same year in response to this discovery from the northwest by way of the military road through Idaho and from the east by way of the Missouri River. Gold Creek marked the beginning of the Montana gold rush. Other unearthings of gold, such as those at Alder Gulch, quickly produced mining towns like Virginia City, which was initially a camp with a population of 4,000. Through the decade, miners and prospectors recovered \$30,000,000 in dust and nuggets adjacent to Virginia City, which doubled the total worth taken at Last Chance Gulch.<sup>34</sup>



Photo 12. Portrait of Bielenberg at age 23. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

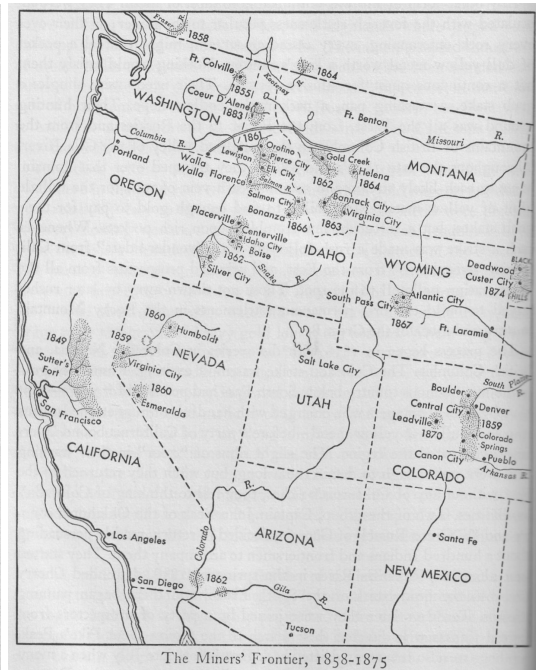


Figure 10. Major mining settlements across the western territories, 1858-75. Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*.

mines produced more than \$20,000,000 in gold dust from gulches as follows:

Gold creek	\$2000000
Ophir	5000000
McClellan	1600000
Lincoln	1200000
French gulch	1000000
German gulch	3000000
Nevada	
Jefferson	
Washington	1500000
Bear gulch	2600000
Scattering	2000000

Table 6. Total dollar worth of gold retrieved from various western mining spots. Amounts are estimates in terms of the dollar's worth at the time. Stuart, *Pioneering in Montana: The Making of a State, 1864-1887*, 34.

Kohrs continued to keep busy while Bielenberg and his brothers moved out west. To supply his butchering outfits, Kohrs bought 400 cattle of rather low quality and a handful of work horses to winter near the Race Track Ranch in the Deer Lodge Valley. Using the strategy others before him in Montana utilized, he nourished the downtrodden herd on open rangeland. This became a strategy to further provide beef for his various meat markets and shops. While learning how to care for cattle and gaining experience in the cattle trade of the territory, Kohrs began using that growing background to take risks and speculate on local supply and demand in the industry. Seeing in the spring of 1865 that cattle would be scarce in the valley, Kohrs sought out acquaintance George Forbes in Virginia City for a \$12,000 (\$155,800) loan. His first major line of credit for cattle, it was enough to purchase nearly all of the herds in the area by splitting the loan between purchases using just enough for a down payment on each acquisition. A loan of \$12,000

used in this manner provided Kohrs with \$85,000 (\$1,103,900) worth of cattle constituting in Kohrs' words "all the beef in the country".<sup>35</sup> By May 1865, after a few years of increasing profits and transactions at three different butcher shops in western Montana, Kohrs and Peel ended their partnership as Peel settled with his fiancé in Missouri. Kohrs purchased Peel's interest in their business for \$17,500 (\$227,300).<sup>36</sup> With at least two years of experience buying and selling herds, driving cattle across the region, knowledge of grain feed, managing cattle at multiple locations, and building up profits and quantity of cattle from owning his own butcher business, Kohrs was set to settle more permanently in one community and solidify his position as a full-time rancher.

On August 23, 1866, Johnny Grant accepted Kohrs' second offer to purchase his farmhouse, accompanying implements, and cattle herd. The increasingly business savvy Kohrs, on acquiring the largest farmhouse and immense grazing lands from Grant, saved \$10,800 from his first offer as he had offered \$30,000 to Grant two years prior. Kohrs and Grant were actually acquaintances within one year of Kohrs arriving to the area with Kohrs borrowing at least \$2,250 from Grant early in 1863 so Kohrs could cover debts he had with other creditors.<sup>37</sup> Grant likely viewed Kohrs as an honest man early on since Kohrs repaid Grant in full within the year even after Grant had considered the loan settled upon partial payment. Grant even offered Kohrs 100 head of prime cattle from his herd on credit, of which Kohrs took 50, after receiving in-full payment of the previous loan.<sup>38</sup> Their friendship and economic relationship continued through the summer of 1864 when Grant supplied Kohrs with hogs butchered and sold at Con and Peel's shop in Summit.<sup>39</sup>

Kohrs ended up saving nearly \$11,000 on the purchase of Grant's house in 1866 as Kohrs knew Grant increasingly desired to leave Montana at that time. While building up his butcher shop, Kohrs had the idea of obtaining a house with rangelands to nourish cattle on and dispose of them through the butcher shops or sell them to the miners. A central ranch in the area to trade and graze cattle would provide Kohrs an efficient spot to keep his herds and access his years of purchasers in the meat markets of southwestern Montana. In further testament to the size operation Kohrs had already built or was envisioning, he purchased an additional 160 acres near Dempsey Creek west of Deer Lodge for \$1,000 only one month after the Grant house acquisition. This land was a part of what was the Louis Demers Ranch and the \$1,000 purchase price included a horse wagon and all farming implements at that ranch.<sup>40</sup> By this point, Kohrs displayed his ability as a shrewd investor, such as with the Grant purchase, and his "native ability to manage business" having diversified assets built-up in less than five years in the territory. Kohrs was not only an astute businessman, but also an efficient calculator often displaying his wiz at computation. Upon his visits to the Helena Bank that held much of K&B's assets, Kohrs would regularly calculate figures in his head and tell the bankers the answer before they could figure it on paper.<sup>41</sup> Three years after the Grant house and land purchase, Kohrs added further lands buying the Alexander Pemberton Ranch from Henry DeWitt for only \$150, which was a small parcel "on Tin Cup Joe Creek, adjoining Frank Mason's Ranch".<sup>42</sup>

Also included in the farmhouse purchase was a horse-powered thrashing machine that Grant bought from St. Louis. Grant had actually used this machine that Kohrs would eventually claim as his own to thrash grain for Kohrs in 1865 when Kohrs was working

with Peel.<sup>43</sup> K&B subsequently gained a sizable early business by putting the machine to work and thrashing grain, including oats, wheat, barley, for many Deer Lodge valley residents from 1866 to as late as 1872. Thrashing records for 1866 through 1872 kept in Kohrs' personal papers provide evidence on this side venture. The first two years of thrashing brought in the most total earnings from this activity with over \$2,000 returned annually.<sup>44</sup> There was nearly one hundred customers then, a testament to the service's popularity considering the small population of Deer Lodge valley in the late 1860s. A majority of customers had 180 to 190 bushels thrashed by paying \$20 to \$30 total in 1867. Jobs of other sizes, based on number of bushels, were done in 1867 with a range of 116 bushels at the low end up to 800 bushels as the largest job. Names of customers, many if not all local farmers, were noted in the records and those same farmers came back the second year asking for more.<sup>45</sup>

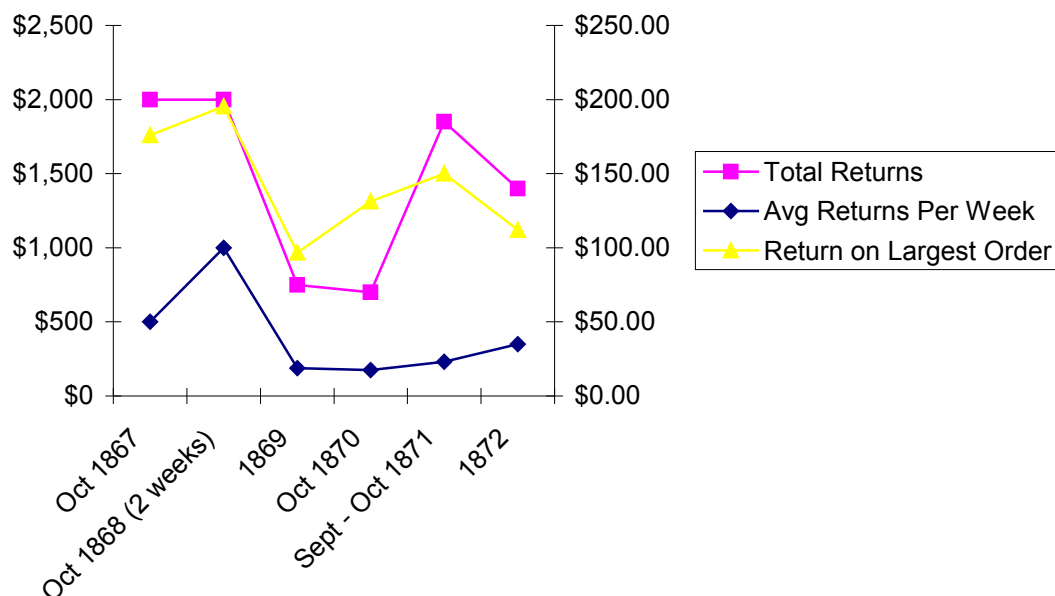


Figure 11. Total returns, average returns per week, and return on largest order for Kohrs' thrashing, 1867-72. Dollar values for "returns on largest order" are on the right Y axis allowing for comparison with the other two variables. Thrashing Records, 1866-72.

Date	Returns	Average returns per week	Largest # of bushels in one order	Returns on largest order	Avg return per bushel
Oct 1867	\$2,000+	\$500+	708	\$176.00	\$0.11 - \$0.25
Oct 1868 (2 weeks)	\$2,000+	\$1000+	1085	\$195.30	\$0.17 - \$0.20
1869	\$700 - \$800	\$175 - \$200	645	\$96.75	\$0.15
Oct 1870	\$700	\$175	1050	\$131.25	\$0.13
Sept - Oct 1871	\$1800 - \$1900	\$225 - \$237.50	1500	\$150.00	\$0.10
1872	\$1400+	\$350+	1400	\$112.00	\$0.08

Table 7. Summary of Kohrs' thrashing activity concerning total earnings, average earnings, and size and returns per bushels, 1867-72. Thrashing Records, 1866-72.

K&B served a similar number of customers in their second year with some individuals increasing their load to between 300 and 500 bushels paying \$50 to \$100 per bushel. The half-brothers occasionally managed large jobs as shown by their largest customer paying \$195.30 for 1,085 bushels. By 1869 and 1870, while the average number of bushels per customer remained steady, the total number of customers served dropped. With this, total returns also decreased to between \$700 and \$800 respectively for these two years as did average per week earnings.

Then, a decent rebound occurred in 1871 as total earnings jumped to between \$1,800 and \$1,900, which was back near the 1866 and 1877 range. This was due to a rebound in the number of customers from the previous two years and a string of large orders including seven individuals paying over \$100. Per bushel rates for thrashing continued to drop throughout 1866 to 1872 as further shown by the largest job in 1871 being 1,500 bushels for \$150. This is a payment over 20% less for nearly 30% more bushels serviced

compared to K&B's 1868 prices. With a similar number of customers, K&B's earnings for 1872 fell to \$1,400 with a few less large jobs.

Already diversified through owning a butcher shop, a placer mine, and its associated water rights while operating a cattle ranch and thrashing grain for farmers, Kohrs continued to develop each investment through the remainder of the decade. Mining was no exception. Kohrs expanded in 1867 forming the Rock Creek Ditch Mining Company (RCDMC) with several partners, one of who was a young William A. Clark who started in Deer Lodge and would later become one of the wealthiest and most famous mining magnates of the west in the 1880s.<sup>46</sup> Working through the latter part of 1867 and through the spring of 1868, Kohrs and his associates had constructed a ditch at Rock Creek with flumes in order to operate the mine.<sup>47</sup>

This formation of the RCDMC resulted from Kohrs having legal rights to water supply on the west side of Deer Lodge, which he had quickly claimed upon settling there years earlier. Within two years after forming, the RCDMC finished a hand-dug artery seven feet wide and three feet deep stretching thirteen miles to bring water from Rock Creek to Pioneer and then to Pikes Peak (a tributary of Pioneer) ending at the north side of Gold Hill. Supplying water to the surrounding mines may have been one reason why the investment partners setup the Rock Creek ditch in the first place.<sup>48</sup> Besides hydraulic mining at Rock Creek, the water transported to other areas was sold to miners of the Montana gold rush bringing in \$70,000 to \$72,000 (\$1,147,500 to \$1,180,300) in returns by 1870 of which Kohrs received \$50,000 (\$819,700) in dividend. This "scrip", the selling of water rights from waterways used for mining, brought in \$35,000 (\$546,900) total for all partners in the Rock Creek Co. during 1869. In 1871, this returned \$72,000



(\$1,263,200), similar to the year prior, with \$50,000 total in dividends declared. Capital not used to pay the owners in dividends was used for material expenses and labor costs at the mine.<sup>49</sup> The town of Pioneer increased population to 1,000 within a few months of its construction, speaking to the demand for water claims at the time. While the dugway construction cost at least \$125,000, it was paid for within only two years. In 1871, Kohrs received another \$50,000 dividend. Kohrs purchased 2,400 acres of mining claims from the returns on water rights sales from the RCDMC again showing his strategy of capital formation; rapidly re-investing profits in diverse and emerging sectors to grow capital and having little sitting idle.

One example of Kohrs keeping track of Rock Creek water rights and transferring them to miners was a notice of claim filed by A.B. Seaton and J.B. Mathews on September 15, 1869. The claim kept by Kohrs in his files outlines that Seaton and Mathews could preempt and appropriate all surplus water at about 300 yards above where an old trail crossed the stream and divert this flow by ditch and flume to Pilgrim Bar of Pikes Peak Gulch. Seaton and Mathews claimed the water for mining purposes and could utilize the flow for other mines in the vicinity of Pilgrim Bar.<sup>50</sup>

Unfortunately for K&B, the prospectors began migrating away from Montana as early as 1864. As had occurred the preceding decades of the western gold rushes, regional booms sustained only a year or two as prospectors quickly settled near towns where there was word of gold, panned the streams rapidly, and migrated to the next new discovery. By 1866 and 1867, Salmon City, ID and Atlantic City, WY were these locations and Montana soon found itself with a decreasing number of miners.

Despite the downturn in local demand for cattle from miners, Kohrs continued his stock-growing venture in conjunction with mining and employed numerous ranch-hands by 1868. Tom Hooban, who worked for Kohrs as early as 1867 continuing through 1883, was one of his earliest and most trusted drivers and range feeders.<sup>51</sup> Mitch Oxarart was also a trusted range and herd manager and cattle driver who was employed as early as 1869 until the winter of 1878 when Oxarart relocated to Texas to work at another ranch for reasons Kohrs does not disclose in his autobiography.<sup>52</sup> Oxarart served as foreman at the home ranch early in his work with Kohrs as of 1869.<sup>53</sup> Oxarart was likely hired and placed as home ranch foreman that year as K&B was expanding on rangeland with Hooban beginning to manage a herd at a range near the Sun River, north of Deer Lodge.

Kohrs, not to trust his cattle on long journeys to an experienced outsider, hired an accomplished fur trader and freighter in Hooban who brought recent familiarity with transportation across the Rockies.<sup>54</sup> Prior to his K&B cowboy days, Hooban traded fur from Fort Benton in northern Montana south to Salt Lake, an area covering the cattle trails he would eventually utilize from 1870 to 1878 to drive most of the cattle K&B would have shipped by railroad during those years. Hooban also operated a freighting outfit covering an area between Fort Benton and Virginia City, representing a long stretch cutting through western Montana. Years of freighting through this area, including helping to transport out timber from Fort Shaw near the Sun River, allowed Hooban to observe the area as a quality location for cattle. Upon Hooban's recommendation to move cattle to the Sun River range as of 1869, Kohrs accepted Hooban's experience with the northern Montana country as adequate and upon his suggestion, began moving at least 1,000 of Kohrs' cattle north.<sup>55</sup> Hooban made the suggestion partially due to Kohrs' herd becoming

too large to not winter feed and apparently the Sun River area was more adequate for supplying feed. Hooban was probably occasionally receiving cattle driven from the home ranch, at least in 1869 and 1871, once K&B reached a quantity they could not adequately winter feed in Deer Lodge.<sup>56</sup> Oxarart remained in Deer Lodge in 1869 as the foreman for the herd there; cattle whose beef was sold to miners surrounding Deer Lodge. Oxarart was in charge of delivering to the mining camps, while Hooban remained with the rest of the cattle at the rangeland near the south fork of the Sun River.<sup>57</sup> Besides hiring hands with transport experience in the region and listening to their recommendations, Kohrs began fencing land from the home ranch to Clark Fork River as early as 1868. This was not yet a choice to fence in cattle close to the Deer Lodge ranch, but rather to keep others' herds away from fields used to grow and keep hay. This hay was for eventual winter feeding on the outfit's other open ranges like their Snake River claim.

Kohrs quickly delegated cattle driving and hay feeding authorities to Hooban upon hiring him. Hooban would help expand the operation across the open range of the northern Rockies and trail cattle to the railroad towns for shipment. In November 1869, for example, Hooban became the first from Kohrs' operation to take a herd to eastern Montana, on Big Muddy north of Augusta, MT.<sup>58</sup> This is near to where K&B would continue grazing cattle on what would become their secondary headquarters, their "eastern ranch" in the northeastern plains of Montana. Besides grazing the eastern ranges of Montana by 1869, Kohrs also trusted Hooban to winter 1,300 cattle in the Sun River Valley northeast of Deer Lodge that same year. In 1871, Hooban wintered cattle along the Snake River Valley in southern Idaho where he constructed barns and supplied hay for the cattle.<sup>59</sup> Sixteen years preceding the end of the hard winter and the supposed

origins of winter feeding practices in the western U.S., K&B were integrating hay feeding into their management style with Hooban who oversaw the larger of the trailed herds.



Photo 13. Portrait of Hooban, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

With increasing numbers of cattle driven through Wyoming and herds grazed across distant rangelands in multiple territories, K&B did not experience as many problems as contemporaries like Granville Stuart did regarding cattle thieves despite operating within the regions worked by outlaws.<sup>60</sup> Even beyond the 1860s and 1870s, K&B experienced little controversy or issues concerning gunfights, range wars, mining claim disputes, or cattle rustlers that would occasionally damage other ranchers. Relatives of Kohrs claim “he was an excellent judge of men” evidenced by the company’s lack of conflict with other outfits and outlaws along with the number of head cowboys highly devoted to the outfit that did not ditch or get fired.<sup>61</sup> Besides the admiration between half-brothers Kohrs

and Bielenberg, Kohrs and Hooban enjoyed complete confidence in each other with Hooban being sent out with thousands of the highest quality cattle the company owned without hesitation. K&B did not write many checks in the many years before 1905 when check stubs begin appearing in their records; instead paying hands and fulfilling business transactions with cash. Hooban was trusted with large amounts of cash while trailing in open country; money to pay for amenities along the drive, compensate the other ranch-hands, and purchase services needed for the cattle such as night stalls when stopping overnight.<sup>62</sup>

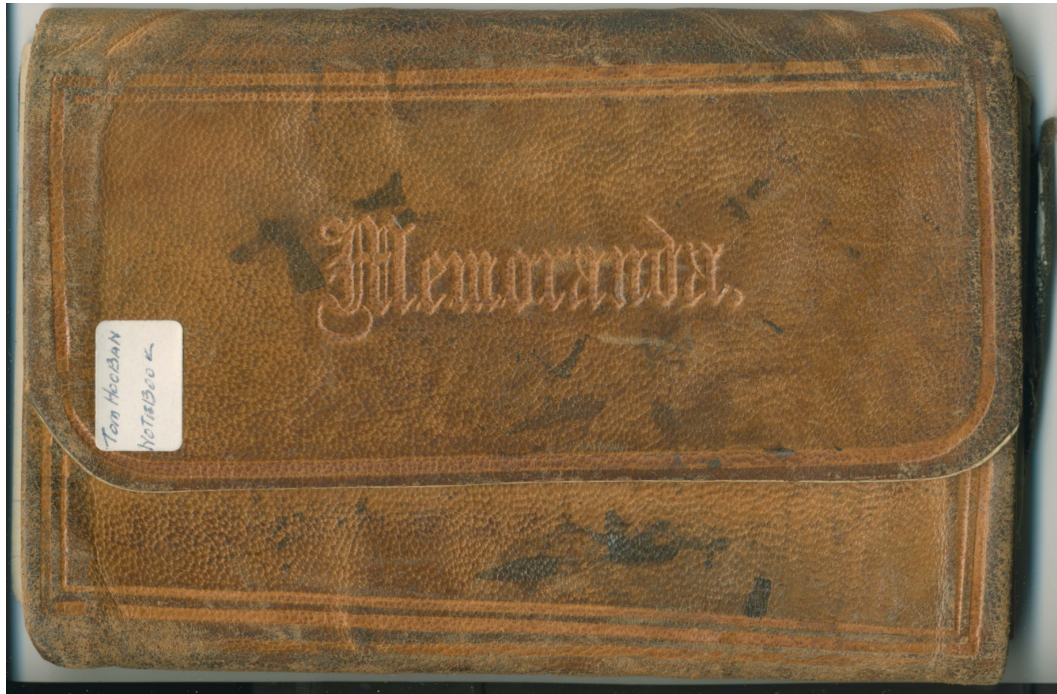


Photo 14. Original cover of one of Hooban's notebooks, GRKO 15721. Courtesy of Peggy Gow, GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

Kohrs established himself through the 1860s and helped bring out and setup Bielenberg who would become a full partner in the ranching business. The half-brothers showed early evidence of savvy economic decision-making, yet maintaining a propensity for risk, in financial allocations through spreading their investments across ranching and

mining, while jumping at opportunities and leveraging investments through loans. K&B would be set with those characteristics to take advantage of the continued healthy economic circumstances of their region and the nation into the 1870s, a period of growth for their ventures.



Photo 15. Pioneers of Montana including Kohrs, Stuart, Samuel T. Hauser, James Fergus, and Matt Carroll with names noted in picture order at the bottom. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge,

### CHAPTER III: EARLY GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION

Bielenberg had become a fifty-fifty partner with Kohrs by 1870 having also gotten out of the butchering business.<sup>1</sup> He was described as a friendly and “tough old character” who lived simply in spite of the thousands and later nearly \$1,000,000 he was worth.<sup>2</sup> A “good-hearted unostentatious individual” without a known enemy, Bielenberg devoted his life to the K&B ranch never marrying and living thrifty.<sup>3</sup> It is these qualities, devotion and concentration on business, combined with light-heartedness towards others, a strong commitment to family, and a propensity to frugality regarding his own personal expenditures that made Bielenberg an ideal ranching partner, especially with half-brother Kohrs. Bielenberg was peculiar not only socially, but also physically standing 6’6” and weighing 240 lbs. Cayuses could not carry Bielenberg and he had a special stallion imported that was so large, it required a custom barn.<sup>4</sup>

Con Warren, Kohrs’ grandson, manager of the Deer Lodge ranch through the mid-part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and preservationist of K&B materials, argues that the half-brothers’ respective personalities complemented each other well making for a long-lasting and successful fifty-fifty partnership. Devoted and loyal to each other, they shared a mutual admiration and would not have enjoyed the financial and industry achievements they did without a partnership. In their first decade together, they shared tasks such as cattle driving and stock-breeding, but also began to split duties in line with their particular talents. Kohrs traveled and promoted the business handling cattle sales with fellow ranchers, while Bielenberg tended the Deer Lodge headquarters looking after animals and

maintaining relations with the ranch-hands. Whenever there was a task involving caring for the animals or ensuring that a herd near the home ranch needed to be trailed for a sale, Bielenberg was the one for the job.<sup>5</sup> Later, into the 1880s and beyond, Bielenberg would grow more into the managerial role of daily operations at the Deer Lodge ranch.

Although K&B were operational, managerial, and profit-sharing partners in cattle-raising through the 1870s and 1880s, it was not until 1892 when Bielenberg was full-time manager that K&B's stock-raising holdings were officially designated a ranch with an estate. After taking over as manager, Bielenberg would further cultivate his stock-breeding expertise with a thoroughbred horse operation, would keep the financial books for the entire ranch company and associated investments, and occasionally advise Kohrs on what cattle to purchase and sell.



Photo 17. Bielenberg on horseback during his later years, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 16. Portrait of Bielenberg, 1883. Courtesy of MHS, Helena, MT.

In January 1870, Bielenberg along with his brothers Charlie and Nick drove much of the total 11,000 K&B herd away from the Deer Lodge valley north to the open range at Sun



River. That year, Kohrs reported to the local press that part of the herd on the Sun River would be wintered there.<sup>6</sup> K&B had outgrown keeping a growing herd only in Deer Lodge and required additional rangelands in order to keep competitive and supply adequate grass. The open range of the era provided economic incentives with low costs of entry and claims, especially with cattle and horse raiding by Native Americans not being a problem for K&B.<sup>7</sup> K&B's 11,000 head represented a large amount of the cattle that was supplied locally in the Deer Lodge valley as right after this drive, a beef shortage occurred there. The importance of the ranch was growing evident as residents complained about not having enough beef in Deer Lodge through the spring of 1870, coinciding with much of the ranch's cattle moved north and out of the valley. This urgency for beef in Deer Lodge in early 1870 may have also been due to a valley-wide beef shortage. K&B continued to supply the southern part of Montana through 1870, as beef demand in this region rose to the point that the half-brothers distributed immature two-year old cattle there. At least by the autumn of 1870, K&B were satisfying much of Deer Lodge's local beef purchases as the half-brothers were selling to local butcher shops twenty slaughtered cattle per week on average during this part of the year.<sup>8</sup>

In 1871, Bielenberg took on one of the most formidable tasks in western ranching as he trailed 1,000 head on the long journey from Texas to Montana in order to bring cattle to Deer Lodge. Kohrs may have decided to bring in cattle from Texas given his observation that the ranching competition across Montana had driven in more Texas cattle than the previous years, such as Dan Floweree did by 1871.<sup>9</sup> Bielenberg, who proved to be a quality cross-breeder of cattle through the remainder of his days as a rancher, may have

cross-bred the Texas cattle he was driving with Durham bred cattle during this trip. This likely occurred as he made stops in Davenport, IA and California at various points to collect “high grade” cattle. Herding the heavier northern European breeds with the leaner Texas cattle was part of a recurring cross-breeding strategy by K&B. The highest quality breeding bulls were often kept near the home ranch and mated with heifers to produce beef of quality for regional butcher shops. Besides the commitment of producing high grade cattle through cross-breeding, these and other early drives by Bielenberg show K&B’s dedication to splitting duties and delegating authority. Duties, like inter and intra-state cattle drives, were spread out early on between the proprietors themselves and cowboys like Tom Hooban and Mitch Oxarart.<sup>10</sup> Hooban and Oxarart occasionally performed some of K&B’s largest cattle drives, such as Hooban taking 2,300 head to Cheyenne, WY in 1874 and Oxarart guiding 2,000 cattle also to Cheyenne in the same year. Hooban and Oxarart would do drives out of Montana to railroad shipping ports in 1876 as well.<sup>11</sup> These management qualities of delegation would be persistent through K&B’s subsequent four decades together.

Kohrs himself drove cattle as well, especially through the late 1860s. Not all trails Kohrs participated in or operated alone were cross-territorial towards the major railroad lines, however. He would also occasionally perform small runs up to the Sun River range and back to Deer Lodge in order to bring to town cattle needed for his continued supplying of local butcher shops. One such visit was in the spring of 1871 when Kohrs traveled north to the Sun River range retrieving approximately 200 to 300 head. Local demand in Deer Lodge, at least from the late 1860s into 1871, helped set Kohrs’ schedule

as to when and from where he would trail and deliver cattle. Kohrs himself would drive herds of cattle from the home ranch back to the Sun River range on separate instances in mid-June and then in the autumn of 1871 in additional examples of small drives and the possible separation of cattle being wintered for local supply as compared to those destined for more distant shipment.<sup>12</sup> With the mining population abandoning Montana by 1864 and having too many cattle remaining after supplying the butcher shops, Kohrs' longest cattle trailings were mostly to Wyoming up through 1869. Drives done by cowboys like Hooban and Oxarart during this era would often consist of one trail "boss", with eight associate ranch-hands, a wrangler, a cook, 110 horses, a mess wagon, and a bed wagon. This size outfit moved 2,000 cattle an average of 8 to 10 miles per day.<sup>13</sup>

K&B, along with their cowboys, primarily used two trails for cattle drives from western Montana to catch railroad shipments east to Chicago. From 1869 to 1879, K&B and the cowboys drove three to four year old cattle ready for market over the Lewis and Clark Pass to the Bitterroot Valley, which is south from the Sun River range over the continental divide near Lincoln, MT and south through the Bitterroot Valley. In Bitterroot Valley, they often purchased additional cattle and continued the trail south over Mud Lake to the Immigrant Road, which is south through Idaho into Wyoming. As Kohrs maps in his autobiography, this was the "western" route rode through most of the 1870s with the final drive occurring in 1878.<sup>14</sup> This route included "Hooban's Bottom", which is the outpost range area that Hooban managed with K&B herds near the Snake River in Idaho. As late as 1879, K&B and the cowboys used the "eastern" route starting from the Sun River range, going through Great Falls, along the Musselshell River, and towards

Pine Bluff, WY to meet the Union Pacific Railroad. Kohrs led his final drive on that route in 1879 to ship a herd on the Union Pacific, a journey that lasted from July 5 to October 23. M.A. Leeson also identified these two routes in his voluminous late 19<sup>th</sup> century history of Montana as two of the five standard routes often utilized by stock-growers in the territory.<sup>15</sup>

As early as 1880, just two and one years after K&B and their cowboys stopped using the western and eastern routes respectively, Kohrs began having Hooban drive herds to railroad shipping points that reached closer to their operation into Montana. In June 1880, Hooban drove a herd of mostly two, three, and some four year old steers along with 300 to 400 head of K&B's oldest cows from the Sun River range towards a shipment point that was now in eastern Montana.<sup>16</sup> By just a year later, the Northern Pacific stretched to Miles City in eastern Montana and as of 1883, the Utah and Northern and the Northern Pacific connected at Garrison, just northwest of Deer Lodge, providing more convenient shipping options for K&B. This railroad connection is within sight of Johnny Grant's original settlement.<sup>17</sup>



Photo 19. Portrait of Kohrs, 1872.  
Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 18. Mitch Oxarart, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO,  
Deer Lodge, MT.



Figure 12. Map of western Montana noting the 1879 and 1880 Hooban-led cattle drives in red. These are the “western” and “eastern” routes, respectively. Routes drawn by Conrad Warren. Courtesy of MHS, Helena, MT.



Photo 20. Missouri River and surrounding range in eastern MT. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 21. Cowboys crossing a river on horseback with cattle herd in front. River-crossing as pictured was common on cattle drives during this period. For example, Hooban and crew traversed at least six rivers in a span of four months on their 1879 drive including the Missouri, Mussellshell, Yellowstone, Stillwater, Tongue, and Powder. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



### **A. Establishing Winter-feed, Land Acquisition, and Banking Partner Strategies**

Within a year of driving a herd to the Snake River in southeastern Idaho, Hooban began consolidating hay there along with constructing cabins and barns. Besides the Sun River range, taking cattle to the Snake River range was also a Hooban-driven decision given his experience with the area and knowing it as a location where hay was in good supply. While Hooban built the range outpost, Kohrs visited him on several different occasions in the spring of 1872; the year Hooban began bringing cattle to the Snake River instead of the Sun River. K&B listened to experienced associates on crucial decisions about where to send much of their stock as seen in the multiple examples with Hooban. Hooban was essentially spending funds on and managing a small ranch of his own at the Snake River as he was purchasing supplies such as mowing machines, rakes, and wagons to outfit his operation there that would eventually include a set of cabins and barns.<sup>18</sup> This Snake River range was under ownership of K&B for these few years until the summer of 1874 when they sold it.<sup>19</sup>

K&B were also actively involved themselves, along with the cowboys, in providing winter hay across some of their open range claims. Hooban trailed an additional herd of 1,200 Texas longhorns to “Hooban’s Bottom” (the west side of the Snake River below the mouth of the Portnip River) in the fall of 1872, but even the winter feeding practice would not save all of these lean cattle from the coming winter.<sup>20</sup> Approximately 100 head perished that winter. One winter loss did not deter K&B from their practice of winter feeding though. After receiving news of the deaths, Kohrs decided to further invest in

growing winter feed at the home ranch by sowing excelsior oats at 100 pounds to the acre at the home ranch.<sup>21</sup>

Early indicators of K&B's wealth appear in the early 1870s through taxes paid and the associated assessed value of assets. As of 1871, Kohrs paid \$885 in taxes on an assessed property value of \$40,218 (\$705,600) along with \$1,320 paid on \$60,000 (\$1,052,600) in assessed value at Rock Creek Ditch showing the importance of Kohrs' mining value in the early years. Kohrs' personal property assessment dropped to \$12,674 (\$222,400) in 1872 with a resulting county tax of \$443.58, approximately half of the previous year's bill. Three years later in 1875, Kohrs' personal property value increased to \$17,896 (\$344,200), requiring a tax of \$394.69.<sup>22</sup> These figures likely represent land and holdings within the county only and do not provide a picture of K&B's larger and expanding rangeland claims elsewhere across the Rocky Mountain West.

Rangeland claims were a major activity during the 1870s and into the early 1880s for K&B as well as their herds grew through the "beef boom". In 1871, during the late summer and into the fall, Kohrs claimed new land in and outside of Deer Lodge. As of early October 1871, he acquired about half a quarter section north of the home ranch and about the same amount upstream along the Deer Lodge River, about four miles south of town, on the "upper ranch".<sup>23</sup> These were the initial acquisitions of land for the home ranch, which would eventually result in holdings of over 25,000 acres. Early in 1873, Kohrs purchased property about four miles south of Deer Lodge on which the houses of the "upper ranch" now stand. He paid \$1,000 for 160 acres of bench land in this purchase; land that overlooks the Deer Lodge River and included parts of both



riverbanks.<sup>24</sup> Although Kohrs was acquiring land to supplement the home ranch, he did not officially own the land the house sat on until the summer of 1874 when he filed homestead, eight years after his purchasing the house from Grant. The homestead was approved later on January 10, 1876.<sup>25</sup> Later in the decade, during the summer of 1879, a half-section of land was added on the “upper ranch”, which was one of the earliest land transactions with both Kohrs and Bielenberg’s name appearing on the purchase.<sup>26</sup> Into the 1880s, on January 2, 1883, K&B purchased 80 acres from the Northern Pacific Railroad for \$400 to continue adding to the upper ranch.<sup>27</sup> In fall that same year, K&B bought another ranch and its cattle near Deer Lodge, a ranch that had been owned by Pemberton and Kelly who had stocked it with “a fine herd they had brought from Missouri”.<sup>28</sup> Then, in April 1884, K&B purchased Tom Stuart’s place including meadowland and a creek through it between Deer Lodge and the ranch house, which is close to Pemberton and Kelly’s old ranch.<sup>29</sup>

From the early to mid-1870s, K&B were buying and selling more through local markets, while the late-1870s saw an increase in shipping and selling to Chicago and more “nationally”, but maintaining their cattle purchases locally. The years 1876 and 1877 were especially evident of these trends with K&B buying much of their cattle in the nearby Bitterroot Valley, which were grazed and shipped to Chicago by that summer.<sup>30</sup> By 1877, Kohrs referred to buying cattle in the Bitterroot Valley “as usual” to buildup herds for summer shipment.<sup>31</sup> Up to the mid-1870s, K&B’s returns on cattle were primarily through serving local and regional markets with the previously mentioned supply to Deer Lodge butcher shops. K&B also sold to fellow ranchers in the region as

shown by their selling of 425 head of three to seven year old head to the Diamond R. Company at an average of \$20 per head in May 1874, which constituted one of their last periods of selling exclusively within Montana territory and the region of the U.S. west. K&B continued to sell cattle locally in Deer Lodge, or at least attempted to as part of the selling strategy, which is evidenced by the ad they maintained in Deer Lodge's *The New Northwest* newspaper. As of the summer of 1875 it stated "Cattle for sale! I have now at my ranch 100 head of prime beef cattle from my Sun River Herd, which I offer for sale at reasonable figures."<sup>32</sup>

The 1870s was not only a decade of expansion for K&B as it was for other western cattle industry entrepreneurs, but also a time when they established strategies and relationships they would maintain and further over subsequent years.<sup>33</sup> One of the key relations that started during this period was Kohrs' personal and business companionship with the head of the Chicago commission firm the Rosenbaum Bros., Joseph Rosenbaum. The Rosenbaums were one of the wealthiest dealers in the city with Joseph as head and well-known commission agent. His company was profitable enough to afford Joseph and his wife to live out of a suite in the Congress Hotel of Chicago by the turn of the century, which cost \$25,000 annually.<sup>34</sup> With K&B's quantity of cattle transported to the Chicago stockyards increasing to the tens of thousands per shipment during the 1870s, the company needed a reliable and trustworthy commission firm in the city to handle increasingly large sales of their cattle, hold and invest returns, and provide loans upon their assets if needed. The relationship commenced during this decade and Rosenbaum

had sold a K&B herd as of 1878 after K&B had the cattle shipped to Council Bluffs where Rosenbaum sold them to feeders.<sup>35</sup>

With Rosenbaum as seller and banker in Chicago, K&B could focus more energy on range management, stock-breeding, and cattle market issues close to home without worrying as much about the condition of their animals in distant Chicago. The Rosenbaum Bros. essentially worked as a bank for K&B besides finding purchasers of their cattle. Proceeds from K&B cattle sales would go into accounts held by the Rosenbaums in Chicago and K&B would draft from them in order to finance acquisitions and investments out west. K&B gained an advantage in efficiency by aligning with a prominent stock commissioner before the upcoming boom years of the industry. Kohrs, as the ranch's promoter and sharp judge of men for the business, showed the similar trustworthy and delegatory qualities with Rosenbaum that had also led to success with the ranch's cowboys.

Rosenbaum was not only K&B's banker and trusted Chicago salesmen for decades, but he became a close friend of Kohrs over this time period. Over three decades after their partnership commenced, Rosenbaum came to visit the Deer Lodge ranch in 1915.

The Rosenbaum Bros. was not the only entity K&B would call on for financial capital during the early years of their stockraising business. Besides the large loans that K&B would eventually call on from Rosenbaum that would reach five figures, K&B also inquired into smaller loans from other financiers during their years expanding the ranch. In December 1873, Kohrs inquired about obtaining a loan from L.H. Hershfield and Bros. in Virginia City, MT at 1.5% interest per month. Kohrs noted he currently had \$3,700 on

hand, but needed more for an unspecified investment.<sup>36</sup> K&B apparently maintained relations with Hershfield and Bros. as five years later, K&B again requested a small loan, this time for \$5,000 Hershfield and Bros. in a letter dated December 14, 1878. The line of credit was requested under both K&B's names with payback to be over a period of four months at a similar interest of previous years, 1.25% per month.<sup>37</sup> K&B would continue their expansionist practices by leveraging their finances through loaning, which will be a subject revisited in the next chapter and in the subsequent chapters of the report.

### **B. The Beginning of Large Returns in Ranching and Mining**

Earnings and loan capital were being invested in diverse areas by the mid-1870s, such as mining. In August 1875, Kohrs became a larger partner in the Pioneer Gulch Placer mine as he purchased one-third interest in the mine for \$300 from William Williams.<sup>38</sup> With just this small investment of a few hundred dollars, within one year Kohrs increased the earning power by at least as much as this initial investment as this mine would later return thousands annually for decades.



Photo 22. Hydraulic mining at Pioneer Gulch near Pioneer, MT and part of K&B's mine investments, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

K&B continued to expand their land claims through the 1870s and 1880s. By 1879, much of Montana was still sparsely populated, especially outside of the few largest towns. This remoteness and vastness of open range was observed by Montana cowboy John Barrows in an 1879 trip west of Ft. Benton. His trip took him ten miles outside of Ft. Benton before he saw another residence and then he traveled into the Mussellshell Valley 100 miles east of Square Butte without seeing another individual.<sup>39</sup> The vast territory continued to be open for informal rangeland claims. In the summer of 1881, K&B claimed rangeland near Flat Willow Creek, southeast of Lewiston, MT, which began a period of sizable open rangeland claiming beyond the expansion of the home ranch and adjacent areas through the 1870s. With this added land, K&B used and laid claim to open range along the Sun River, which they had grazed since the start of their

partnership. During this period, they also claimed area surrounding the Snake River in southeast Idaho, Goose Creek in northeast Wyoming, and the home ranch at Deer Lodge. K&B gained free grazing along the Tongue River in southeast Montana by 1882, which proved to be a quality choice concerning herd nourishment. Average shipping weight of cattle from the Tongue River range was between 1,300 and 1,600 lbs.<sup>40</sup> K&B continued to hold their large spread in eastern Montana, which included pasture around Fort Peck Lake, that would eventually become their “eastern ranch” under a hired manager.

Their recently acquired lands proved both successful and otherwise depending on the circumstances over the subsequent years. During the winter of 1880-81, for example, K&B experienced losses in herd quantity along the Sun River range. Kohrs noted “that of 1881 was responsible for heavy losses in a local rather than general sense, as it was what is called a ‘spotted winter.’” Some of the losses came during the cold weather, but others resulted from water rising behind ice dams on the Sun River late in the winter and drowning cattle on islands. K&B’s aggregate losses stood at approximately 15% when the count was made at spring roundup.<sup>41</sup>

The Tongue River claim, on the other hand, paid off immediately after K&B began using it. In 1882, 1,100 head of the Tongue River herd shipped from Miles City to Chicago returning \$93,500 (\$1,947,900), which is a high \$85 per head for the time. This herd consisted of mature cattle at healthy weight for the Chicago market with 700 three year old and 400 four year old head averaging 1,365 and 1,583 lbs. for the respective age categories.<sup>42</sup> Such prices received are evident of the high quality of the cattle there. Subtracting input costs including labor, feed, and equipment resulted in profit margins of

around \$40 per head from the Tongue River herd during the early 1880s. With expanded land claims, multiple herds on vastly spread out ranges, and reaping high returns from an upswing in Chicago prices, the “boom” for K&B was officially started by this time. Also in 1882, the continued westward construction of the Canadian Pacific Railroad stretched through Alberta and placed crewmen in vicinity of northern Montana cattle suppliers. K&B negotiated a deal to supply beef to the railroad employees through I.G. Baker and Company where, in 1882, K&B made a return of approximately \$93,750 (\$1,953,100) by selling over 1,500 cattle at \$62.50 per head. This beef came from a K&B herd grazing at the Sun River range, where Bielenberg met and drove the cattle north to complete the transaction.<sup>43</sup>



Photo 23. Portrait of Kohrs at age 45, 1880. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

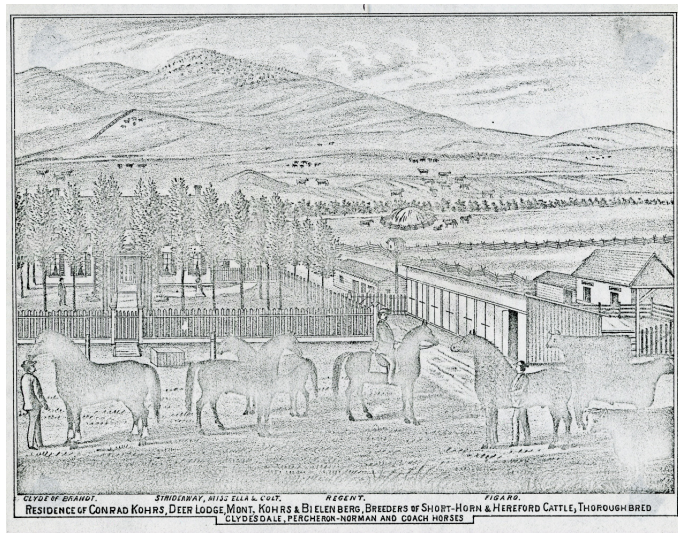


Figure 13. Sketch of K&B’s home ranch, horses, and surrounding land as of 1880. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

During the start of their boom, in June 1882, K&B also increased their allocations in mining. From John Hickey, K&B purchased one-quarter interest in a variety of mining claims for \$2,000, which included the following lodes: Buena Vista, Altoona, Cliff,

Queen, and Lena. One of these lodes, the Altoona, included a specified amount of feet around the lode that also went to K&B in the transaction.<sup>44</sup> Thus, K&B could benefit not only from the lode, but also the immediate area surrounding it if further mineral discoveries were made. The fate of these lode investments for K&B are difficult to discern, unfortunately, as the names are not entered in subsequent journals, ledgers, claims, or correspondence. The purchase at least shows the expansion of claims by K&B during the early 1880s. Just a few months later, in September 1882, K&B accessed additional water flow from Rock Creek. On September 14, they signed a claim appropriating 1,000 inches on Rock Creek to take water from a channel approximately 30 feet below Rock Creek Ditch to be conveyed in flumes and ditches on the south side of the creek.<sup>45</sup>

One year later, in September 1883, Kohrs continued allocations towards mining by purchasing two one-sixth portions of the Quartz lode mining claim in the Clear Creek mining district of what was formerly called the Boulder district. These two acquisitions were from John Hickey and David Henessy, both of Deer Lodge County, for \$50 a piece. The claim from Henessy included four miles along the Princeton mine.<sup>46</sup> For only a small allocation, K&B were able to officially claim and use water rights and invest in portions of mines in the region.

Substantial reinvestment of profits did not take long during K&B's increased cattle returns of the early 1880s. The half-brothers' eye for expansion in open rangelands persisted as in July of 1883, during one of the most profitable years for the company, K&B acquired two-thirds of the interest owned by Judge Andrew Davis in the Davis,



Hauser, and Stuart Company (DHS). The DHS, also partially owned by Samuel Hauser and Granville Stuart, was one of K&B's largest competitors in the region, an open range outfit primarily using valley land near the Judith Mountains in central Montana, which is south and east of the Sun River range. Created in 1879 after four investors put in a ranch headquarters on Box Elder Creek, about four miles south of Ft. Maginnis, the DHS was organized by Hauser, a Montana territorial entrepreneur and politician, Stuart, who was one of the earliest Montana settlers, and the two Davis brothers, Butte banker A. J. and his brother Ervin who lived in New York City.<sup>47</sup>

K&B's purchase included 12,000 DHS cattle at an average estimated worth of \$32.50 per head, for which they paid \$400,000 (\$8,510,600) to also include most of the buildings, lands, and materials belonging to the company.<sup>48</sup> This nearly doubled, in terms of quantity of cattle and amount paid, the next largest cattle industry transaction previously in Montana, which was 7,000 head sold for \$235,000. The enormity of the sale, especially since it was a buyout of a sizable portion of a competitor's assets, led later commentators to dub K&B at "the head of the Montana cattle business" and call Kohrs himself as the figurehead of the company, the "undisputed Cattle King of Montana."<sup>49</sup> Shortly thereafter, Kohrs would sell one-third interest in the DHS worth approximately \$133,333 to a handful of investors, while Kohrs retained a majority of his DHS purchase.<sup>50</sup> The following table shows DHS cattle as of December 1883, just later in the year of the acquisition by K&B speaking to the tens of thousands of cattle held by the DHS at the time.

<u>DHS Recapitulation for 1883</u>	
Cattle as shown by Stuart, 1882	10,500
Calves branded from above	3,379
Steers sold at Custer Station	644
Cows sold at Custer Station	71
Stags sold at Custer Station	16
Butchered at ranch	10
Butchered by thieves estimated	25
Total cattle on range, end of 1883	13,113

Table 8. Recapitulation for the DHS, 1883. Custer Station was a rail loading point on the Northern Pacific Railroad near Billings, MT. Adapted from Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

The DHS was likely in reasonably healthy condition at this point as the 13,113 “cattle on range” as of the end of 1883 were valued at \$35.00 each, totaling between \$455,000 and \$460,000. The approximate gain for the year of 1883 stood at \$71,067.95 (\$1,512,100), although it is not clear if this was net profit for the year. Combining the DHS with K&B’s already sizable ranching assets, as K&B did, resulted in the half-brothers holding a major portion of the Montana cattle business as of 1883.<sup>51</sup>

The DHS, which was kept track of as a separate entity, continued to grow through 1884 as well. The DHS recapitulation for 1884 showed increases in quantity of cattle. The herds expanded from 13,113 at the beginning of the year to 15,686 by the end of the year and increasing up to 18,343 on the range by the end of 1885.<sup>52</sup>



state legislative session. Granville Stuart recalled that during this period in Helena concerning the DHS “the name was changed from Stuart, Kohrs and Co. to the Pioneer Cattle Company.” It was the Pioneer Cattle Company’s (PCC) symbol, “DS”, that would become one of Montana’s most widely recognized cattle brands. The now PCC managers decided to capitalize the company with 10,000 shares of \$100 each, bringing the total capitalization of the PCC to \$1,000,000 (\$22,222,200). The stock was divided as the shares had been; Kohrs became president, Samuel T. Hauser vice president, A.J. Seligman secretary, and Stuart retained his role as superintendent.<sup>53</sup>

Besides showing their success during the national “beef boom” through consolidating with neighboring stock-growers and racking up immense returns and profits, K&B also used one of the largest land areas of any stockraising outfit in Montana during this period. Through the mid-1880s, K&B reached their peak of claiming nearly 10,000,000 acres of rangeland across the Rocky Mountain west and northern plains. While some of this constituted trails and their adjacent river valleys used only occasionally during cattle drives, ranges like the Sun River, Snake River, and lands of the “eastern ranch” became like subsidiary operations in themselves with the former two using hay feeding through winter months. With K&B growing elsewhere, the home ranch had also grown since the 1870s as shown by 1883 and 1884 taxes. Kohrs paid \$866.20 in taxes for 1883. The increase in wealth, in Deer Lodge County at least, was reflected in Kohrs’ tax bill of 1884 as he paid \$917.80, up a little over \$50.00 from the preceding year.<sup>54</sup> Kohrs’ assessed property value in Deer Lodge increased from 1872 and 1875 when he was paying less than \$500 in county taxes, assuming tax rates did not more than double during the

interceding years.

As figurehead and traveling promoter for this immense ranch who would go out on cattle purchases and complete transactions, Kohrs was an important voice heard among the cattle industry's elite concerning major issues of the era, such as range management techniques. With the infamous hard winter approaching unbeknownst, Kohrs presented a proposal to the Montana Stock-growers' Association (MSA) in 1885 addressing winter feeding. Advocating his own mixed range methods, Kohrs formally suggested that the association require each outfit to separate bulls by the first of November and hay feed them close to their respective home ranch. Kohrs argued this would bring positive results for the industry as bulls turned back out on free grazing in the summer months would be nourished and in prime condition to breed quality calves. In trying to convince fellow ranchers how adopting this strategy would result in a higher quality product, Kohrs concluded with a call to national patriotism and individual economic rationality: "The great American test applied to all proposal change is "Will it pay?" In this case there can be no doubt about the answer. It will absolutely!"<sup>55</sup>

Although calling on pure monetary ends with his contemporaries, Kohrs' own personal criteria for encouraging mixed range strategies may not have been due completely to his previous business success with the methods and a desire to help the industry in this manner. The same year of his speech at the MSA, Kohrs stated in an interview at the MHS in Helena that to support one cow requires twenty acres on a previously unused range. With continued grazing, however, after two years one cow will need 25 acres and then 40 acres after six years. Kohrs showed with this reasoning a

concern for the year-round utilization of open rangelands and how constant use without rest would result in more crowding of free-grazed areas. Perhaps he had environmental concerns about over-grazing of the regions' grasses, but one could also argue he was also or exclusively looking out for his company's and his own interests. What was happening at the Ft. Maginnis open range that same year, supports the latter perspective, where twelve herds including K&B and DHS cattle had been grazing for three consecutive years. At least in this range, Kohrs knew of overcrowding issues. Kohrs' premonition about overcrowding open ranges started K&B on their strategy to avoid the upcoming fluctuation in weather and also marked the beginnings of a major rift and distinction in decision-making between K&B and fellow pioneer Montana rancher Granville Stuart.<sup>56</sup>

Average per head returns on cattle sales for K&B dropped a bit as of 1885. In a letter to Samuel T. Hauser, who was founder of several banks across Montana and a fellow mine investor and politician, Kohrs explained some of the conditions and sales of cattle in 1885. Writing from Davenport, IA on November 8, the letter shows that K&B also placed money with Hauser, most likely at Hauser's First National Bank of Helena. Kohrs told of just returning from Chicago and seeing the shipment of 982 head of PCC cattle. The shipment was of a decent quality ratio consisting of 592 steers, 381 cows, and nine bulls not including 31 cattle that perished on the trip. These brought an average of \$42 per head across the three different types, which was down from the enormous average sales of 1882 and 1883. Of the approximate total of over \$41,000 (\$911,100) for this sale, Kohrs told Hauser "there has been sent to your bank \$38,588.90" with the remainder of the total arriving from Burlington Cedar Rapids Railroad. Kohrs expressed good feelings

for the 1885 cattle sales and although he acknowledges they were not as good as last year, he saw 1885 as a “fair grass season” that would provide reasonable profit totals for that year. Another reason for optimism despite the slight downturn was that most of the sales during that time were three-year-old steers, which brought decent returns.<sup>57</sup>

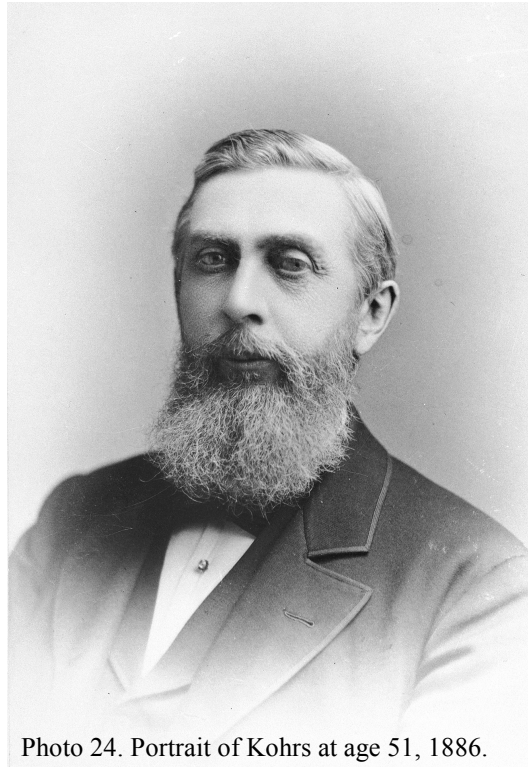


Photo 24. Portrait of Kohrs at age 51, 1886.  
Photograph by Steffens Studio, Chicago.  
Courtesy of MHS, Helena, MT.

Despite these years of sizable returns in the mid-1880s, by 1885 Kohrs writes in his autobiography that Bielenberg and he were considering selling nearly their entire cattle herd that then consisted of nearly 35,000 head. Of these, about 12,000 were K&B's cattle and the rest were DHS cattle in which K&B held one-third interest. This was likely not an active pursuit to liquidate and slowdown their ranching business, however, as Kohrs explains he received an offer from a group of eastern investors to buy his entire herd. K&B ended up offering nearly their entire stock, 33,000 cattle, for a price of \$1,000,000.

Given that the cattle inspector for the potential investors was satisfied with K&B's cattle helps support the \$1,000,000 figure as a fair estimate of near to their total worth at that time. The sale ended up falling through, however, as the inspector advised the investors to buy only if there was an adequate rain that year to supply adequate grass for the cattle.<sup>58</sup> This not being the case, the deal fell through.

DHS and PCC Manager's Report Balance Sheet, Jan. 16, 1886		
18,843	Cattle on range (worth \$31 per head)	\$584,133
164	Horses	\$12,886
4	Wagons & harnesses (badly worn)	\$200
400	Acres of hay land (\$25 per acre)	\$10,000
400	Tons of hay (\$10 per ton)	\$4,000
	Amount due from sundry parties per trial balance	\$4,212.19
	Cash on hand	\$108.09
	Capital stock	\$400,000
	Amount due parties per trial balance	\$3,764.77
	Approximate gain	\$211,974.51
		\$615,739.28      \$615,739.28

Table 10. DHS and PCC Manager's Report balance sheet as of January 16, 1886 showing cattle, land, and stock assets along with approximate recent gains and estimated total company worth. Adapted from Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

Although the above table shows a continued growth in cattle, recent earnings, and an impressive total worth, the DHS herds were likely not in an ideal state of health through 1886. In a letter to one of the DHS partners, a DHS manager wrote that the "cattle are looking poorer on this range than I have ever seen them. There is actually no grass on the



range and if we do not sell the most of the cattle will have to be moved onto a new range or they will all die next winter. The range is now the poorest in the country. Thoroughly eaten out”.<sup>59</sup> Thus, 1886 was probably the start of a short downturn for at least portions of K&B’s ranching investments, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The situation worried the DHS partners, who considered opportunities to sell that came along that year. The herds of K&B totaled 35,000 as of 1886, which includes the DHS cattle. Kohrs estimated the DHS herd, of which K&B were one-third owners, at 23,000 in number with their “CK” herd making up the rest numbering about 12,000. Many portions of K&B’s operation were not entering a downturn and quite healthy during this period. As of 1885, for example, the quality of the K&B shorthorn herd was trumpeted in *The New Northwest* as of February 20, 1885, which reprinted a story from England noting that “Mr. Morton Frewen says, in the London (England) *Telegraph*: Mr. Kohrs, of Deer Lodge, in Montana, has the largest herd of Bates Shorthorns in the world”.<sup>60</sup>

Despite K&B’s sizable profits along with their growing number of trustworthy investment and banking partners, there were rare occasions of ventures that failed quickly, decisions to sell prematurely when future returns would have been much greater, and choosing to team with businessmen that turned out crooked. Not all investments paid off, after all. In one brief example, one of the largest missed opportunities Kohrs’ ever experienced was with a mining claim sale. He owned the Leonard claim along with a few other mining rights in Butte and sold the Leonard for \$17,000. A year later, this area was mined and rapidly grew to a worth of over \$1,000,000 approximately. Kohrs also helped Bielenberg’s brother, Nick, to setup financially with a mine. Nick apparently had failed at

other ventures a few times, but was family and so found solace with K&B. Although Kohrs had invested in the mine, Nick declined an offer to sell it for \$1,000,000 because he thought an offer of \$2,000,000 would cover its worth. Soon thereafter, a vein at the mine was cross-cut and its value dropped to virtually zero.<sup>61</sup> Financial failure and missed opportunities such as these were scarce for K&B, but did occur.

Beyond these few examples of failed judgment, K&B were building a diversified ranching operation and set of investments through the 1870s and into the mid-1880s. They enjoyed enlarged profits during the early and mid-1880s that began to decrease approaching the industry-wide downturn of the late 1880s. From 1870 to 1885, K&B solidified their use of winter feed in a mixed range management strategy, increased their shares in numerous mines in the vicinity, grew their relations with select and trusted banking partners, significantly increased their head of cattle and estimated worth through acquiring the DHS, and spread their assets across different banks.

## **CHAPTER IV: TRANSITIONING AND STAYING LOCAL**

Although 1887 is the year often-used in the western history of ranching literature to mark transition in stock-raising as a whole, it is also an appropriate year for modifying the story of K&B, but for different reasons than much of the industry. K&B thwarted the hard winter, which ended into 1887, better than many of their contemporaries and experienced changes through the previous decades and into the subsequent few years that solidified their economic success.

By the late 1880s, Bielenberg became the full-time manager of the home ranch taking over from Kohrs, which became official as of 1892. The previous years of high financial returns, strategies of diversified investment, leveraging their spending power through loaning and re-allocating much of what was brought in through earnings, using winter feed in closed range settings, and the other management strategies that were initiated in the previous two decades gradually became set routines through the 1890s. These strategies would result in K&B's continued prominence in the industry and solidified their estates and place in Montana history as a long-enduring and resilient ranching operation. While national markets were key for selling cattle by the 1880s, K&B are an example of ranchers using local and regional markets effectively for buying and building up herds to sell to the distant markets such as Chicago. K&B sold regionally and locally as well across the years of their operation, but their supply was mostly local cattle and their demand a mix of local, regional, and national.

This is not to say that the hard winter did not have a temporary negative effect on K&B's operation. Calves branded by the DHS, of which K&B continued to own one-third interest, numbered less than one-eighth in the spring of 1887 as compared to spring 1886.<sup>1</sup> Stuart wrote the PCC inventory for the year illustrating the amount of loss "Total Cattle on Range Jan'y 1, 1887 . . . 22622." Further down the column shows "Less Loss of winter of 1886-7 . . . 15081." Then, with the small calf crop added, a few purchases, and a few strays on the fall roundup brought the "Total on range Jan'y 1, 1888 . . . 8262".<sup>2</sup>

Despite such losses, K&B's cattle stock at the home ranch was maintained at least enough to continue advertising quality shorthorn cattle for sale to local markets. Appearing in *The New Northwest*, on May 5, 1887 was a K&B cattle selling ad reading "TO SELL OR LET ON SHARES. Owing to being overstocked on our limited home range, we will sell or let on shares, on favorable terms, to a responsible person or persons, About 40 head of cross-bred Polled Angus and Short Horn Heifers. Also a lot of cross-bred Hereford and Short Horn Heifers. It being a condition of such lease that the lessee shall have good range, sufficient hay and facilities to keep the breeds distinct".<sup>3</sup> This ad also speaks to K&B's continued commitment to hay-feeding practices as they even ask the buyer or lessee to have adequate feed upon acquiring their cattle.

By 1887, Kohrs' days of cattle driving were over a decade behind him and while he continued to travel for managing the company's mining investments and the occasional cattle transaction, Bielenberg was performing many of the daily managerial tasks at the ranch by this time. Bielenberg was in charge of bookkeeping, cattle and horse breeding throughout his life with K&B and by 1887, he increasingly made decisions on cattle

transactions and shipments. When it came to choices made at the home ranch, Bielenberg was the person often looked to from this point onward. He would continue as full-time ranch manager until his death in 1922 at age 79. From the 1890s until his own death, Kohrs decreased his involvement in the areas Bielenberg specialized. Kohrs continued to keep an eye on their investments, however, as he would occasionally venture from Deer Lodge to the eastern Montana range in these later years, while also visiting the neighboring mining operations to simply see what was transpiring and in the case of the mines, pay employees.



Photo 25. Bielenberg (left) and Kohrs (right) together standing near fence, n.d. This picture is likely in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century given Kohrs' appearance. Bielenberg was more physically capable of day-to-day ranch managing by this point. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

As Bielenberg continued his work as the daily manager of cattle breeding, shipping, and bookkeeping, Kohrs continued to rely on his partnerships with neighboring investors and bankers such as A.J. Davis. Coming out of their larger than average cattle and profit losses during the hard winter, K&B secured a \$100,000 (\$2,222,200) loan from Davis in

1888, a banker in Butte and partner in the PCC. Despite the size of this line of credit, Davis wanted nothing “except the notes of Kohrs and Bielenberg” as collateral.<sup>4</sup> This statement shows a high level of confidence in K&B’s past returns and possibly a continued loyalty to K&B given that Davis’ shares in the DHS were purchased five years earlier by K&B. Davis was correct in loaning to his long-time acquaintance; K&B paid off the entire amount within three years. K&B utilized at least part of the Davis loan in early 1888 to build herds back up from the losses over the hard winter. Kohrs visited a smattering of locations across Idaho including the Boise Valley and Ontario, OR searching for cattle and ended up purchasing approximately 9,000 total cattle, mostly mature steers paying a per head average of \$10 for yearlings, \$14 for two year olds, and \$18 for three year olds.<sup>5</sup> Most of the 9,000 cattle bought that early summer of 1888 went to the CK herds and “were shipped and unloaded at Big Sandy and taken in charge of D.J. Hogan. Those for the Pioneer Company were shipped to Bowdoin”, MT, which was near the old DHS ranges to the southeast.<sup>6</sup> This began the recovery process, which in 1888 meant increasing the number of cattle in the herds.

The focus on already grown cattle was likely a technique to ensure more immediate returns from market sales since mature cattle could be sold in the immediate following seasons since K&B were probably desiring returns rapidly after the down year of the hard winter. K&B also received credit from their long-time banker Rosenbaum to continue to grow despite their hard winter losses. Hearing of the decline in cattle and the cattle-raisers during 1886 and 1887, Rosenbaum offered a total of \$1,000,000 in credit line to Montana cattle ranchers of which K&B were apart. They accepted a portion of this total.

After receiving returns on cattle sales in late 1887, K&B paid portions of their earnings back to Rosenbaum. In November 1887, for example, K&B paid Rosenbaum \$12,532.36 for a cattle sale in Chicago.<sup>7</sup> This may have been a portion of payback on loans recently acquired from Rosenbaum, perhaps a quick share of payback for the loan acquired earlier in the year. Given average returns on cattle sales, this amount going back to Rosenbaum was likely below 25% of returns earned even in a down year like 1887. K&B still had sufficient cattle to bring in large enough returns to feed continuous re-investment for expansion while being able to cover multi-year loan repayments.

Date	Lender	Loan Amt	Loan Amt (2008)	Interest	Amt Paid Back	Used towards
1863	George Gohn	unspecified		unspecified	unspecified	cattle purchases (for Con & Peel shop)
1863	Johnny Grant	\$2,250		unspecified	paid in full	pay other debts
1865	George Forbes	\$12,000	\$155,800	unspecified	unspecified	cattle purchases
1873	L.H. Hershfield and Bros.	unspecified (requested)		1.5% per month	unspecified	unspecified
1878	L.H. Hershfield and Bros.	\$5,000 (requested)		1.25% per month	unspecified (to be paid back in full in four months)	unspecified
1886-7	Joseph Rosenbaum	unspecified		unspecified	\$12,532.36	
1888	A.J. Davis	\$100,000	\$2,222,200	unspecified	paid in full in 3 yrs	cattle purchases

Table 11. Loans acquired and used by K&B, 1863-1888. These represent only a small sample of Kohrs' and K&B's lines of credit through their operating years.

In 1887, as Bielenberg was transitioning to full-time manager and the half-brothers had increased credit obligations to Rosenbaum, K&B also earned returns through horse sales. In October 1887, a horse sale occurred totaling \$4,519.50, which included six geldings sold for \$750 total and five mares for \$475 total. This is \$125 and \$95 per head

respectively for the geldings and mares. Into the winter months of 1887, K&B continued their commitment of winter feeding by purchasing hay. In November and December, for example, they bought hay from Bielenberg's brother Charles in separate purchases of \$25, \$650, and an additional acquisition of 78 tons for an unlisted price.<sup>8</sup>

#### **A. Increasing Earnings of the PCC and Labor Costs, 1887-1891**

One of the major investments constituting much of the expenses and returns for K&B through the late 1880s was their cattle-raising partnership with Granville Stuart, the PCC. A journal left behind from the company provides a wealth of economic evidence, especially for expenses paid by K&B in labor and supplies through most of 1887 and parts of 1888. The starting date for the journal, January 28, 1887, shows \$1,574.59 held for the company in the First National Bank of Helena.<sup>9</sup> The half-brothers paid costs for the PCC significantly more in spring and summer months leading up to a dip in costs immediately following the primary shipping season of cattle eastward before a quick bump-up in costs during late autumn (see Figures 15 and 16). Winter costs were low, which is likely an indication that K&B were not always primary decision-makers with the company as higher supply and labor costs for winter is an indication of hay feeding. Instead, with costs concentrated in spring and summer, the PCC was likely focused on investing in cattle grazing open rangelands with increased ranch-hands and supplies during mid-year. There is mixed evidence, however. A significant one-month increase on labor in October may be a possible sign of an early season setup of winter feed. Perhaps hay was purchased throughout the year for the company and this may have been one



point K&B had say in regarding how to operate the company's cattle-raising practice.

With 1887 as the most thorough case study year available, K&B started that year with only \$652.77 listed in expenses for the PCC in February. This included labor for at least fifteen ranch-hands employed through this month along with additional supplies. March saw a significant rise to \$1,719.63 in total expenses showing a rise in costs as spring began to arrive. Expenses continued to rise more than doubling to a peak of over \$4,000 for April, then dipping down to nearly half of this at approximately \$2,000 in May and a few hundred less in June. Costs rose significantly again back to near April levels for July and August respectively. September saw a decrease down to near \$1,000, likely a downturn in costs after the eastward shipping season. Then, a large increase in labor expenses for October put total costs back over \$3,500 for that month. November was a sharp decrease to just a few hundred dollars signaling a major seasonal lull in operations.<sup>10</sup> Moreso than other ranching costs for K&B, the PCC had sharp fluctuations concerning expenses within one or two months throughout the year.

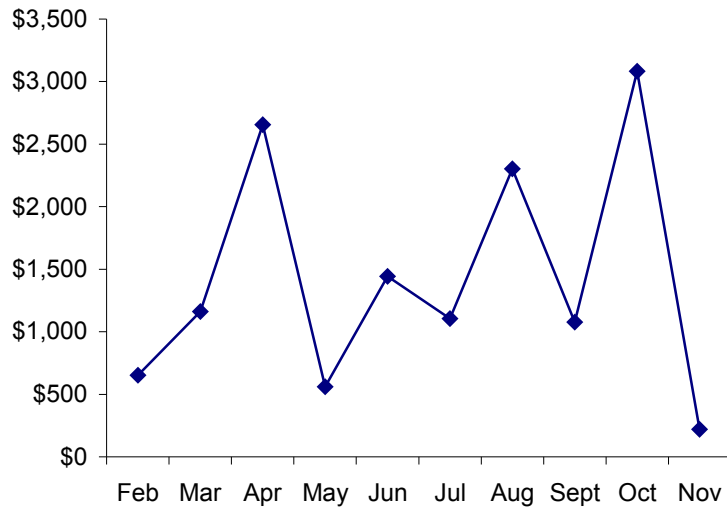


Figure 15. PCC monthly labor costs, 1887. Journal for Pioneer Cattle Co., Jan. 1887-Dec. 1890.

Month	Expenses
Feb	\$652.77
Mar	\$1,161.98
Apr	\$2,655.66
May	\$561.66
Jun	\$1,444.66
Jul	\$1,106.82
Aug	\$2,302.76
Sept	\$1,077.99
Oct	\$3,081.91
Nov	\$221.32

Table 12. PCC monthly labor costs, 1887. Journal for Pioneer Cattle Co., Jan. 1887-Dec. 1890.

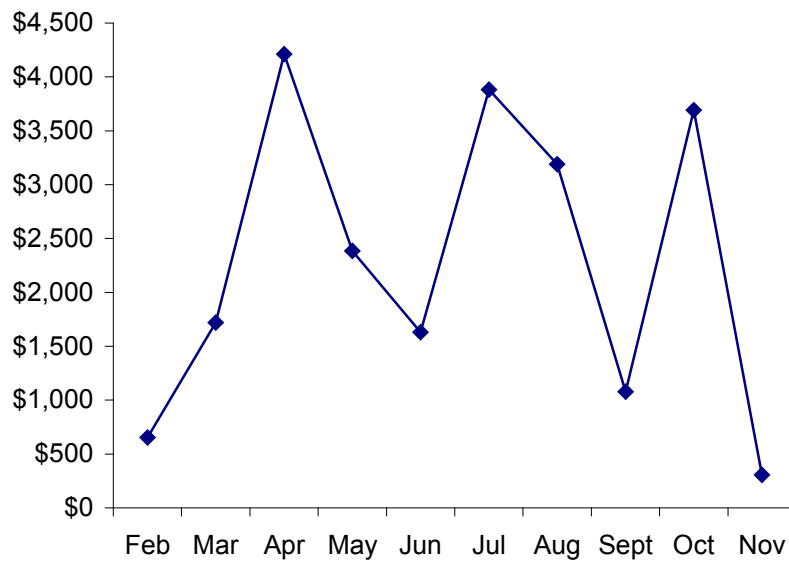


Figure 16. PCC total monthly costs, 1887. Journal for Pioneer Cattle Co., Jan. 1887-Dec. 1890.

Month	Expenses
Feb	\$652.77
Mar	\$1,719.63
Apr	\$4,212.48
May	\$2,384.13
Jun	\$1,629.33
Jul	\$3,882.83
Aug	\$3,190.62
Sept	\$1,077.99
Oct	\$3,692.57
Nov	\$304.65

Table 13. PCC total monthly costs, 1887. Journal for Pioneer Cattle Co., Jan. 1887-Dec. 1890.

Total costs for the PCC for nearly all of 1887, from February through November, were \$22,747 (\$505,500), which makes the per month average over these months \$2,274.70. As seen in the previous monthly breakdown (Figure 16), however, this average was rarely hit as expenses fluctuated quite rapidly. At least \$13,614.70 of the total \$22,747 in costs was allocated toward paying ranch-hands. This is calculated using entries marked “labor” only as there were other accounting entries marked “labor and supplies”. Since the latter had labor included as well, actual labor costs were likely a few hundred to one thousand dollars more for 1887. Still, with a conservative estimate, K&B were paying a majority of their PCC expenses, nearly 60%, towards workers spending an average of \$1,237.70 per month for labor.<sup>11</sup> Compared to mine labor, only the largest operations like the Pioneer mine approached monthly labor costs for ranching operations such as the PCC. Cattle-raising labor often doubled or even tripled the worker expenses at many of the mines.

Month-by-month trends in labor expenses for the PCC in 1887 fluctuated similarly to the total costs for the company since paying ranch-hands constituted the majority of payments. Starting with a low of just a few hundred paid in February, labor increased to over \$1,000 in March and then doubled to over \$2,500 by April. A significant drop occurred in May down to at least \$550 with another bounce-back up for June with at least \$1,400 paid. July was similar with at least \$1,100 in labor. August and September remained in the \$2,000 and \$1,000 range respectively with the highest monthly labor costs coming in October at approximately \$3,000. Labor expenses dropped down to just

over \$200 for November signaling that there was little spent in winter months on PCC ranch-hand labor. Almost all of this correlates well with overall expenses by month, except for July, which has a larger proportion of expenses towards supplies (see Figure 17). With total costs (T) as the dependent variable and labor costs (L) as independent, regression analysis results in an expected moderately strong correlation coefficient ( $R = .7561$ ) and a  $R^2$  of .5718 meaning that prediction of total PCC costs are improved by 57% when using changes in PCC labor costs as the predictor.<sup>12</sup> The July outlier may have been a one-time occurrence, but it may also have been that K&B were ensuring that certain supplies needed for regional cattle drives for railroad shipping such as saddles, ropes, and chuckwagon supplies were stocked sufficiently for the coming late summer and autumn shipping rounds. Most ranch-hands during 1887 received \$40 to \$50 per month with a few higher-paid hands receiving \$75. Through winter, the PCC likely kept less than ten ranch-hands, while average months would see at least twenty and possibly up to 50 cowboys when total monthly payments were at least \$2,000 a month. October probably saw an increase of up to twenty extra workers.<sup>13</sup>

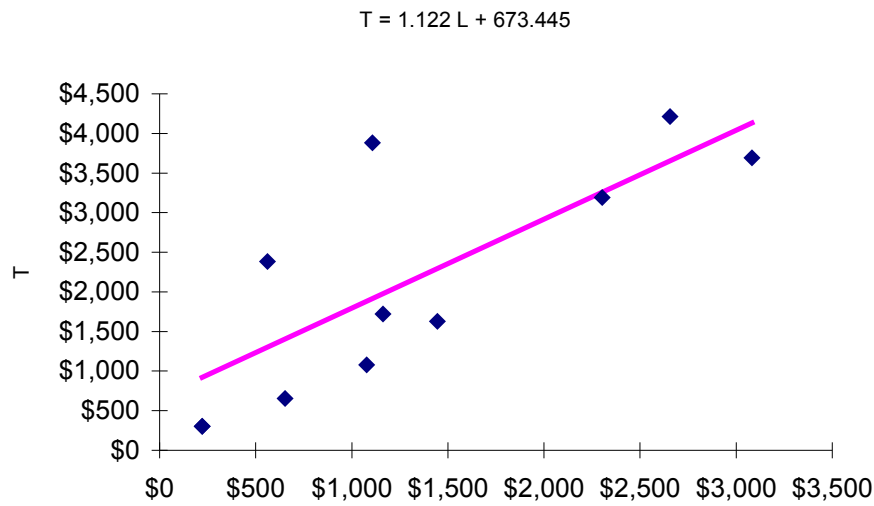


Figure 17. Regression straight-line graph and equation of PCC total expenses and PCC labor expenses, 1887. A moderately strong relationship exists.

After labor, supplies constituted the remainder of the total and per monthly expenses for the PCC. An average of \$736.45 per month and \$7,364.46 total were spent on supplies, which is about 32% of the total expenses. This calculation is only an estimate as the actual supply costs were lower since some ledger items combined labor and supplies into one book entry.

Much of the remaining \$1,767.84 spent on the PCC by K&B for 1887 was salary paid to Granville Stuart, which totaled at least \$1,115.01. Stuart's salary was paid out in various months across the year ranging from less than \$100 per month to over \$300 after four months.<sup>14</sup> This was a common practice among ranching partnerships, to pay an official salary to one of the managers even though cattle sale returns and dividends were much more sizable and split between them. Returns and dividends provided the bulk of each individual partners' income while on-the-book salaries were ancillary.

K&B also occasionally paid for ranch-hands working in the various "pools" of cattle brands from different ranchers. "Pools" were collaborative efforts partnering different

ranchers allowing ranch-hand labor to be shared and split in terms of cost when cattle from multiple outfits grazed the same rangeland. These pool figures are included in the above data for 1887, but there was only one entry noted specifically as a pool labor contribution. That was \$449.02 out of the approximately \$2,000 in August, which was paid towards the “River Drive Pool”. There were only a few entries for PCC expenses the following year, 1888, which saw \$1,392.18 paid for labor at the start of June and \$4,085.66 total for December. While the first figure is likely a monthly amount for the preceding month of May, the December figure is probably an end-of-year settling of back-owed labor costs or perhaps just a calculation of previous months labor expenses unaccounted for in 1888. Also, at the end of 1889, Kohrs paid an additional \$3,230.65 in labor and expenses, likely as the result of an accounting error or from a pre-arranged agreement with the PCC partners to hold off certain payments until the end of the year.<sup>15</sup>

Regarding returns for the PCC, less evidence exists over these years compared to that of expenses. One entry at the end of 1888, however, shows a return on cattle of \$52,316.70 (\$1,162,600) and a dividend payoff of \$38,732.36 (\$860,700) demonstrating that K&B were perhaps spending no more than 25% of their PCC earnings on expenses. Nearly one year later, on October 1, 1889, two large deposits of \$53,579.97 (\$1,246,000) and \$45,750.55 (\$1,064,000) from returns on cattle sales were deposited at the First National Bank in Helena. K&B were likely placing most if not all of their earnings along with debiting for expenses for the PCC from one bank account, that at First National Bank in Helena. A couple months later, an additional \$13,214.58 was made as a single deposit from cattle sales. Also in December of 1889, Kohrs made two additional sizable

cattle sale deposits of \$53,029.32 (\$1,372,800) and \$53,768.97 (\$1,250,400). Returns for the PCC from cattle sales may have increased from 1888 to 1889 as this data shows with earnings from 1889 totaling at least \$219,343.39 (\$5,101,000). Only one deposit is on record for 1890 with \$19,971.05 accounted for in May as 1890 was likely a year of low prices for Montana cattle.<sup>16</sup> Kohrs describes 1890 as having few shipments of PCC cattle and the PCC earning “just enough to cover expenses and interest”. Total PCC earnings rebounded quickly, however, increasing to \$290,000 (\$6,744,200) as of 1891.<sup>17</sup>

Through their other ranching ventures, K&B were involved in regional cattle sales in 1888 beyond the seasonal shipments to Chicago. On March 12, 1888, H. Ervin in Payette, Idaho bought 1,000 head of cattle from K&B for \$14,500, averaging \$14.50 per head. This demonstrates the suddenly lowered prices of cattle, even at the regional level, in the couple years following the hard winter. Of this sale, 500 head of one-year-old steers were sold at only \$12 per head and 500 head of two-year-old steers sold not much higher at a paltry \$17 per head. Ervin’s cattle were to be delivered to railroad cars at Caldwell, ID for shipment. Kohrs was still active as a traveling promoter and salesperson for the ranch as he made the trip over to Idaho to complete this sale, even at an advancing age (see Photo 26). In the journal from this period, Bielenberg lists \$350 in expenses for Kohrs on this trip. K&B also sold an additional 1,600 to 1,700 one and two-year-old steers in March 1888.<sup>18</sup> Springtime was likely a busier season for selling cattle regionally as to cleanout any additional cattle not sold over the previous summer and fall, while also providing additional income to invest in new cattle to fatten in the coming large sales season of summer and fall.



Photo 26. Portrait of Kohrs, 1889. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

Besides the sale of cattle to Ervin in Payette, K&B were also buying cattle from this area during the late 1880s. Kohrs relates this in his autobiography

“In trading and buying I found there were many fine four year old steers at Wood River, Camas Prairie, Payette, and Weiser and even toward the Salmon River [all in the western Idaho eastern Oregon area]. Stockmen there had never shipped east and were timid about undertaking it: were anxious to sell at \$25.00 per head. I counseled with Mr. Davis, told him I thought there would be a nice profit in the trade and that the money would not be invested long. He advised me to go ahead and check on him. I have forgotten the number I purchased. Picked out those that were not good and sent them to the range and the balance to Chicago. They netted a profit of \$15.00 per head.”<sup>19</sup>



With deals such as these, K&B continued to bring in earnings during the immediate post-hard winter years, while other ranchers were still attempting just to rebuild their herds.

### **B. Mining Expansion, Returns, and Operating Costs, 1887-1892**

Into the late 1880s and early 1890s, beyond their increasing returns from the PCC investment, K&B continued expansion of mining claims and shares. One portion of evidence for this is through their official positions held in various mining outfits. Occasionally, at board of trustees meetings for the companies K&B were managing and/or invested in, such as mining firms, there would be votes for aligning or re-aligning the amount of shares held by each trustee and official titles held by each. Concerning the Rock Creek Ditch and Mining Company (RCDMC) in February 1887, for example, one of the trustees recommended that Kohrs take two of five shares available in the company while Bielenberg and additional partners Rob S. Kelley and Scott Hill receive one each.<sup>20</sup> As far back as 1872, Bielenberg had received all of Kohrs' interests in the RCDMC, then worth \$9,000, in exchange that Bielenberg transfer a section of land at the home ranch to Kohrs' name. While the 1872 transaction was likely just a transfer of interests for the sake of lessening taxes for either Kohrs or Bielenberg during that fiscal year, it did technically give Bielenberg control of the RCDMC that Kohrs would re-claim fifteen years later at the latest.<sup>21</sup>

In August 1887, the same year of the trustee's recommendation, Kohrs was elected President, Bielenberg Vice President, and Kelley as Secretary of the company. This was a common practice for either Kohrs or Bielenberg to serve as President or Vice President of

a company and then hold the associated higher or lower amount of shares depending on their official title. Agreeing that Kohrs would be the head and have a slight inequity in the share of the company made sense as out of the four partners, Kohrs had been one of the original founders and developers of the company back in 1867. By August 1891, right as John Boardman (Kohrs' son-in-law) was becoming manager of the eastern ranch, K&B further integrated him into their investments including those outside of ranching as they made Boardman a trustee with the RCDMC. Boardman would hold a trusteeship with the company until 1907.<sup>22</sup> This was an early sign of trust for and delegation of responsibility to Boardman showed by K&B that will be covered in further depth in the following chapters. Immediately placing him in a partnership with one of Kohrs' longest held investments is another example of how K&B made swift decisions concerning to whom to delegate authority.

Through most of 1888 and 1889, K&B continued to expand their mining claims, especially their holdings in placer mines. During these two years, there are records of numerous acquisitions across a variety of mining locations. In February 1888, Kohrs bought 20.66 acres of claim at the Forlorn Hope lode for \$105. This is an example of an investment Kohrs would hold through the remainder of his life, but perhaps a rare exception of one that did not provide ample, if any, returns over its lifetime. A statement from the Deer Lodge Country treasurer dated in July 1944 estimates the value of the lode as less in 1944, \$75, than what Kohrs paid for it over 50 years earlier.<sup>23</sup> The Forlorn was a small allocation, however, as in April 1888 K&B acquired one-third to one-half interest in thirteen placer claims bought from Gustavus Wisner for \$650 total. These claims were

in the Pioneer mining district including land in the Wilson Bar on the west side of their mine at Pioneer Gulch, claims of 200 by 800 feet each on Ballards Hill near Spring Gulch, and claims at Spring Gulch itself.<sup>24</sup> Ten months later, K&B purchased numerous additional placer claims from Wisner for \$4,000 total. K&B also purchased what was likely two-thirds interest in Squaw Gulch and Independent Gulch located in the Pioneer mining district for a total of \$20,000 (\$444,400), easily the largest of their mining acquisitions through 1888 and 1889. Mines from this purchase were described in nearly unworkable condition by Kohrs in his autobiography, although Kohrs does admit to making profit in subsequent years specifically on Squaw Gulch with at least one cleanup worth \$3,000 in 1888.<sup>25</sup>

In the second Wisner purchase, K&B acquired additional interest in Wilson Bar, Spring Gulch, and Ballards Hill bringing the half-brothers near to complete ownership of these mining areas. They also bought one-third and one-half interests in Pioneer Gulch at this time and K&B were able to connect the water sources of Pioneer Gulch to the Rock Creek ditch.<sup>26</sup> All of these claims were in the Pioneer mining district, which K&B were substantial investors in at this point as they were able to link at least a couple of their mines and their water sources together.<sup>27</sup> Kohrs also had occasional small investments involving Bielenberg's brother Charles as shown by Kohrs' and Charles' purchase of a placer mining claim called the Empire State lode for \$100 in May 1889.<sup>28</sup>

After buying these various claims, K&B began developing the land for mining and filed "notice of locations" for some of these placer mines through 1889 and subsequent years. As early as October 1889, seven months after purchasing over one-sixth interest in

the Wilson Bar, K&B, along with five partners including long-time business associate Casper Geehrdts, submitted a notice of location for the “Wilson Bar Placer” in the Pioneer mining district. This is an example of K&B turning around rather quickly on an investment, especially considering the needed equipment and labor for operating a mine, and attempting to get it operational in less than one year. Wilson Bar Placer was a good-sized mine at about 158 acres.<sup>29</sup> Some of K&B’s same associates, specifically Geehrdts and Samuel Larabie, were also partners with them on the “K&B Placer” mine. They filed this mine location a year-and-a-half later in January 1891 for 94 acres on the middle fork of Pioneer Gulch.<sup>30</sup>

Date	Mine Name(s)	Location	Size of Purchase	Purchase Price
Feb 1888	Forlorn Hope	unavailable	20.66 acres	\$105
April 1888	Wilson Bar, Ballards Hill, Spring Gulch	Pioneer district	unavailable	\$650
Dec 1888	unavailable	unavailable	unavailable	\$4,000
Dec 1888	Squaw Gulch, Independent Gulch, Pioneer Gulch, Wilson Bar, Ballards Hill, Spring Gulch	Pioneer district	unavailable	\$20,000
May 1889	Empire State	unavailable	unavailable	\$100

Table 14. Mine purchases, 1888-1889. Note the multiple listings of certain names as most purchases were partial one-sixth to one-half purchases in partnerships with other partial owners.

Through 1890, after at least a couple years of adding mining claims to their list of investments, K&B continued to expand their land claims surrounding the home ranch. On May 13 of that year, Kohrs purchased a 640-acre section of public land under the Desert Land Act. This land was located approximately one mile north of the ranch house and

along the west side of the Deer Lodge River. Just over two weeks later on May 29, K&B jointly acquired one section west of the ranch house. Bielenberg also gained his portion of land under the Desert Land Act in September by adding approximately 635 acres to the home ranch range. Augusta, Kohrs' wife, acquired her allotment as well that year in December by gaining a little over a half section of land north of the house. In total, these acquisitions increased the home ranch's size by over 2,200 acres through 1890.<sup>31</sup>

With the purchasing of mines through the late 1880s came the expenses of operation that goes along with it. The RCDMC was one of K&B's larger and longest held mines. A ledger for the company covers the first few years into the 1890s and provides a glimpse of types and amounts of expenses K&B experienced for their mining investments. K&B's business partner Geehrdts was involved with the company as either a direct manager of labor at the mine site or perhaps even performing mine repairs himself as he was paid \$520.50 for labor through 1890 and into 1891. During this period, there were similar amounts allocated to ongoing work at Pikes Peak Ditch including \$486.50 for work expenses, which was a site that was part of the company, and lumber purchases for \$681.50.

A less piece-meal record of expenses at the mine exist for April through October 1891. Total costs inclusive of cleaning and repairs, freighting, lumber purchases, and a few laborers was \$2,967 over these seven months, which is an average of \$423.86 per month. This should be taken as covering expenses outside of labor, however, as the work costs are likely not complete considering the substantially longer lists of workers and associated costs at other mines during the later part of the same decade. The bookkeeper

for the ledger notes that as of 1890, the going work rate for a hired hand in a mine was \$3 per day, which is approximately \$90 per month. This would add at least a few hundred dollars onto monthly averages for expenses during this period. Of the previously mentioned \$2,967 total for April to October, much of it was for repairs, which was \$1,326 of the total. Repair costs included \$429.80 to clean and repair a ditch and a smaller amount of \$117 to repair a brake and water-flow. Geehrdts continued to work on repairs as he was paid \$1,015.85 over April to October 1891 for labor. J.W. Farley was another highly paid laborer at the mine receiving \$354.65 for work performed. By November of 1891, the balance for the RCDMC showed \$4,549.81.<sup>32</sup>



Photo 27. Mine laborers and water supply at Rock Creek, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 28. Laborers and supplying water for hydraulic mining, n.d. Location is possibly Gold Hill. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

Returns for the RCDMC may have been small in the first few years of the 1890s compared to other mine earnings through the decade. For an unmarked year, either 1891 or 1892, from May through November returns for the mine totaled \$6,677.37, which averages to \$953.91 per month. Selling lumber was a small part of this total, \$668.37, while the rest was from selling water rights. Many weeks within this period show at least a few rights being sold, often ranging between \$25 to \$54 per week. These, along with some occasional larger sales, constituted the returns for the company. The transfer of water rights from an original claim continued to be a profit source for K&B decades after the initial claim made by Kohrs back in the 1860s.<sup>33</sup> Figures on total costs, labor costs, and total earnings for K&B's mines up through 1892 are piece-meal (sample sizes less than ten) compared to data available into the 1890s and early 1900s. While the late 1880s

figures are not enough to constitute further analysis on their own at this point in the report, they are included in more rigorous analysis when more samples become available through the 1890s in subsequent chapters.

Besides holding official titles in their various mining companies and banks, K&B were also prominent in regional and territorial cattle-raising organizations. This was especially so for Bielenberg in the early 1890s, who was the Deer Lodge County Commissioner as of 1891 for the Montana Board of Stock Commissioners (MBSC), an organization created for the oversight and improvement of cattle breeding and transactions across the state. In August 1891, Bielenberg was elected Secretary and Treasurer of the MBSC. While Kohrs focused his efforts with the MSA, Bielenberg met with familiar business contacts and kept updated on statewide issues in cattle ranching through the MSBC. K&B were each active and held prominent positions in the MSA and MSBC respectively. Each focusing on different organizations is another example of the half-brothers clear delegation and effectiveness at spreading their efforts to maximum effect. As with their mining company investments, K&B shared the management of the cattle-raising organizations with familiar business associates. As of August 1891 at the MSBC, for example, Granville Stuart was President and longtime mining partner Casper Geehrdts was Vice President.

By 1891, besides continuing their prominent positions within the MSA and having expanded the home ranch, K&B also maintained their post-hard winter success in earnings from cattle sales. Their first shipment of the spring averaged a healthy 1,585 lbs. per head of mostly five year olds, which returned \$5.25 (per hundredweight). PCC cattle



also continued selling well, averaging \$62.50 per head. An additional major sale in 1891 brought \$45 per head for cows and \$65 per head for steers as K&B sold a large trainload to buyers in nearby Helena and Butte. Total sales for 1891 came to \$190,000 (\$4,418,600).<sup>34</sup> Despite a decent spring, the fall sales were possibly less profitable as Kohrs notes of the 1891 autumn in his autobiography that “the fall market was not good. We received more for the cattle sold in the spring than those shipped to Chicago”.<sup>35</sup> With much of the late 1880s and early 1890s purchases and some sales occurring locally and regionally, this may have been a strategy employed by K&B to maintain their near to home markets while avoiding the downturn experienced by other ranchers during this period who relied on selling at the Chicago stockyards. Kohrs also mentions in his autobiography that 1892 and 1893 were profitable overall for cattle despite being poor years for yearling cattle with estimated losses of 50% on yearlings for 1893.<sup>36</sup>

K&B maintained their interest in allocating finances for land at the home ranch through 1891 and 1892. Two large land purchases occurred at the end of 1891 in December when K&B added, in total, the largest area of land to the home ranch up to that date. For \$1,400, K&B acquired, from the Northern Pacific Railroad, two portions of land west of and running parallel along the Deer Lodge River with the smallest of these parcels being 520 acres. This was about a section and a half north of the ranch house and possibly an addition linked or adjacent to a land acquisition noted in a similar area of the home ranch as of October 1871 (see Chapter II). They also acquired six additional full sections of land that same day and smaller portions of other sections for \$8,739.18 (\$203,200). This second transaction brought in approximately 5,190 acres minus 3 acres

right of way, bringing the total for the day to nearly 6,000 acres. A half year later, on July 11, 1892, K&B purchased 40 additional acres for \$300 from an absentee owner, S.H. Bathkin who was residing in Minneapolis, MN at the time of K&B's purchase. These 1891 and 1892 acquisitions were part of the "upper ranch" near the home ranch area, north of Deer Lodge. With much of the "upper ranch" constructed through these transactions, K&B added two more quarter sections, one in 1893 and another in 1895.<sup>37</sup>

By 1892, with the recent large additions to their home ranch, K&B showed increased county property taxes paid. They paid over \$2,000 total for 1892 across at least three counties where they held registered rangeland. In Deer Lodge County, representing the home ranch and upper ranch land, they paid \$799.51. For Choteau County, likely evidence that K&B officially held rangeland that the DHS herds grazed in this part of central Montana near the Missouri River, they paid \$635.80. The Dawson County property tax bill was \$673.17 with this being slightly above the Choteau County bill. Since this Dawson County land was in eastern Montana, however, likely representing land of the "eastern" ranch that will be elaborated on in coming chapters, the tax rate may have been lower due to the sparse population of eastern Montana. Although showing comparable taxes across counties totaling a sizable annual property tax, one cannot conclude that there was simply more land held in Deer Lodge County by K&B when there might have been a larger area formally claimed across Dawson County by this time.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the hard winter that brought a downturn in earnings and reduction of operations to the point of bankruptcy for some across the cattle-raising industry of the

western U.S., K&B exited the 1886-7 winter season with animal and financial losses, but maintained a commitment to their previously successful resource and economic management strategies. Their rapid rebound is evidenced by their continued high earnings in cattle sales, especially locally and regionally, along with expansion into numerous mining claims and additional land acquisitions into the early 1890s. Maintaining access to loans for leverage during their short downturn and continuing to purchase quality cattle locally also helped as it did decades previous. By 1892, with an expanded home ranch, large parts of the Pioneer mining district in their name, rebounded earnings from cattle, and claiming large rangelands across central and eastern Montana, K&B were set to enter their next stage of earnings growth and an expansion of their overall total worth more than they had experienced since through the 1870s and early to mid-1880s.

## **CHAPTER V: DELEGATING AND LATER GROWTH**

### **A. Boardman Takes Over the Eastern Ranch**

Of K&B's open rangelands, the eastern Montana range that Tom Hooban had first grazed cattle on in November 1869 would become a prominent example of K&B's successful delegatory strategies starting in 1891. This land, which became known as the "eastern ranch" to K&B, grew to be a prominent location on-par with the home ranch for exporting cattle by railcar beginning in the 1890s. It was also an example of how their style of mixed range techniques would be taken up by those to which they delegated rangeland management authority. In the spring of 1891, John Boardman and Kohrs' eldest daughter Anna were married. K&B immediately appointed Boardman as manager of the eastern Montana range granting him authorization to handle payments for ranch-hands there, purchasing and selling cattle for the eastern ranch, and shipping head from that outpost. The son-in-law became a ranch manager within the company and was rapidly integrated into not only the management of a large portion of K&B's ranching outfit, but also as a shareholder and official in associated investments as well.

At the eastern ranch, Boardman emulated and also deviated from K&B's management practices. On one hand, he more often purchased calves instead of K&B's preferred method of buying more mature two year olds. Although starting primarily with calves was seen as more risky, Boardman winter fed the calves at the Deer Lodge ranch before sending them back out to the open range each May. Boardman used mixed range strategies like K&B had decades prior to buildup herds over a few years from purchased

calves.



Photo 30. Boardman on horse, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 29. Boardman (far right) in front of barn, likely at eastern ranch, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 31. House at the eastern ranch, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 32. Buildings at the eastern ranch, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 33. Cattle herd on Prairie Elk Creek, a part of the eastern ranch rangeland, n.d.  
Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

The 1890s was a time of modification for K&B concerning entrusting Boardman to build the eastern ranch to the level of the home ranch and also for K&B to spend much of their earnings re-investing in assets already held and expand into new investments. Although K&B likely held tens of thousands of dollars in various bank accounts, such as at Larabie Bros. bank, the credits they deposited were sometimes countered by sizable withdrawals. High withdrawals proportional to credits are especially seen in the Larabie bank account, which was a main depository for K&B's earnings. For examples on debiting, from the end of March through April 1892 there were separate debits from K&B's Larabie Bros. account totaling \$25,436 (\$591,500). In other debits separate from these in April, there was \$6,528.78 withdrawn.<sup>1</sup> In continuing to invest and expand their business ventures, K&B often withdrew large proportions of their bank accounts. While

this thwarted what could have been higher savings through interest earnings on their account, their using of thousands of dollars to diversify and inject other investments increased their overall wealth more than leaving their money in savings would have.

Through the early and mid-1890s, Bielenberg's tracking of K&B's bank account at Larabie Bros. is an appropriate source by which to understand the breadth of K&B's assets. From September 1892 to November 1894, occasional entries on the credit and debit sides of this account provide a look at how K&B managed one of the larger of their financial holdings. They stayed on the positive side of their account, but costs consistently ran close to returns at approximately 80% to 90% of earnings. Except for the end of 1894, they debited this percentage through 1892 and 1893 from this large account that often exceeded \$100,000.<sup>2</sup> The following chart and table shows these credits and debits through the period with records for previous and subsequent years included, where available.

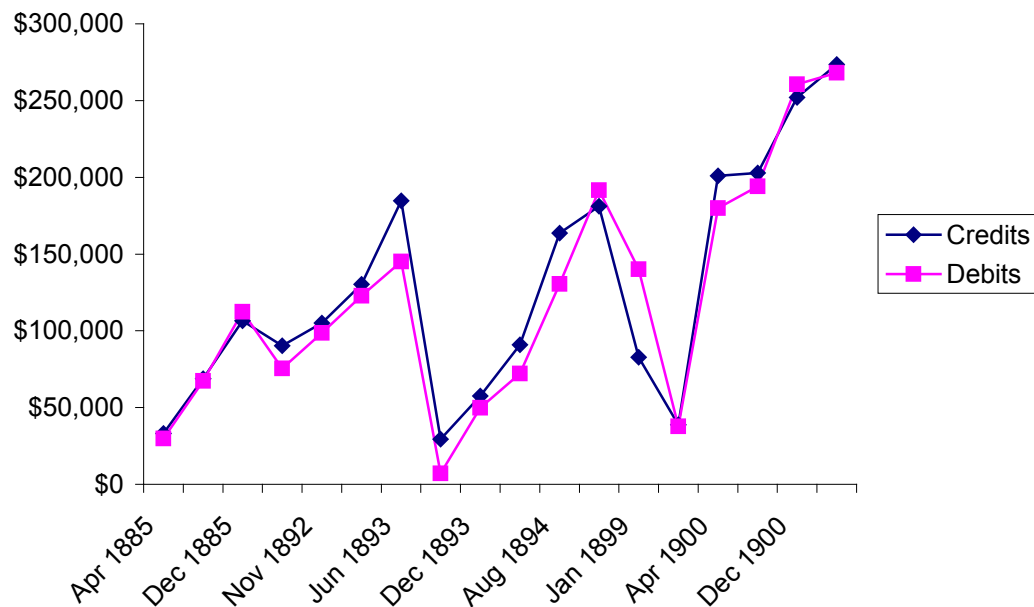


Figure 18. Larabie Bros. bank account, credits compared with debits for various months, April 1885 - April 1901. Only months with both credit and debit data from Table 1 below are included in this chart.

Month	Credits	Debits	Month	Credits	Debits
Apr 1885	\$33,100.34	\$29,879.82	Feb 1896	\$143,969.26	unavailable
Aug 1885	\$68,812.54	\$67,358.71	Nov 1896	unavailable	\$28,250.68
Dec 1885	\$106,497.06	\$112,321.54	Feb 1897	\$65,631.40	unavailable
Apr 1892	unavailable	\$31,964.78	May 1897	\$13,150.32	unavailable
Sept 1892	\$90,367.20	\$75,553.36	Jul 1897	unavailable	\$13,387.73
Nov 1892	\$105,036.97	\$98,523.44	Dec 1897	\$30,788.98	unavailable
Feb 1893	\$130,223.21	\$122,799.16	Sept 1898	\$45,199.67	unavailable
Jun 1893	\$184,624.01	\$145,022.45	Jan 1899	\$82,731.57	\$140,087.15
Jul 1893	\$215,346.25	unavailable	Jun 1899	\$38,809.24	\$37,774.52
Aug 1893	\$29,421.19	\$7,133.22	Apr 1900	\$200,931.57	\$179,825.05
Dec 1893	\$57,598.64	\$49,729.03	Sept 1900	\$202,861.57	\$194,070.05
Apr 1894	\$90,914.99	\$72,187.40	Dec 1900	\$252,011.93	\$260,605.09
Aug 1894	\$163,627.32	\$130,461.99	Apr 1901	\$273,584.35	\$268,198.00
Nov 1894	\$181,261.05	\$191,666.64			

Table 15. Larabie Bros. bank account, credits compared with debits for various months, April 1885 - April 1901.

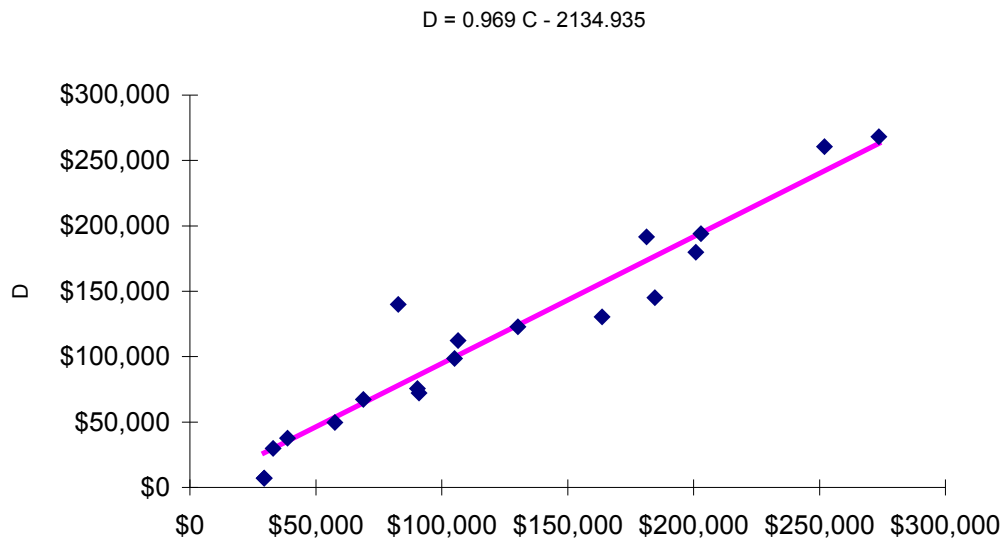


Figure 19. Regression straight-line graph and equation of Larabie Bros. bank account debits and credits, April 1885 - April 1901. A strong relationship exists.



Notice that both sides reach peaks in June and July 1893 and again in later 1894, excluding the largest in both categories later into 1900 and 1901. Credits into this bank account included large dividends, such as those by November 1892 when the credits reached over \$100,000. Some of this was from sizable dividends, the largest being \$9,999 and the next largest \$6,666. In June 1893, the highest of the credits included \$3,000 from the Pioneer Cattle Company (PCC) and \$1,000 from Rosenbaum. By mid or late July 1893, a significant decrease of 87% in account holdings occurred with a subsequent similar decrease in debits from the account. By August 1893, debits had declined by 95%. Perhaps this was simply a large transfer of wealth to a different account as only one year later in August 1894, credits in the Larabie account moved back up by over five times the previous year and debits followed climbing by a factor of approximately eighteen. Through spring and summer 1894, the credits were boosted by deposits from Rosenbaum ranging from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Additional payments from Marcus Daly of \$10,000 and D.J. Hogan for \$7,000 along with dividends from the PCC totaling \$3,333 provided K&B with extra earnings from which to draw. By November 1894, K&B started to overdraw their account by just over \$10,000 for the first time in a couple years.<sup>3</sup> For these two years, the Larabie account was a key point of financial transfer for K&B holding income from a variety of investments and serving as a debit account for purchases, repayments, and transfers to other investments. We will return to the Larabie account for 1895 and beyond later in this chapter.

Credits and debits from the Larabie account are highly correlated through the months where data exists on both for the same month ( $n = 18$ ). Figure 19 shows a near-perfect

straight-line relationship between the two. With debits (D) as the dependent variable and credits (C) as independent, regression analysis results in an extremely strong correlation coefficient ( $R = .9622$ ) and a  $R^2$  of .9258 meaning that prediction of monthly debits from the Larabie account are improved by 92% when using changes in credits into the Larabie account as the predictor.

### **B. Managing Large Assets with the Costs of Mining and Ranching**

Occasionally, there are points in the journals and ledgers that Bielenberg kept where he collects and lists a wide range of investments and their associated worth. These moments allow a glimpse into the total wealth K&B enjoyed. In 1892, for example, a portion of their ledger labeled “stock account” shows a total credit of \$559,924.49 (\$13,021,500). This amount included \$243,060 in inventory livestock, \$89,500 in various types of mines, \$77,386.40 in bills receivable, \$67,400.59 cash on deposit in Larabie Bros. bank, \$66,600 in lands, and \$15,907.50 in “ledger accounts”. This shows K&B had already made by 1892 a large proportion of what would eventually be the amounts they held in their estates after their respective deaths over two decades later. The previous years of success through the 1870s and 1880s resulted in the half-brothers garnering a large percentage of the total accumulated earnings they would earn in their lives. While 43% of K&B’s wealth was in their ranch animals, 12% to 16% lay in sizable investments like mines and even their lands. Also, these entries show the importance of collected payments and how much K&B were holding in bank accounts at any one time. Mining continued to be the most crucial investment outside of ranching, the latter being the

activity for which they were most known. Concerning mining, the Rock Creek Ditch and Mining Company (RCDMC) mining ditch, for example, shows \$12,000 of assets in this section of the ledger during 1892.<sup>4</sup>

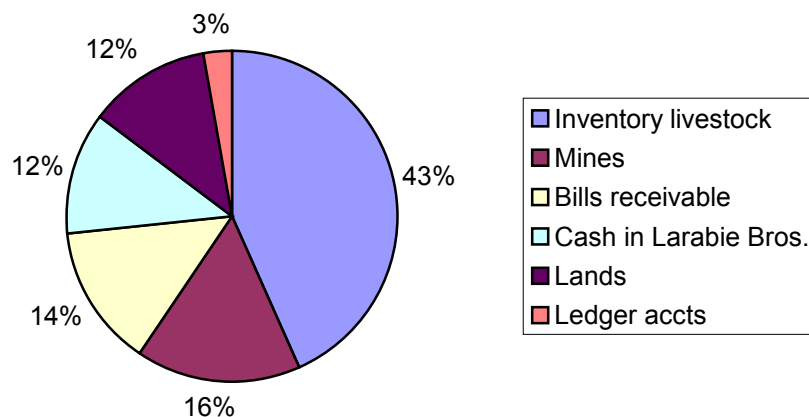


Figure 20. Proportions of various investments totaling much of K&B's aggregate wealth as shown in the "stock account" entries, 1892. Ledger, 1892-1901.

The above totals for wealth held in these various investments was subject to debits from January 1892 to February 1896 when total debits were \$39,882.26.<sup>5</sup> This is fairly small when compared to the overall total amount of wealth held across K&B's livestock, mines, land, and bank accounts, but much of the high percentage debiting occurred in other accounts.

Another glimpse of K&B's wealth during the early and mid-1890s was the "bills receivable" accounting by Bielenberg in the ledger. This account covered returns on investments such as stocks and payoffs from Rosenbaum. Through all of 1892 and 1893 there was \$159,253.33 total credits that came into this account. The largest credits included in this total were from Rosenbaum at \$40,696.53 and \$20,000. Numerous other

credits range lower from a few hundred to \$5,000 each including returns from various stocks.<sup>6</sup>



Photo 34. Portrait of Kohrs, 1889.  
Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

Investment in mining was important in the early 1890s as shown by \$17,223.18 (\$400,500) worth of shares held by K&B in Champion Mining as of November 1892. Profits from mining investments varied greatly between different years and different mines. The timing of payoffs also shaped the size of annual returns. The next year, from April to June 1893, the “Kohrs and Geehrdts” mine provided \$1,000 to \$2,000 in earnings. An example of a one-time payoff providing large staggered returns occurs with this mine later that year. From June 13 to October 24, the Kohrs and Geehrdts mine returned \$14,068.08 (\$335,000) in earnings. Another high payout happened a few months later in January 1894 for \$13,534.61 (\$338,400).<sup>7</sup> K&B likely saw these high returns

through the falls and winters following successful summer operations when mining was at its annual peak in terms of hours and material worked. Perhaps the scheduling of board of directors meetings for the mines also influenced when payouts occurred. At least one mine paid consistently over a lengthy multi-year span. From 1892 to 1897, K&B show approximately \$1,000 annual earnings on investment in the Squaw Gulch mine, which was a mine approximately 13 miles from the Rock Creek ditch.<sup>8</sup>

Mining also had large costs for which K&B provided. The first three months of 1892, K&B had \$23,059.03 debited to Casper Geehrdts for expenses that included the Squaw Gulch and French Gulch mines. Likely, it was the Squaw Gulch mine that had larger costs since through all of 1892 and 1893, K&B paid \$6,476.94 for the French Gulch mine alone. Of this total, \$3,896.68 was paid to Geehrdts. The French Gulch also had small labor costs. The period of May through September 1894 shows this with a range of \$625 to \$918 per month for labor. While K&B's other mines cost thousands per month in labor, the French Gulch was rather small in its expenses. From May 1894 through mid-January 1895, K&B spent \$8,984.26 total on the French Gulch. Average monthly expenses including labor for 1892 and 1893 was \$269.87, while average monthly expenses for 1894 were up to \$1,056.97. By mid-1896, from May through September, labor costs at the French Gulch dropped to \$315.77 per month on average totaling \$1,578.85 for this five-month period.<sup>9</sup>

Date	RCDMC Expenses	RCDMC Expenses (avg per month)	RCDMC acct debits	RCDMC acct debits (avg per month)	Pioneer Mine Expenses	Pioneer Mine Expenses (avg per month)	French Gulch Expenses	French Gulch Expenses (avg per month)
Apr - Oct 1891	\$2,967.00	\$423.86	unavail	unavail	unavail	unavail	unavail	unavail
Jan 1892 – Dec 1893	unavail	unavail	\$8,763.05	\$365.13	unavail	unavail	\$6,476.94	\$269.87
May 1894 - mid-Jan 1895	unavail	unavail	unavail	unavail	unavail	unavail	\$8,984.26	\$1,056.97
mid-May – Dec 1894	unavail	unavail	\$3,274.77	\$436.64	unavail	unavail	unavail	unavail
Aug 1894 – Jan 1895	unavail	unavail	unavail	unavail	\$10,036.86	\$1,672.81	unavail	unavail
Jul 1895 – Jan 1896	unavail	unavail	unavail	unavail	\$8,781.68	\$1,254.53	unavail	unavail

Table 16. Expenses for the RCDMC, Pioneer, and French Gulch mines by total and per month average, April 1891 - January 1896. Ledger, 1892-1901.

Other mining expenses during this time included costs paid to the RCDMC. In two years, from January 1892 through December 1893, K&B paid \$8,763.05 in total debits from their account under the company's name. This was an average of \$365.13 per month, while from mid-May through December 1894, K&B paid an increased average of \$436.64 per month to the company.<sup>10</sup> The increase maybe due to the second calculation being over only the second half of the year when expenses tended to rise. This may skew the results as the first average was over two annual cycles.

During this time, while K&B reaped rewards from their previous mine purchases and holdings, they remained active in selling mining areas as well, which brought them additional high returns. In May 1893, they sold one-eighth interest in five different quartz lode mining claims located in Owyhee County, ID to Millard F. Leech of Silver City, ID for \$10,000 (\$238,100).<sup>11</sup> This occurred as K&B were already earning five-figures on

multiple other mines they continued to hold. Whether K&B desired to sell based on an above-market price offer, on quartz mining having not been or not projected as profitable, or that they did not want to deal with operating a mine that far from Deer Lodge, the half-brothers made off with a nice selling price. Considering the close proximity of the other mines and how much K&B visited the mines and tended to perform tasks themselves, such as paying miners wages, these Idaho mines may have represented a quick turn around buy-and-sell investment. Or these mines may have represented a mining claim from a few years back that K&B invested in before they realized they would prefer to remain close to their mining operations.

Also, in regards to moving finances, Bielenberg maintained an “expense account” in the K&B ledger that seems to have been a specialized account for keeping track of money that was often in motion from one use to another. Often, it involved, as the name suggests, K&B paying expenses, especially at the eastern ranch. Numerous transactions in this account are marked as transfers to Boardman for ranch costs and returns from “pools” K&B were partners in at the eastern ranch. The account also provides evidence on costs associated with running the eastern ranch and other investments in which K&B were involved. By May 1892, there was \$8,059.13 total in expenses, most of which were to Boardman. This represents a running total from a previously unspecified period and shows there were numerous small expenses in April and May ranging from \$6 to \$120. The eastern ranch did, at least occasionally, require thousands of dollars in inputs within periods of a few months. While this account was primarily for expenses, there were credits entered in during the same periods when transfers for expenses were made. By

May 1892, \$982.91 in credits came to the account from entries such as Malta Pool, placer mines, and “range cattle”.<sup>12</sup> Credits may have happened because of over-payment by K&B with Boardman and pool members sending back portions of payments not utilized or perhaps these credits were portions of returns from the eastern ranch held aside specifically for expenses. This general proportion of debits to credits in the expense account continued from April 1892 to March 1893.

While seasonal cost data shows that labor expenses increased through the summer months during the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for K&B, costs from the “expense account” during 1892 to 1893 show a different trend. Debits from this account for a year’s cycle from June 1892 through May 1893 demonstrate that summer months were low expense months and October and November were the highest. After spending an average of \$1,380.27 for June and July, expenses slightly increased to over \$1,600 on average paid in August and September. From there, debits from the expense account nearly doubled to over \$2,800 per month average in October and November, then steadily fell to below \$2,500 averaged in December and January, and ending at just over \$1,500 per month from February through May 1893. The summer months were perhaps times when little financial input was needed on the eastern ranch, while October and November required the highest since Boardman had shipped cattle by then. There may have been more of a reimbursement strategy since expenses came predominantly at the back end of shipping. This shows that Boardman used a fair amount of total inputs from K&B with a total of \$21,370.28 transferred from the expense account in June 1892 through May 1893.<sup>13</sup> This also establishes the importance of the eastern ranch in its early years to K&B



as demonstrated by the fair amount of expenses paid for this distant entity that K&B traveled to only occasionally.

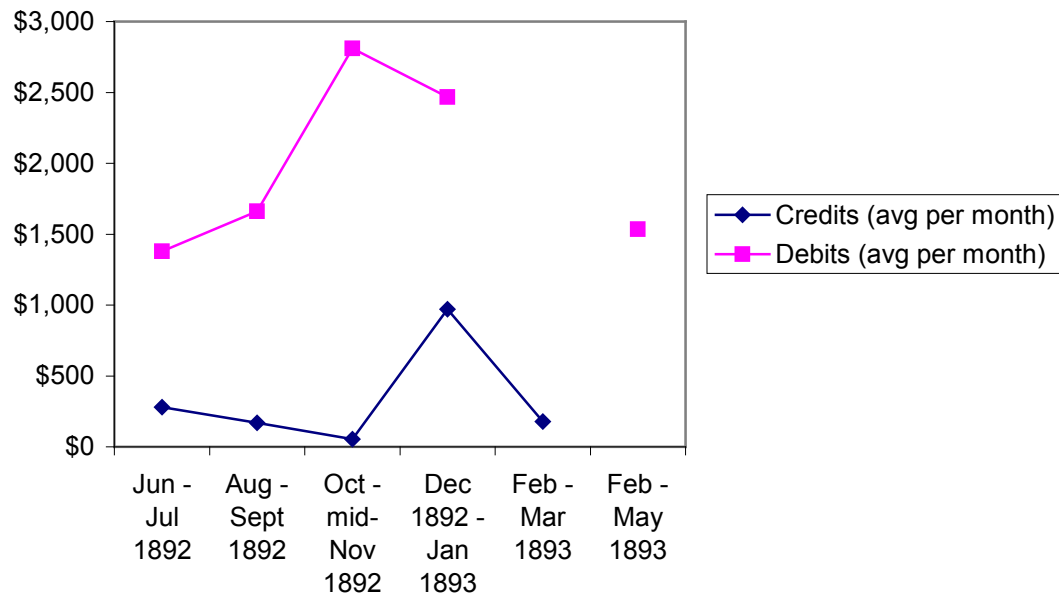


Figure 21. Expense account credits and debits, June 1892 - May 1893. As the name implies and the comparison of high debits to credits shows, this was likely an account for transferring money in and keeping track of money being allocated out for covering costs. Data on debits for February - March, 1893 is unavailable and no line is drawn between the adjacent two points as no assumption is made on what level of debiting occurred during those months. Ledger, 1892-1901.

Date	Credits	Credits (avg per month)	Debits	Debits (avg per month)
Jun - Jul 1892	\$559.54	\$279.77	\$2,760.54	\$1,380.27
Aug - Sept 1892	\$338.20	\$169.10	\$3,320.91	\$1,660.46
Oct - mid-Nov 1892	\$80.30	\$53.53	\$4,215.35	\$2,810.23
Dec 1892 - Jan 1893	\$1,940.50	\$970.25	\$4,936.38	\$2,468.19
Feb - Mar 1893	\$354.47	\$177.24		
Feb - May 1893			\$6,137.10	\$1,534.28

Table 17. Expense account credits and debits, total and average per month for each period, June 1892 - May 1893. Ledger, 1892-1901.

Credits into the expense account were mostly small, but at the end of the year as with other accounts there was a sizable deposit. At the end of 1892, \$1,940.50 was credited over December 1892 and January 1893. This far outpaced the previous and following months where average per month credits ranged from just above \$50 per month to less than \$300 per month. The summer months of June and July continued to be the cheapest for K&B's "expense account" when factoring in credits since they were debiting the least amount and brought in an average of \$279.77 each of these months to offset some of the costs.<sup>14</sup>

### **C. Increased Spending for the Eastern Ranch and Ranch Labor**

Besides the expense account, Bielenberg also kept an account marked "J.M. Boardman" for the manager of the eastern ranch. Debits for Boardman are available through all of 1892, the second half of 1893, and all of 1894. Whether the following expenses were already finances on hand at the eastern ranch or Boardman requiring K&B to transfer money for these costs, the figures provide a glimpse of seasonal expenses needed during the early years of Boardman's overseeing the eastern ranch. From mid-February through May 1892, there was \$7,335.51 in total debits. Spending hit a dramatic high in May through July of that year as total costs for those months totaled \$37,833.54 (\$879,800). Clearly, expenses increased significantly into tens of thousands at the eastern ranch as preparations were made for the major summer and autumn shipments of cattle to Chicago. This is further verified by debits on Boardman's account dropping to only a couple thousand dollars during the entire second half of 1892. Debits spiked again in

1893 to over \$20,000, but that was over a longer period from August 1893 to mid-February 1894. In 1894, from mid-February through April, debits totaled just over \$14,000 with debits shooting up once again from May through July at over \$37,000 total. These late spring and summer costs are nearly identical to 1892. The last half of 1894 cost \$20,344.12 for Boardman, which is also nearly equivalent to the second half of 1893.<sup>15</sup> The per month average on spending over 1892 through 1894 was approximately \$5,000 while the two “high” periods of May through July 1892 and 1894 averaged around \$12,500 per month.

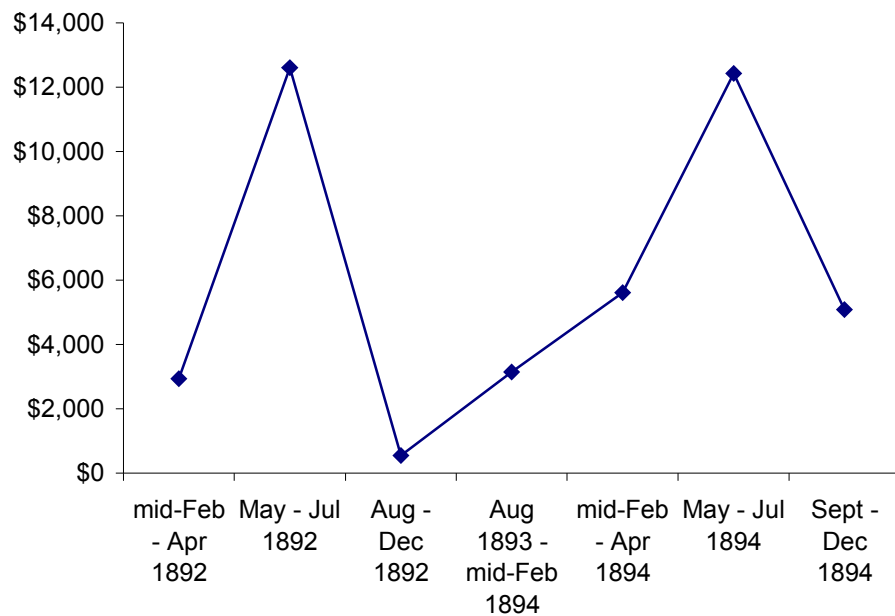


Figure 22. Debits from Boardman account, February 1892 - December 1894. Ledger, 1892-1901.

Date	Credits	Credits (avg per month)	Debits	Debits (avg per month)
mid-Feb - Apr 1892	Unavail	Unavail	\$7,335.51	\$2,934.20
May - Jul 1892	Unavail	Unavail	\$37,833.54	\$12,611.18
Aug - Dec 1892	Unavail	Unavail	\$2,756.03	\$551.21
Aug 1893 - mid-Feb 1894	Unavail	Unavail	20,439.21	3,144.49
mid-Feb - Apr 1894	Unavail	Unavail	\$14,025.08	\$5,610.03
May - Jul 1894	Unavail	Unavail	\$37,295.39	\$12,431.80
Sept - Dec 1894	Unavail	Unavail	\$20,344.12	\$5,086.03
Jan - Feb 1896	\$93,754.91	\$46,877.46	\$85,300.77	\$42,650.39
Feb - Mar 1897	\$17,155.14	\$8,577.57	\$160,824.33	\$80,412.17
Jan 1900	\$10,891.69	Unavail	unavail	unavail
Mar 1900	Unavail	Unavail	\$5,723.81	unavail
Dec 1900	\$25,219.81	Unavail		unavail
Feb 1901	Unavail	Unavail	\$26,965.01	unavail

Table 18. Credits and debits from Boardman account, February 1892 - February 1901. Ledger, 1892-1901.

With a near doubled amount of expenses during the middle part of the year, Boardman was spending a fair amount of finances by this period as the eastern ranch became more prominent in the economic health of K&B. Over 1892 through 1894, a total of \$140,028.88 in expenses were used by Boardman.

The higher costs for ranching compared to mining also showed during this time regarding wages paid to laborers at the home ranch. From July 1893 to July 1894, K&B spent \$15,769 total on ranch labor.<sup>16</sup> This averages to \$1,314.08 per month, which is nearly double what labor costs were for ranch-hands at the end of the decade from 1897 to 1900.

By 1894, as Boardman was allowed increased leverage to spend, Kohrs only took part

in general planning for the eastern ranch as he continued to remove himself from daily ranching duties in Deer Lodge. Boardman enjoyed control over cattle transactions and continued to build the prominence of the eastern ranch in the overall portfolio of K&B through the rest of the 1890s into the turn of the century.

Data for expenses incurred by K&B continue into the mid-1890s, enabling more understanding of how much they allocated to inputs for ranching as compared to mining. Another mine for which K&B paid labor costs was the Pioneer Placer. From June through October 1894, which covers the peak mine-operating season through the summer, K&B spent a range of \$1,035 to \$1,786 on wages per month. During a similar time period from May through October 1895, labor costs dropped to a range of \$927 to \$1,402 per month. From August 1894 through January 1895, K&B spent a total of over \$10,000 on the mine. Total expenses dropped from July 1895 through January 1896 at a similar proportion that they dropped in 1895 as K&B spent just under \$8,800 total for these months. For 1894, it was a per month average of approximately \$1,600 spent on the mine with the monthly average for 1895 dropping to around \$1,200. Another mine K&B paid expenses for was marked as the “Idaho mine” in Bielenberg’s ledgers. K&B spent a similar annual amount as the other mines of \$13,231.93 (\$339,300) in 1895 on this mine. There were also large debits, however, at the end of 1895 at a total of \$38,000 (\$974,400) for this mine’s expenses.<sup>17</sup> Considering this accounted for labor and other costs, this was relatively high, but within range of the costs at other mines.

K&B paid much smaller amounts to the Illinois mine in the 1890s. The expense account for this mine shows only \$5,484.35 in total expenditures from November 1895

through March 1897. This included labor and occasional small fees such as four dollars for hauling services. During this time, there may have been a dispute with an employee or a disagreement over land use as K&B also paid occasional attorney fees of \$22.<sup>18</sup> Concerning expenditures as a whole, K&B only spent \$322.60 per month on average, which is less than one-half to one-third of many of the other mines accounting only for labor costs. Accounting for total expenditures, the Illinois mine, along with the French Gulch, were especially small allocations during the mid-1890s.

Date	RCDMC Debits	RCDMC Debits (avg per month)	Pioneer Placer Mine Expenses	Pioneer Placer Mine Expenses (avg per month)	French Gulch Expenses	French Gulch Expenses (avg per month)	Illinois Mine Expenses	Illinois Mine Expenses (avg per month)
May 1894 - mid-Jan 1895					\$8,984.26	\$1,056.97		
mid-May - Dec 1894	\$3,274.77	\$436.64						
Aug 1894 - Jan 1895			\$10,036.86	\$1,672.81				
Jul 1895 – Jan 1896			\$8,781.68	\$1,254.53				
Nov 1895 - Mar 1897							\$5,484.35	\$322.60

Table 19. Total and average per month debits from mining accounts and noted expenses for the RCDMC, Pioneer Placer, French Gulch, and Illinois mines, May 1894 - March 1897. Ledger, 1892-1901.

For ranching expenses, one area that required allocation of earnings was purchasing local cattle to nourish for eventual sale. K&B continued to purchase a portion of their cattle from local stock-raisers during the mid-1890s. One was the mining magnate and also ranch investor Marcus Daly. One of K&B's ledgers shows an account marked "Marcus Daly" with a purchase from Daly of 535 cattle and four bulls for a total of \$13,963.50. This is an example of a large cattle purchase in terms of quantity of cattle

and total paid by K&B. The cattle were bought at approximately \$26 per head and the four bulls at \$70 each. While this is a reasonable price for bulls, the large quantity of cattle may have been either of poor quality or part of a friendly deal or liquidation with Daly since \$26 per head is quite a low price during 1895. There were also other expenses involved with Daly as the total debit to him from K&B totaled \$16,344.41 (\$419,000) over a period of March through July 1895.<sup>19</sup> Apparently, K&B had multiple purchases and perhaps an invested relationship with Daly through the mid-portion of 1895. Kohrs describes in his autobiography of meeting Daly as of 1877 and selling him some K&B cattle within that year. Kohrs also eventually sold Daly two of K&B's finest horses as Kohrs had high praise for Daly calling him "a warm friend, a very witty and pleasant companion".<sup>20</sup>

K&B also provided capital on cattle purchases and other expenses for the PCC through the mid-1890s. From May through December 1895, for example, they spent \$40,755.71 (\$1,045,000) toward the PCC including large purchases of 707 steers for \$7,638 total and 748 two-year old cattle for \$12,130 total. These buys averaged \$10.80 and \$16.22 per head respectively, which is exceptionally cheap. Total expenditures, however, for the company took a large amount of K&B finances in 1895. PCC total costs, or perhaps just K&B's contribution to the company's costs, varied significantly with only around \$7,400 spent by K&B on the PCC from mid-April 1896 through February 1897. With average per month expenses of approximately \$5,100 and \$700 respectively for 1895 and 1896, there were significant differences within one year concerning costs of the PCC operation. Considering PCC expenses per month ranged from a high of around

\$4,200 to a low of just above \$300 almost a decade earlier in 1886, K&B likely had grown accustomed to large differences in the hundreds to thousands between different months of the year for PCC costs. Kohrs was paid an annual salary of \$1,500 for 1895 and 1896 listed in this account.<sup>21</sup> Paying ranch managers a salary was commonplace among K&B including Kohrs who obviously shared access to accounts of large wealth with Bielenberg, but was listed on the books and paid a salary as an official recognition of his duties as a manager of the company.

By April 1895, K&B had withdrawn sizable amounts from their Larabie Bros. bank account for another season of investing in their various ventures. Starting with the overdrafts in late 1894 (see earlier this chapter), K&B continued their high rates of debiting from this account through 1895. They consistently withdrew at least 90% of their holdings in the account at any given time that year. By the end of the year, having returned multiple deposits from Rosenbaum, which included three \$10,000 payments and one \$15,000 in-cash transfer, K&B showed \$106,497.06 (\$2,730,700) credits in this account. They had, however, withdrawn \$112,321.54 (\$2,880,000) as they increasingly utilized the Larabie account to cover expenditures and other investments (see Table 15 earlier in this chapter).<sup>22</sup>

Withdrawals on the Larabie account occurred mostly around the late winter and early spring during these years. The account shows how earnings were primarily made in summer and fall with the largest deposits on returns arriving in December or January. While 1895 was a year of using a large amount of income to expand investments and/or repay debts, 1896 saw a reasonable increase in the positive balance held in the account.



Positive balance reached a high of \$21,392.66 (\$548,500) in April 1896, but fell from withdrawals to \$8,605.93 by May. In 1897, K&B kept the positive balance consistently larger with March 1897 showing \$69,612.51 (\$1,784,900) and then \$26,920.37 in July after the annual large withdrawals. The positive balance remained in the \$20,000 to \$60,000 range through the rest of 1897 and 1898. By January 1899, however, K&B began another cycle of high withdrawals and running a low balance with January and June of that year showing 86% to 97% rate of debiting compared to the finances on hand in the account (see Table 15 and Figure 18 earlier in this chapter).<sup>23</sup>



Photo 35. Portrait of Kohrs, likely during the 1890s, n.d. Courtesy of MHS, Helena, MT.

#### **D. Growth Through the Late 1890s and Boardman's Cattle Management**

By 1896, K&B once again returned to expanding the home and upper ranch land area. That year, they acquired an additional 160 acres to add to the upper ranch. There is no

record of K&B purchasing land for the home or upper ranch in 1897, but more was added in 1898. On October 10, 1898, K&B paid the Northern Pacific Railroad \$2,370.60 for a sizable addition of 1,896 acres. A month and a half later they added another 1,280 acres of Northern Pacific Railroad land, west of the ranch house and across the Deer Lodge River. By the end of 1898, they also added a smaller 200 acres of pasture for a cost of \$800. This land was added to some already purchased east of the ranch headquarters where the grasslands slope gently up ward toward the Continental Divide.<sup>24</sup>

In 1899, K&B continued adding large chunks of rangeland from the Northern Pacific Railroad claims by purchasing an even larger portion, 2,481.08 acres, from the railroad for \$3,103.85. Later, in August 1899, they added a quarter section of land, followed the next day by acquiring 1,920 acres from the Northern Pacific Railroad. On October 31, K&B added an additional 1,894 acres for \$2,521.88 from the railroad bringing their total additions to the home and upper ranch from 1896 through 1899 at 9,831.08 acres.<sup>25</sup> During this period, almost all of this acquired land, at least 96%, came from the Northern Pacific Railroad illustrating the importance of purchases from the railroad that had intervened on K&B's land years prior as a large portion of the upper ranch, nearly 10,000 acres, came into K&B's possession over a four year period. This is another example of the half-brothers expanding their land and investments initially after or during years of earnings growth.

Returns on range cattle sales were reasonably high from 1895 to 1897. At the start of 1895, the balance in K&B's "range cattle" account stood at \$128,598.04 (\$3,297,400). Through the second half of 1895, K&B earned at least \$77,400 on cattle sales with

almost all of this amount arriving in one transfer from Rosenbaum of \$75,629.48 marked “beef sales 1895 Rosenbaum”. The “range cattle” account was most likely a way for Bielenberg to track the major Chicago cattle sale earnings; how much was returned and where the money was transferred. Certainly, funds were exchanged in and out of this account as the balance stood at \$100,752.24 (\$2,583,400) as of February 1896 and lowered to \$83,162.13 (\$2,132,400) over a year later by March 1897. Through 1896, Bielenberg noted some cattle purchases in this account such as spending \$3,780 for 210 stock cattle at \$18 per head. Through all of 1896, however, Hereford thoroughbred cattle returned only \$3,594.30.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to cattle sale earnings, K&B received some of the largest single dividends in 1896 and 1897. These were \$69,993 and \$48,111 respectively, showing that K&B occasionally made a sizable amount of their annual returns on dividend payouts.<sup>27</sup> Also, as of March 1897, Bielenberg marked that K&B held at least \$74,519.18 worth in range cattle, \$16,931.27 in thoroughbred cattle, and \$20,731.42 in horses. One year later, in March 1898, the ledger showed \$46,218.90 worth in range cattle.<sup>28</sup>

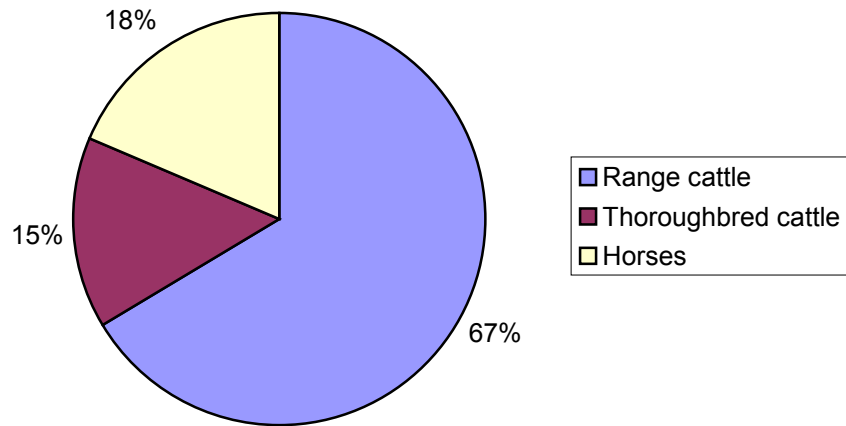


Figure 23. Proportions of worth of holdings in various animals, March 1897. Ledger, 1892-1901.

Date	Range Cattle Acct Earnings	Range Cattle Acct Earnings (avg per month)	Range Cattle Acct Balance
Jan 1895	unavail	Unavail	\$128,598.04
Jul - Dec 1895	\$77,420.03	\$12,903.34	unavail
Feb 1896	unavail	Unavail	\$100,752.24
May 1897 - Feb 1898	\$107,370.54	\$10,737.05	unavail
Mar 1898	unavail	Unavail	\$46,218.90
Apr - Dec 1898	\$74,866.13	\$8,318.46	unavail
May 1899 - Nov 1900	\$56,991.39	\$2,999.55	unavail

Table 20. Earnings and balance for “range cattle” account, January 1895 - November 1900. Ledger, 1892-1901.

Similar to K&B’s earning and spending patterns from their large Larabie bank account, Boardman also kept rates of debiting close to or over total funds available as evidenced in the account marked “J.M. Boardman” (see Table 18). This account also enables a more specific look at how much the eastern ranch was bringing in and spending

in total through the late 1890s. Through 1896 and 1897, Boardman debited over 90% of the income brought into the eastern ranch. As of the first few months for these two years, Boardman had \$93,754.91 (\$2,404,000) and \$171,155.14 (\$4,388,600) in credits respectively. Through both of those periods, \$85,300.77 and \$160,824.33 were spent respectively.<sup>29</sup> Boardman certainly had a large amount of funds at his disposal given the prominence of the eastern cattle in the sales earnings of the ranch. It seems that Boardman was privy to re-investment of earnings to upkeep and expand the ranch operations similar to the style K&B used with large accounts at the home ranch. Boardman may have been emulating his bosses, working on financial management advice from them, or may have been third in command to K&B's management of the eastern funds themselves.

The high amount of spending from earnings as shown by Boardman through the mid-1890s was a signal of K&B's continuing growth, which resulted in them acquiring additional land, buildings, and equipment in northeast Montana. In 1898, in the period of Boardman's high spending, K&B purchased the "N Bar N" (N-N) Ranch, which sat along Prairie Elk Creek in Dawson County, MT. The addition of the N-N occurred near the turn of the century following decades of growth and seven years of Boardman running the eastern ranch, which had proven to be a crucial asset for grazing and shipping quality cattle.<sup>30</sup>

At least through the end of the 1890s, Boardman may have been occasionally purchasing cattle with K&B, specifically Kohrs, potentially sharing in funds and decision-making processes with him. For 1898 and 1899, there are a small amount of

cattle purchases noted as “Kohrs and Boardman” in the ledger. From July 1898 through the end of the year, these acquisitions cost \$11,823.90 (\$303,200) total. The largest of these buys were a purchase of 302 two year old steers at \$24.93 per head totaling \$7,528.86 and another purchase of 118 one year old steers at \$17.86 per head for \$2,107.48 total. Kohrs and Boardman’s pooling for cattle purchases dropped the next year as they only bought \$3,025.63 worth of cattle for a similar time period, from mid-May through September 1899. When they did partner, they focused on steers, but this was likely a short-lived strategy that was way behind the tens of thousands allocated toward direct transfers to Boardman’s account for purchasing inputs for the eastern ranch. For example, as of July 1898, the balance for an account marked “J.M. Boardman cattle” stood in six figures at \$128,046.46 (\$3,283,200). While credits and spending were in this monetary range the prior year, this balance shows some of the sizable worth of Boardman’s operation in eastern Montana. Boardman also had a separate bank account at First National Bank in Helena, which exhibited a balance of \$35,693.48 (\$915,200) as of July 1899.<sup>31</sup>

Boardman also shared in the management of the “55” brand steers, one of the brands of cattle that K&B shared costs in the “pools”.<sup>32</sup> In Boardman’s account for the this brand of steers, the balance started at \$11,790.77 (\$302,300) in 1898 and dipped to only \$4,439.12 by December. Boardman may have differed from K&B in regards to when he chose to spend money on upkeep or expanding his own cattle herd. When having more control over decision-making processes, such as financing the “55” brand, it looks as though Boardman spent more in summer and fall more near the prime cattle selling

seasons. Since he was probably using less winter feed in eastern Montana and primarily running cattle on open rangeland, Boardman would not have the same expenses nor spend them in the same seasons as K&B. Boardman probably spent more in summer and fall as April balances in 1900 and 1901 show \$11,222.03 (\$287,700) and \$19,182.16 (\$479,600) respectively, which are similar to the previous year's starting balance in January.<sup>33</sup> Through the late 1890s, the "55" brand finances appear steady and 1900 was likely an improved year for the brand with increased earnings and/or decreased spending.

K&B's cattle earnings not only came through brands run at the eastern ranch, but also through brands of cattle that were developed from partnerships with fellow investors. In the ledgers, Bielenberg kept account on some of these different cattle brands. The "wineglass" brand used on the cattle of Kohrs' partnership with Marcus Daly maintained a steady balance through 1897 and 1898. In March 1897, the balance was \$142,627.14 (\$3,657,100), which remained nearly the same by January 1898 at \$143,348.93 (\$3,675,600) and increased to \$158,696.14 by the end of the year. This shows a good amount of K&B's wealth was in smaller brands such as the "wineglass" and partnerships in cattle with outside entities contributed up to six figures in finances. By the end of 1901, although the total balance is not available for that year, the ledger shows \$40,396.38 (\$1,009,900) in credits at that time.<sup>34</sup>

Data is also available during these years for K&B's continued expenditures on labor at the home ranch. While these costs averaged just over \$1,300 per month back in 1893 and 1894, their average monthly expenses towards labor at the home ranch declined from 1897 to 1900. From September 1897 through March 1898, K&B averaged \$700 per

month on ranch-hands, which fell to \$612 by April 1898 through the rest of the year. Costs were further cut to an average of \$544 per month over a longer period of time from March 1899 to July 1900.<sup>35</sup> The drop in costs may have occurred from a cut in the number of ranch-hands and/or other workers around the ranch (e.g. cooks). A wide survey of their ledgers shows that K&B tended to keep monthly pay for specific labor positions steady. The exact number of laborers at certain points of time is difficult to ascertain, however, as records of worker names exist in several scattered sources.<sup>36</sup> The quantity of workers at any given time is only available in a few instances when Bielenberg would list the number of laborers working in a certain month when calculating total monthly labor costs. Bielenberg's record keeping of ranch labor costs in the ledgers was detailed though. During certain years he listed each individual worker's monthly and total wages for the year and for some laborer's he maintained separate pages to note each individual's names and their respective total wages. Whether due to a drop in the number of ranch-hands or other reasons, labor costs fell from 1897 through 1900, but these represent a rather small portion of K&B's expenses.



Photo 36. Line of cowboys on horseback representative of how they looked during this time period, 1904. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.





Photo 37. K&B bunkhouse, where ranch-hands slept and kept possessions when not on cattle drives, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

### **E. Growing Returns From the Mines**

Back in the early part of the decade, in 1893 and 1894, returns on mines were staggered with K&B occasionally showing earnings in the range of \$13,000 to \$14,000 alongside another few months of returning only \$1,000 to \$2,000. In the later part of the decade, from 1897 to 1900, returns continued in this range. Investment in the French Gulch mine paid off reasonably well during the late 1890s. As with other mining outfits, profits from the French Gulch were likely distributed to stakeholders in the “off-season” after summer operations ceased. In December 1897, K&B received \$5,383.38 (\$138,000) in earnings from the mine with a similar amount, \$5,112.37, in earnings from January 1897 to December 1898. This is probably due not to lowered rates of return, but rather a consistent payoff arriving in a lump sum at the end of each year. Such a system is further

supported by an entry for December 1899 with an increase to \$6,828.83 (\$175,100) in profits. The earnings for these entries are listed going until January 1 of the following year, so technically they may have been paid out all at once at the start of the year rather than in December. Performing even better were the Emory mine and the K&B mine. Each returned an average of \$2,000 to \$8,000 every six months in the years 1897 to 1900. By January 1901, K&B showed a balance of \$8,399.97 (\$210,000) from the Emory mine.<sup>37</sup> These two mines matched and a few times at least doubled the annual profits received from the French Gulch during the late 1890s.

The RCDMC was a smaller earnings venture for K&B from the late 1890s into 1900. By the end of 1897 and start of 1898, the balance for the company was sitting just below \$3,300. This decreased to around \$2,300 at the end of 1898, but this may not reflect large lump-sum payoffs that often occurred in either December or January for mines. It does show that the RCDMC was not a sizable investment for K&B. Earnings and spending probably remained similar through the next couple years as by the start of 1900, the balance was in this range of a few thousand dollars at \$2,700.<sup>38</sup>

Date	RCDMC Acct Balance	French Gulch Earnings	Squaw Gulch Earnings	Kohrs & Geehrdts Mine Earnings
Nov 1891	\$4,549.81			
1892			\$1,000	
Jan - Oct 1893				\$14,068.08
1893			\$1,000	
Jan 1894				\$13,534.61
1894			\$1,000	
1895			\$1,000	
1896			\$1,000	
Dec 1897 - Jan 1898	\$3,294.44			
1897		\$5,383.38	\$1,000	
Dec 1898	\$2,301.58			
1898		\$5,112.37		
1899		\$6,828.83		
Jan - Feb 1900	\$2,700.70			
1900		\$3,029.42	\$4,302.83	
Aug 1909 - Aug 1910	\$250,000.00			

Table 21. Earnings and balance for various K&B mines, November 1891 - August 1910. Notice the significant increase in the RCDMC balance occurring between 1900 and 1909, which will be discussed in a later chapter. Ledger, 1892-

Besides the long-held mines paying off during the late 1890s, K&B continued laying official claim to additional mines and spreading their mining investments over many locations with multiple partners as they had through the early 1880s and 1890s. In August 1897, K&B along with six associates that this time included John Boardman and once again included Casper Geehrdts, filed a notice of location for a deposit of placer gold named the “Slaughter House Bar”. This was a large claim of 160 acres located one-third of a mile northeast of the town of Pioneer in Deer Lodge County where K&B preferred to have their mines located.<sup>39</sup> By the late 1890s, Boardman was being brought on as an

equal partner into investments beyond the eastern ranch and cattle-raising further exhibiting the trust K&B possessed in him and Boardman's acceptable performance as the eastern ranch manager.

Through the 1890s, the eastern ranch became an important cattle nourishing and shipment point for K&B, under the management of Kohrs' son-in-law John Boardman. Boardman proved similar to K&B concerning utilizing earnings immediately for high amounts of re-investment and proved different regarding focusing on calves rather than more immediate buying and selling of mature head. Experiencing another growth period for cattle earnings through this decade, K&B began enjoying large accumulated assets from their decades of operation and consistent re-investment and expansion. With further delegation to Boardman at the eastern ranch and Bielenberg at the home ranch, Kohrs increasingly removed himself from daily operations in ranching transitioning into the turn of the century when a more full picture of K&B's success through wealth can be ascertained.

## CHAPTER VI: MANAGING ACCUMULATED EARNINGS

By the late 1890s through the turn of the century, K&B reached their peak in cross-breeding for production of quality cattle. Bielenberg focused on cross-breeding the ranch's stock for years, but after years of high returns K&B were able to adequately cover the costs of importing top bulls from England to increase the weight and maturation rates of the herds. They brought over "Anxiety" during this time, the first high quality bull imported from England and later shipped over the bull's son "Anxiety Fourth" who sired a majority of the high quality bulls at K&B through this period with names such as "Bull Mischief", "Bull Blanchard", and "Bull Randolph".

While the "anxiety" line was a purebred operation, K&B also decided to cross-breed hereford and shorthorn head during this period. On the first cross of two English breeds, the cattle that resulted often grew to a mature weight quicker, were heavier at their maturity than other stock, were less susceptible to disease, and could maintain their weight across seasons. These qualities made them increasingly popular with cattle buyers through the period. Cross-breeding increased efficiency at the ranch as those cattle were generally a heavier weight at the time of sale than others and were ready for sale earlier. Mixing herefords and shorthorns, regardless of which is the male or female, produces a "black baldy", black cattle with white faces. These cattle had what ranchers called "hybrid vigor", the previously mentioned qualities of an English cross-breed. K&B, as other ranchers, had to be careful and ensure they sold their first cross-breeds. This is because mixing a hereford bull with a cross-breed heifer does not produce the high

quality characteristics resultant in the first cross. At the home ranch, K&B spayed cross-bred heifers to further ensure a second cross-breed with their associated “loss of vigor” would not occur. Mixed breeding of English cattle in Montana and elsewhere across the U.S. west did not result in new breeds, except for the Santa Gertrudis cross-breed that was developed at the famous King Ranch in Texas.<sup>1</sup>



Photo 38. Hereford bull of K&B's, 1911. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 39. Hereford cattle in fenced pasture, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

Earnings for portions of range cattle sales began healthy, but declined through the late 1890s. For the Pioneer Cattle Company (PCC), returns from March 18, 1897 through the rest of the year totaled \$51,298.68 (\$1,315,400). Under a separate heading marked “range cattle” in K&B’s ledger, a stretch of sizable earnings were seen in cattle sales from 1897 through 1901. These were good years for cattle sales, especially the second half of 1897 when returns totaled over \$107,000 from April 23, 1897 to March 1, 1898. From April 1898 through the remainder of that year, range cattle sales declined from the previous year to \$74,866.13 (\$1,919,600). They continued to decrease at higher rates until sales for an eighteen-month stretch totaled only \$56,991.39 from May 1899 to December 1900. There is also an enormous credit shown during this time, in January 1900, totaling \$279,522.79 (\$7,167,300), which may have been accounted for outside of the total

earnings.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, however, this was likely accounted for as the “range cattle” balance rose dramatically to \$555,226.97 (\$13,880,700) by April 1901.<sup>3</sup> The decrease in returns from 1898 to 1900 shows only in the “range cattle” portion of the ledger and cannot be taken as an indicator of overall decline in cattle sales during late 1899.

#### **A. A Series of Healthy Assets**

Much of K&B’s financial holdings in cattle were healthy by 1900, especially after these years of high earnings from cattle. As of the end of 1900, K&B show a positive balance of \$107,726 in the PCC alone.<sup>4</sup> This balance was this high even after spending \$99,882.18 through 1900 while crediting only \$71,822.75 that same year. Despite a sizable \$28,000 more in expenditures than earnings, K&B’s balance with the PCC still showed over \$100,000 by 1901. This shows the accumulation of profit over previous years to be able to spend nearly six-figures annually and maintain a balance also in six-figures. In early 1901, the PCC balance experienced a major jump-up to \$848,530.90, which was likely one of the largest transfers between accounts or one-time payments to K&B ever experienced by the half-brothers. A portion of this increase may have been due to a large dividend for K&B arriving from the PCC in January 1901 totaling \$83,515.83. There was also a tremendous increase in the balance marked “range cattle” as of April 1901 as the total jumped to \$702,090.24.<sup>5</sup> By this time, K&B were transferring the largest amounts of money they had ever allocated before representing the culmination of decades of fairly uninterrupted growth and two multi-year periods, in the early 1880s and late 1890s respectively, of high growth.



A few different accounts enable a broader glance at K&B's wealth during the late 1890s into the turn of the century. Entries for the "bills receivable" account, for example, appear for the start of 1898 and 1899 enabling another glimpse at the amount of wealth held by K&B. As of January 1898, the balance for bills receivable was a healthy \$162,244.25 (\$4,160,100). Just a couple months later, as of March 1, 1898, the "profit and loss" statement written by Bielenberg also showed a large positive balance of \$350,445.39 (\$8,985,800). The balance on bills receivable, however, fell drastically to \$46,660.92 by January 1899. K&B did, however, receive a large dividend during this month from an unnamed source for \$54,747.<sup>6</sup>

Bielenberg's tracking of "profit and loss" in the ledger shows healthy earnings during 1900. At the start of 1901, Bielenberg noted credits totaling \$218,835.10 (\$5,470,900) with \$79,309.56 in debits during that year. Of those debits, \$39,033.77 was likely in expenses for 1900 and of those expenses, \$17,827.22 was marked for "ranch labor". The balance on "profit and loss" rose dramatically in just a few months. By April 1901, Bielenberg noted the balance as \$799,278.33 (\$19,982,000), which likely represented most of K&B's entire financial holdings at this point. This jump occurred because of the addition of returns on range cattle totaling over \$555,200.<sup>7</sup>

Another bank account for K&B was at First National Bank in Butte. This was a smaller account, but provides additional data on the half-brothers' financial holdings and expenditures. At the start of 1899, K&B showed \$46,999.19 (\$1,205,100) of credits and \$24,866.21 of debits in this account. This is a rather low ratio of withdrawals compared to other bank accounts such as the larger Larabie Bros. holding. This low ratio of debiting

to available earnings was probably temporary, however, as credits in the account dropped to just below \$25,600 by November 1899 with mid-year withdrawals near the credits amount at around \$25,500. There was probably not an annual cycle to this account as shown in other accounts and investments as a couple years earlier, in January and February 1897, the First National Bank account showed a balance on the lower end of its range, over \$23,500. Before that, however, in October 1895, the balance was higher at around \$59,500.<sup>8</sup>

K&B's First National account was a smaller account, but the half-brothers did use it liberally on occasion for maintaining and expanding their investments by withdrawing up to the amount of returns coming in. They continued to add and withdraw from this account through the 1890s, showing similar behavior with it as with their other accounts: adding continuous earnings and utilizing those earnings to re-invest in other areas.

The Larabie Bros. account, which was gaining up over \$106,000 in credits by 1895, reached over \$200,000 in earnings by 1900 and grew significantly to over \$250,000 by the end of 1900 and into 1901. As of April 1901, their account showed \$273,584.35 in credits with \$268,198 in debits. From April 1900 to 1901, spending was running at least 89% of returns in this account. At one point, in December 1900, K&B were withdrawing more than what was on hand by over \$8,000 similar to a few months over five years prior (see Table 15).<sup>9</sup>

While K&B held nearly doubled the credits going into this account since a few years earlier, they were also spending more in absolute and relative terms from the account as of 1900 and 1901. Sizable increases in earnings did not slow down spending and instead

actually increased the rate of expenditures for maintenance and expansion of K&B's investments.

Another good source to analyze K&B's earnings and wealth during the last half of the 1890s and into the following decade is their account with Rosenbaum. The chart and table below provides their balance with Rosenbaum from the start of 1896 through early 1904.

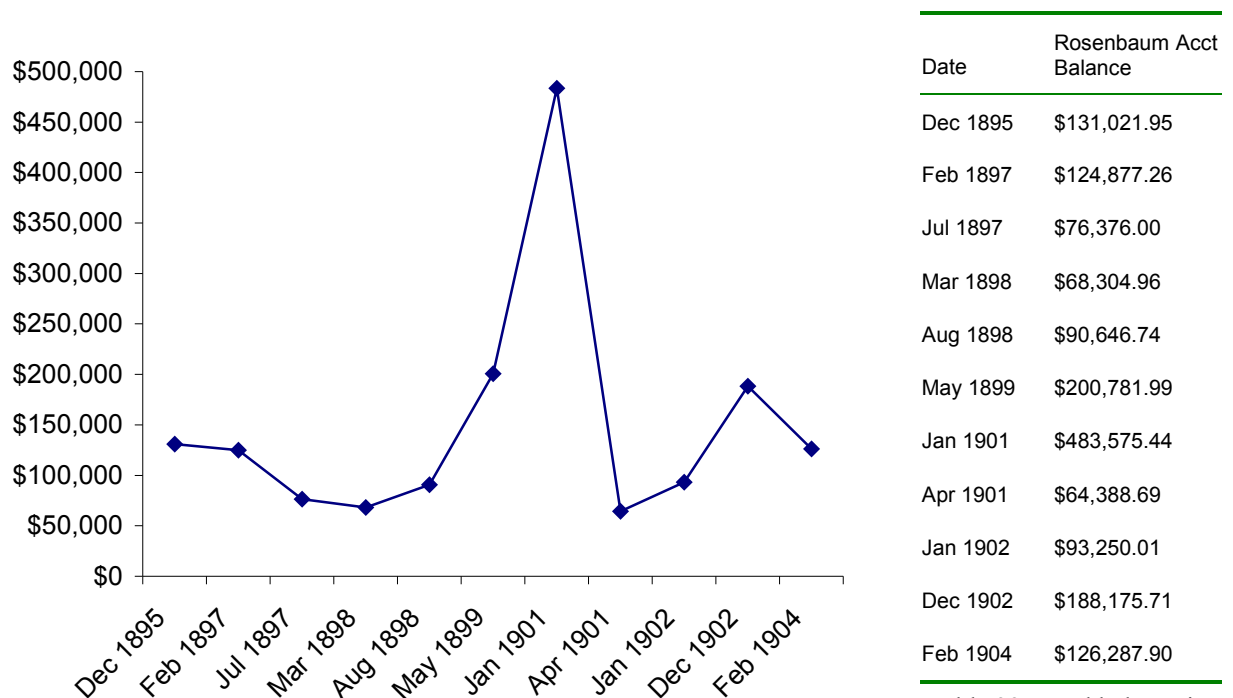


Figure 24. Total balance in Rosenbaum account, December 1895 - February 1904. The January 1901 outlier visually exaggerates the stability of finances in the account during the other months and years as the smallest changes between months were above 10 percent of the previously available balance. This is evidence of K&B continuing to micro-manage their accounts and their consistent transferring between accounts for optimum use and allocating for different investments. Ledger, 1892-1901.

Table 22. Total balance in Rosenbaum account, December 1895 - February 1904. Ledger, 1892-1901.

Cattle sales facilitated by Rosenbaum in Chicago continued into the start of the new century. July through November 1900 saw another set of summer and fall cattle sales facilitated by Rosenbaum. From July 23 up to September 24 of that year, "CK" brand

cattle brought in \$26,869 in total sales. During a longer stretch from July 23 through November 5, other brands of cattle were sold. The largest was the “D-S” brand with 1,113 head selling for \$61,772.27 total. Also, during this stretch 940 head of the “55” brand returned \$51,190.07, 344 head also of the “55” brand brought \$16,878.91, 55 head of the “wineglass” brand sold for \$5,200.59, and the “75” brand had 61 head sold for \$3,846.93.<sup>10</sup> This is a total of \$138,888.77 in sales with an average of \$55.27 per head, which is an average that is steady across the different brands. Also across the brands, heifers and steers were selling for an average of \$40 to \$50 per head during August and September 1900.

As of April 1901, K&B continued to hold a large amount in earnings from their cattle sales. Through late summer and early fall of that year, the annual season for Chicago cattle sales brought K&B earnings once again. From early August to the end of October, Rosenbaum sold various brands of cattle associated with K&B. The largest sale was 236 head of “CK” brand cattle for \$10,663.84 (\$266,600) total. Rosenbaum also sold 217 head of “D-S” cattle at a total of \$8,682.79. These sales averaged \$45.19 and \$40.01 per head respectively. A smaller sale was the 36 head of “55” cattle that Rosenbaum sold for \$2,044.56, which is a higher average of \$56.79 per head.<sup>11</sup> The total across the three brands for these sales by Rosenbaum was 489 head for a total of \$21,391.19 at an average of \$43.74 per head. While the CK cattle brought the most returns at a decent unit price, the “55” cattle during 1901 were fetching a high price. Through 1901, the “55” cattle were perhaps of less quantity, but of a high quality for the Chicago market. Also, the average per head in 1901 was much less than that in 1900, down over \$10 when K&B

cattle brought \$55.27.

Sales of cattle by Rosenbaum in July through November of 1902 were most likely smaller than the preceding year, but provided a higher return rate concerning per head of cattle. In 1902, there was a considerable decrease in cattle sold by Rosenbaum with 37 “D-S” brand cattle bringing in \$1,637.91 total and 68 “CK” brand cattle returning \$4,381.14.<sup>12</sup> Although the absolute numbers were low, the average price per head rose for each brand compared to 1901. The “D-S” brought in \$44.27 per head, the “CK” \$64.43, and the combined average of the two was \$57.32. While the “D-S” improved by a few dollars, the “CK” cattle of 1902 increased over 60% per head from the previous year. Perhaps the downturn in quantity shipped or produced in 1902 enabled an increase in quality.

Despite the low total returns for 1902, the balance in K&B’s account with Rosenbaum more than doubled through that year from a balance of \$93,250.01 in January to \$188,175.71 (\$4,704,400) by December. K&B were shifting returns from other sources into this account during that year, such as earnings from the PCC. In January 1902, K&B received \$85,000 from Pioneer earnings and a year later in January 1903 received \$80,000. The \$85,000 in returns was deposited into the Rosenbaum account.<sup>13</sup> With the PCC, K&B were, on an annual basis, still bringing in similar amounts they earned annually on the company back in the late 1890s. Through 1902 and 1903, K&B would have numerous additional transactions of smaller amounts with Rosenbaum, which would sometimes amount to only a few hundred dollars exchanged.<sup>14</sup> By February 1904, K&B’s balance with Rosenbaum stood at \$126,287.90 (\$3,006,900).<sup>15</sup>



Photo 40. Cattle of K&B's and George Lane's (Bar U Ranch of Longview, Alberta) in pens at Chicago stockyards, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

Besides the returns on cattle, K&B continued to diversify their investments at the start of the decade. In 1900 and 1901, their journal shows allocations in bonds and numerous mining operations. From April to September 1900, returns from multiple mines exceeded \$9,000.<sup>16</sup> Reported earnings for all of 1900 concerning some of these mines were quite large, especially the Pioneer mine bringing in over \$10,000. Also for 1900, the Squaw Gulch mine returned approximately \$4,300 and the French Gulch just over \$3,000.<sup>17</sup> This is a total of over \$17,000 in earnings from these three mines for 1900, which is an increase from the 1890s for the Squaw Gulch and a decrease for the French Gulch. Additionally, smaller dividends arrived to K&B after large payoffs, such as \$533.33 deposited to K&B's Larabie Bros. account in February 1901 from an unspecified mine holding.<sup>18</sup>

## **B. Ranch and Mine Labor Costs Through the Early 1900s**

Regarding costs for K&B entering the new decade, there is labor data available for much of 1900, from April to November. Through April and May, the quantity of employees and total monthly labor costs for K&B was quite low. In April, they spent \$454.20 total on eighteen employees, which dropped to a low of \$250.30 total for labor in May for twelve employees. June started to pickup with 30 employees bringing in \$416.10 total, which set the stage for a larger labor force and pay in July when \$1,511.23 was spent on 52 employees. July was by far the largest month for number of employees and total pay, showing that at least one month of summer was a rush period for completing ranch work. In the employee pay lists for this period, July also shows that there were more hands receiving monthly wages of \$30 to \$40 total for a variety amount of days worked. This was a higher pay per month than all the other months in 1900 for which there is data. By August, the work staff was quickly cut back down to a little over twenty employees with total monthly labor costs ranging from \$200.20 to \$681.35 since there was a sizable difference in employee wages on the upper end. For example, while in August the low range of wages was \$5 to \$26 as employees were not working as many days, in September the high end jumped to \$149 in wages.<sup>19</sup>

It looks as though K&B did occasionally hire specialists, perhaps highly skilled cowboys with experience as foremen or cattle drive leaders, which called for high wages. Even the Chinese cooks were paid some of the highest wages as “Ham Sam”, the occasionally photographed Chinese bunkhouse cook for the ranch-hands, had a wage of \$100 for October 1900. He was one of only two employees paid over \$100 that month

and one of a handful over \$100 during this period in 1900. Near the end of the year in November, the number of employees dropped to only three who were paid a total of \$270.75.<sup>20</sup> This continues the trend of non-summer labor costs being low. Average pay for employees from April to September was \$26.20. Average total cost for labor per month over this period was \$583.96, which is similar to K&B's monthly labor costs the preceding three years.

Early 1901 also exhibits low winter labor costs at the home ranch with K&B spending \$580 total in labor for January and February combined. This figure is similar to the low "off-season" ranch labor numbers from 1900. During these two months, labor costs were split quite evenly with ten employees receiving \$25 in monthly wages and the cook "Ham Sam" earning \$40 per month.<sup>21</sup> This continues the trend of K&B employing a low number of workers during the winter months at the home ranch.

K&B also paid at least some of the labor costs for the eastern ranch. Expenses for employees on the eastern range totaled a hefty \$7,489.11 from December 1899 to July 1900. This was a per month average of \$936.14. Labor for the eastern operation was quite expensive compared to the home ranch. Over eight months during the same year, labor at the home ranch would have cost less than \$5,000 if computing from the previously mentioned average per month cost. In the sampling from December 1899 to July 1900, which covers much of winter, spring, and summer, total labor on the eastern range was approximately 25% higher than the home ranch either due to the quantity and/or quality of labor hired. Possibly, a greater number of highly skilled cowboys with years of experience or backgrounds as foremen were required at the eastern ranch. A higher



number of ranch-hands would have necessitated more cooks as well, who brought a decent wage. While spending a sizable amount on total labor at the eastern ranch, K&B spent a small amount in terms of annual costs, \$4,189.35 in 1900, toward their share of expenses for the “CK”, “D-S”, and “wineglass” brand cattle.<sup>22</sup> K&B contributed to expenses involved in maintaining the various branded cattle in the “pools”, but these costs were considerably lower. This is only a \$349.11 per month average for expenditures on these brands.



Photo 41. Cowboys herding K&B cattle in the area of the K&B eastern ranch, 1910. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 43. Log building at the eastern ranch, which was either accessed by ranch-hands or served as a quarters for them, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 42. Cowboy on horseback with cattle at eastern ranch, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

The eastern ranch also had sizable equipment expenses during this time, \$7,565.87, which is nearly equivalent to the previously mentioned labor costs.<sup>23</sup> Certainly, K&B annually allocated five-figures towards costs of their eastern ranch by the turn of the century. The costs were worth it since this is where much of their cattle were nurtured through the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

K&B may have taken on a much larger proportion of the financial holdings of the eastern ranch by 1900. Through 1900, the account for John Boardman at the eastern ranch was quite low compared to a few years prior. As of 1897, Boardman had been handling over \$100,000 in credits and debits, but this fell to \$25,000 and less through 1900. Boardman also began debiting more than he had in earnings at the eastern ranch by the start of 1901. With \$25,219.81 (\$630,500) in earnings, Boardman spent \$26,965.01 in February 1901.<sup>24</sup> K&B also sent \$14,184.11 to Boardman in December 1900. K&B's journal shows a large transaction at the end of 1901 that either bought shares for

Boardman or transferred shares to him for the PCC. At approximately \$74.60 per share, 171 shares were exchanged at a total of approximately \$12,700.<sup>25</sup>

Labor cost data for the mines is also available for 1900. Monthly totals on wages for much of 1900 from the Pioneer, Squaw Gulch, and French Gulch mines are available in the K&B journal for this period. From March through August at the Squaw Gulch, K&B paid around \$2,500 total in wages. This is an average of \$422.76 per month. Similar to this were wages at the French Gulch, which totaled just over \$2,200 from March to July and an additional total of approximately \$1,500 from August to October. The French Gulch had a slightly higher monthly labor expense of \$473.15 since the later summer and early fall seems to have required more quantity and/or more skilled and highly compensated laborers. March through November at the Pioneer mine cost \$6,714.22, which is \$746.02 monthly.<sup>26</sup> This gives a total of \$13,035.99 paid to mine employees through most of 1900 with a total average per month expense for K&B across the three mines of \$566.47.

The returns and associated costs across these three mines show a good correlation as the Pioneer's earnings more than double the other mines' earnings for 1900 with its labor costs nearly doubling the other mines as well. The Pioneer, for 1900 at least, was a fairly efficient operation with high returns and low labor costs considering its returns. Squaw Gulch and French Gulch were similar in input and output financing with the Squaw Gulch being a bit more efficient in terms of earnings per unit labor cost.

Also during 1900, as of a trustee meeting in August, K&B continued to receive earnings from mines, such as the RCDMC, in the form of securing a large proportion of

dividend shares. At that meeting, out of 1,200 shares divided between the trustees, Kohrs held a large majority of 870 with Bielenberg claiming 290. Together K&B claimed nearly 97% of the 1,200 shares with additional partners Geehrdts holding 30, Boardman with five, and Edward Scharnikow with five. Scharnikow was a fairly new trustee, having been elected in May 1899 after H. Gehrman sold all his stock and left the company. Scharnikow would ten years later go on and become a major buyer of this company when K&B sold back many of their holdings. This exact quantity and proportion of trustees' shares were maintained through several years to January 1907 and were also listed the same as of May 1912 and June 1913.<sup>27</sup>

Besides ranching and mining costs, K&B also had occasional expenses concerning their land holdings. Although there were fewer entries in journals and ledgers compared to other costs such as labor and taxes that were paid monthly and annually respectively, expenses marked in the "ranch land account" in K&B's journal for October 1900 included \$1,377.25 in costs for that month. One of the larger portions in these costs was \$176 in surveying fees.<sup>28</sup> Into the turn of the century, it looks like more finances had to be put into land for activities such as surveying since formalized land titles and leases were growing more common. These expenses were moderate and only occasional, about the equivalent of two to three months worth of labor costs.

Another expense for K&B were income taxes paid for various investments and taxes paid to the different counties where their formal land holdings and ranch operations existed. In November 1900, K&B paid \$3,164.58 total in taxes, which included \$1,473 to Deer Lodge County, a few hundred dollars to Valley and Choteau Counties each, and just

a few dollars to Granite County. Also of this total, \$364.93 was paid for tax on K&B's holdings in the PCC.<sup>29</sup> This left less than \$1,000 for Deer Lodge city tax, the rate for which was set at 5% for all real and personal property by the Deer Lodge Board of Aldermen back in September 1891.<sup>30</sup> In August of that year, the town of Philipsburg, MT had adopted a similar 4% tax giving multiple locations in Deer Lodge County a fairly consistent tax code.<sup>31</sup> K&B were likely paying an amount of 5% or similar to the city in addition to county and other taxes.

K&B may have begun using the Rosenbaum account as an investment for interest returns later in their careers since in their earlier decades, much of the Rosenbaum sales returns were withdrawn to buildup the business. After years of using Chicago cattle sale returns to expand and add investments, K&B may have eased their high proportion of withdrawal from returns on cattle sales and allowed this sizable account to act more as an investment in itself.

In attempting to make each investment provide a high rate of return and not let financial accounts sit without being put to use, K&B had interest accruing on their cattle sales account with Rosenbaum in Chicago by at least 1904. It looks as though whatever money was not withdrawn for financing additional investments or ranch inputs was itself amassing interest as another form of investment. There is evidence of this activity from 1904 through 1906. From August through December 1904, \$8,397.50 (\$199,900) was earned in interest from the Rosenbaum account.<sup>32</sup> This was a significant increase from the \$1,760.30 accrued from the previous months of March to June of that year. Through January and February 1905, total interest accrued was \$896.40. Later in 1905, interest

picked up and returned a total of \$1,988 for August through December. Looking at month-by-month interest earnings during these years shows that the earliest and latest parts of the year provided the most interest returns. In 1905, returns were steadily between \$410 and \$480 from January through May with earnings dipping below \$300 in June through August while October through December saw earnings reach over \$480 each month. Per month returns declined in the first half of 1906 with earnings of over \$400 maintained only from January through March.<sup>33</sup> The previously mentioned \$8,397.50 total from the end of 1904 may have represented a large one time earning of interest from a large lump sum left in the Chicago account after a cattle sale. The per month returns reflect a scenario where higher returns occurred during the months following summer and autumn cattle sales. Low returns during summer suggests K&B kept cattle sale profits in the account to accrue interest during these years and withdrew at various points to reduce interest returns by spring.

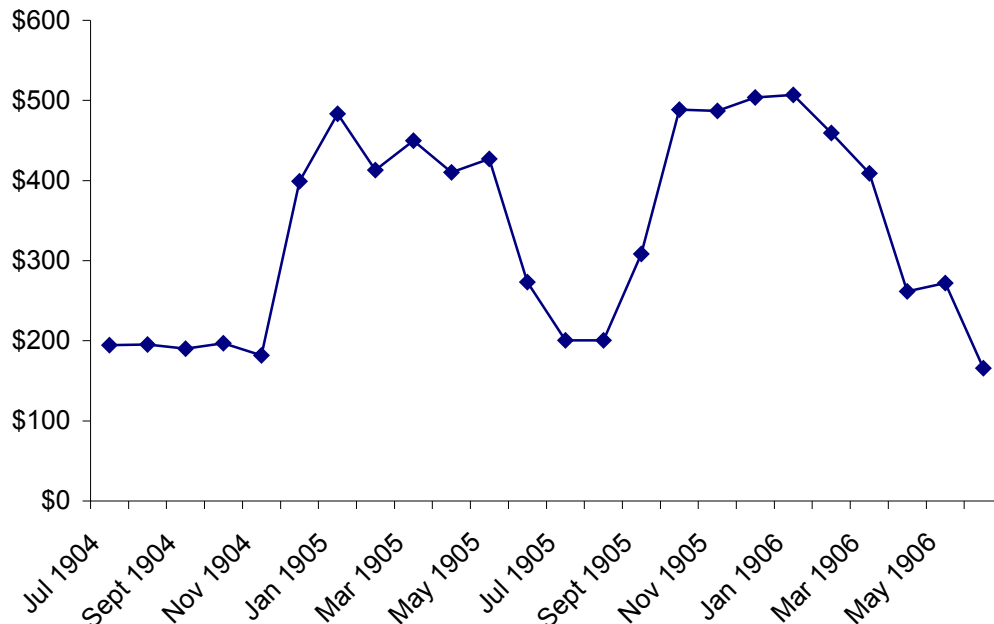


Figure 25. Interest accrued per month in Rosenbaum account, July 1904 - June 1906. Every month in this date range has a data entry. General Journal, 1900-6.

For the period July 1904 through June 1906 when continuous monthly data is available, the average monthly interest return was \$336.54 with a total of \$8,076.91 for those two years. Interest accrued on this account provided a reasonable rate of return with enough earnings to earn back what K&B lost in some of their moderate monthly costs such as ranch labor. Even interest earnings fell prey to the annual economic cycle that many other K&B ventures did. Income was plentiful at the start and end of each year with full cattle sale profits in, along with mining dividends arriving, and labor costs staying low through winter. By summer, money had been spent over the year on building up cattle and operating the mines while awaiting the late summer and early fall returns on cattle and mining.

As of the early 1900s, K&B reached a plateau of accumulated profits from decades of operation and multi-year periods of growth. While maintaining their allocations to ranch and mine costs, which could be seasonally high, the half-brothers had by this time collected sizable returns that would carry them through the subsequent two decades and into their respective estates. These large assets marked the time for Kohrs to retire to Helena and become a more distant advisor to Bielenberg and for many of their numerous investment ventures, especially in ranching and mining, to be gradually closed down and sold for large finalized payoffs. These strategies will be discussed in the next chapter.



## **CHAPTER VII: SLOWING DOWN AND WINDING UP**

By 1909, K&B began steps to cash out portions of their spread out investments, specifically by beginning to cleanup many of their mines by this year. While Bielenberg stayed in Deer Lodge at the home ranch as manager, Kohrs continued his transition during this period into a more distant advisor on cattle sales and winter feeding as opposed to being an occasional participant and observer on cattle transactions. The year 1909 was also a transition period for K&B besides starting to liquidate their mining assets as that was the last year of major cattle purchases for stocking the eastern ranch. Kohrs indicates in his autobiography that a few years later by 1915 all of K&B's cattle had been sold except for a few remnants.<sup>1</sup> The late part of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century into the 1910s would be a slowing down period for K&B in these respects as they grew less active in cattle transactions and started settling long-held assets for securing their retirements and estates.

### **A. Incorporation and Liquidating the Mines**

In a couple year period between 1906 and 1908, K&B illustrated their focus at the time of securing their continued ownership and security of their estates by incorporating much of their holdings in real estate and the home ranch. On June 1, 1906, they registered the K&B Realty Company and placed in its holdings the various real estate properties they owned in the large nearby communities such as Helena and Missoula. About seven months after this, K&B received a "certificate of extension of corporation" for the long-

held Rock Creek Ditch and Mining Company (RCDMC) allowing K&B to ensure they maintained ownership through the subsequent years. A year-and-a-half later, in May and June of 1908, K&B incorporated both the K&B Land and Livestock Company and the Pioneer Mining Company. Besides Kohrs and Bielenberg themselves, Kohrs' wife Augusta was also listed as an official partner in the corporation assuring that ownership would continue in the family upon any of their deaths. As of June 1, 1908 and official approval of incorporation, K&B transferred the home ranch into this corporation for \$200,000 (\$4,651,200). From county records and maps, Albright estimates in his 1979 report that the total size of the home ranch at the time of the transfer was about 26,787 acres. The records for the transfer show a large majority of this, 22,307 acres, involved. Considering the decades of continuous expansion of the home ranch with little subtraction, the 1908 transfer and estimates likely show the home ranch reaching its peak in terms of acreage formally owned. Albright also notes what may have been the final purchases of land before the 1908 transfer, that being the addition of 120 acres along Mullan Creek, west and north of the ranch house, just one year prior in 1907. Along with transferring the actual land property to the K&B Land and Livestock Company, K&B also transferred the rest of their cattle business including its assets of animals and additional holdings to the corporation.<sup>2</sup>

By mid-1909, K&B were beginning to clean up their decades of mining allocations. In August 1909, K&B sold numerous placer mining locations belonging to the RCDMC. This deed of sale also included almost all of the water rights to Rock Creek and Rock Creek Lake. Fellow company trustee Edward Scharnikow made the purchase for

\$250,000 (\$5,814,000) signaling a substantial shift in control of the company to him. The water rights included all rights held by the company except for China Ditch and the sale included 24 placer mining locations ranging from 15 to 140 acres totaling around 2,970 acres. This sale represented a sizable portion of the RCDMC and shows after decades of earning tens of thousands annually how much an investment could payoff further by unloading it years later. K&B had made in this liquidation of the RCDMC as much as much of their entire home ranch's sizable property was worth. Claims included in the RCDMC that K&B had purchased in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for tens to hundreds of dollars a piece ended up easily returning those initial amounts in annual returns. Further, they were easily worth the small initial investments compared to the final massive sell-off price they brought decades later.

K&B made even more on this transaction than the stated \$250,000 since it was paid in installments with interest. According to the terms of sale, Scharnikow was to pay \$50,000 nearly a year following the agreement, on or before June 1, 1910, with the remaining \$200,000 charged 6% annual interest. This remaining amount was due in total by the end of 1910.<sup>3</sup> The RCDMC continued to exist as an intact company after this sale. K&B along with their fellow trustees agreed to extend the company for an additional twenty years at a meeting a few years earlier on January 25, 1907.<sup>4</sup>

The RCDMC sale of 1909 may have been for the purpose of adding funds to Kohrs' portfolio as he transitioned into retirement and continued working as an advisor to Bielenberg. This is further supported by Bielenberg continuing his investments in mining as of November 1910 through purchasing water rights to supply multiple placer and

hydraulic mines. For \$100, Bielenberg acquired water rights on small portions of Crater Gulch Creek, Pikes Peak Creek, and Willow Creek for the purpose of building ditches and flumes to appropriate water to numerous mines such as the “Old Flume placer”, “Standard Placer”, “Monte Christo”, and “Gravel Mountain”.<sup>5</sup> Considering the low purchase price and the associated construction of pathways from the waterways to the mines that this investment required, Bielenberg was likely remaining active as a manager of mine operations and allocations during his years as sole official manager of the ranch in the 1910s. K&B also had water rights remaining with the RCDMC and transferred some of these to another of their mining ventures, the Pioneer Placer Mining Company, for \$1,000 in May 1912.<sup>6</sup>

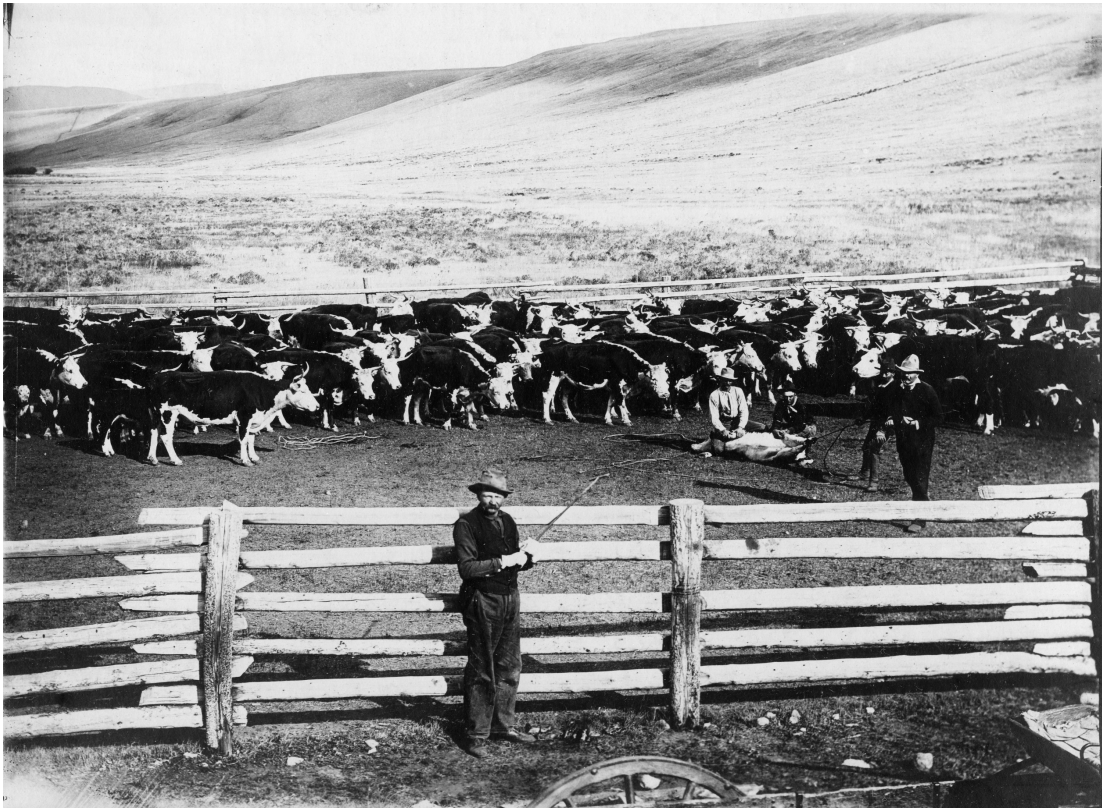


Photo 44. K&B cattle herd in fenced pasture with what maybe John Bielenberg pictured near the cattle on the far right, n.d. Photo likely in the first or second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 45. Bielenberg with horse during his time as manager of the home ranch, 1915. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

While Bielenberg was purchasing his own mining investments after Kohrs' retirement from ranch managing, the half-brothers continued their sell-off of their longer standing partnered mining investments. This included not only rights involving the RCDMC, but also the Pioneer Placer Mining Company and smaller mines like Pioneer Gulch. A plethora of large sales came in June 1913 when K&B sold 720 acres of Rock Creek land and water to Pikes Peak Gulch and Pioneer Gulch for \$100,000 (\$2,173,900) to E.M. Slatter. With this purchase, Slatter also became liable for eventually buying the Pioneer Placer Mining Company for an additional \$100,000. Slatter was also required in the sales agreement to turn around and re-sell some of this mining property to Charles H. Williams for \$50,000. The property to be sold to Williams included a large amount of land totaling

1,120 acres, which is more than Slatter acquired in the initial Rock Creek purchase.<sup>7</sup> With this sale, the Pioneer Placer became another mine that paid off in six figures after years of earning thousands of dollars. This continued to add a tremendous amount of wealth to each of K&B's already growing estates. Also, this sell-off shows that K&B may have arranged sales of land and water rights to go to specific individuals even though those persons may not have had the funds for the purchase at the time. The order for Slatter eventually selling to Williams maybe a case of this. The 1913 sell-off was also an example of K&B gaining a final large return on land and water rights, some of which Kohrs had held as early as May 1867. From a small beginning over forty years earlier reselling water rights for just tens of dollars, K&B had reached the point of making tens and hundreds of thousands in addition to the accumulation of years of returns exceeding \$10,000 annually.

K&B continued to search for potential buyers of their mines into the mid-1910s furthering their cleanup of mining investments. A purchaser named Murray was looked at by K&B in April 1916 as a possible taker for mines K&B owned situated below the Pioneer and Rock Creek Ditch mines. By April 18, 1916, Kohrs told Bielenberg that they had an agreement to sell these mines to Murray for \$80,000 (\$1,568,600) total.<sup>8</sup>

#### **B. Bielenberg Continues as Home Ranch and Mines Manager**

Despite the large sell-offs of portions of the RCDMC, K&B did maintain a smaller interest in the company and continued their involvement in the RCDMC mining operations by paying occasional labor costs. In 1914, from mid-February through March,

K&B paid \$521 total in labor for work performed on an “upper claim” for the company. More than double this amount, \$1,063.86, was paid in April to laborers at Rock Creek Ditch who were individually receiving the going rate of \$3 to \$4 per day. Additional labor expenses at “Lake and Ditch” cost \$886.30 in labor for April through October 1914, which averages to a small \$126.61 per month. Most workers at this area were earning \$65 to \$80 per month, although likely at the same \$3 to \$4 daily rate, but not working every day of the month.<sup>9</sup>

Through 1914, K&B also incurred expenses for labor at a few other mines, such as the Pioneer Gulch, Pioneer Lower, and French Gulch. The Pioneer Gulch had the highest total cost and monthly average for most of 1914. From May through November, K&B spent \$3,882.15 total on Pioneer Gulch while also spending \$3,265.73 on the Pioneer Lower mine for the same period. This was an average of \$554.59 and \$466.53 per month respectively for labor. Pioneer Gulch had peaks in labor expenses between \$680 and \$740 per month for May, June, and July with slight drop-offs to between \$450 and \$600 for late summer and fall. Pioneer Lower maintained more steady labor costs between \$470 and \$580 for summer and fall. November saw a sharp drop-off for both these mines with each dipping below \$150.<sup>10</sup> These results follow the previous decades of mining labor costs as K&B generally spent more on Pioneer Gulch and incurred higher labor costs during the “high season” of mine operations in summer months. Pioneer Lower, however, shows that at least occasionally K&B spread work at the mines through more months than just the mid-summer. This mine may have had a more stable number of six to ten laborers through all of summer and autumn, while the likely larger and more costly

Pioneer Gulch experienced an influx of extra summer workers that were temporary and relieved of their duties after a month or two.

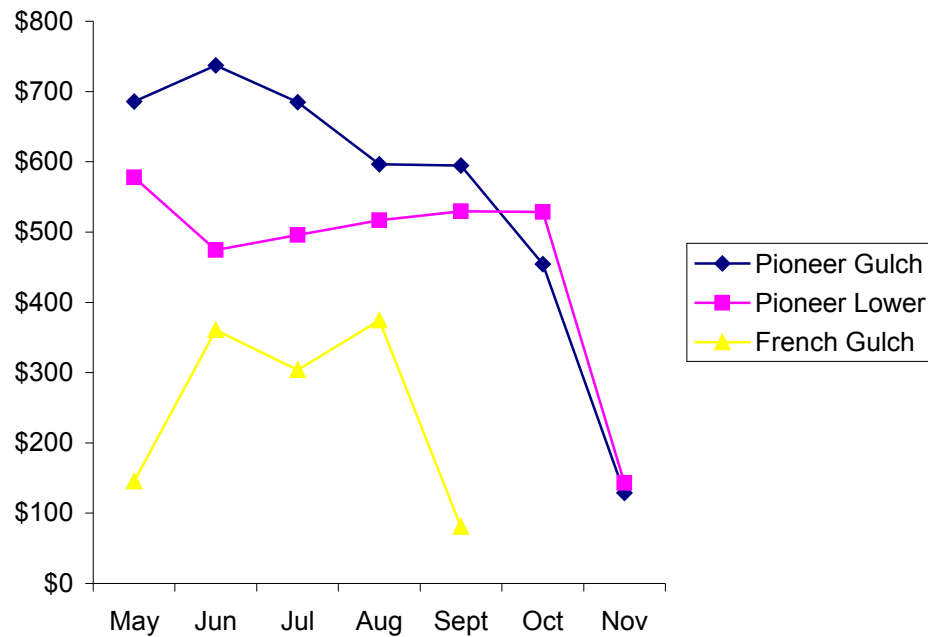


Figure 26. Monthly mine labor costs, 1914. Rock Creek Ditch Co. Minutes, 1887-1919.

Period	Pioneer Gulch	Pioneer Lower	French Gulch
May	\$685.50	\$577.75	\$145.40
Jun	\$737.25	\$474.45	\$360.75
Jul	\$684.90	\$495.63	\$303.65
Aug	\$596.50	\$517.00	\$374.25
Sept	\$594.50	\$529.50	\$80.70
Oct	\$454.50	\$528.65	unavailable
Nov	\$129.00	\$142.75	unavailable
Total (May - Nov)	\$3,882.15	\$3,265.73	\$1,264.75
Avg per month	\$554.59	\$466.53	\$252.95

Table 23. Mine labor costs, 1914. Rock Creek Ditch Co. Minutes, 1887-1919.



Paralleling previous decades of mining expenses, the French Gulch was again the smallest cost for K&B regarding mining as of 1914. In May through September they spent only \$1,264.75 total averaging a small \$252.95 per month. This further confirms a continued downward slope in labor costs at the French Gulch looking at previous data in 1894 and 1900 when costs averaged between \$600 to \$900 and less than \$500 respectively. The French Gulch saw the most activity during June, July, and August with May and September seeing less than \$150 in labor expenses.<sup>11</sup> Since other mines saw similar reductions in labor costs in 1914 compared to the 1890s and the turn of the century, K&B either had reduced the size of the holdings worked, had less materials to mine and process, and/or invested in technology to decrease the number or quality of laborers needed.

Bielenberg would oversee the daily operation of a few of K&B's mines through the mid-1910s. In an April 1915 correspondence, Kohrs notes that Bielenberg should fill a lake with water adjacent to an unspecified mine to ensure enough water availability for the summer mining season.<sup>12</sup> A couple subsequent letters during the first half of 1915 discuss concerns with water amounts for mining and how having a full lake would alleviate those potential problems.<sup>13</sup> That same year, Kohrs estimated that annual expenses for operating a mine and ditch with Casper Geehrdts and Frank Slaughtner cost \$3.08 per \$100 in returns, approximately 3%.<sup>14</sup>

### **C. Kohrs as Investor and Financial and Resource Management Advisor**

Despite the increased use of the Rosenbaum account in Chicago as an interest accruing

mechanism as mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, K&B continued to call on this account to finance additional investments into the 1910s. K&B drafted \$25,000 (\$543,500) in 1913 from this account to help purchase \$50,000 worth of 5% Yellowstone County (MT) bonds.<sup>15</sup> On March 12, 1914, Kohrs wrote to Bielenberg from Kohrs' retirement residence in Helena asking Bielenberg to spare up to \$5,200 for a loan. Kohrs instructed him to call on Chicago, which was likely a reference to Rosenbaum, if he did not have adequate funds.<sup>16</sup> Later that year, in October, Kohrs warned Bielenberg that this was a heavy time of year for expenses and he should ensure that certain debtors to K&B pay them quickly. Kohrs specifically noted if debtors located in Anaconda, MT did not pay what they owed, then Bielenberg should draw on their Rosenbaum account through Larabie Bros. bank. This was likely in reference to the expense of hay, which Kohrs suggested Bielenberg should buy from Charlie Williams for cattle feed. Being autumn at this point, Kohrs told Bielenberg to feed the cattle plenty of hay, but to pass on using alfalfa as it would bloat them.<sup>17</sup>

Just over a year later, in November 1915, Kohrs wrote Bielenberg once again concerned about the amount of hay they have available for feed. Kohrs suggests Bielenberg purchase hay from Nevada Creek for the winter.<sup>18</sup> Having adequate hay was a concern even during summers before winter feeding in certain years. Kohrs wrote Bielenberg in June 1917, for example, noting that hay should be purchased immediately since hay would be scarce and high-priced that upcoming winter. In this instance, Kohrs was keeping track of hay supply and demand at least in local markets as he commented concerning the local and surrounding farms and ranches that "all hay has been fed out".<sup>19</sup>

Purchasing and using plenty of hay feed in the winter for their cattle was a top concern for K&B through the mid-1910s.



Photo 46. Kohrs (right) during one of his visits back to the home ranch after the turn of the century, 1906. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

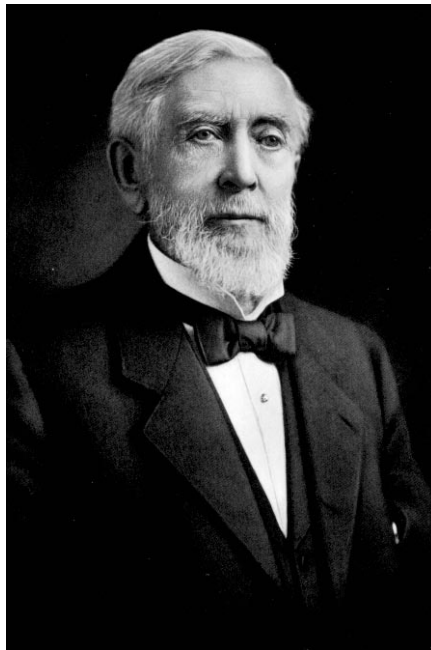


Photo 47. Kohrs in his retirement days at age 75, 1910. Courtesy of

Perhaps much of K&B's hay and other winter cattle feeds were purchased using dividends from the several thousand shares they held in various mining outfits. In a January 1915 letter to Bielenberg, Kohrs tells of the recently declared dividend at \$1 per share from the Pioneer Cattle Company. Kohrs says the dividend will provide several thousand dollars to cover expenses until summer when they will receive profits again. This further shows how the highest returns for K&B often arrived around the turn of the year.<sup>20</sup> Mines, which tended to execute large payoffs in the "off-season" during December or January, provided a winter booster in terms of immediate cash on hand to tide K&B through winter and spring expenses.

Despite some worries about hay and other expenses in through the 1910s, Kohrs wrote to Bielenberg requesting that he draft on Rosenbaum in Chicago for \$30,000 (\$638,300) in November 1914 to put towards another investment.<sup>21</sup> Sizable funds still lay with Rosenbaum and Kohrs wanted to transfer a portion away from Chicago due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease at the Union stockyards that year. Besides a potential downturn in the Chicago market, Kohrs expressed his confidence in investing the \$30,000 for Bielenberg with the help of Samuel McKennan, President of the Union Bank and Trust in Helena. In regards to McKennan, Kohrs wrote to Bielenberg "we will be able to find an investment for it for you".<sup>22</sup> As late as 1914, K&B were aware of market conditions locally and in Chicago and looked to relocate tens of thousands in finances even during the latter years of slowing down of ranching activity. During this time, Kohrs had investments in the Royal Gold Mining Company and a continuing investment in the Pioneer Placer Mining Company. Beyond mining, Kohrs also held shares of the Deer

Lodge Electric Company in 1914.<sup>23</sup>

As with other expense and investment strategies, Kohrs continued his role as a written advisor to Bielenberg during Kohrs' retirement years residing in Helena. An example of Kohrs continued involvement was when K&B claimed problems of delay and poor treatment of a portion of their cattle shipped from Deer Lodge to Chicago during the fall of 1914.<sup>24</sup> Expenses for selling cattle in Chicago and even at certain locations in Montana included railroad shipping fees since K&B, as other ranchers, needed to locate their animals to potential and actual buyers. As of June 1915, using an example from K&B's records, it cost \$74.88 for one 36-foot car in which to ship bulls from Deer Lodge to Ft. Benton, MT. This total represented \$32 on the Northern Pacific Railroad and the remaining amount on the Great Northern Railroad on the route north to Ft. Benton.<sup>25</sup> Shipping cattle within Montana may have increased in the later decades of K&B's operation as intra-Montana distances that were previously covered through cattle drives might have given way to the more frequent utilization of railroads since train routes increasingly covered more of the territory's interior and major towns through the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Regarding the dispute of delay and poor treatment of cattle on the railroad, Kohrs asked Bielenberg in January 1915 to place a claim of \$1,031 with C.M. and P.S. Railroad as reimbursement for these problems with the railroad's handling of their cattle. Citing a claim K&B had recently won with the Milwaukee Railroad for \$818.81, Kohrs noted that the reimbursements should be sent to the Union Bank and Trust. Reimbursement from railroads likely provided between a few hundred and \$1,000 as a small boost to income,

but only rarely as there is little evidence of these episodes occurring. The market for cattle may have been quite good during early 1915 as Kohrs mentions pricing two year old bulls for sale to John Fleming at \$125 per head.<sup>26</sup>

K&B also sold wheat at least during the spring of 1915 and summer of 1917, if not in additional seasons, for added income. Correspondence from Kohrs to Bielenberg through May and June 1915 shows that the half-brothers had knowledge of and factored in larger western U.S. markets when selling wheat. In a May letter, Kohrs forecasts that wheat would ship to Montana in June from Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, which would reduce the price of wheat more than 30 cents.<sup>27</sup> With this example, it seems K&B were focusing on selling their wheat in distant markets. Bielenberg had just sold and shipped wheat to Minneapolis on railroad cars as of June 1915.<sup>28</sup> This episode also shows that Kohrs may have been more privy to and sensitive of information on larger market forces. Kohrs updated Bielenberg on the drop in wheat prices through May 1915, noting that the market for wheat was “about 6 cents or 7 cents lower than it was when I was over in Deer Lodge”.<sup>29</sup> Two years later, in June 1917, Kohrs informed Bielenberg that prices in Minneapolis were fair enough for selling wheat.<sup>30</sup> K&B produced different grades of wheat and separated the Marquis wheat from other types since seed wheat of that form was scarce, according to Kohrs.<sup>31</sup>

Despite K&B increasingly conducting business through correspondence between Bielenberg in Deer Lodge and Kohrs in Helena through the 1910s, there may have been a few episodes of delays in correspondence between the two. During the summer of 1916, Kohrs sent numerous letters to Bielenberg, which went unanswered for weeks and

sometimes months. Kohrs was concerned about Bielenberg's well-being since he had not written or phoned from Deer Lodge. The correspondence available does not show how this issue was resolved nor what the cause of it was.<sup>32</sup> Whatever the reason, correspondence resumed that year between the two.

While Bielenberg continued to handle daily operations in Deer Lodge, Kohrs would remain active not only as a written advisor to Bielenberg, but also as a visitor to the eastern ranch. Through the late 1910s nearer to Kohrs' passing, he would continue to make occasional trips to the eastern ranch. This was a lengthy trip with the eastern operation as isolated as it was. The eastern ranch's buildings were at the edge of the Fort Peck Reservoir and the trek took two days once off the train that Kohrs took to Oswego, MT. Kohrs would travel sometimes with family and stay at a hotel in Oswego before departing on the 60 to 65 mile journey the following mornings. Halfway between Oswego and the eastern ranch, there was another ranch where Kohrs would stay after the first day of the trek. These trips were observational and business-oriented as Kohrs would view the land and the herds while also discussing conditions of the stock and business in general with eastern ranch manager and his son-in-law John Boardman. By this period, cattle from the eastern open range shipped from Wolf Point, which is likely at or near the spot of the present town of Wolf Point along the southern edge of Roosevelt County in far northeastern Montana. This was a farther drive than to other shipping points like Miles City. The Wolf Point option was sometimes used because crossing the Missouri River could potentially cause cattle to drown if not done properly. In order to traverse the Missouri with a herd, Boardman would have neighboring Native Americans come in and

set out an alleyway across the river by manning lifeboats on two sides. Boardman kept all the boats in a shed near the river for such an occasion. The cattle would swim between the stretches of boats as the water was kept steady on either side of the boats and if any of the cattle or riders began to sink, the Native Americans would help them through.



Photo 49. Church and building in Oswego; stopover town near the eastern ranch, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 48. Kohrs (second from right) and others attending roundup at eastern ranch, n.d. Likely in first or second decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century given Kohrs' aged appearance. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 50. House and outbuilding at eastern ranch, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



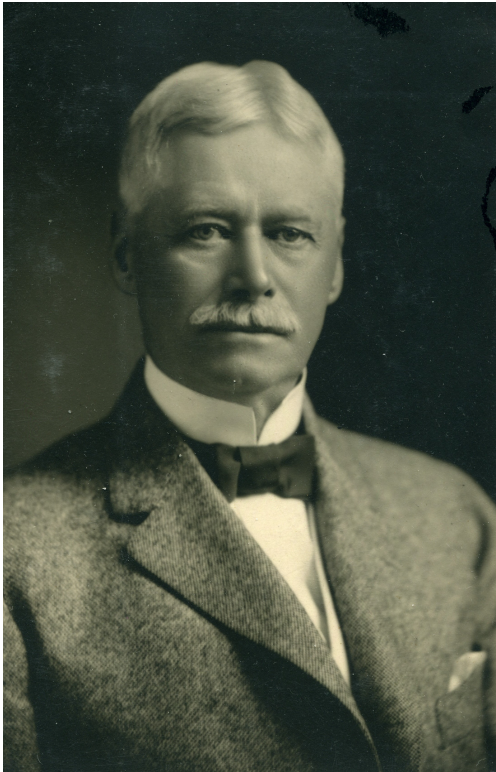


Photo 52. Portrait of Boardman likely during this period, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.



Photo 51. Boardman with hunting dogs likely during this period, n.d. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

Boardman tended to build herds up from calves as mentioned in previous chapters, while K&B preferred and kept more mature two and three year old cattle at the home ranch.<sup>33</sup> Continuing to claim and operate on open range and public domain into the 1910s enabled K&B to continually trade for mature cattle bypassing the waiting years of building up stock from youth to maturity. K&B continued to sell numerous two and three year old steers through this period as males survived open range winters better than cows and calves. They integrated this into their mixed range strategy as K&B would also send steers to the eastern range during this period and keep heifers in Deer Lodge. Kohrs notes in a November 22, 1915 letter to Bielenberg that at that time they held 99 cattle of ages two years and above with most of them being three to four year old steers at the eastern

ranch.<sup>34</sup> Later, in the first couple months of 1918 for example, K&B sold 37 two year old bulls for \$5,550 total (\$150 per head average), an additional ten two year olds for \$750 total (\$75 per head average), and 21 year old bulls for \$2,500 total (\$125 per head average).<sup>35</sup>

Through the last few months of 1917, K&B continued to sell high quality two year old and older cattle along with winter feeding their stock. In October 1917, K&B discussed appropriate selling prices for two year old Hereford bulls; approximately \$125 to \$150 was deemed adequate. As of November 1915, Kohrs argued that the market for Hereford bulls allowed for \$100 per head as a fair sale, so the price looks to have risen over those two years.<sup>36</sup> Seemingly, in an attempt to diversify their winter feed, Kohrs ordered a carload of oats all the way from Manhattan, KS on November 7, 1917. The cost was \$2.54 total per bushel with 14 cents of that total in freight expenses. Again, Kohrs seems to have been privy to information on distant markets regarding winter feedstuffs as he completed this purchase and then told Bielenberg to purchase oats locally only if he could find some of high quality.<sup>37</sup>

K&B continued their mixed range techniques near to the end of their respective lives and Bielenberg's full-time management of the ranch. By 1918, after four years of selling and "cleaning up" their assets in the ranch, there was no more open range grazed by K&B cattle as the remaining unsold stock was returned to the home ranch.

Another venture that Kohrs remained active in during his later years was the Rock Creek Ditch mine, which was part of the RCDMC. By the late 1910s, Kohrs would take the responsibility of visiting the weekly cleanup of the Rock Creek Ditch mine.<sup>38</sup> As

discussed earlier, the mines operated from May to September since this is when sufficient water was available. During each weekend in these summer months, Kohrs traveled to Pioneer, MT to observe the mine in operation and pay the miners. The weekends would start on a Friday when Kohrs would go to the Larabie Bros. bank in Deer Lodge to obtain money for the miners, often in gold pieces. Then it was off to lodging in a boarding house in the town of Pioneer on Friday and Saturday nights. Cleanup was observed on Saturday out at the mine site. Saturday nights were the dinners when roll was called and Kohrs paid wages. Average wage was \$5 per day during this period and there were usually 30 to 40 miners employed at each site. Kohrs would then be back home by Sunday.

Mining and other investment ventures required annual tax payments as well. As an example of these expenditures, in 1918 the assessed value of the RCDMC subject to tax was \$10,000 (\$140,800). K&B paid \$180.50 tax on this, a rate of less than 2%. The same rate was paid for the \$12,573 assessed value of “K&B Placer Mines”, which was a payment of \$226.95 for 1918. Taxes of this nature on assessed values of mining land and equipment were a miniscule expense for K&B. Also, a minor expense were taxes on state land, which K&B had \$4,350 assessed value of in 1918 and paid a small \$108.57 in taxes. K&B did incur more sizable costs on the assessed value of their ranching business with the K&B Land and Livestock Company estimated at a worth of \$134,470 (\$1,893,900) for 1918 and K&B paying approximately a 2% tax totaling \$2,886.21.<sup>39</sup> Even these larger taxes did not approach other expenses such as labor costs, which would at least double these tax totals annually as seen in previous evidence on ranch-hand pay. It took only one reasonable cattle sale to collect the funds necessary to meet yearly tax

obligations.

#### **D. Final Investments, K&B's Passings, and Company Dissolution**

Into the late 1910s, K&B ensured they had diversified investments beyond ranching, mining, and banking. During this period, K&B held a large amount of wealth in various assets and bank accounts and they both invested in bonds as well. In October 1917, K&B invested \$25,000 (\$416,700) in Liberty Loan bonds in name of the K&B Land and Livestock Company.<sup>40</sup> Through 1918 and 1919, Bielenberg purchased \$7,500 in Liberty bonds and was also invested in "War Savings Certificates".<sup>41</sup> On November 18, 1919, K&B transferred the remaining property of their longest held mining company, the RCDMC, over to K&B Land and Livestock Company recording the transaction for official purposes at \$1. After fifty years of claiming and utilizing water and land at Rock Creek, K&B dissolved the RCDMC since they had sold off much of it over the preceding ten years. At dissolution, the company still had 1,200 shares with Kohrs claiming 900, Bielenberg 295, and Edward Scharnikow five, which was similar to the division during the previous two decades.<sup>42</sup>

After Kohrs' death in 1920, Samuel McKennan, President of the Union Bank and Trust who would become the manager of Kohrs' estate, engaged in correspondence with Bielenberg about how to handle standing investments and managerial positions Kohrs had held. McKennan wrote Bielenberg on August 19, 1920 advising him to sell the Geehrdts Ranch and the Pioneer Placer mine since Kohrs had said these would become

losing investments. The Geehrdts Ranch already had potential buyers by this point.<sup>43</sup>

McKenna would later become Bielenberg's estate executor as well.

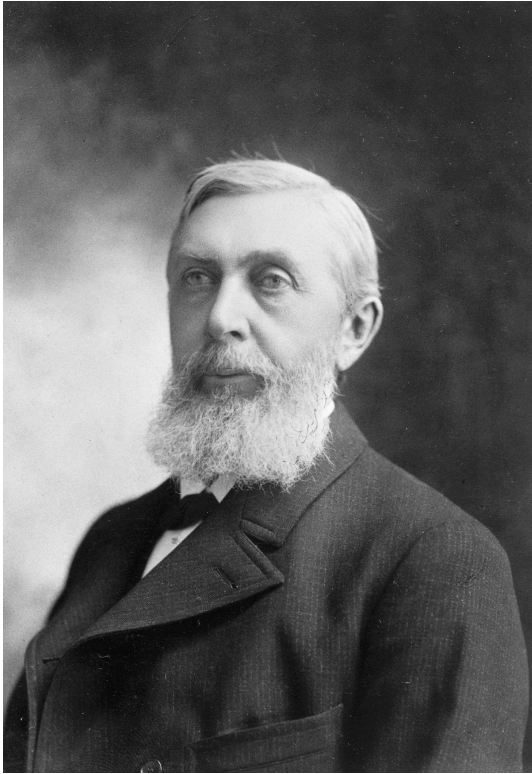


Photo 54. Portrait of Kohrs at advanced age, n.d. Likely taken in the mid-to-late 1910s. Courtesy of MHS, Helena, MT.



Photo 53. Portrait of Kohrs at advanced age, n.d. Likely taken in the mid-to-late 1910s. Courtesy of GRKO, Deer Lodge, MT.

As of 1924, K&B and Boardman, who were the managers and expanders of the GRKO through the growth decades of the 1860s through the 1910s, had passed on. Kohrs' wife, Augusta, survived, but much of the home ranch land and additional major investments had been dissolved in the preceding five years period. Once again showing the financial foresight to close deals they could decide upon and evaluate while still alive, major sell-offs for K&B began as of 1919. The home ranch rangeland had remained under the K&B Land and Livestock Company until it was sold in three large tracts starting in 1919. Charles H. Williams and Peter Pauly, a partnership of Deer Lodge

ranchers, purchased much of the land east of the ranch house with a total of over twelve sections. With this land going on the market June 2, 1919, it only took less than a month before Williams and Pauly bought the sections on July 1 for \$100,000 (\$1,234,600). Williams and Pauly continued to buy much of the K&B home ranch with an additional 1,200 acres and the water rights of the nearby RCDMC being purchased by the two Deer Lodge ranchers for \$50,000 that same day. A smaller portion of home ranch land would be purchased, again by Williams and Pauly, three years later on July 29, 1922 after K&B's respective passings. This third transaction was for 1,120 acres officially recorded in two parcels of 720 and 400 acres each. The sale was carried out through Augusta, Kohrs' wife, who was acting as trustee for K&B's companies and assets after their deaths.<sup>44</sup>

After these three large sales, the Dog Creek Pasture remained, which consisted of fourteen sections owned and seven sections leased by Bielenberg through the 1910s. This land on the east side of the home ranch rangeland was used by Bielenberg in his later years for grazing bulls and horses. Another set of Deer Lodge ranchers, "Nelson & Sons" consisting of Edward Nelson and Ralph A. Nelson purchased more than fifteen sections of rangeland along with seven leased sections, which included all of the Dog Creek Pasture, for \$75,000 (\$937,500) in the fall of 1924. Some of this amount was paid over the subsequent years with interest leaving the final total paid at \$91,020 at the final payoff on November 1, 1931. With the exception of approximately 1,000 acres around the ranch house, the home ranch as a major stock-growing entity was dissolved by 1924 with Williams and Pauly and Nelson & Sons being the two outfits gaining the remnants

of the home ranch. The last major sale of cattle that were once managed by K&B, part of the “Helena herd”, were sold just one year prior to the Dog Creek Pasture sale.<sup>45</sup> In 1923, approximately 1,000 of this herd were sold constituting the end of the large K&B cattle herds.

After the sell-offs of much of the home ranch and its cattle from 1919 through 1924, the K&B Land and Livestock Company corporate charter expired in January 1930. Marking the official end of the K&B era “all real estate, mining property, and water rights owned by said corporation in the State of Montana” were transferred to the Conrad Kohrs Company as of that month to continually ensure the remaining assets from K&B would be held by subsequent generations of the family. Just a few months later, Kohrs’ grandson, Conrad Warren, came to live at the ranch in April, initially working as a ranch-hand under transitional ranch manager Pem McComis. McComis quickly retired right after this and upon the suggestion of K&B’s estate manager Samuel McKennan, Warren stepped in as ranch manager in the spring of 1932.<sup>46</sup> The “Warren era” of GRKO began.

## CONCLUSION

Through the beginnings of ranching enterprises across the Rocky Mountain West, the subsequent boom years for stock-raisers in the 1880s, and into the turn of the century, K&B operated their ranch as partners spanning approximately six decades. For nearly all of this time, K&B maintained specific decision-making processes regarding managing their natural resources and finances that enabled them to weather larger economic upturns and downturns, shifts in industry practices, and sharp changes in climate, while forging and improving their own unique strategies and financial history through these storms. Although not always the first to practice such techniques described in this report, they were successes and innovators among the large western ranches in maintaining winter feed for cattle at a home ranch and at open range outposts, grazing stock on open rangeland during warmer parts of the year and fenced pastures in winters, allocating profits into diverse business ventures with a set of business partnerships cultivated through the years, and managing a multitude of accounts in ranching, mining, banking, and stock investment with a sense of how much was on hand and not severely overextending even when utilizing leverage.

More specifically, the journals, ledgers, and correspondence covered in this report show they practiced the following.

- Earnings from large Chicago cattle shipments, often in the range of six figures (equivalent to millions in 2008 dollars) were most often received by October at the latest. Much of this, in some cases with additional funds from other



sources, were immediately re-invested in cattle or other investments as shown from bank account records.

- Major annual returns came from the cattle sales at Chicago, carried out by Rosenbaum. While the mines produced less earnings on an annual basis during K&B's peak decades of the 1870s-1890s, the mines eventually brought exorbitant returns by being liquidated after the turn of the century. These sales, equivalent to millions in 2008 dollars, heavily contributed to the value of the K&B's respective estates.
- K&B were subject to increased ranch labor costs usually during August through October with mining labor costs occurring more in months during the second-half of the year. With fairly consistent labor costs between years in certain decades, perhaps enough from a year's earnings were set aside for to allocate toward labor costs in the subsequent year since those labor costs could be anticipated. There was a decline, however, specifically in ranch labor costs by the late 1890s compared to the 1880s and the eastern ranch during the early 1890s.
- Kohrs procured loans from various business partners, bankers, and other acquaintances at sporadic points through the years and in most cases immediately spent the entire capital obtained from the loan to finance business expansion. High-value cattle purchases were most often the reasons for obtaining loans, essentially jumping on a deal that Kohrs deemed efficient.

- The Rosenbaum account was utilized increasingly as a stand-alone interest-accruing mechanism by 1904. Additional interest-bearing investments, such as bonds, were purchased by 1900. By at least the early 1900s, K&B were earning a steady amount of interest off of these allocations.
- Winter-feeding was utilized as early as the late 1860s and continued thereon as shown by continuous hay and oats purchases.

Through the K&B years and beyond, the ranch site at GRKO has seen multiple innovations in rangeland and finance management techniques within the industry. Even key advances in herd management may have been refined after the K&B years, according to Kohrs' grandson and ranch manager beginning in the 1930s, Conrad Warren. Warren began practicing artificial insemination of horses, mostly Belgians, by the early 1930s, a management technique that has become popular in more recent decades. During this period, Warren used a semen container/warmer and a separator/measuring device, which may have been separately constructed innovations beyond the actual practice of insemination.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the collective and separate strategies used by K&B enabling the success and endurance of their operation, both men stand as prime individual examples of achieving the "American Dream" of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kohrs' story is especially a thorough example of this as his experiences cover numerous aspects of the ideal narrative a successful and adventurous citizen was supposed to have. After traveling the world in his teens, he arrives to the U.S. as a young European immigrant. He meets up with his immigrant family on the, then, western edge of more dense population, that being

Davenport, IA. From the modest, middle-class, immigrant family, Kohrs quickly marries a childhood love, Augusta, who happens to be in neighboring Cincinnati. Kohrs never divorces and stays happily married to his early love until death. He experiences the western adventures of being on a prospecting trip and nearly running out of provisions, before running into a local business owner who employs him in an industry he will eventually learn and excel at, beef sales. After pulling himself up from having little, Kohrs settles in this newly populating territory and begins accumulating contacts and land and water rights. Taking all these risks, he also risks alienating partners by taking out loans early in his building of his business, which pays off in the long-run. He purchases one of the grandest houses in the town he settles in and lives there operating his cattle operation until retirement.

Growing his earnings from cattle, he invests horizontally across numerous economic sectors and becomes one of the largest earners and most prominent businessmen in the territory, specializing in the western “boom” industries of his day (cattle-raising, mining, banking) while controlling much of the local land and water. He is elected to state office, becomes a close friend of an eventual President (Theodore Roosevelt), has three children, of which two survive and have grandchildren solidifying an expanding tree of descendants. After such an abundance of accomplishments, he passes away as a near-millionaire (a millionaire converted to 2008 dollars) and one of the richest and most prominent business and political names in his territory after having lived into old age. Remaining immortalized by the National Park Service (NPS) through the designation of his ranch as the preserved example of the western ranch, he leaves behind this and the

legacy of his descendants, one of whom (Warren) continued management of the ranch through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kohrs' story is one of constructing a wealthy life from a modest beginning, winning his ideal love, succeeding despite his status as an immigrant, and taking risk and having it payoff at numerous turns in his life. Except for marriage, having offspring, and purchasing his own ranch house, Bielenberg also represents these portions of the American Dream.

Given the findings of this research, we provide the following recommendations for interpretation at GRKO. These suggestions apply at various points to two aspects of public presentation of the GRKO site that many visitors experience upon their stay: the guided tour of the ranch house and the fold-up brochure handout. These points supplement the previously mentioned summary points of the report forwarded as bullet points earlier in the conclusion.

- For both the tour and handout, brief commentary should be provided on the use of winter feed (hay, oats) starting from approximately 1869 as a supplement to open range grazing was one reason why K&B were able to weather harsh winters (such as the 1886-7 storm) relatively well compared to the largest cattle empires of the west. K&B started this strategy in the early building years of their operation and maintained it throughout their era together. This counters the history of western ranching literature, which claims winter feeding was exclusively in use by prominent western ranchers after the hard winter of 1886-7 (see Chapter 1).

- On the tour, when interpreters mention that K&B held multiple types of investments, they could more specifically point to the example of Kohrs holding rights to much of the nearby Pioneer district in water rights and mining. The multiple mines operated there from the water claims he had collected over the years provided tens of thousands in annual returns and were eventually sold for the equivalent of millions in 2008 dollars.
- During the tour, when K&B are mentioned as a ranching outfit operating during the “beef boom” of the 1880s, emphasis could be placed on K&B experiencing much of their earnings during the early to mid-1880s and the late 1890s, which is a slight adjustment from when national growth in the “beef boom” era occurred.
- In the brochure, there maybe room to add a two line summary concerning this reports’ findings, such as “K&B were financially successful and long-enduring compared to their contemporaries due to investment diversification in ranching, mining, banking, and interest-bearing assets, effectively delegating duties to trusted ranch-hands to spread out work tasks, accessing credit to speculate on cattle, consistently buying cattle from the local market to nourish herds for eventual shipment to Chicago, and using mixed-range strategies of open grazing in summer and controlled winter feeding during cold months to thwart harsh winters.” This would provide a statement supporting GRKO as an appropriate site for representing the resiliency of the ranching industry through the national boom and bust years.

- In the tour and brochure, more attention needs to be paid to Bielenberg. Simply emphasizing he was a fifty-fifty partner with Kohrs during the tour (potentially at his bedroom in the ranch house) and his role as a manager of cattle and winter feeder at the home ranch would help. In the brochure, adding a statement on the worth of his estate being comparable to Kohrs and his managing the ranch from the 1880s to 1920s, would further pay tribute to his memory and contributions to the partnership.
- A few lines could be added to Tom Hooban's space on the handout as well concerning his background as a freighter and trader, giving him experience in the region and how he oversaw several open rangeland outposts for K&B through the building and early growth years of the 1870s.

Recent historians on the 19<sup>th</sup> century U.S. west argue that this was the period of not only initial European-descendant settlements in certain territories, but also a time of food producers switching away from subsistence towards production for increasingly nationally and globally-linked markets (e.g. increased cattle shipments to Chicago and from there to points east and beyond).<sup>2</sup> While such perspectives continue to focus on the role of larger economic and environmental forces in the lives of early western ranchers, the K&B story is one that prominently displays the crucial role of the ranchers themselves, their management style and decision-making processes, their reliance on local and regional cattle markets, their inventiveness and diversification of their growing assets, and the help they enjoyed from partners and trusted laborers along the way. It is in

these modifications to the western narrative, that K&B's story, as their enterprise did, become one that endures through the ages.

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## FOOTNOTES

### Chapter I

<sup>1</sup> “Western” and “west” as used in this report (e.g. western literature, western history, history of the west) refers to the U.S. west, more specifically those states, territories, and regions west of the line that presently separates Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana from the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. This differs from an often-used marker in the history of the U.S. west literature denoting the start of the west, the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian. See Gene Gressley, *Bankers and Cattlemen*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p.x-xi; Wallace E. Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954). The 100<sup>th</sup> meridian is the longitude line marking the boundary between the arid western U.S. and more humid and moist eastern U.S., but it is crucial to include locations like Kansas and Texas on the plains in the “west” as during the mid-nineteenth century these areas held large amounts of cattle and some of the earliest ranchers operating on relatively arid land compared to the U.S. south and east.

<sup>2</sup> An often-cited classic volume on western history is Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*, (New York: Macmillan, 1967). Prominent anthologies include Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O’Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss, eds., *The Oxford History of the American West*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Charles M. Russell provides some of the more famous paintings of cowboy life, a sampling of which are found in Robert H. Fletcher, *Free Grass to Fences; The Montana Cattle Range Story*, (New York: University Publishers, 1960). “Sea of grass” is adopted from the title of a memoir of the prominent King Ranch in Texas, John Cypher, *Bob Kleberg and the King Ranch: A Worldwide Sea of Grass*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Gressley, *Bankers and Cattlemen*.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion on the romanticism of western history, see Richard White, *“It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”: A History of the American West*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> See previously cited anthologies on the hard winter and how it is the key historical marker noting the transition from open to closed rangelands, the economic boom and recovery periods of the industry respectively, along with the other noted characteristics.

<sup>6</sup> e.g. Walt Coburn, *Pioneer Cattleman in Montana; The Story of the Circle C Ranch*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968); William Martin Pearce, *The Matador Land and Cattle Company*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964); Lawrence M. Woods, *Alex Swan and the Swan Companies*, (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*; William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991); Gressley, *Bankers and Cattlemen*.

<sup>8</sup> Joe B. Frantz and Julian Ernest Choate, Jr., *The American Cowboy: The Myth & The Reality*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 20-21. Longhorns were introduced to North America in the 1500s.



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<sup>9</sup> Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 673-4.

<sup>11</sup> Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, 209-10, 218.

<sup>12</sup> Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*.

<sup>13</sup> Lyndel Meikle, ed., *Very Close to Trouble: The Johnny Grant Memoir*, (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1996). Grant was one of the early western ranchers who practiced the previously mentioned strategy of trading with western immigrants on the Oregon Trail for downtrodden cattle.

<sup>14</sup> Richard White, "Animals and Enterprise," in the *Oxford History of the American West*, edited by Clyde A. Milner, Carol A. Connor and Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 253.

<sup>15</sup> Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, 209-10.

<sup>16</sup> White, "Animals and Enterprise", 252.

<sup>17</sup> Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*, 674. The four longhorn-milch mixes were the "Texas-Mexican" (tall and gaunt, splashed with white patches with large horns twisting back towards the body), the "Spanish" (similar to "Texas-Mexican", but having a smaller body and shorter horns), the "Long-haired Texan" (round and heavy body with long-legs, medium horns, and heavy brown coat), and the "Wild Cattle" (mostly in west Texas with a thinner body, blue-horns, mealy-noses, and brown coats).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 674-5.

<sup>19</sup> There exists an immense cross and inter-disciplinary literature exploring the "tragedy of the commons" through looking at how natural resource users overcome these problems through collective and sometimes informal management. These studies are often listed under "common-pool resources" (CPRs) and anyone wishing to research such issues further should start with the classic on problems of the commons, that being Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968). A brief review of these issues can also be found in a study written by one of this report's authors Brandon Chapman, Douglas Jackson-Smith, and Peggy Petrzela, "Comparative Institutions and Management Resiliency in Latin American Small-Scale Fisheries," *Social Science Journal* 45 (2008).

<sup>20</sup> Frantz and Choate, *The American Cowboy: The Myth & The Reality*, 54, 56; Ernest Staples Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957[1929]), 28-9.

<sup>21</sup> Following excerpt from Granville Stuart, *Pioneering in Montana: The Making of a State, 1864-1887*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977[1925]), 166.

<sup>22</sup> Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, 234; White, "Animals and Enterprise", 259.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis Elden Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961).

<sup>24</sup> Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*.

<sup>25</sup> Fletcher, *Free Grass to Fences; The Montana Cattle Range Story*, 118.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

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<sup>27</sup> Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*, 687-8.

<sup>28</sup> John Clay, *My Life on the Range*, (Chicago: Private Print, 1924).

<sup>29</sup> Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*, 687-8.

<sup>30</sup> For a thorough review of land and water use rights during this period, see Leigh Raymond and Sally K. Fairfax, "Fragmentation of Public Domain Law and Policy: An Alternative to the "Shift-to-Retention" Thesis," *Natural Resources Journal* 39 (1999).

<sup>31</sup> Gressley, *Bankers and Cattlemen*, 245.

<sup>32</sup> e.g. Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*; Billington, *Westward Expansion; A History of the American Frontier*; Fletcher, *Free Grass to Fences; The Montana Cattle Range Story*; Robert S. Fletcher, "That Hard Winter in Montana, 1886-1887," *Agricultural History* 4 (1930); Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman*; White, "Animals and Enterprise,"; James A. Young and B. Abbott Sparks, *Cattle in the Cold Desert*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2002). See, however, Warren M. Elofson, *Cowboys, Gentlemen & Cattle Thieves: Ranching on the Western Frontier*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), which mentions Alberta stock-raisers that survived later harsh winter periods.

<sup>33</sup> Warren Elofson, "An Exceedingly Dickey Business: Frontier Horse Ranching on the Northern Great Plains," *Agricultural History* 79 (2005).

<sup>34</sup> cf John Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*, (Denver: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1979). As the first history of the ranch and as part of a larger project on documenting historic structures on-site, Albright's report was not intended to be a comprehensive history of GRKO, but rather an introduction to the scope of practices and activities at the ranch through its history.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>36</sup> e.g. Gressley, *Bankers and Cattlemen*, 244.

<sup>37</sup> e.g. *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*, 2; Conrad Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography* (Deer Lodge, MT: C.K. Warren, 1977), 18-22.

<sup>39</sup> J.H. Gehrmann, interview by Rex C. Myers, Davenport, IA, January 4, 1982.

<sup>40</sup> The story of U.S. western migration through the 19<sup>th</sup> century is a story of family migrations. Relatives would setup together in one town to support each other and help provide livelihoods for their future generations, often in similar or the same industry. See Kathleen Neils Conzen, "A Saga of Families," in the *Oxford History of the American West*, edited by Clyde A. Milner, Carol A. Connor and Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 324.

<sup>41</sup> Conrad Warren, lecture for seasonal training at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT, May 9, 1985; Conrad Warren, interview by John Albright, Deer Lodge, MT, May 14, 1975.

<sup>42</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 43; Meikle, ed. *Very Close to Trouble: The Johnny Grant Memoir*, 131, 134-5; Conrad K. Warren, interview by John Douglas, Deer Lodge, MT, November 11, 1970.

<sup>43</sup> Conrad Warren, interview by James O'Barr, Deer Lodge, MT, April 5, 1985.

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<sup>44</sup> Warren, lecture for seasonal training at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site. Kohrs did not rub down his horse after being chased by road agents to Johnny Grant's. He arrived fifteen minutes before his pursuers and simply turned the horse into a corral after racing it through a mountainous trail sixty miles from Camp Creek to Cottonwood in six hours. His horse foundered after it was let out to water. See Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 31.

<sup>45</sup> Warren, interview by John Albright; Conrad Warren, interview by Bill Haviland and Michael Holm, Deer Lodge, MT, December 1, 1976.

<sup>46</sup> Gehrmann, interview by Myers; Warren, interview by John Albright.

<sup>47</sup> Conrad Warren, interview by Cheryl Clemmensen, Deer Lodge, MT, November 19, 1981. The ledger for 1886 shows cattle inventory for K&B at 24,069 head with a loss of 15,081 to the winter. Final inventory was 8,262 due to additional factors such as cattle killed by coyotes, butchered for the ranch, and butchered by others. See also Fletcher, "That Hard Winter in Montana, 1886-1887," 126-7; Dave Walter, "The Hard Winter of 1886-87: Was that Winter a Century Ago Really Montana's 'Big One' of All Time?," *Montana Magazine* 81 (1987), 65. Fletcher and Walter cited in Anna Fay Rosenberg, *Hard Winter Endurance: Conrad Kohrs' Cattle Raising Operation, 1887-1900*, (MA thesis, University of Montana, 1996), 31-2.

<sup>48</sup> Rosenberg, *Hard Winter Endurance: Conrad Kohrs' Cattle Raising Operation, 1887-1900*, 20-1, 41.

<sup>49</sup> Dollar amount in parentheses in this instance and through the rest of the report indicate the amount before it converted to 2008 US\$. All 2008 dollar worth estimates here and through the rest of report are based on Robert Sahr's inflation conversion factors available through links at his website (<http://oregonstate.edu/cla/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/sahr.htm>). Sahr's data is based on the U.S. Consumer Price Index, a commonly-used metric to calculate monetary conversions to find comparable worth between years. Data since 1912 has changed occasionally making conversion factors before and after that year not precisely comparable. Sahr recommends, and we follow in this report, that estimates before 1913 be rounded to no more than two decimal places. For example, \$12,658 becomes \$12,700. This rounding to the "nearest hundred" means that conversions to 2008 dollar worth will not be attempted with any amounts under \$1,000 since rounding such estimates would result in large changes as compared to the entire amount being converted. The CPI compares the cost of items the average household buys such as food, housing, transportation, medical services, etc. It can be interpreted as how much money you would need today to buy an item in the year in question if its price had changed the same percentage as the average price change. Essentially, it shows an estimation of comparable "buying power".

<sup>50</sup> Warren, interview by John Albright.

<sup>51</sup> Conrad K. Warren, interview by Rex C. Myers, Deer Lodge, MT, July 10, 1980.

<sup>52</sup> Although Albright's 1979 report included Dale Johnson's microfilming of records housed by Warren, Albright was not able to use microfilm or ledger records due to other foci of the project and time constraints.

<sup>53</sup> Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, MC 145, Vol. 2, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>54</sup> Conrad Kohrs Papers, 1864-1904, microfilm reels 1-7, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT. Also available at MHS, Helena, MT.

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## Chapter II

<sup>1</sup> De Smet also founded Couer d'Alene mission of the Sacred Heart in 1842. Soon following were the St. Ignatius mission to the Flathead tribe, St. Paul's to the San Poils, and St. Michael's to the Spokane. See Ferenc M. Szasz and Margaret Connell Szasz, "Religion and Spirituality," in the *Oxford History of the American West*, edited by Clyde A. Milner, Carol A. Connor and Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 365.

<sup>2</sup> Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*, 9. Ranches with eastern bred cows were already established in southwest Montana in the 1850s.

<sup>3</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>4</sup> Clyde A. Milner, "National Initiatives," in the *Oxford History of the American West*, edited by Clyde A. Milner, Carol A. Connor and Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 164-5.

<sup>5</sup> Meikle, ed. *Very Close to Trouble: The Johnny Grant Memoir*. To give an idea of the sparse population in Montana at this time since it was still a pioneer period, Grant's nearest neighbor upon his initial settling in Garrison was in Bitterroot some 135 miles away.

<sup>6</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>7</sup> This report would profile Grant's economic allocations and resource management strategies as a rancher more, but there are no known ledgers or adequate data available to do so. Grant himself once said "all my accounts I kept in my head". Grant did hire a bookkeeper, James Arnold, since he had so many dealings, but neither mentions what happened to those books. With a lack of recorded financial data on Grant, he is made quick work of in this report. Besides, a thorough examination of Grant's life already exists through his collection of memoirs in Meikle, ed. *Very Close to Trouble: The Johnny Grant Memoir*. See p. 98 in Meikle for the preceding quote from Grant.

<sup>8</sup> Meikle, ed. *Very Close to Trouble: The Johnny Grant Memoir*, 134.

<sup>9</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 23; Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>15</sup> Data on returns and costs exist for multiple mines that Kohrs setup over the years with this one referenced at least under one name as the "Pioneer Placer Mine" in journals and ledgers. It may have also been referenced as the "Pioneer Mine" as this appears occasionally. This data exists mostly through the 1890s and is analyzed later in the report.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel McKennan to John Bielenberg, Aug. 19, 1920, MC 145, Box 1, Folder 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT. In a discussion of Kohrs'

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investments in the year of his death, the President of the Union Bank and Trust (McKenna) advised Bielenberg to sell the Pioneer Placer mine because Kohrs had said it would degrade as an investment.

<sup>17</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 24.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>20</sup> Day Book 1 for butcher shops in Bannack City, Virginia City, and Summit City, GRKO 15639, Series 1, Subseries A, Box 1, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>21</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 25-6. Kohrs would also obtain a loan for \$5,000 from Nolan and Weary bankhouse of Virginia City in January 1864 to invest in Con and Peel's shop. This loan was repaid a month later at 10% interest for the month. On the Nolan and Weary loan, see Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 35.

<sup>22</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 26.

<sup>23</sup> Ledger for butcher shop in Summit City, Feb. 22, 1864-Oct. 21, 1864, GRKO 15640, Series 1, Subseries A, Box 2, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>24</sup> Ledger for Con & Peel in Highland City, Oct. 1868-May 1869, GRKO 15623, Series 1, Subseries A, Box 3, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>25</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*; Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 38.

<sup>26</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 38.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>31</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*; Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 40.

<sup>32</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 41.

<sup>33</sup> Keith L. Bryant, Jr., "Entering the Global Economy," in the *Oxford History of the American West*, edited by Clyde A. Milner, Carol A. Connor and Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 200-1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 204-5.

<sup>35</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>36</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 43; Albright cites from the May 27, 1870 issue of Deer Lodge's local newspaper *The New Northwest* what maybe an additional purchase by Kohrs of Peel's

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portions of their business five years later in May 1870. According to Albright: “Kohrs consolidated some of his business affairs in May, buying out his longtime partner Ben Peel, for \$7,000. Consummated early in the month, notice of the deal appeared later that month in *The New Northwest*, with the statement that the “firms named Con Kohrs and Co. and Con and Peel, Helena dissolved [with] Conrad Kohrs becoming purchaser and sole owner of all property of said firms. signed: Con Kohrs, Joseph Peel, John Bielenberg.” See Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>37</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 25, 31.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>40</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>41</sup> Anna Warren Bache, interview by Rex C. Myers, June 11-13, 1980. Bache is a sister of Con Warren and granddaughter of Kohrs. In an additional example of Kohrs’ knowledge of his own personal and business finances, Bache recalled that one evening Kohrs was relaxing in the house with his wife Augusta and stated, “Gusta do you know how much we spend on living expenses this year?” Augusta said no, so Conrad Kohrs related a figure and she expressed shock. After a few moments, Kohrs amended “that included 27 miles of fence.”

<sup>42</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*. Albright elaborates that “the exact location of the ranch is not known, and it is not shown on the map outlining the growth of the home ranch. In all probability, however, its location on Tin Cup Joe Creek puts it in the southern portion of the home ranch.”

<sup>43</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 42.

<sup>44</sup> This is the total showing by late September and most of October each of these years, respectively.

<sup>45</sup> Thrashing Records, 1866-72, GRKO 15716, Series 2, Subseries F, Folder 24, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>46</sup> Milner, “National Initiatives”, 189.

<sup>47</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 46.

<sup>48</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>49</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 47.

<sup>50</sup> A.B. Seaton and J.A. Mathews Claim, Sep. 15, 1869, GRKO 11264, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 7, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>51</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 32, 33, 60, 80. Hooban and Kohrs first met earlier than this, back in 1863 as Kohrs was camping for a night while on a cattle drive. Hooban was employed as a cattle herder at a ranch where Kohrs was supposed to meet an acquaintance of his, but Kohrs acquired cholera during his drive and Hooban cared for him through the night and next day. Hooban, after working over a decade for Kohrs, would die in 1884. According to Kohrs, Hooban’s death was eleven years after Hooban suffered a cold after coming back from getting provisions from Ross’ Fork in the winter of 1873. Hooban’s mules struck the ice in the Snake River and got caught up in the free-flowing water. Hooban retrieved the provisions and mules from the icy water, but his matches were wet and he could not make heat for camp

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that night and thus caught a cold that eventually contributed to his death. In a testament to Kohrs' and Hoobans' relationship, Kohrs had held some money for Hooban and Kohrs paid additional interest upon Hooban's death and gave it to Hooban's sister. Kohrs also sent to Santa Fe, NM where Hooban had died to have his remains sent in a metallic casket back to Hooban's home area of Wisconsin with Kohrs paying the expenses.

<sup>52</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*; Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 72.

<sup>53</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 51, 52.

<sup>54</sup> Freighters were common in Montana during this period as illustrated by John Barrows, *Ubet*, (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1934), 20-4, 29. Barrows notes upon his arrival in Ft. Benton, MT that "the streets and alleys were crowded with freight wagons and the prairie behind the town was dotted with the camps of freighters". Numerous freighters came into Ft. Benton from Helena and points west within Montana during this period.

<sup>55</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>56</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 55.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>58</sup> Warren, lecture for seasonal training at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site.

<sup>59</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>60</sup> Stuart's persistent problems with cattle thieves and his eventual vigilantism are well documented. See E.C. Abbott, *We Pointed Them North; Recollections of a Cowpuncher*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 131, 132; Barrows, *Ubet*, 207; Richard Maxwell Brown, "Violence," in the *Oxford History of the American West*, edited by Clyde A. Milner, Carol A. Connor and Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 401, 402; Frantz and Choate, *The American Cowboy: The Myth & The Reality*, 117.

<sup>61</sup> Warren, interview by Myers. We have found evidence of only a few individuals that K&B were dissatisfied with to the point of firing them, if they were employees, or dis-associating from them if they were partners or colleagues. One example was Wesley Roberts, a brief partner of Kohrs who was responsible for driving cattle from Texas to Montana as of the early 1870s. Warren expounds upon this in his interview with Myers by stating "Of course, that Roberts that he made a deal with to bring some cattle from Texas, he was sending this Roberts money, and he was living it up and was driving in the head of the herd in a carriage and had a couple of women with him and all kinds of things. It didn't take Grandfather very long to can him."

<sup>62</sup> Tom Hooban's Notebook from 1866-1869, GRKO 15722, Series 2, Subseries A, Folder 1, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT; Tom Hooban's Notebook from 1879-1881, GRKO 15721, Series 2, Subseries A, Folder 1, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT; Tom Hooban's Notebook from 1879-1880, GRKO 15720, Series 2, Subseries A, Folder 1, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT. A summary of cash transactions made by Hooban, including a near full account of cattle drive expenses from a July to October 1879 drive, exist in these notebooks.

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## Chapter III

<sup>1</sup> “Albright: Now apparently John Bielenberg became the senior partner, the most intimate partner with Kohrs pretty early in the game. Warren: They were always partners. Grandfather and John were partners for practically forever.” From Warren, interview by John Albright.

<sup>2</sup> Betty Wingert Griffith, interview by Rex C. Myers, Dixon, IL, January 6, 1982. “Griffith: He didn’t care how he looked. He wouldn’t spend a nickel on his wardrobe, and so Mrs. Kohrs was always teasing him about his clothes. She’d say, ‘I’ll give you \$2.00 for that hat, John.’ It’d be an old, sloppy, perspired hat. Myers: Did he eat the various meals with you? Griffith: No. He was a millionaire in his own right.” Griffith was a niece of John Boardman (Kohrs’ step-son) who visited the home ranch and knew Kohrs and Bielenberg as a child.

<sup>3</sup> Kohrs passingly mentions in his autobiography that by 1880, he was encouraging Bielenberg to marry so Kohrs could move away from the home ranch and semi-retire with his wife and children. See Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 74.

<sup>4</sup> Gehrmann, interview by Myers. Gehrmann was the nephew of Kohrs and Bielenberg and knew them at least into his teens and twenties. Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*, notes one instance of Gehrmann’s involvement early in his life during his teen years at the ranch commenting that “The two Gehrmann boys (“J.H.” was twelve that year) participated in the 1904 roundup during their visit with Uncles Con and John and Aunt Augusta.” Besides his peculiar size, Bielenberg may have also been unique in that he possibly carried a \$1,000 bill in the toe of his boot as a form of “getaway money” in case he ever ran into last minute problems that would result in him having to flee.

<sup>5</sup> Warren, interview by Albright. “But then whenever he needed a man real bad, like when DHS sold those cattle to the Army and agreed to deliver them to Dickinson, North Dakota, Grandville Stuart was going to drive the cattle. Grandfather didn’t have too much faith in Granville Stuart as a trail driver, so he sent John and Nick down to see that the cattle got there safely.” “Nick” here refers to John’s brother Nick Bielenberg, who was a resident of the region during this period.

<sup>6</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* This is not to say that K&B were not on the lookout and in their typical fashion, predictive and ready for certain circumstances to occur. Concerning their preparation in case Native Americans did raid their Sun River land, “Late in the summer a notice appeared in the local newspaper, drawing attention to some of the dangers faced by the cattlemen who had ventured into the Sun River Valley while the area was still actively used by the Indians: “A few stand of arms were shipped to Con Kohrs for use at Sun River. These arms are government issue and [are] to be used for protection in raids by the Indians.” Albright cites the included quote from *The New Northwest* from August 24, 1872.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 55.

<sup>10</sup> “Mitch” was likely a nickname from his real name, Michael Oxarart, which is how he is noted on multiple ledger pages for his wages in Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>11</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 63, 64.

<sup>12</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.



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<sup>13</sup> Warren, lecture for seasonal training at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site.

<sup>14</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>15</sup> M.A. Leeson, *History of Montana. 1739-1885.*, (Chicago: Warner, Beers & Co., 1885). Leeson identifies five standard cattle drive trails used by Montana ranchers at least through the mid-1880s: 1. from Sun River via the Snake River to Granger, WY (in western Wyoming near Green River and Rock Springs) on the Union Pacific Railroad (this is the “western” route), 2. from Sun River via the Smith and Musselshell Rivers to Pine Bluff, WY on the Union Pacific Railroad (this is the “eastern” route), 3. from Sun River to Bismarck, ND on the Missouri River via the Blackfoot Reservation, 4. from Sun River across the Marias River (in northwest Montana) to Fargo, ND, 5. from Sun River to Bismarck, ND via Camp Lewis, the great bend of the Musselshell River down the Porcupine River, across the Yellowstone and Tongue Rivers to Bismarck, ND.

<sup>16</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>17</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*. See also K. Ross Toole, *Montana: An Uncommon Land* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), 91.

<sup>18</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 58.

<sup>19</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*; Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 103.

<sup>20</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*. The 1,200 referred to was part of a larger herd of about 2,500 Texas cattle that was arranged for the previous fall. The herd arrived late and was split up due to the poor condition of the cattle. Approximately 1,200 of the herd remained in central Wyoming, near Rawlins. The rest were taken overland to Hooban’s Bottom arriving quite late in the fall. This was the episode previously mentioned with Wesley Roberts with which Kohrs was unsatisfied. Kohrs quickly dissolved his partnership with Roberts, his partner in bringing in the Texas cattle.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> A “section” of land is equal to one square mile. From Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* A copy of the homestead document is on file at GRKO and MHS.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* Albright elaborates that this purchase may have involved “lieu lands”, those areas granted the railroads out of the public domain that did not lie along the right-of-way, but were granted in lieu of such land.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* Albright states that in Kohrs’ autobiography, he refers to this ranch as the “Jim Stuart Place”. This maybe the same complex known later as the Tom Stuart Place, which is the site of the GRKO visitor contact station and restrooms building.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* This transaction was mentioned in *The New Northwest*, on April 11, 1884, which stated that “the ranch adjoins that of Kohrs and has some excellent meadow land.”

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Albright includes in his report a quote from Kohrs concerning this, “In 1877, as usual, I purchased cattle in the Bitter Root making a drive from there and also from the Sun River.”

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> The entire decade of the 1870s in general can reasonably be deemed prosperous and one of expansion, but Kohrs notes in his autobiography starting in 1872 that the year prior had been “the last to bring us a profit on our cattle for years to come.” At other points in his autobiography, Kohrs notes the early 1870s as a period of hard competition across the territory in the cattle market as he seems to observe the market being glutted and mentions often selling cattle at low prices (e.g. \$11 and \$20 per head). The authors take Kohrs at his description for the early 1870s being a “low period” in terms of profits for K&B as there is no available evidence from ledgers or daybooks during this period and thus, no data to deny it.

<sup>34</sup> Gehrmann, interview by Myers.

<sup>35</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 70. Albright notes in his report that the first sale through Rosenbaum was in 1874. This was a herd of approximately 2,000 head driven from Sun River by Oxarart for shipping. See Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*; Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*.

<sup>36</sup> Kohrs to Hershfield, Dec. 23, 1873, MC 115, Box 4, Folder 7, Merchants National Bank Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>37</sup> Kohrs to Hershfield and Bro., Dec. 14, 1878, MC 115, Box 5, Folder 20, Merchants National Bank Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>38</sup> A deed to Conrad Kohrs from William and Lillian Williams, GRKO 4506, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 9, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>39</sup> Barrows, *Ubet*, 31.

<sup>40</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 75.

<sup>41</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*. The Kohrs quote is from Conrad Kohrs, “A Veteran’s Experience in the Western Cattle Trade,” *Breeder’s Gazette* 2 (1912), 1329.

<sup>42</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*; Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 117, 118.

<sup>43</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 76.

<sup>44</sup> A deed from John Hickey and Jane Hickey to Conrad Kohrs and John N.W. Bielenberg, Jun. 27, 1882, GRKO 4567, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 11, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

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<sup>45</sup> Kohrs and Bielenberg Claim Water Rights on Rock Creek, Sep. 14, 1882, GRKO 11265, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 7, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>46</sup> A deed from David Henessy and Mary Henessy to Conrad Kohrs, Sep. 12, 1883, GRKO 4498, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 12, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT; A deed from John Hickey and Jane Hickey to Conrad Kohrs, Sep. 12, 1883, GRKO 4499, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 13, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>47</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*. Also see John W. Hakola, *Samuel T. Hauser and the Economic Development of Montana: A Case Study in Nineteenth Century Frontier Capitalism*, (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1961), 226. Hakola's dissertation includes a chapter on the formation and development of the DHS.

<sup>48</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 76.

<sup>49</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*; Rosenberg, *Hard Winter Endurance: Conrad Kohrs' Cattle Raising Operation, 1887-1900*.

<sup>50</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 76.

<sup>51</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* One item on the recapitulation, the category "Estimated killed by thieves" indicates some of the problems of rustling and slaughter of range cattle by people other than the owners, at least during the mid-1880s. Since the DHS continued to be managed by Stuart, it is also an indicator of how Stuart was experiencing these problems in central MT as compared to K&B in western MT.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* Also see Hakola, *Samuel T. Hauser and the Economic Development of Montana: A Case Study in Nineteenth Century Frontier Capitalism*, 244.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Montana Stock-growers Association Records, MC 45, Vol. 8, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>56</sup> Rosenberg, *Hard Winter Endurance: Conrad Kohrs' Cattle Raising Operation, 1887-1900*, 39, 40.

<sup>57</sup> Kohrs to Hauser, Nov. 8, 1885, MC 37, Box 13, Folder 33, Samuel Thomas Hauser Papers, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>58</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 83.

<sup>59</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*. The quote comes from a letter from H.P. Kennett to Samuel Hauser dated May 31, 1886, which Albright cites from Hakola, *Samuel T. Hauser and the Economic Development of Montana: A Case Study in Nineteenth Century Frontier Capitalism*, 249.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Warren, interview by Myers.

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## Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*; Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 133. Albright notes that this statement comes from Kohrs' autobiography, but does not match the figures given in the DHS manager's report, which showed about 4,500 calves branded. The manager's report might not have represented the entire DHS herd, however, or the 8,541 figure might have been the total of K&B's "CK" herds added to the calves of the DHS in 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*; Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 87.

<sup>6</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>7</sup> Day Book/Cash Journal for mining, cattle business, and ditches, Oct. 1887-Jul. 1892, GRKO 15643, Series 1, Subseries B, Box 5, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Journal for Pioneer Cattle Co., Jan. 1887-Dec. 1890, GRKO 15606, Series 1, Subseries B, Box 4, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Regression analysis is utilized through the remainder of the report on available interval-ratio variables (e.g. dollar amounts) where the sample size for all variables involved in the analysis is at least ten. Given the small nature of monthly or annual entries when broken down by K&B's separate ranching and mining operations, along with bank accounts, there are only certain points where regression becomes arguably feasible. This particular example with PCC costs is a "small" sample (ten monthly entries) for performing regression as are other regressions in this report, thus the results should be treated as informative, but not always conclusive or causal.

<sup>13</sup> Journal for Pioneer Cattle Co., Jan. 1887-Dec. 1890, GRKO 15606, Series 1, Subseries B, Box 4, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT. Using multi-month or monthly wage totals for an industry or company to calculate monthly wages per employee is an acceptable statistical practice in the field of economic history, e.g. H.M. Boot and J.H. Maindonald, "New Estimates of Age- and Sex-specific Earnings and the Male-female Earnings Gap in the British Cotton Industry, 1833-1906," *Economic History Review* 61 (2008). Boot and Maindonald use data from archives on the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century cotton industry in Britain to estimate average hourly wages of cotton industry workers through calculating from archival figures on weekly and monthly wages. Average per employee is also calculated from figures on total labor expenditures. See similar methods used on data from female labor in Britain during World War II in Ian Gazeley, "Women's Pay in British Industry During the Second World War," *Economic History Review* 61 (2008).

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<sup>14</sup> Journal for Pioneer Cattle Co., Jan. 1887-Dec. 1890, GRKO 15606, Series 1, Subseries B, Box 4, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 93.

<sup>18</sup> Day Book/Cash Journal for mining, cattle business, and ditches, Oct. 1887-Jul. 1892, GRKO 15643, Series 1, Subseries B, Box 5, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>19</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*. Quote, without addition in brackets, originally appears in Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*.

<sup>20</sup> Kelley is spelled this way in Rock Creek Ditch Co. Minutes, 1887-1919, GRKO 15612, Series 3, Subseries C, Folder 5, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT. His last name is spelled "Kelly", however, in Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 89.

<sup>21</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>22</sup> Rock Creek Ditch Co. Minutes, 1887-1919, GRKO 15612, Series 3, Subseries C, Folder 5, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>23</sup> Claim filed by Conrad Kohrs for Forlorn Hope Lode, Feb. 27, 1888, GRKO 15791, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 14, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT; Notice of Tax Sale for Forlorn Hope Lode, Jul. 19, 1944, GRKO 15791, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 14, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>24</sup> Deed from Gustavus Wisner to Conrad Kohrs and John Bielenberg, GRKO 15768, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 15, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>25</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 89, 90.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>27</sup> Deed from Gustavus Wisner to Conrad Kohrs and John Bielenberg, Feb. 20, 1889, GRKO 4497, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 16, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>28</sup> Deed from Edwin Irvine & Anna Irvine and James Talbott & Josie Talbott to Conrad Kohrs, Charles Bielenberg, and Peter Lansing, May 6, 1889, GRKO 4569, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 17, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>29</sup> Notice of Location for the Wilson Bar Placer Mining Claim, Oct. 23, 1889, GRKO 4500, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 18, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>30</sup> Notice of Location for the Kohrs & Bielenberg Placer Mining Claim, Jan. 5, 1891, GRKO 4507, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 19, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

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<sup>31</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>32</sup> Ledger for the Rock Creek Ditch & Mining Co., 1891-1892, GRKO 15656, Series 3, Subseries C, Box 13, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>35</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 144, 145.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>37</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter V

<sup>1</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 47; Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>9</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Deed from John Bielenberg, Conrad & Augusta Kohrs to Millard F. Leech, May 8, 1893, GRKO 4570, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 20, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT. The five mining claims were the War Eagle quartz lode, Stormy Hill quartz lode, Ralph quartz lode, Ruth quartz lode, and Hoyt quartz lode.

<sup>12</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 96.

<sup>21</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* These two dividends were unmarked as to their source.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>31</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>32</sup> The symbol for this brand is the numeral “5” followed by an upside-down numeral “5”. Due to the upside-down five not being available in the word processing of this report, the symbol “55” is used.

<sup>33</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Names of laborers that worked for K&B exist in the following records: Tom Hooban’s Notebooks, GRKO 15720-2, Series 2, Subseries A, Folder 1, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT; Ledger for the Rock Creek Ditch Mining Co., 1891-2, GRKO 15656, Series 3, Subseries C, Box 13, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT; Day Book/Cash Journal, 1887-92, GRKO 15643, Series 1, Subseries B, Box 5,

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Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT; Ledger for Pioneer Cattle Co., GRKO 15607, Series 1, Subseries B, Box 5, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT; General Journal, 1900-1906, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT; Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>37</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Notice of Location for Slaughter House Bar, Aug. 11, 1897, GRKO 11266, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 21, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

## Chapter VI

<sup>1</sup> Warren, interview by John Albright.

<sup>2</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>3</sup> General Journal, 1900-6, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> General Journal, 1900-6, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT. Albright reports the same quantities and returns for the “75” and “wineglass” brand sales, but attributes the “55” brand sale that returned \$51,190.07 as being of “CK” cattle. See Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>11</sup> General Journal, 1900-6, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT. This is an example why account holdings without further explanation in the journals and ledgers of how they got there should be taken with caution in analyzing



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K&B's separate investments. The half-brothers did have earnings and expenditures from different investments in accounts they sometimes were not supposed to be in based on labeling.

<sup>14</sup> General Journal, 1900-6, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>15</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>16</sup> General Journal, 1900-6, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> General Journal, 1900-6, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>19</sup> General Journal, 1900-6, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT. These labor numbers slightly differ from those given in Albright's report. He reported 13 employees for April, 20 in June, 32 for July, and 15 in August. We believe our readings of the journal are accurate, but this is one of the couple examples where our numbers differ from Albright with these being the largest discrepancies. See Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>20</sup> General Journal, 1900-6, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Ledger, 1892-1901, MC 145, Vol. 2, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>25</sup> General Journal, 1900-6, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Rock Creek Ditch Co. Minutes, 1887-1919, GRKO 15612, Series 3, Subseries C, Folder 5, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT. Despite the discrepancy in shareholdings, the trustees elected Geehrdts as Vice President in August 1900 after Bielenberg had held the position for years. It was common practice for official titled positions to rotate among trustees after numerous years of the same lineup, despite the differences in earnings interest.

<sup>28</sup> General Journal, 1900-6, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>30</sup> LG 20, Deer Lodge County (Mont.) Assessor records, 1887-1891, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT. On Sep. 8, 1891, the Deer Lodge Board of Aldermen adopted ordinance #32 taxing all real and personal property at “5 mills” on the dollar.

<sup>31</sup> LG 20, Deer Lodge County (Mont.) Assessor records, 1887-1891, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT. On Aug. 12, 1891, the Philipsburg Board of Aldermen adopted a resolution taxing all real and personal property at “4 mills on the dollars (sic)”.

<sup>32</sup> There may have been an additional injection of capital for extra interest to accrue or another cattle sale may have been added as this large total reported by K&B in their journal does not match the sum of the month-by-month breakdown recorded in the same journal.

<sup>33</sup> General Journal, 1900-6, MC 145, Vol. 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

## Chapter VII

<sup>1</sup> Kohrs, *Conrad Kohrs: An Autobiography*, 99.

<sup>2</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>3</sup> Deed for Water Right on Rock Creek and Rock Creek Lake, Aug. 25, 1909, GRKO 4519, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 22, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>4</sup> Rock Creek Ditch Co. Minutes, 1887-1919, GRKO 15612, Series 3, Subseries C, Folder 5, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>5</sup> Deed for Water Rights from the estate of John Dolas to John Bielenberg, Nov. 7, 1910, GRKO 4496, Series 4, Subseries B, Folder 23, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT. The purchase included 1,500 inches of water from Crater Gulch Creek for placer mining on “Old Round Top” and other neighboring claims, the use of a six foot wide two feet deep ditch to appropriate 1,000 inches of water from Pikes Peak Creek for placer mining on “Old Flume Placer” and adjoining claims, 400 inches of water from Willow Creek for placer mining on the “Standard Placer” mine and adjoining claims, and an additional 1,000 inches of water from Crater Gulch Creek and 200 inches from Willow Creek for hydraulic mining on Monte Christo and Gravel Mountain claims.

<sup>6</sup> Rock Creek Ditch Co. Minutes, 1887-1919, GRKO 15612, Series 3, Subseries C, Folder 5, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Apr. 18, 1916, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>9</sup> Rock Creek Ditch Co. Minutes, 1887-1919, GRKO 15612, Series 3, Subseries C, Folder 5, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>12</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Apr. 19, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>13</sup> MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>14</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Jul. 1, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>15</sup> MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>16</sup> MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT. In relation to the request for Bielenberg's funds, Kohrs also writes that Mr. Whisler sent to Samuel McKennan (President of the Union Bank and Trust) a loan of \$6,500.

<sup>17</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Oct. 5, 1914, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>18</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Nov. 22, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>19</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Jun. 16, 1917, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>20</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Jan. 23, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>21</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Nov. 17, 1914, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT. At this point, the drafts to Rosenbaum for transactions with K&B were sent by Samuel McKennan, President of the Union Bank and Trust.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Dec. 16, 1914, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>24</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Nov. 22, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT. Cattle losses did occur occasionally whether through death during shipment on railroad cars or by other means. K&B lost a considerable quantity of female cattle in 1913 due to an unspecified reason.

<sup>25</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Jun. 23, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>26</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Jan. 15, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>27</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, May 4, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>28</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Jun. 7, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

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<sup>29</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, May 18, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>30</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Jun. 16, 1917, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>31</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Oct. 2, 1917, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>32</sup> MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>33</sup> Boardman would also garner extra income by selling saddle horses during the mid-1910s. He was marketing these horses for \$50 per head as of 1915. Kohrs to Bielenberg, Nov. 22, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>34</sup> MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>35</sup> Bielenberg to Kohrs, Mar. 1, 1918, MC 145, Box 1, Folder 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>36</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Nov. 22, 1915, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>37</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Nov. 7, 1917, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>38</sup> Conrad Warren, conversation with Michele Farmer, August 1977. Warren recalled going with his grandfather, Kohrs, for the weekly cleanup at the mines. Warren was born in 1907, so recalling his childhood would place this event occurring in the late 1910s.

<sup>39</sup> Tax receipts, 1918, MC 145, Box 1, Folder 5, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>40</sup> Kohrs to Bielenberg, Oct. 20, 1917, MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>41</sup> MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>42</sup> Rock Creek Ditch Co. Minutes, 1887-1919, GRKO 15612, Series 3, Subseries C, Folder 5, Kohrs Family Personal Papers, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, MT.

<sup>43</sup> MC 145, Box 1, Kohrs and Bielenberg Land and Livestock Company Records, Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

<sup>44</sup> Albright, *Historic Resource Study, Cultural Resources Statement, and Historic Structure Report*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

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## **Conclusion**

<sup>1</sup> Conrad Warren, interview by Lennie Jarrett, March 4, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Bryant, “Entering the Global Economy”, 196.

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