

## Col. Charles Goodnight

### Col. Charles Goodnight

West Texas

Revised June 14, 2017

---

#### Colonel Goodnight Story

Born: March 5, 1836 – Died: December 12, 1929

#### Find-a-Grave

A Miss Corrine Goodnight heard the gospel in Montana through Tom Lyness and companion in the mid-1920's. She was full of zeal and enthusiasm. She had heard of Colonel Goodnight in West Texas and decided to see if they were related. When she arrived, she found the Colonel in bad need of care. The Colonel asked her to care for him and marry him and stay with him as long as he lived and he would leave his inheritance to her, as he had no heirs. She married him and continued to care for him.

In the Summer of 1927, Tom Lyness sent word to Robert Chambers and he in turn asked Eva Thompson and companion to visit the Goodnights in West Texas. The Colonel was a good, honest, friendly man.

For years he had gone to Arizona for the winter. So in the winter of 1927, word was sent to Frank Dennison and Melvin Leen in Phoenix and they contacted the Goodnights. A tent was set up about two blocks from where the Goodnights stayed. The Colonel and Mrs. Goodnight walked to the meeting, never missing.

One day the governor of Texas sent some reporters to interview the Colonel there in Phoenix and get some Texas history. So he talked to them and kept looking at his large gold pocket watch. At a certain time, he said, "Gentlemen, about two blocks from here is some good preaching going on, and I'm going to hear it. You're welcome to wait until I get back to finish, or you're welcome to go along and listen, or you can make an appointment and come back tomorrow." He picked up his 10-gallon hat and started out. The reporters came back the next day. The Colonel was 90-91 years old at this time. He loved the meetings and took his stand to serve the Lord. He got a real clear vision of Truth.

In the summer of 1928, Colonel and Mrs. Goodnight were back in West Texas. The Colonel was baptized at the West Texas Convention at that time, by Jim McLeod. Two younger men, one on either side of the Colonel, were assisting the Colonel out into the water. The Colonel shook them loose and said, "I'd rather go out unassisted." And he did. The Colonel attended two conventions in West Texas in 1928-29.

In the fall of 1929, Colonel and Mrs. Goodnight were back in Phoenix, Arizona. Ralph Blackburn was Frank Dennison's companion. They were going to do some pioneering in Southern Arizona and decided to go to Tucson to have meetings. The Colonel suggested to Mrs. Goodnight that they go to Tucson and rent them a house so that the workers could stay with them and there would be an open home in Tucson. She readily agreed. So they moved to Tucson. Frank and Ralph had an apartment over the garage. The home had two bedrooms. Mae Dennison and Elma Wiebe stayed in the home some too, and had meetings in the area.

Colonel and Mrs. Goodnight were in the first Sunday morning meetings established in Tucson. He got right up and gave his testimony and told the people that these boys were bringing the Truth and for them to take heed to it!

One day he asked Ralph to drive his old 1925 Packard out to range. He wanted to check on the cattle. So they did, and it bothered the Colonel how some cattlemen didn't watch their cattle better. The cows would try to get the green grass under the cactus plants and would get the cactus stickers all in their nose. The Colonel would go along and pull the stickers out.

While they were out on the range, a big, dark cloud came up. So they knew they better head back to town. So Ralph was driving that old Packard 60 mph, the Colonel said, "Is that as fast as you can go?" Ralph said he thought he was really going fast, but he knew the car would go faster. So he said, "No, we can go faster." The Colonel said, "Why in the thunder don't you get a move on—that cloud really looks bad." So they kept out running it and made it to town before the flash flood came.

Ralph said the Colonel asked Ralph if he thought the Lord would forgive him because he had established several big churches in different places. Ralph assured the Colonel that he had been sincere when he had given to the churches, and the Colonel said, "Of course, I was sincere. I was doing what thought was right." He just wanted to know if the Lord would forgive him. The Colonel and Mrs. Goodnight were in Tucson when he died, the winter of 1929. Frank and Ralph were taking turns sitting with him. It was Ralph's

shift and a nurse had temporarily stepped out of the room and the Colonel breathed his last breath. Frank Dennison and Robert Chambers had the funeral. Mrs. Goodnight went on faithfully for a few years. She had a brother, Tom Goodnight, who was a banker. He wanted to help her with all her money. He was a hindrance to her. To our knowledge, she died outside the Truth, some years ago. The Colonel was fearless. He had a great impact on West Texas history. He was the only white man who could get along with the Indians. He would ride, fearless, sitting up straight on his horse right into an Indian camp, right in the middle of their war dances, etc. The Indians thought of him as a white god. He could talk peace to the Indian. He used to tell Ralph a lot of his stories. He would sit by the hour and talk. As told by Ralph Blackburn.

---

Editor's notes. **View Photo** – Phoenix, AZ 1929. Melvin Leen, Col Chas. Goodnight (with beard), Frank Dennison, Mae Dennison & Elma Weibe, workers who brought Col Goodnight along.

Biographer J. Evetts Haley inquired of Col. Goodnight as to the name of the church he had affiliated himself with, and Col Goodnight replied, **"I don't know, but it's a dam good one!"**

Goodnight's papers are housed in the Research Center of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon, where several Goodnight artifacts donated by Cleo Hubbard and his family are on display. Streets in several Panhandle towns bear his name, as do the Charles Goodnight Memorial Trail and the highway to Palo Duro Canyon State Scenic Park, which includes a restored dugout thought to have been his first 1876 quarters. The Goodnight ranchhouse, owned since 1933 by the Mattie Hedgecock estate of Amarillo, still stands near U.S. Highway 287. In 1958 Goodnight was one of the original five voted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City.

Books: Haley's monumental publication, ***Charles Goodnight: Cowman and Plainsman***, which first appeared in 1936, remains the standard scholarly work on the man.

By J. Evetts Haley

**Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman**

University of Oklahoma Press, 1981 (originally printed in 1936)

ISBN: 0806114533

502 pages

By William Thomas Hagan

**Charles Goodnight: Father of the Texas Panhandle ( Oklahoma Western Biographies), 2007**

University of Oklahoma Press; First Edition edition (September 30, 2007)

ISBN: 0806138270

147 pages

By Deborah Hedstrom-Page

**From Ranch to Railhead with Charles Goodnight (My American Journey)**

B&H Books (September 1, 2007)

ISBN: 0805432728

Ages 9-12; 87 pages