

THE COWBOY WAR IN KANSAS, CORONADO AND LEOTI PEOPLE ARMED FOR THE FIGHT, DECEMBER, 1887, March 3.—A. Wallace (Kan.)

Denver, Col., March 3.—A Wallace (Kan.) Special to the News says: The situation in the Coronado-Leoti war remains unchanged. Both towns are surrounded by a strong cordon of armed men, who permit no one to enter. The men in both towns sleep with their guns, and after admission the stranger finds a Winchester at every turn. They stand in doorways, and merchants bring their guns to wait on customers. Men patrol the street all day and night. The country surrounding is as excited as the towns and about equally divided. Coronado sympathizers are for the most part in town, with their ammunition and guns, and a Coronado man said today that within an hour 500 men could be recruited in the town, ready to defend it with their lives. At Leoti the cry is for revenge. The citizens are as excited as they were on the day following the shooting, and they are unanimous in their determination to avenge Coronado at the first opportunity. This will probably be offered on Thursday next, when the county election occurs. Immediately after the shooting Sunday some men from Leoti came to Wallace and secured all the guns and ammunition they could get and representatives from Coronado paid a similar visit to Garden City, so that both towns are well equipped with ammunition for the war which every man believes will occur before the thing is settled.

The population of Leoti, which has been recruited by the county militia, is looked to for the first move, and the Coronado men will act on the defensive. Each town has plans, but they are in two distinct a state for a long-aid forecast of the probable result. Since Sunday there have been no hostile actions beyond a running of guns in Leoti. Whiskey and beer are freely imbibed, and those will be at the bottom of further trouble, should there be any. County Sheriff John Edwards, who is a Leoti man, has not made an attempt to arrest anybody, as he knows that such an effort would cost him his life. He has 12 warrants, but unless the State authorities lend the assistance of a couple of companies of militia they will never be served, and even then the Coronado men say that a man will never be taken alive. It was reported at the Hotel Vendome in Coronado,



Charlie Conter and Bill Raynes, ringleaders of the Leoti crowd, went over to Coronado on Sunday morning and drank considerable beer and whiskey. Conter, who was a dependo of the county type, and who is the fourth member of his family to die with his horse on, promised to return with

Excerpt from *Of The Kansas Cowboys, 1867-1888*

According to Bill's widow, Mrs. Zoe Tidgman, who wrote his biography in 1949, he was called by one of the fact men in the Wichita County seat to go to guard the polls at once the several county seat took on elections. Possibly this was the election of March 1888, for Tidgman was absent from Dodge City at that time and three months later was holding forth in Tanager City, Wichita County. This small western town was a large town located between Leoti and Coronado, the contestants for the county seat. So close were Leoti and Coronado that Tanager City was barely able to space in between them, and even so was accused of spitting on a portion of the Coronado town site. Little love was shared among the three towns, in fact blood had been spilled just the winter prior to Bill's visit. Possibly the intense feeling of the times had something to do with the action which occurred at Tanager City on July 4, 1888. On that day Bill Tidgman's 54th birthday, the ex-Dodge City marshal shot and killed Ed Prother.

The Coronado Star, March 10, 1887

Mr. Stephen of Dodge City and Sheriff of off county, has purchased the west half of block 5 for a residence, and lot 9 and 10 in block 28 on north Main street. Mr. Stephen says that we have the finest vine arid one of the best built towns in this part of the state, and he has implicit faith in Coronado as the future county seat of Wichita County, and will erect a dwelling home at an early date and will move his family to Coronado as soon as he can settle up his official business. The STAR extends a hearty welcome.

The Coronado Star, October 13, 1887

Mrs. (Pats) Stephen presented her husband with a fine daughter (Johnnie) Friday.

FRAUD AND INTIMIDATION

Excerpt from The Wichita Standard, Coronado, Dec. 23.
Leoti went to Topeka with about five hundred men on their petition for county seat. Coronado filed a petition containing over seven hundred names, asking for the same. Leoti backed their petition with four hundred and fifty-one votes, while Coronado shows up with two hundred and eighty-five and then begins crying fraud.

Where is the fraud?
Who made the statement that they were bound to win if they had to pay fifty dollars ahead for votes, and that was their only hope? Coronado.
Who got a Leoti voter drunk and left him on the prairie to prevent his voting for Leoti, the second day of the canvass? Coronado.
Who reported their town had a majority of votes when they were behind, to inspire confidence in their friends? Coronado.
Who imported a lot of men from outside the county and attempted to vote there in the interest of their town? Coronado.

Now let us see about the "intimidation" business.
Who first went to the polls armed with Winchester? Coronado.
Who imported "bad men" from Dodge City to aid them? Coronado.
Who told a lot of fine provokers with the threat, in substance if not literally, that they would have their votes or their opponents blood? Coronado.
Who employed U. S. Marshall (?) to watch the polls, regardless of authority? Coronado.



The Wichita Herald, Coronado, March 10, 1887 a special edition claiming victory in the county seat election. (Printed in

that contained. He and Raynes returned to Leoti, got the beer, and with five companions, only three of whom were armed, returned in a wagon and buggy. They visited a drugstore, who was a side in but, and made him get up. Conter or—died him to dance, and find his gun that the ket to make him obey. The drug-store offered to let Conter would lower his gun, and the offer was accepted. The man then went into the street, and, according to the story beginning first, Conter did not shoot off his foot. A Coronado man named Jackson happened to get in Conter's way and was struck on the head with the butt of Conter's gun. The Leoti men interfered and requested the Leoti men to stop abusing citizens. For a reply Conter turned on Bob Loomis and struck at him, performing an old planter's trick, hitting Bob Loomis on the head and shooting John Loomis in the leg at the same time. John was standing back of Bob and as Conter fired he sprang free and clutched with him. The Leoti crowd, according to the story of the Coronado men, then began firing at two citizens who were running up the street. A dozen Coronado men, who had gathered in the store, then opened fire, and Conter seemed to be a target for them all. The firing only lasted a moment, and when the smoke cleared away it was seen that Raynes, Conter, and Watkins, who were on the pavement, had fallen to the ground dead. The other men were in the wagon, and James Dinning and Johnson were on only wounded. A. N. Booney, the seventh man of the Leoti crowd, escaped without injury.

The statement that the bodies of the dead men were permitted to lie in

This fight will be a danger to the county, but it was necessary after the Leoti men, because they were the fight. It was history repeating itself in frontier settlement; in this case, however, making down (Leoti). Leoti men, however, and all other towns in Kansas have passed through this ordeal.

The Wichita Herald, Coronado, Mar. 3

Leoti. There were 14 bullets in Conter's body, and Raynes was wounded in 11 places. Every one of Raynes's wounds would have been fatal, the two Loomis boys are only slightly wounded. Jensen, it is thought would die, but Johnson and Dinning will recover. Johnson, who is the last injured, says he and his companions went to Coronado at the invitation of some friends. They were having a little fun in the street and probably fired a few shots, but harmed no one. He acknowledged that some of the crowd had been drinking, but denied that any were drunk. He alleged that the bodies of his dead companions were permitted to lie in the street and

THE WICHITA COUNTY HERALD

The Wichita County Herald (Coronado), March 10, 1887

To The Press.

You have published a false statement about the shooting here and are by no means from Leoti who did not witness it. Neither is your statement and non-sensational and partial statement.

On Thursday the 17th ultimo, the voters of the east side of the county left the polling precincts to avoid bloodshed when a few reckless characters threatened their lives. They came to Coronado and registered their names, occupation, age, and real estate, fulfilling all the requirements of the law, proposing to carry the matter to the supreme court, where it could be proven that these men acted under the instructions of a certain prominent man in Leoti. But last Sunday morning while the citizens of this place were at church services and parties came over from Leoti and inspired "where all the people were." The streets were very muddy and scarcely a human being could be seen. They returned to Leoti and remained their friends within and a case of beer and returned. They were Charles Conter, William Rains, Frank Jensen, John-son, (A. N.) Booney, (George) Watkins, and Ernest Dinning. They were very much under the influence of whiskey, and proceeded to make everybody drink with them they met.

They were partly masked. Not satisfied with such proceedings, they ordered a gentleman just in from the east to dance. They then proceeded to "do up the town" by commencing to knock down several citizens with pistols. E. S. Lilly and Louis Jaden were the first victims. Jensen and Conter commenced it, saying "they were here to make the people fight and 'round up' the town."

Charley and Ezra (Ruf) Loomis were standing near by and Conter struck Charley to the ground, shooting him and dealt the second blow with his revolver, shoving his leg home just above the knee joint. Charley clutched Conter and threw him to the ground, holding his pistol arm in such position that he could not shoot him, his brother Ezra, or Mr. Nicol. In the meantime Rains had fired at Nicol. Then the firing commenced from the wagon, and a general engagement ensued, which resulted in the killing of Conter and Rains, and the wounding of Johnson, Dinning, Watkins, Booney, Jensen, from Leoti. Ezra Loomis was shot twice in the leg by parties in the wagon, while Charley was shot in the right arm by Rains, yet with a broken leg and wounded arm he held the "terror of the west" down till he was removed. Charley was unharmed. Rains attempted to ram his head about and fired till he was shot dead.

Booney escaped to Leoti with the wagon, shot through the spine. Frank Jensen ran after the firing. We learn that he had five wounds in his body. He is the son of R. E. Jensen, a prominent citizen of Leoti. Watkins was shot in the month, body, and arm, and his horse died.

John was shot in the leg, but he had not discharged his revolver. Ernest Dinning was shot through the thigh. He was a very respectable young man, every one expressing sympathy for him was wounded.

Conter and Rains' bodies were put on the bank porch. Johnson and Dinning were removed to Wright's drug store, and Watkins to the Melick building. Loomis was removed to the Alamo House. Drs. McCain and Chance relieved the suffering of the wounded as much as possible, and both men and women did everything in their power to comfort them.

Two of the injured ones are very painful for coming here with dangerous men, and badly denominated Jensen and Conter for commencing the fight. — Last Week's Herald

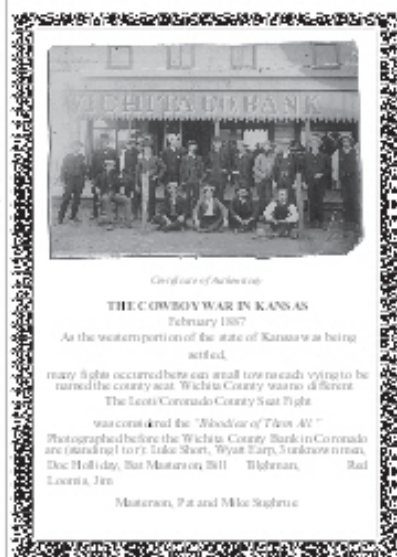
Monday Adjutant-General Campbell and Col. Richeson accompanied

a set of beings as represented to Governor Martin by that noble (?) Christian (?) Man (?) the president of the Leoti company. We are positive the governor by this hour knows who brought Conter in the county and here he was to drive our citizens from the polls with his pistols, to "round up" Coronado, and of the \$750 he was to receive for his half job.

The citizens told the adjutant-general that they were ready to put down their arms if he would remain and guarantee protection against the toughs imported to Leoti. Tuesday morning when it was known that Leoti men had surrounded Coronado and entrenched themselves in rifle pits during the night, the adjutant-general Col. Richeson said they would dig in and hold their rifles if Leoti's men were not armed. He immediately drove half mile south to a pit and ordered Patton and Wade, who were in the pits to leave. Later in the day warrants were served on thirteen citizens here, who willingly surrendered after the adjutant-general promised to accompany them. They went to Garden City.

Five of them were not near the scene of action when the shooting took place to our personal knowledge.

The final result of this shooting affair will result in the conviction of the son of the president of the Leoti town company, as he is the sole survivor of the organizers of the trouble.



Civilian of the Leoti

THE COWBOY WAR IN KANSAS

February 1887

As the western portion of the state of Kansas was being settled,

many fights occurred here on small towns vying to be named the county seat. Wichita County was no different.

The Leoti Coronado County Seat Fight

was considered the "Bloodiest of Them All."

Photographed before the Wichita County Bank in Coronado are (standing) L. T. Lake, Short, Wyatt, Camp, Johnson, Jensen, Doc Holliday, But, Matson, Bill Tidgman, Ruf Loomis, Jim

Matson, Pat and Mike Stephen