

## Questions for Ranching in Clark County since 1920 Interview

**What is your full name and where do you currently live?**

Kathryn Shattuck Papay of Palisades, NY; Anne Shattuck Atherton of Salina, KS; Sarah Bootes Shattuck of Ashland, KS; and James Scott Shattuck of Dolores, CO.

**When did your family come to Clark County? What year?**

**Why did they come to Clark County?**

**What were their names?**

**How were they related to you?**

**Where did they settle in Clark County?**

In 1892 Enoch Austin Shattuck, our great-grandfather, began ranching in Clark County after heading north from drought-ridden Cochise County, AZ, where he had founded the Erie Cattle Company in 1883. Around 1903, he bought the Weeks Bros. Ranch in Lexington Township. It was thereafter known as the Shattuck Ranch.

**Was there a school on the property?**

**How close was the nearest school?**

The District 40 Schoolhouse was about a half mile north of the homestead, on Shattuck property.

**What was your/your family's occupation? Rancher? Farmer? Cowhand? Merchant?**

We were primarily ranchers, with some farmland.

**How did they acquire land? Homestead, purchase, trade?**

**Describe the land, Pasture, fields, rivers rough, sandy soil close to town.**

**Has the Ranch size changed since it was begun? How?**

E.A. Shattuck had purchased land in both Clark and Comanche Counties, and when he died unexpectedly in 1911, his son and our grandfather, Willis Henry Shattuck, left Washburn College, where he had intended to pursue a law degree, to take charge of his father's cattle business. The land was heavily mortgaged, and Willis H. sold the Comanche County land, retaining approximately 5,400 acres to the east of Old Highway 34, and 600 acres to the west, where the Shattuck homestead is located.

The Shattuck Ranch was considered one of the most picturesque settings in Lexington, with the oldest house in Clark County, built as a cowboy dugout in 1875, and a two-story stone barn nestled into the side of a hill.

On July 16, 1886, an item in the County Beacon newspaper documented the building of the barn — 100 feet long by 32 feet wide by 40 feet high — for \$500, noting: "*Suggest Weeks Bros. should abandon cattle and turn their ranch into most beautiful farm on Lone Tree Valley.*"

In the late 1970s, Willis Austin Shattuck, the older of Willis H.'s two sons, wrote about life on the ranch as a boy:

*It was in the late 1920s and early '30s that I rode with my father. After that I was in college and still later in the army, and the ranch was a place to go home for short visits with my family. Most of those summers were during the drought that plagued the high plains during the '30s, but even then, the hills and valleys of our area, most of which had never been plowed, had a quiet beauty that only those who have lived there could truly appreciate. Occasional trees were clustered in the creeks, planted by some early homesteader, but for the most part the only vegetation was a variety of grasses to include buffalo grass for which our prairies were named. In addition there was a taller grass known as blue stem, and undoubtedly many other varieties that I would not know or recognize. Too often, during those years our pastures were overgrazed. It was hard to cut down a herd of registered cattle that had been developed over a period of many years in order to accommodate what one recognized as good grazing practice, and so, in those years our pastures did not look like the pastures which my grandfather described as "like walking on a mattress . . . as high as a man's knee." Those were desperate years; a matter of staving off one's creditors; a battle quite often lost as the years of drought and depression went on. But in the morning and late evening as the shadows enveloped those hills, they were beautiful. From one point in the far east pasture you could see the towns of Coldwater and Protection, ten to fifteen miles away, and on the horizon to the west a grove of trees an equal distance from the viewer, outlined against the sky. I early knew that there was no more beautiful and satisfactory picture than the one of reddish-brown Herefords with their white faces, grazing on green pastures in the soft sunlight of a spring day in Western Kansas.*

In 1940, the ranch was foreclosed on. After World War II, Dan Luther, Willis H.'s younger son, and Willis A. repurchased the homestead and pastures to the west, and Dan leased the land to the east, running the two parcels together as the original whole.

In a 1942 letter, Dan wrote to his oldest sister, Jean Shattuck Hooper, about their shared love for the land and the homestead:

*We have managed to do considerable improvement of the ranch plant this winter. How I wish you could see the barn. The roof is almost shingled, the east wall has all been rebuilt, and three massive buttresses of concrete poured to support the leaning west wall. A dormer opening has been built into the east opening of the loft, and when work is finished, the old barn will again be about the best in the county from the standpoint of warmth in winter and coolness in summer. I know that you will feel as I do concerning it, that every shingle which has gone on the roof has served to preserve something rather precious in a sentimental way. How we children used to swing on a rope in the loft; to climb the roof, to straddle precariously on the ridge, lords of all we surveyed, from its eminence. And even the calves, which used to climb the roof to fall over the other side, by a miracle unhurt. And the initials of Harry Bone, Bill McVickers, Bill Curtis and others carved into the window frames, still there after forty-five years. The stalls where old Sam and Belge, and Night and Kate, and Skeet and Duff, and Trixie used to stand. The nooks and crannies where the cunning Leghorn hen would hide her nests, which I, as a small boy, could never find. The games of cowboy and Indian about its walls.*

*More and more, as I work around the ranch, I treasure even more dearly the memories of our childhood together, the wonderful times we had, the fact that it has always been home to us, that our grandfather trod exactly the same paths which I tread daily, and that my father's feet and my own follow in his. Especially in these troubled times do I turn more and more for solace to this home. Perhaps this sentimentalism is not a healthy thing, perhaps one should not pin his most intimate hopes on such a basis, yet I most deeply hope that the title of this ranch will soon again be in the Shattuck name, and that our children and grandchildren can always play here. I realize that I am a rank sentimentalist, yet I am perfectly sincere when I say I want to die in the house where I was born.*

## **What type of operation was it? Run cattle, other livestock, farm**

### **What type of cattle?**

Like his father, Willis H. specialized in purebred Herefords and was recognized as an authority in conformation and quality. In the 1960s Dan, having phased out his cow-calf operation, began to take in feeder calves.

Dan was renowned for his fences, and he held his neighbors to the same standard, sometimes rebuilding a stretch along their shared property lines if he didn't find their work up to snuff. Roger Giles called him "the most particular man on fences I've ever met."

At the time of Dan's death on Oct. 16, 2012, Scott Shattuck, who worked with Dan from the age of 14, recounted his days of fence-building with his uncle:

*Most of you know of Uncle Dan's fences. He maintained 35-40 miles and during the course of life on the ranch managed to rebuild them all to a state few others could match. What most don't realize is that the fences were a means to an end. Dan managed 6000+ acres and up to 900 head of cattle. Most of the time he was alone. The top-quality fences made his life and operation far easier. I think he enjoyed building them because they were something of value and durability. (He used to joke that he wanted to be buried "with his wire stretcher – because he spent so much time with it.") As with the cattle work, and the pickup time, fence building provided time together for our endless discussions.*

Dan was also deeply admired for his land stewardship, practicing the philosophy of most ranchers to leave the land in better shape than they found it, and steady in his belief that the grass came ahead of the cattle.

Roger Giles recalled how when rotational grazing came into vogue, Dan, who had done considerable reading on the subject, worried that perhaps his methods weren't in keeping with the times.

"I said, 'Dan, you've actually been doing this for years — you just didn't notice,'" Roger said. "He looked shocked."

Dan tried to leave 25 to 30 percent of the grasses in the pasture, and balanced grazing patterns among two extremes: tall grasses and short grasses. Each year, he consulted Wayne Rogler, a

rancher near Matfield Green in the Flint Hills, about how to price his grass. As a third-generation rancher, Dan had benefited from the wisdom of his father and grandfather, and had endured challenges from the 1930s to the '50s, "which is a learning curve for a lot of people," Roger said.

Dan achieved his balanced system "by looking and listening," Roger added. "He listened to his people before him, and he saw what was on the ground, and he made judgments from that."

For his excellence in land stewardship, Dan was recognized by the Clark County Conservation District with its first grassland management award.

**How were the cattle fed? How has it changed through the years?**

**Do you remember cattle drives or working/doctoring the cattle? What methods were used? Did you barter or trade work with neighbors? What was the procedure?**

Dan would often drive cattle with the help of his wife, Phyllis Seacat Shattuck, a fine horsewoman whose skills he thought far surpassed his own, and his brothers-in-law R.J. and John Seacat. Dan was often tense in the hours before the arrival of semis hauling calves from as far away as Kentucky and Florida, pacing nervously until the trucks had pulled safely into the driveway and unloaded their cargo into the corrals next to the barn. He branded, cut and vaccinated the calves himself with assistance from Phyllis and her brother John, a veterinarian.

**Did you market your livestock? Where and how did you get them to market?**

Dan's days typically began with early morning calls to John Killeen, a cattle buyer in Dodge City. When the price was right, the process was reversed, with the cattle driven into corrals on the east side of the ranch and loaded onto trucks for their final fattening in a feed yard.

**Did your family hire outside help? How were they paid? (free house, wages, beef)**

For many years, Willis H. employed Marion and Paralee Fleetwood, until they purchased their own land in the area. During the early '60s, Robert Swonger worked for Dan, living in the tenant house on the homestead with his wife, Lois; earning a salary; and running cattle of his own on the property. In the summer of 1964, Dan's nephew Scott, then 14, started working for him and continued for the next seven years. Later on, high schoolers including Tom Humphreys and Milt Rankin worked for Dan during their summer vacations, earning wages, living in the bunk house, and eating breakfasts prepared by Dan and dinners and suppers cooked by Phyllis.

In 2012, Scott wrote about his time on the ranch:

*When I first went to work for Uncle Dan, I already knew how to operate tractors and trucks, having learned at the [Lambertson] farm in Fairview. Nonetheless, Uncle Dan spent hours going over tractor operations and always rode with me for the first hour in the field until he was certain I had a grasp of the basics. He was still doing this 7 years later when I worked for him between semesters at KU and had racked up a couple of thousand hours on the tractor.*

*Dan was a “by the numbers” equipment operator. He always maintained that he was not as skilled as Uncle Lonnie and I actually thought I was a better tractor operator than Uncle Dan. It was only in the past few years after operating an RV with one eye that I realized how skilled Uncle Dan was operating as he did with only one good eye. Once Uncle Dan had me work Marion Fleetwood’s farm ground while Marion was hospitalized. I completed the job in about 2/3’ds the time Uncle Dan thought it should take. When I got back to the ranch, Uncle Dan was certain I had done a bad job and embarrassed him. We drove back to Marion’s place and Dan walked the fields for an hour before acknowledging I had done the job properly. Lighter soil allowed for higher speed, less time. He apologized repeatedly for the next few weeks. This was part of him that many didn’t realize, his innate sense of fairness.*

*Dan was first and foremost interested in the livestock on the ranch. Most years he ran 250-350 head of cattle (a small number belonging to Dad); additionally he took in other’s cattle on a rental basis, totaling as many as a 900 head at any given time. Dan constantly “counted” cattle, a euphemism for checking that the cattle were doing OK. When there was tractor work to be done, I got the task. Otherwise, he took me along. It didn’t take me all that long to realize that Uncle Dan wanted the companionship.*

*An old saying goes “one boy is better than two.” One cattle counter is better than two when riding in a pickup. The driver maneuvers to see what he is counting; the passenger is never quite certain whether he is double counting. Also, there were the distractions. Discussions over politics, quite spirited; history of U.S. western expansion and development, especially as it pertained to the Shattuck family. He greatly admired the personal courage, tenacity, of his ancestors and hardships they overcame. He loved to talk about the “Scotch-Irish” contribution to the Civil War and western expansion. He spoke repeatedly of the Erie Cattle Company, E.A.’s time near Medicine Lodge, Tombstone, and the Weeks Bros.’ Ranch. Right in the middle of a history lesson, or count or discussion, he would stop, lean or jump out of the pickup and point out some small wildflower or weed or grass. After explaining the significance of his find he would then make some self-deprecating remark, typical for him, about how Phil Arnold had a much more extensive knowledge of native flora.*

### **What crops were grown?**

**Cash crops or to feed livestock? How did you plant and harvest them? Did you have your own machinery or custom hire?**

**How has the machinery changed through the years?**

Dan raised approximately 500 acres of wheat through the 1970s, eventually returning it to grassland through the Conservation Reserve Program. Harvest brought a certain exhilaration with the arrival of custom-cutting crews from Montana who became special family friends through the years, their trailers parked behind the bunk house or at the Fritz Blau homestead down the road.

“Harvest was the highlight of our summer,” Dan’s younger daughter, Anne Shattuck Atherton, recalled. “Daddy awaited it with great anticipation and angst, worried that a hailstorm or deluge would wipe out a good crop of wheat before the cutting crews could get to it. Don’t you remember how excited we were when the crews arrived with cute young men? I remember the Olsons bringing with them two teenage boys that you and I drooled over.”

**What did the Depression do to the operation?**

**What are some of the family stories of the Dirty Thirties?**

**How did World War I or WWII affect your place?**

**How has the family been involved in the community?**

In his book “We’ll All Wear Silk Hats: The Erie and Chiricahua Cattle Companies and the Rise of Corporate Ranching in the Sulphur Spring Valley of Arizona, 1883-1909,” the historian Lynn R. Bailey wrote about the effects of World War I and the Depression on the Shattuck Ranch:

*With persistence characteristic of his era, Willis carried on the family business. Like his father, he was plagued by the vicissitudes of the cattle trade. Deflation following World War I hit the cattle industry hard. The price of yearlings dropped from \$40 to \$20. Credit dried up. On top of that, annual per capita consumption of beef, which was seventy-nine pounds in 1900, dropped to forty-five pounds in 1921 and beef exports declined by 100,000,000 pounds, the equivalent of 200,000 head. If that was not enough, drought swept the west and midwest between 1931 and '39. The dry years and low prices devastated those stockmen carrying heavy debt.*

*Like ranchers everywhere, Willis fought to stay afloat. “To see his Ashland ranch through,” he requested a loan of \$3,000 from [his half-uncle] Lemuel Shattuck’s Miners and Merchants Bank. It was all Lemuel could do to carry cattlemen and businesses in Cochise County, and Willis was turned down. As a result Willis lost most of his father’s property. Despite hard times, Willis persevered; and remarkably, never lost his passion for law. He became an expert in Kansas cattle law, served as Clark County Commissioner in the 1920s, and was elected a member of the state legislature for five terms in the 1930s and 1950s. He personally wrote Kansas’ final livestock community sales act, and carried to the House floor the state brand law, a committee bill largely written by him. Between 1961 and 1973 he served as Probate and County Judge of Clark County. On May 9, 1973, he passed away leaving a wife, Ethel Grace Luther, five children, fifteen grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.*

**Do you remember any disasters, snowstorms, tornadoes floods that affected the area?**

Through the decades, the ranch endured the usual weather-related threats: a lightning fire on neighboring grassland in 1938 that pushed home the necessity of fire guards; the blizzard of February 1971 in which Dan drove into pastures twice daily to cack his cattle and later noted with relief, and some well-deserved pride, that he had lost less than one percent of his herd. In 2007, a propane explosion in the ranch house rendered it uninhabitable. But the kiss of death was the 2017 Starbuck Fire that burned the Shattuck homestead to the ground, taking with it the granary, machine shop, bunk house, tenant house and corrals, while leaving only the stone foundations of the house, barn and wash house — the last remnants of a place beloved by five generations of Shattucks across more than a century.

**When did you become involved in the family operation?**

Scott and Sally inherited Willis A.’s land upon the death of their mother, Sarah Drais Shattuck, in 2004. Kathryn and Anne inherited the land of their father, Dan, when he died in 2012.

**Tell about your current operation, how has it changed?**

**Is farming a part of your ranching operation?**

**How has ranching changed in the last 100 years? Do you use 4-wheelers or horses. Combination?**

**How is grass managed, has fencing changed?**

**How are you preparing another generation to run your operation?**

Dan retired from ranching in 1995, at the age of 75, “ready to walk away on his own terms, handing back the Berrymans’ land in good shape and ready for the next caretaker,” Scott Shattuck wrote.

Jeff Krier now leases the Shattuck land to the west as well as the Berryman land to the east, managing it in much the same way, and with a similar focus on stewardship, as the original Shattuck Ranch — using horses rather than 4-wheelers to tend to his cattle, and maintaining fences utilizing methods similar to Dan’s. Jeff runs 28 breeding heifers and 18 bulls on the Shattuck land, which includes an additional 96 acres of wheat owned by Scott and Sally. He is primarily assisted by his daughter, Kalee Clemens, and son, Gus Krier, as well as by Kirk Woodruff, who helps with breeding.