

WILLIAM KAUDER

Interviewed by:

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Oral History Project

Latah County Museum Society

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I. Index

WILLIAM KAUDER

Southwick; b. 1868

homesteader

1 hour

minute page

Side A

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03	1	Clearing land; burning the brush and burning the log piles. There was no sawmill where the logs could be hauled.
05	3	Farmer's Alliance ran stores for the farmers. Most people were dissatisfied with the government and Cleveland's Free Trade policies, but couldn't do anything about it. Bill voted for Harrison and the Protective Tariff. Coffee was 8 pounds for \$1.00. 1893 Wet Harvest.
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17	6	Kendrick. A bigger town then than now. Beefsteak meal at the hotel for 25¢. Didn't go to town too often. Couldn't go to Kendrick during the winter because there was snow on the ridge and bare ground in Kendrick so you couldn't take just one rig.
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William Kauder

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15	14	Weather changes.
16	15	Homesteaders with a little extra income had an easier time of it. Once people were settled in it was easier. Most people fed their grain to cattle or hogs then drove them to market, because it was easier to drive livestock than wagons over the bad roads.
20	15	Working with horses and mules; twelve-inch plow and AA harrow. Mules were steady all day. Bill's favorite horse was a chestnut sorrell gelding.

II. Transcript

Billy Kauder was born in 1868 in Illinois, and at the age of 21 moved with his family to the Cedar Creek country where he and his father both took up homesteads. On this tape Billy talks about the Farmers' Alliance, the homestead years, clearing land, the 1893 Depression, the 1896 election, and early towns.

ROB MOORE: Well, you were here during the hard times around 1893 then, weren't you?

WILLIAM KAUDER: I sure was. That was some pickings, I'll tell you. Yes sir, right at that time I was twenty-one, two, and three, when I should been a'making something and you couldn't get a job and you...it was some living.

ROB: What did you do to get through those years?

W K: Well sir, I'm guessing at that yet. I don't know how we managed that.

ROB: Did you...

W K: It was slim pickin', I'll tell you.

ROB: Did you stay on the homestead?

W K: Yes, on father's homestead.

ROB: At that time were there many people around here who were interested in that Coxey's Army that was kind of protesting against the poor times?

W K: There was more people in here. There's quite a lot of homesteaders hadn't proved up yet, you know. In there where we were, what is called Crescent now, and Lenville and on beyond, they was all homesteaders. They all lived on their places. They proved up and happened to...I think along about 1894, '95 a lot of them proved up and mortgaged and left their homesteads. There was at that time more people in there than it...more heavily populated than it is today.

ROB: Were they all mostly on small farms?

W K: Um?

ROB: Were they mostly on small farms?

W K: Oh no, they had the hundred-and-sixty, all timber. They had to clear up, there wasn't any cultivating land.

ROB: Was it pretty hard to clear that land up?

W K: Oh gosh yes.

ROB: How would you go about it?

W K: Well, we cut down a tree. Trim him up and burn the brush, saw him up in about 8, 10, 12 foot lengths. Take a team and drag it up into log piles, and set 'em afire. There was thousands of dollars worth of good timber burnt up just thataway.

ROB: Was it too hard to get them to a mill?

W K: Was no sawmills around then.

ROB: Was the Farmers Alliance or the Farmers Union working around here at that time?

W K: No, but I heard of them around through the farming country.

ROB: What kinds of things did they do?

W K: How was that?

ROB: What kinds of things did they do?

W K: I don't know. Did you call it the Farmers Alliance?

ROB: Yes.

W K: I don't know. They started in, I guess meant pretty good. They were quite well organized yet and they had stores of their own. That is, grocery stores, and hardware, what the farmers needed.

ROB: Uh-huh.

W K: But that didn't last so long.

ROB: Were most people pretty angry about the hard times then?

W K: Yes, they were dissatisfied. You couldn't do nothing about it, you know. They got plenty of that Free Trade. You know, Cleveland run on a Democratic ticket, on a Free Trade. He believed that this country and other countries should exchange free, you know. They ship things in here free of duty and America ship out free of duty. That's the way they believed. And Harrison was the opposing nominee of the Republican ticket and he believed in Protective Tariff. And that's where I picked my ticket. I consulted a lot of pretty well-educated men, you know, that been through the mills, and they told me

that this Free Trade business wouldn't work. We had to have Protective Tariff. And I come to that conclusion myself, that that was right. Because in them foreign countries, you take Germany, France, Russia, they had cheap labor. So much cheaper than we had here. And they manufactured their goods for less than a half of what we would here. They could ship them in, you take dry goods such as clothing, why you could buy a shirt there for fifty cents. Why, they couldn't make it in the United States for less than seventy-five, at that same time. It was that way with everything: hardware, coffee. You could buy coffee then a bit a pound, eight pounds for a dollar. It was parched but not ground. That's in packages, pound packages. There was two brands of it; there was a Lions brand, and Arbuckle.

ROB: Well, do you think it was Cleveland's free trade polices that brought on that 1893 depression?

W K: I didn't exactly catch you.

ROB: Do you think it was Cleveland's free trade polices that brought on that 1893 depression?

W K: Why of course. Nothing else could bring it on.

ROB: Well, there was a bad harvest here that year too, wasn't there?

W K: No, the harvest was all right, but it was a wet one. A good many people lost quite a bit of grain on account of rain. It started about the middle of September, by gosh, it did rain and it rained! I worked down in the Dayton country. I was with a thrashing machine then down there. But we happened to get most of the crops taken care of before the rains come. They didn't come about 'til after the middle of September.

ROB: What was the next election after that? Who ran in the next election after that?

W K: Four years later William Jennings Bryan run against William McKinley.

Bryan run on a Free Silver ticket; sixteen silver dollars to one gold dollar.

And McKinley run on a Gold Standard and McKinley won.

ROB: Didn't most of the working class people support Bryant?

W K: I don't know about that. Anyhow McKinley was elected. But I think the people...well I know around here there was an awful lot of people voted for McKinley regardless of whether democrats or republicans, but they voted for McKinley. They got that silver trade was something similar to that free trade. They figured that out thataway.

ROB: What were the early homesteaders like? What kind of people were they?

W K: The best people in the world. There was people from Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Ohio. I didn't know a thing about my neighbor and my neighbor didn't know a thing about me, whether I was a respectable character or not. But we never asked any questions. And we were neighbors. And all friendly one with another.

ROB: Why did most people come out here?

W K: Well, I have an idea that they didn't do so well in the East. And there were a lot of homestead land at that time, back east you had to buy it. When we left there, land was all the way from twenty-five to seventy-five dollars an acre. You'd get here, it'd produce just about as good as that did, only you didn't have the market here that we had there. But then you had the same amount of land if you could crop it. But we...we didn't have nothing when we come out here and we had to just take a brush claim and clear up our land. We did go down and kind of up the river from Pasco, we looked at one hundred-and-sixty there just as level as you'd want land but I don't know how many thousand feet above water. Nice level and flat land, but it was too dry. That was the trouble here then.

ROB: Was this a pretty wild country when you arrived?

W K: What do you mean, wild animals?

ROB: Oh, wild animals and a hard country, a harsh country? Was it a hard life?

W K: No, it wasn't bad. You'd go through the woods and you might travel all day and never see anything. And all at once maybe you'd run up against a bear, something like that. But then the bear was wild and he'd give you plenty of room.

ROB: How about the people? How did the people kind of enforce the law in those days before there were marshalls and sheriffs?

W K: Well, I don't know about that. We had officers just about the same as you got now, pret'near. Only without..we didn't have them what you might call automobile...we met quite a lot of Indians and they were civil and peaceable.

ROB: Were the Indians still moving pretty freely through this part of the country?

W K: No, not here. They generally remained on the reservations.

ROB: What town would you go to when you wanted to get supplies?

W K: How was that?

ROB: What town did you go to when you wanted to get supplies?

W K: You mean for groceries and that stuff?

ROB: Yes.

W K: Kendrick.

ROB: What was Kendrick like in those days?

W K: Oh, pretty thriving town. I believe it was better than it is now. They had several dry-goods stores, and grocery stores, saloons, hotel. Go to the hotel and get a good meal for two bits. Beefsteak.

ROB: About how often would you go to town from the homestead?

W K: Well, not very often. In the fall of the year we tried to get our supplies so we didn't have to go in the wintertime. Because the snow where we lived would get about four feet deep and down in Kendrick it was bare ground. So you couldn't...one rig wouldn't work all the way.

ROB: Uh-hm.

W K: That's the reason we'd take in the harvest, you know, and get enough money

and get us a good supply of grub, and as the fella says, we'd hole up in the winter. And the snow got so awful deep.

ROB: Well, how would people keep themselves entertained then?

W K: Well, we had we had a school, and I believe there's about twenty or twenty-five kids going. And every Friday night we had a literary. And on Sunday's, why we had Sunday School, and church when we could get a preacher, but we always had a Sunday School.

ROB: What was a literary?

W K: Well, it's kind of a debating society where they get a subject and then they'd debate on it. Then we had a program, you know, declamations and...

ROB: Would everybody participate?

W K: Oh yes. Yes some of them old ranchers are pretty good talkers on a subject. Sometimes they'd have kind of a funny question up, you know, for debate. Like, which is more essential the dish rag or the broom? (Laughs.) Yeah, we used to have lots of fun at them meetings.

ROB: How about parties and such, were there many of those?

W K: Well once in awhile they had a dance. Not in our neighborhood, but across over in the Gold Hill country they'd have dances there. And we'd have... once in awhile we'd have kind of what they call a play party, you know. No dancing allowed.

ROB: Why wasn't there any dancing allowed?

W K: Well, they was kind of religiously inclined, you know, and they didn't believe in it.

ROB: Oh.

W K: And they'd have a party at those places.

ROB: Do you think many of the early homesteaders cleared out around that 1893 time?

W K: Did what?

ROB: Do you think many of the homesteaders cleared out in that 1893 hard times?

Did many of them kind of go broke and have to leave?

W K: I don't know whether you'd call it go broke or not, but lots of them about that time would have served their five years. And they'd go prove up and then mortgage it and leave it. There's lots of land in there now still in the hands of companies.

ROB: Would they sell out to the timber company or what?

W K: Do what?

ROB: Did they sell out to the timber company? Usually?

W K: No, J. P. Vollmer bought most of the...

ROB: He was the banker up in Troy wasn't he?

W K: At Lewiston.

ROB: Was he a pretty good banker?

W K: Yes, he was a good banker. He looked out...

ROB: Did he kind of watch out for people and try and help them out?

W K: No, no he wasn't that kind of a man. Now he...I don't know how he worked it but he would take a mortgage on their property and of course foreclose it. And he put that in somehow, so much deposited in the bank. It was a backing for the bank.

ROB: Do you remember the Kendrick fire in 1903?

W K: Was I here then?

ROB: Yes.

W K: Yeah, we lived up here on Cedar Creek. I went down there after it all cooled down. Pretty sorry looking place.

ROB: Were the businesses still trying to operate?

W K: Yes. They put up kind of temporary buildings and start over.

ROB: How did the politicians campaign for office around that time?

W K: Oh, there was quite a number running for office. But of course like all

the time, some was successful and some weren't.

ROB: Well how would they come around and kind of let people know who they were?

Or who was running?

W K: Well, you take now....I don't know....in Moscow that man Snow, is he running for Congress?

ROB: Now, you mean?

W K: Huh?

ROB: Now, you mean?

W K: Uh-huh.

ROB: I'm not sure. I think he might be. I'm talking about back in the early days? Would the politicians who were running come out to the different little communities?

W K: Well, that's just what I was going to tell you. They...well, they'd have their cards you know, and they come and maybe they'd announce that they were speaking in certain places a certain night. We'd meet there with them. Sometimes there'd be a dozen democrats or a dozen republicans. They'd be different times, you know. Now they'd come there...from Moscow they would come out and they'd talk. They'd have their meeting there at the school house. And we'd go over there and hear them. There'd be maybe a half a dozen or a dozen republicans or maybe next time that many democrats would come. They'd have...each one had their story.

ROB: Were most of the early homesteaders pretty interested in politics?

W K: No, they wasn't. You might say they wasn't crazy about it. They didn't care too much.

ROB: What kind of things were they crazy about?

W K: Oh, I don't know if they were very bad on anything or any subject. They had the work. They had....some of 'em made shakes, some of 'em made shingles. Everything to make a dollar, you know, to buy grub. They were busy. I know

father and I made shingles one whole winter. We made a better kind of a building, we had a shed in front. We'd drag a log in there and saw it up in shingle lengths, sixteen inches. Then we'd split 'em up, rive 'em and shave 'em. Put 'em up in packs. We'd get maybe two dollars a thousand for 'em or...we had to do something.

ROB: When people went on down into Kendrick for their supplies, would they pretty often go on a bender or something to get away from the pressures of working so hard?

W K: Never heard of it.

ROB: I heard at one time in the early days at the Fourth of July celebrations in Kendrick they used to have big tug-of-wars and the people from Potlatch Ridge would take on everybody else. Do you remember those?

W K: They'd have kind of a tug-of-war?

ROB: Um-hum.

W K: Oh yes. The Potlatch had quite a bunch of big heavy men, way over two hundred. And they got on one end of the rope...

(End of Side A)

W K: And several from Leland there. Men that weighed, oh, 200 and 20 and 225 pounds you know. There was about a dozen of them. And the workers, the workers were big heavy men.

ROB: What other kinds of things would happen at those Fourth of July celebrations?

W K: Oh, I don't know. Down at Kendrick they had...on one Fourth of July we was down there and they had races of all kinds and they had a large platform outside, you know. I don't know what you'd call it, pavilion or something. They'd have a dance there. They start the dance there after dinner about 3:00 o'clock, 2:00 or 3:00, and they'd dance I guess maybe all night, I don't know. I left there about 11:00 or 12:00 o'clock and they were still a'hammering away.

ROB: Where was it that you were born again?

W K: What state?

ROB: Yes.

W K: Illinois.

ROB: When was that?

W K: 1868.

ROB: Why did your father decide to leave Illinois?

W K: Well, land at that time was quite high in Illinois and we got just as good a land a whole lot cheaper across the Mississippi River in Missouri. The land was just as good as the Illinois land and you didn't have to pay half as much. Take land in Illinois that was selling for fifty and seventy-five dollars an acre, and you can go over and buy just as good a land for fifteen and twenty dollars in Carr County, Missouri.

ROB: Were there still a lot of hard feelings around that time about the Civil War?

W K: No, not right in there. But south further there was. Wasn't very healthy to take a family from the North and go into Arkansas or Mississippi and them places and locate.

ROB: Where did you go from Missouri?

W K: Iowa.

ROB: How long did you stay there?

W K: One year. Broke up.

ROB: Did your father homestead in Iowa too?

W K: Huh-uh. There was no homestead land in Iowa then. (Tape pause.)

Wonderful, awful changes.

ROB: What do you think is the most impressive sort of change that you have seen?

W K: Well, the biggest change is in the way things are running. That's the worstest change I think. Now this Watergate business and this gasoline business got things mixed up pretty bad.

ROB: How do you think Watergate compares to something like Teapot Dome?

W K: I don't there's much difference is there?

ROB: I don't know. I wasn't around when Teapot Dome happened.

W K: How old of a person are you if I'm allowed to ask?

ROB: I'm 25.

W K: Ohhh. Oh, if you stay alive you're going to see lots of changes.

ROB: How did your family come west? How did they travel?

W K: Well we come on the train. We bought our tickets in Sioux City, Iowa ,
and we went from Sioux City to Omaha, Nebraska. And we got on the Union
Pacific and we come on out to Walla Walla.

ROB: That was about 1891?

W K: No, that was in 1890. 1891 we come up in this country.

ROB: I asked you before about Coxey's army and you didn't say much about it.

I wonder, were there many people got interested in that Coxey's army thing
around here?

W K: No. No, they didn't take no stock in it.

ROB: What kind of thing was that anyway?

W K: Well, it was a lot of people that was dissatisfied with the way the govern-
ment was running things. Really there was no work for 'em, you know. And
that was what they was after was...They want wages.

ROB: What were they going to do about it?

W K: Well, they wanted to talk to the President of the United States to start
something. But I don't know what they wanted to start, but so they could
have employment and make a living.

ROB: Was there much business with the IWW's in this area?

W K: No, not around here.

ROB: What kind of jobs did you do throughout your life?

W K: Oh, worked the ranches and sawmills. When we first come west we landed

in Walla Walla. I think it was the 17th of March when we landed in Walla Walla and they had all their crops in. So we moved from Walla Walla on up to Dayton and father and I got a job in the sawmill there. And we worked that summer and that winter in the sawmill. We made enough to get us a team, harness, and kitchen supply stuff, and we hauled that up here.

ROB: Did you know where you were headed for when you left Dayton?

W K: Um-hm.

ROB: And you came all the way by wagon?

W K: Yep. I don't know...it don't take it very long to go from here down to Dayton now, but it took us about eight days to move up from Dayton to what you call Crescent. Cedar Creek.

ROB: When you arrived at your homestead it was just unproved land wasn't it?

W K: It's what?

ROB: When you arrived at your homestead it was just empty land wasn't it?

W K: Um-hm.

ROB: What did you do first when you got there?

W K: Built us a cabin to live in.

ROB: How long did that take?

W K: Well, I was out in the harvest that fall and father he cut and hewed the logs. And when I come back from harvest I took the team and drug 'em up and we had what you call a house-raising. We put up the framework that fall and then it snowed us under and we couldn't work anymore until the next spring.

ROB: Where did you live that winter then?

W K: There on the homestead, we put up a box house. I don't know, it was I think sixteen feet square. Just had a fire place in one end of it, and cook stove and a couple of beds in there. Oh, we fared pretty good.

ROB: How many people came over for your house-raising?

W K: Oh, we had I guess a dozen or more. Just what was in the neighborhood, you know.

ROB: How long did it take?

W K: Oh, the best part of one day.

ROB: Was there a celebration or a big feed or something afterwards?

W K: Yeah, we had a dinner.

ROB: Was helping-out like that pretty common in those homesteading days?

W K: Um-hm.

ROB: What other ways would people help each other out?

W K: Oh, sometimes sickness or something like that, they was always willing to help. We had a doctor at Leland and we had another doctor lived on a homestead there at Gold Hill.

ROB: Were you and your father supposed to come and help other people out who'd helped you out raising your house?

W K: Yes.

ROB: What kind of things would you do to help pay back?

W K: Well some had barn to raise, to put up a log barn. And help on that.

ROB: Were there any people who weren't very neighborly, who didn't participate in those sorts of things? People that you might call sort of hermits or...

W K: Oh yes. Yes they all...When you had a gathering of that kind everybody was happy, well pleased. (Tape pause.) Is it clear outside or...?

ROB: No, it's cloudy today.

W K: Is it?

ROB: There was probably about an inch or two of snow this morning. It's not snowing now but it's cloudy out.

W K: Hum.

ROB: Do you think the weather has changed much from the early days?

W K: Oh yes. We don't get near the snow that we used to. Get more rain in the wintertime than we did then.

ROB: Do you have any idea why that is?

W K: No. I don't.

ROB: What kinds of words would you use to describe the old days, in general?

W K: How was that?

ROB: How would you describe the old days? The homestead days?

W K: Well, there was differences, lots of differences. Some people that had income, or didn't have to get out and scratch, why they could make it pretty good on the homestead. But if you had to...couldn't make it on the homestead and had to work out for a living, it was pretty tough going. Whenever you worked out you was losing that much on the homestead. Clearing.

ROB: About how much of a year did you have to work out?

W K: Well, I generally went out in harvest and that's about all.

ROB: Do you think people were happier in those days?

W K:S Well, I don't know about that. Some of 'em were quite well contented and some of 'em were not, just the same as they are now. I don't see much difference.

ROB: Was there much difference between the real homesteading years and 20 or 30 years later?

W K: Oh yes. They had more land in cultivation and they was awhile lot further advanced. That is they had more stock, something to sell, you know. They had cattle, maybe some hogs. They'd have something to sell. Hardly any grain or anything, not from these timber ranches. They generally fed it. And the roads wasn't much more than a common trail. You couldn't haul much of a load over 'em, so if you could feed it and drive over it like driving several head of stock it was better than hauling a load of grain over a trail and bumping over them darn rocks in the road.

ROB: That was when you were coming out with horses wasn't it?

W K: Um-hm.

ROB: Did you prefer working with horses?

W K: Oh yes, I never learned to drive a car.

ROB: How about mules, did you ever work with mules?

W K: Back east father had a span of mules. It was about as good a team as I ever worked. When I was about fourteen, fifteen years old, we raised a lot of corn; corn was a principal crop. And then we started plowing about the first of March for oats. We sowed maybe twenty or thirty acres in oats and then we'd plow for corn, put in about thirty or forty acres in corn and do it all with them two mules, a twelve-inch plow, and a double-A harrow.

ROB: Do you think a span of mules can outwork a span of horses?

W K: No, I don't think that, but what I liked about the mules was they were steady. Just lug along, you know, all day. Horses being a little faster in the morning, slower in the evening. Mules not. Mules had that gait and that was it all day.

ROB: Why didn't you use mules out here then?

W K: I don't know why they didn't. There was a man moved in over there to Gold Hill, they come from the southern part of Missouri, pretty close to the Oklahoma line. And he brought his span of mules with him out here. He kept them three or four years, and I don't know whether he sold 'em or traded 'em for horses, but he got rid of 'em. I don't know why.

ROB: Are mules as stubborn as they say they are?

W K: Well, this span we had wasn't. They're a little tougher in the mouth, you had to pull a little harder to guide them.

ROB: About how many years could you work a horse or a mule before it would give out on you?

W K: Oh I don't know, I never tried that.

ROB: Did you ever have any horses that were real favorites of yours?

W K: Had what?

ROB: Did you have any horses that were real favorites of yours?

W K: You mean an animal I liked better than others?

ROB: Yes.

W K: Yes, I had one gelding. He was a chestnut sorrel. Weighed about 1200.

A heavy, blockish animal. I don't know, I could do anything with him. Plow him single, double, hitch him up to anything he'd work with that. And when I ride him he was a nice animal.

ROB: What was his name?

W K: Selum.

ROB: How many years did you have him?

W K: I don't just remember. I guess about 10 or 12 years.

ROB: Could you work him even when was getting to be an old horse?

W K: Did I work him with other horses?

ROB: Did you work him even when he was getting to 10 or 12 years old?

W K: Yes, he was alright then yet.

Transcribed and typed by Sherrie Fields