

Here, Billy Kauder sings a song that was popular after Garfield's assassination. He tells of how and why he came West with his family in 1890, and talks about some of his neighbors. He also explains some of the difficulties that a homesteader could encounter.

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# I. Index

## WILLIAM KAUDER

Southwick; b. 1868

homesteader

1 hour

minute page

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William Kauder

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with Rob Moore  
May 3, 1974

## II. Transcript

ROB MOORE: I was thinking that you must have seen or heard of quite a few  
Presidential assassinations over the years, haven't you?

WILLIAM KAUDER: Oh yes.

ROB: Which ones do you remember?

W K: Well I don't know. I don't believe I understand you.

ROB: Well, do you remember how McKinley got assassinated?

W K: Oh yes it was awful. I remember from the...when was that first President  
assassinated? Lincoln was the first one that was shot.

ROB: Well, you weren't born yet when Lincoln was shot were you?

W K: No, I wasn't born then. But I was the next one...Garfield.

ROB: Oh right, Garfield. Do you remember that one?

W K: Yeah. James A. Garfield. The song went, how was that now. (Sings)

In My Saddest Day

My name it is Charles Guiteau  
My name I'll never deny  
For the murder of James A. Garfield  
I am condemned to die.

ROB: Hm. Was that song popular shortly after Garfield's murder?

W K: Um-hm.

ROB: Where were you when Garfield was murdered?

W K: We were living then in Missouri. In the northeast corner right almost at  
the mouth of the Des Moines.

ROB: Before Missouri, you lived in Illinois didn't you?

W K: I was born in Illinois, yes.

ROB: Where in Illinois?

W K: Adams county, not very far from Quincy.

ROB: Did your father know Abe Lincoln when he was an Illinois politician instead  
of a President?

W K: Um-hm.

ROB: How did he know him?

W K: Well, principally by his speeches, you know. I think he seen him. When Lincoln first called for the first 75,000 men a brother of fathers, younger a couple years than father, he went on that call for the first 75,000. Father didn't go. But he went, a brother.

ROB: Did your father end up fighting in the Civil War?

W K: Um-hm. But I forget who he was with now. He had a...oh I don't know what you would call it but it was about that long (indicating one foot)...a paper that the names, you know, where they went across, the country they went through, the companies they been taking. Rebels, all them, that was all names on that. It was lost. I don't know what become of it.

ROB: Was your father married before he went off to the Civil War?

W K: No.

ROB: After he came back he married your mother and they decided to move out West?

W K: He married I think it was in 1867, I think. I was born in the last month of the year, 1868.

ROB: Well how old were you when your family made the move West?

W K: How old I was?

ROB: Yes.

W K: That was in 18...we come West in 1890. And I was just 21.

ROB: Why did you decide to move West?

W K: Father had an awful poor heart and the doctor told him that if he'd go West, if he'd live among the pines, that he would live ten years longer. And we come in 1890 and he died in 1900. Yes, he had an awful weak heart.

ROB: Were there a lot of people coming West at that time?

W K: Oh my gosh I think there was eighteen cars and they were all full.

Immigrant train. We come on an immigrant ticket, it was a reduced rate. It begin on the 17th of March, St. Patrick's Day. We bought our ticket the 17th



day of March and we come West.

ROB: How long did it take on the train?

W K: Well, we left on Monday, that was St. Patrick's Day was on Monday that year and we left, and I think it was Thursday, Wednesday or Thursday we got into Walla Walla. We bought our tickets for Walla Walla. We had a layover there at Pocatello. There was a train wreck or anyways the track was all tore up and we had to wait 'til they fixed that. It took about all day.

ROB: How did you get from Walla Walla to where you ended up on Cedar Creek?

W K: We landed in Walla Walla about the 23rd or 4th of March and I worked around there. The crops was all in, you couldn't work on a farm. But I did work for a farmer too, that is summer fallow. Then we moved all up to Dayton and father and I both worked in the sawmill there at Dayton up the Touchet about twelve, fourteen miles.

ROB: Up the what?

W K: Up the Touchet River. It runs through Dayton and down...I don't know where it comes out at Walla Walla. I don't know whether it empties into the Snake or the Columbia.

ROB: How long did you work there in that sawmill?

W K: We started in there...what time? Must have been in June when we went to work there in the sawmill. We worked there all fall and that winter we cut saw logs and made cordwood and so on. And in the spring then about June why... then I think in the spring we worked for that flume company.

ROB: The flume company?

W K: Uh-hm. Flume. They built a flume that run from the sawmill down to Dayton. It's about fifteen miles. And we had to build that flume and they flumed lumber down and cordwood. Made quite a lot of cordwood up there.

ROB: How much did you get paid for that sort of work?

W K: We got 30 dollars a month in the mill for working, and when the mill wasn't

working and we was making cordwood why we got a dollar a cord. Boarded ourselves. I forget...it was 30 dollars and board when we worked in the mill, or they allowed so much when we boarded ourselves. I forget how it was.

ROB: There was no union activity in the mills or anything in those days was there?

W K: I didn't hear of any, no. It came up to about \$1.15 a day, to 30 dollars a month and board. We had to work eleven hours.

ROB: Were you pretty satisfied with that?

W K: Well we had to be. We either had to work or starve. No we wasn't satisfied with that but we had to be.

ROB: When did you move up into the Cedar Creek country?

W K: 1891.

ROB: And you took up a homestead then, didn't you?

W K: Uh-hm. Father took up a homestead right in the neighborhood. It wasn't much. It was a nice piece of land but it wasn't much, it was only about 40 acres. And then I took up a 160 not far from that. But my gosh it was heavily timbered.

ROB: What was the land like around there then?

W K: The land? If you got any in cultivation it produced good. But it was a job getting in any cultivation. There were big pines on there. Gosh we cut down them pine trees, oh be great tall trees. Saw 'em up into about 10 or 12 foot logs. Roll 'em together and make a big pile and burn it.

ROB: Was there a lot of underbrush in the forest in those days?

W K: In some places was an awful lot. It was pretty hard to work it too, it's called that sarvis you know, sarvis berry.

ROB: About how long would it take you to break in some land? How long did you have to work on your homestead place until it was pretty comfortable?

W K: Well we mostly had I guess four or five years before we got it so that we could help ourselves pretty good. 'Course we got small patches in and had pretty good garden. Raised all our vegetables.

ROB: Was it hard work proving up on a homestead?

W K: I'll say it was. I'd never do it over again.

ROB: What kind of things did you have to do to prove up?

W K: Well we had to live five years on the place. And we had to have so much in cultivation. I forget now how that was. I think it required continuous residence, I ain't sure but I think it did.

ROB: Did you build yourself a little cabin there on the land or what?

W K: To live on?

ROB: Yes.

W K: Yes, we built us a log house with three rooms in it. A living room and two bedrooms. We added on two more rooms, a kitchen and another bedroom.

ROB: When you moved up to Cedar Creek how did you know which land was open and which was already taken?

W K: When we lived there in the canyon working at that sawmill there was another family that lived there by the name of Wells. And Mr. Wells and I went up in the fall before. We'd heard so much about his Cavendish and Cedar Creek country that we thought we'd come and look it over and we did, and we kind of picked out our homestead.

ROB: Did the Wells end up moving down with you then too?

W K: Yes, Wells moved in by gosh in an awful brushy patch. He took up a 160.

ROB: How come your father only took up 40?

W K: Well it happened to be right in the neighborhood you know. And wasn't much brush on it. It laid nice and was in a nice shape. A nice piece of land but it was kind of bottled up, that is other places was taken all around it. But we happened to buy a way out. Father being of such a weak heart why we didn't want to stick ourselves in too much of a brush patch.

ROB: Isn't it kind of a strange thing for a man with a weak heart to go out and start a homestead?

W K: It took a lot of courage I'll tell ya.

ROB: Why do you think most people were homesteading at that time?

W K: Well all them prairie farms, they were all homestead. Just like that reservation when it opened. Well it's all homestead. Now that Nez Perce reservation and the Camas Prairie reservation all opened for homestead. Why they wanted them all settled up by whites is a mystery to me yet. They'd better left that with the Indians.

ROB: Well what would cause most people to want to be homesteaders? Why would a person want to leave the things they knew and go out and be a homesteader in a strange land?

W K: Well some for different reasons. Some on account of change of climate, perhaps it's better for their health. Now like father with that weak heart of course the change was better for him. The home we had back East was worth a whole township of this country.

ROB: The home you had back East was worth a whole township of this country?

W K: It was for living and things. Yes they could make a living on it so much easier.

ROB: Well why did you choose to leave then?

W K: There was only the three of us in the family. There was father and myself and mother. I couldn't go away and leave father in the condition he was in. I stayed with both of them until they passed away. Never married 'til afterwards.

ROB: So you kind of helped your father prove up on his place too?

W K: Oh yes.

ROB: Did you build a house on your place also?

W K: Yes I built a log house on that. Wasn't no lumber around. I had to build a log house. And a log barn. I cleared up some land on it. And then I didn't have it more than a year or two 'til father passed away. And that

left mother alone and I had to stay there with mother most of the time.

And so I sold off the homestead.

ROB: How much did you get for it?

W K: Not very much. Just about enough to prove up on it if I wanted to prove up.

ROB: Did quite a few other people move into the Cedar Creek area at the same time you did?

W K: Most of that country was taken up. There was quite a big settlement in there at the time we went in. And they kept proving up and mortgaging and this J. P. Vollmer, you've heard of him?

ROB: Yes.

W K: He'd take mortgages on all those places for backing for his bank.

They'd go down to Lewiston prove up and mortgage the place and away they'd go.

ROB: They'd just leave?

W K: The country was well settled when we first went in there and five years later there was just a few of us that was in there.

ROB: What happened to everybody else?

W K: Well they proved up mortgaged and left. Didn't want to clear all that land.

ROB: Well why would they homestead in the first place if they didn't want to clear all that land?

W K: For a fortune. 'Cause they thought they could sell out to a big price. And it didn't prove too good.

ROB: Well, your neighbors who stayed what were they like?

W K: They were good people good neighbors. They all come from different countries. Some from Texas, Arkansas, Illinois.

ROB: Did they all have different reasons for coming?

W K: I suppose. I don't know. There was people you know from different nations that gathered there and they never asked one another any questions. They was just neighbors and that was all. It was none of my business what my neighbor was into before or what he done or how he lived or anything. They just seemed be all real nice.

ROB: Did you become friends with them later?

W K: Oh yes, yeah.

ROB: Do you remember the names of your neighbors? Of specific neighbors of yours?

W K: Well yes some of 'em. Are you acquainted any in Kendrick?

ROB: Some yes.

W K: You know the Longs? Well, they had a homestead up there.

ROB: Mr. Long was a meat cutter wasn't he?

W K: Afterwards, yes. The oldest boy, Jodie.

ROB: Well when they were on Cedar Creek was he a homesteader?

W K: Yes, he had a homestead there on Cedar Creek and some of them boys were born there. There were four boys and I don't know, one or two of 'em were born there. I believe this Marvin that's living there in Kendrick now was born there. And maybe one just before him.

ROB: Did Long have a pretty nice homestead?

W K: Yes pretty good homestead. He built a pretty good house on it and I guess it brought a pretty good price too at that time. Four or five thousand dollars. But the party that bought it last, I don't know how they got mixed up but the kids they went to Kendrick to school. Lived there at home and went down in the truck. Some way or another the house caught fire and burnt up. And it's a wreck now. It's funny, there was three pretty good buildings that burnt down up there in that country. On the Wells place there was a cellar, wood shed that was pretty good and the house was in pretty good shape and it

burnt. And then on the Cramer place was an awful good frame house there with a basement there and it burnt down. And now this here old place of Long's it burnt. They were all about...it wasn't for the timber you could see the places. The Long's place, and the Cramer place you can see one house and the other. But they hadn't cleared up that much land. But the Wells place back further, you couldn't see it.

ROB: Were most of the homesteaders single men or married men?

W K: No, married men.

ROB: Did most of them bring their families with...

(End of Side A)

W K: ...They'd take what was left.

ROB: Were they of different nationalities too, from different countries?

W K: No, I don't know. Oh yes I guess there were. The Germans, Irish, English.

ROB: Do you think most of the homesteaders were pretty religious people?

W K: Yes, Longs was quite religious, Wells was quite religious. But there was a few in there like Thompson, and Halls, and some of those and a few others they wasn't very religious. We'd have church once in awhile in the old schoolhouse.

ROB: Would most people attend church whether they were religious or not or whether they belonged to a different kind of church or not?

W K: Well they might have belonged to different churches but they all attended whenever they could get a preacher in the schoolhouse there. The neighbors would all turn out and help. They had Sunday School. There's nothing like that going on there now.

ROB: Do you remember when Governor Steunenberg was killed?

W K: Yeah.

ROB: What was people's reaction around here like?

W K: Well you couldn't get the sentiment of most of the people, they kept pretty quiet about it. Steunenberg was...some of them didn't believe in the way Steunenberg treated those miners. Had 'em in the bull pen there. 'Course they blowed up that mine. Wrecked the whole thing.

ROB: Do you think most people sympathized with the miners or with the mine owners during that trouble?

W K: Well they didn't express their thoughts very much.

ROB: What did you think about it?

W K: Well the way I think is the way I think about all things. Nobody has the right to blow up somebody elses property. I don't believe in that. I have no right to go over to your place and blow your house to pieces or your barns or anything. No more than I want somebody to blow up the buildings I have. I don't believe in that. Do you? What do you think about it?

ROB: I don't believe in that either, but my sympathies are kind of with the miners, with the workers, rather than with the owners of the mines. But not counting the blowing up of the mine...

W K: You don't believe in that? (No.) I didn't either.

ROB: How did you feel about the rest of the things that they were doing, striking and trying to get better pay? How did you feel about the trail of the men who were accused of killing Steunenberg? Do you remember that trail?

ROB: I don't...let's see, no I didn't think much of that trail. They had a couple other men up for killing Steunenberg besides Orchard. And it seems like some way and another got it stuck on Orchard altogether. I forget what then...there was two others, I believe.

EOB: One of them was Big Bill Haywood.

W K: Yes, oh yes that's right. Yeah. Yeah.

ROB: How do you think most people, most of the earlier settlers felt about the law?



W K: I never heard of them express their...

ROB: How did you feel about it?

W K: Well of course if government give 'em the land away why they ought to comply with the law.

ROB: It wasn't easy to have the laws enforced in that homestead country though was it?

W K: No they had no trouble. I don't think that they had any contesting done. I think everybody complied pretty well with the law.

ROB: Well like during Prohibition weren't there quite a few moonshiners up there on Cedar Creek?

W K: Oh that Prohibition that was a fake.

ROB: That was a fake?

W K: Yeah. (Laughs.) Made lots of moonshine. I worked for a fella that was making moonshine. I told him I says to hide your thing and keep it away until we get through here. And then do your moonshining. I didn't like it.

ROB: You didn't like the moonshine?

W K: No.

ROB: Why not?

W K: Well I don't think it's right. It's against the law and people should abide by the law.

ROB: Do you think that moonshine law was about the worst law that they've had around here or has there been worse ones than that? Or ones that were broken more than that one was?

W K: Well I don't know about any other times. But of course that moonshine was breaking the law all right.

ROB: What would you do for fun when you had a little spare time and you thought you might want to go do something? What would you do in the early days around 1895-1900?

W K: Well all the spare time that we could gather up why we worked burning out stumps or clearing up the ground. I'll tell you it was quite a job. Now we had one patch there, five acres. I had it in timothy and it was awful heavy. Timothy was way tall and heavy on the ground and we had to scythe it on account of the stumps, we couldn't get no machine in there. You know that was blamed hard work. Then rake it up by hand. Even a small patch like five acres, some of that was heavy enough looked like it'd go about three tons to the acre. Gosh you'd have pile shock after shock. We had awful good crops them times.

ROB: What kinds of crops did you grow?

W K: Well we grew wheat and oats.

ROB: What would you do for fun? Would you go out and burn stumps for fun or was there something else you'd do when you wanted to have a good time?

W K: Burn stumps? We couldn't burn any, only the pines they pitchy enough to burn. And them others we had...I got one of the neighbors to come over. I had five acres there that I'd cut off and I had it broke. The stumps were so darn thick on it I couldn't do anything and the neighbor he was quite a man with this stump powder. So I got a box of stump powder and got him to blow 'em out. He blowed out a bunch of stumps for me, looked like I was clearing land again. My I had a mess on the ground.

ROB: About how many years of work would it take to bring a homestead up to where it was pretty comfortable?

W K: Oh that's different in different places. Some places where there was no red firs or white firs or anything like that to fool with, just the pines, you could burn them pines out and get quite a field in a short time. Now take across the canyon from us over in what's called the Gold Hill country. On that ground it's principally more pines grew. They just burn the pine stumps out and they have lots of clear land in a short time. But we couldn't

do that. We had too many firs. And them firs they rooted out for looked to be over an acre of ground.

ROB: How long did it take you to get your place pretty well fixed up?

W K: Oh took quite a long time. I had to work out so much to make a living.

ROB: What kinds of work would you do when you worked out?

W K: Well I worked out in harvest on someones thrashing machine, twenty or thirty days. And then sometimes in the spring of the year as soon as I got my crop in I took my team and I worked on the road. I got four dollars a day for that. I think I made 75 or 100 dollars after I got the crop in, working on the road. And then I went out in harvest.

ROB: What kind of work would you do on the road?

W K: Grading. I had my team on the road and was grading, principal part of the time..

ROB: Would you follow the harvest around different parts of the county?

W K: No. I worked with a thrashing machine and we'd get into our community and thrash that out and get into another community. That way I kind of got acquainted with people and the country.

ROB: What town would you usually go to for supplies?

W K: Oh at first we had to go to Kendrick principally. And then Leland sprung up then we had a good store there at Leland. Winters and Godsworth, they had a big store.

ROB: Winters and Godsworth?

W K: Uh-hm.

ROB: Did you like Leland more than Kendrick?

W K: Well it was just handier. We didn't have no grade to pull when we come home. Go to Leland, we could buy just about as cheap at Leland as we could at Kendrick and we didn't have that grade to pull coming home. That grade from Cedar Creek down to Kendrick was a holy fright.

ROB: Did many people have trouble on that grade?

W K: Oh yes. Sometimes it was so bad it took four horses to pull an empty wagon back up.

ROB: How does it feel to be 105 years old?

W K: Feels like you're worth nothing.

ROB: Feels like what?

W K: Feels like you're worthless. Better be dead.

ROB: No. You've lived through such a remarkable period of time.

W K: Yes. I even got so important that I got a letter from the President, Nixon. A personal letter.

ROB: What did he have to say?

W K: Oh he congratulated me, you know, and talked about if we had lots such citizens we'd have a good country. Oh he made a certainly nice letter. One of my friends had to read the letter to me. She keeps the letter. If I had the letter here I'd let you read it. But I wouldn't know...they laid it away for me I wouldn't know where it was. I couldn't see it. Tell you, when a person as blind as this, same as nothing. It's the most disagreeable feeling that I've ever witnessed.

ROB: What do you think stands out most in your life? What do you think is been the most important thing in your life over the past 100 years?

W K: I don't know. I didn't think one thing was more important than another. It was all about the same.

ROB: When the changes were happening, you know, like the changes from the horse steam, and steam to car, and all those sorts of things, did they seem like they happened real fast or did it seem like it happened pretty slow?

W K: Well sir, I don't know hardly. In some ways this change maybe it's all right. But the way that it's a'going now I'm afraid it's going to have trouble. Everything is getting so unmerciful high, unreasonable high. When I first

landed on Cedar Creek, when Cleveland was President, you could buy a good cow for \$12. Here lately I've heard some of them say that they got \$150 for a common cow. Beef steak is out of sight. Pork, you never see any. I haven't had a bite a pork for since I left Alma Betts', that I recognized as pork.

ROB: What do you remember as being the happiest period of your life?

W K: It was about when I was sixteen, seventeen I guess.

ROB: Why would you say that time?

W K: Well after that you got eighteen, twenty I had to dig in. I worked like the dickens.

ROB: Were you glad that you moved west?

W K: No, I'd rather remained where we was. I always kind of liked to farm and out West we had no chance for farming and back East we did. If I didn't have enough ground I could rent a few acres from the neighbor. Lots of time I rented 30 or 40 acre from the neighbor for corn. I would cultivate and ~~work~~ that and have the home place in grain.

ROB: That was back in Missouri?

W K: Um-hm.