

THE PIONEERING PRICE FAMILY

Web Preview

This is the companion booklet to **The Life and Art of C. S. Price**.

It delves into the Price family history through the recollections of C. S. Price's younger brother, Maurice. Their history is interesting in and of itself.

Through Maurice's memories, you will also gain insights into the circumstances that helped to influence and mold his brother's character.

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THE PIONEERING PRICE FAMILY

**by Maurice A. Price as told to his niece,
Frances Price Cook**

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by Frances Price Cook and Art Price Junior

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Cover Drawing

A wash drawing by C. S. Price, 1905, of the artist's father and his prize stallion. The original is in a private collection.

This book is dedicated to Donald Cook,
Maurice's grand nephew and Frances' son.



Maurice A. Price giving a first haircut to
Donald Cook (1948-2003), 1951

INTRODUCTION

by Frances Price Cook

Interesting conversation has accompanied the times that I have been with my Uncle Maurice and have had the opportunity to hear about pioneer travels in Wyoming and Canada. Many telephone conversations have included further detailed reminiscences, now followed by this manuscript.



Frances & Edith Price with their Uncle Clate & Uncle Maurice, ca. 1935,
Photo courtesy of Frances Price Cook

It is from a wide variety of experiences that my uncle speaks. Here is a picture of a family who carried all of their possessions with them on a journey to a new country where they chose land on which they would build homes. It was World War I which took my uncle back to Wyoming, the state of his birth, where he enlisted in the Army. He saw action in France, was injured and returned to the United States. In Portland he received the educational opportunity available to him as a veteran as it was here that he enrolled in a barber college. Many of the people who came to him as customers are now his friends. His shop was pleasant, like a small art gallery. It was also the location where he pursued his hobby of playing "old time" music on the violin, mandolin and harmonica.

Uncle Maurice was in close contact with his oldest brother, my artist uncle, the late C. S. Price. He has spent much time with the staff of the Portland Art Museum in helping to fill in with details of Uncle Clate's background following the unexpected death of the artist at the time the Museum was preparing a retrospective show. We find that art museums and galleries in Seattle, Detroit and New York also have C. S. Price works in their collections.

I remember Uncle Clate as a kind person. For fun he would sometimes "fiddle" and dance jigs for my sister and me. I grew to recognize that he had a wonderful understanding of people with a consideration that was enhanced by his early pioneer environment.

The details of the background and journey described here were so etched in memory that Uncle Maurice has painted these word pictures swiftly and surely.

THE PIONEERING PRICE FAMILY

by Maurice Arthur Price

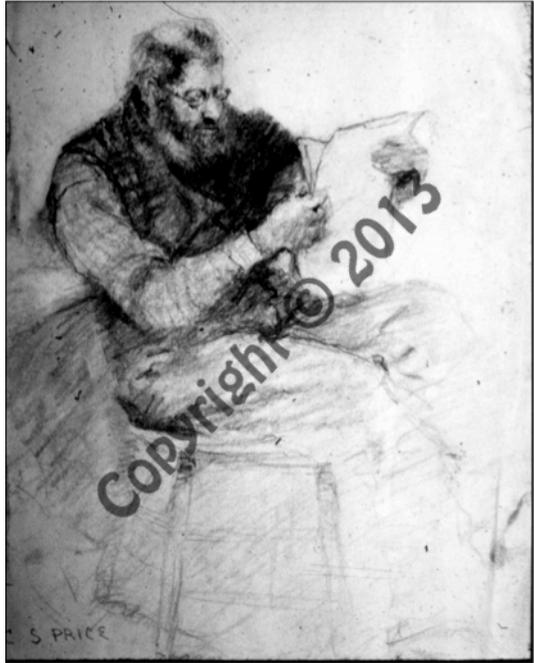
John Wesley Price was born on a farm near Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1846 and lived there through the Civil War in which he lost two brothers. He married Kaleida Kitchell Baker who was born in 1849 near Mt. Carmel, Illinois. They ranched and farmed near Bedford, Iowa; dad also marketed cattle for the bank by purchasing them in Iowa and driving them to Wyoming, near Sheridan, about a four months' trip each time.

There were Indians along the way, but dad knew how to get along with them, sometimes giving them sugar. However, one night they stole his work horses so that he had to go to the Indian Agency and notify the officials before they were returned.

Dad rode a buckskin mare, a pacer, an unusual horse because she would swim in the creek when he put the lariat rope around her neck and because she would let him shoot a gun while riding her.

After making several trips for the bank, dad moved the family to Sheridan in 1886 and continued ranching, farming and raising stock on the two thousand acre Banner Ranch.

The homesteaders were not welcome neighbors to the earlier ranchers who precipitated the Johnson County raid by notifying the new settlers to leave. Dad took a part and saw the trouble put down with the help of soldiers from Buffalo.



Portrait (drawing) of Grandfather Price

In the early fall dad crossed the mountains on horseback to go to Shell Creek. An unusually severe winter in 1892 found him across the mountains from his family; only two letters came through to mother before he returned in the spring. Dad then moved his family over the Big Horn Mountains into the Big Horn Basin, near Shell, where he and the older boys took up homesteads.

They brought water for irrigation by making four miles of ditch with only plows and scrapers, as well as building a flume, or siphon, to get it across Red Gulch. We raised beautiful crops of grain and alfalfa with the water after we had also cleared the land of sage brush.

Up in the mountains my father and the older boys cut timber for our log houses and buildings. Dad was a good axeman; my oldest brother Clayton, showed a natural mechanical ability in the construction of these buildings and corrals which were much admired by the other settlers. There was no place to buy furniture, nor even a saw mill for getting kiln dried lumber, so Clate made our furniture of lumber that was available.

My mother's life was that of a true pioneer, cooking, baking (twelve loaves of bread at a time), canning, sewing, knitting. We could see an artistic gift in her crocheting and quilting. Clate was aware of the work load our mother had. He made a washing machine of his own design to free her from rubbing clothes on a wash board. It was rectangular in shape with a board that moved from one side to the other and squeezed the clothes when a handle was moved. He made one like it for a neighbor family, applied for a patent and sold the patent pending for fifty dollars.

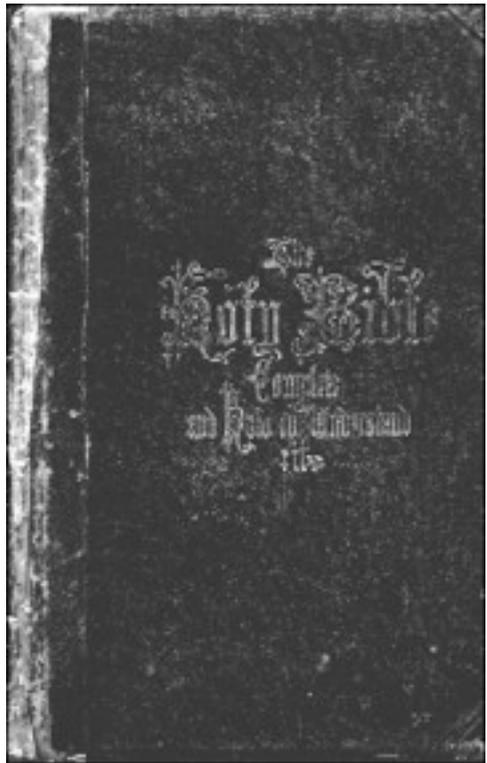
Although Clate took land for homesteading in Wyoming, he let it become part of the family holding as he did not want to be tied down to the land. He helped in his own special way on any project that called for unusual mechanical or artistic ability. My dad was proud of our farm because Clate drove the team very straight to mark the field in rows for irrigation.

Basin was our county seat. It was about twenty miles away, had about a thousand people including the nearest dentist and our physician, Dr. Carter. He had a fine team of horses with which he made good time. The stage driver, Bernie Davis, brought mail and passengers. It was a typical frontier town with seven saloons, one called the "Big Seven."

Clate was showing artistic talent. The bartender tacked his drawings of people up on the walls where they drew attention. A retired Army

officer who lived near us, Col. Torrey, searched out my brother and offered to loan him money so that he could attend an art school in St. Louis, with the comment that if he did not make good he need not repay the money. Clate received the award given that year to the outstanding student. It was during this time that Clate met Charlie Russell who liked his work in the school and asked him what he had been doing "all these years," to which my brother told me he replied "Oh, I have been out in Wyoming, punchin' cows." He said Charlie Russell then told him "You are just as good an artist as I am, Price; all you need is the name." Little did we know then that this brother would become one of America's leading artists, signing himself as C. S. Price.

At home the log school house was our community center. Dad was a director. There were no churches, only two weeks of revival meetings every summer. For a while our school teacher, Mrs. Sweeney, held Sunday School classes in the school house. On Friday evenings throughout the year there were debates, both adults and children participating. These evenings also called for talent from the ones who cared to sing, play an instrument or recite a poem. Usually there were several of our family who contributed as nine of us played music on some instrument. We had an old time organ that Edith and Gertrude played; Clarence, Ern, Will and I played the fiddle, as well as Clate who also played for dances and called the old time quadrilles, and danced jigs.



John W. Price's family bible

Our first fiddle was a small one Clate had made. Later on, Clarence and I received one for Christmas, one instrument for the two of us,

purchased from Montgomery Ward. Ota played the accordion; Archie played the guitar; and we nearly all played the harmonica.

There was a community Christmas Tree at the school house. Edith and a neighbor girl went many miles to every home for money subscriptions for the Tree. None of the children was forgotten: each received a net stocking filled with hard candy, pop corn balls, and nuts along with some little present like a ball, cup or book. We made the candles in molds at home.

We had good times together. There were many horses to break and colts to break to lead. The boys made good use of a pair of boxing gloves. We had a six-quart ice cream freezer and enjoyed having company come on Sundays for ice cream and entertainment.

We hunted cotton tail rabbits with our little single shot Stevens rifle Dad gave us for Christmas. I think it cost only four dollars. We had it for years. Dad was an expert, always a winner in a shooting contest. His Winchester rifle of 45-75 caliber had killed many wild animals.

There were no individual birthday presents as we know them now. Our mother asked each child what he would like to have her bake especially for him; he could also invite the neighboring children to come for a whole day. I asked for tarts, which she made with jellies from the wild fruits we had gathered for her.

We saw many Indians in Wyoming, especially in the summer months when they visited other tribes and came past our ranch sometimes five hundred at a time. Whenever they camped on Shell Creek, about one mile from our ranch, we went down and visited with them in the evenings; they put on a war dance for us if they felt in the mood. Sometimes we traded horses with them or bought a pony. They were friendly Indians.

One time some Indians arrived at our ranch just as the family had finished a noon meal. They walked right into our house and helped themselves to food that had not yet been cleared from the table. My mother told me she just let them alone and went on about her usual household tasks. After they had eaten what they wanted, they took me, then small, up into their arms and played with me a while. When they were ready to leave they gave her a beaded purse.

Will had Greyhounds that killed coyotes, each hide worth about five dollars in addition to the bounty on coyotes paid by the county. We trapped some. In fact we did many things to make a few dollars.

Wages on ranches were about thirty-five dollars a month plus board. Hay hands were paid one and a half to two dollars a day.



John and Kaleida Price's farm in Shell, Wyoming

One of the jobs available was that of "punchin' cows" requiring the skill of a man who rode well and kept cattle moving to proper areas. Clate rode for the association of cattle owners, their stock free in the mountains for summer grazing. It was important to keep the cattle from eating in fields of larkspur, locally called "poison weed" as it was just that to them. Clate's saddle was designed with two leather pockets, one with art supplies as he was never far from his sketch pad. He sat on his horse and drew while watching cattle.

As far back as I can remember, Clate had asked me to pose for him, always giving me little gifts. When he bought a beautiful new saddle he wanted a cowboy scene at night. I put on my cowboy garb; we went out; he built a sage brush fire and sketched me and the horse resting beside it.

Dad raised fine hogs, Poland China and Berkshire. We always had very good ham and bacon after we boys kept up the black willow smoke twenty-one days for smoking the pork. We rendered lard in large iron kettles over an open fire.

In winters we cut ice, packed it in sawdust, and had enough for all summer. There was a large cellar dug in the ground where we kept