

KOONTZ, GEORGE
?-August 30, 1916

TWO YOUNG MEN INSTANTLY KILLED BY LIGHTNING

George Koontz, aged 19, and Thos. Miller, aged 27, were struck by lightning at the Miller sawmill on Luman creek, near the McFee ranch, twenty miles west of Wheatland about three o'clock Saturday afternoon during a storm and were instantly killed. Four other men, including two brothers of Mr. Miller, were occupying the bunkhouse at the time of the storm, and three of them were stunned, one of the brothers being made sick for some time, and a Mexican suffering from a paralyzed leg. One of the men mounted a horse and rode to the Ralph Hall ranch, where the alarm was given. The injured men have recovered.

A large bell hangs in the bunkhouse, and this is connected by a wire with the boarding house 100 yards away. The bell is used to awaken the men in the morning and call them to meals. The six men were grouped about the room, the two that were killed were directly under the wire, Mr. Koontz sitting on a sack of oats and Mr. Miller sitting on his heels in a crouched position. The flash struck a tree near the boarding house and ran out on a dead limb where it jumped to the wire following it to the bunkhouse and to the bodies of the two men, the four others being shocked. The two men died instantly, neither of them moved after being struck.

Mr. Koontz had been employed by John McGill on his ranch, and Tom McGill had sent him to the Miller mill to assist in getting out some lumber for the ranch. The Miller brothers owned the mill and live in that neighborhood. The accident has caused a great deal of sadness there as both young men were well liked.

The bodies were brought as far as the Mertz ranch Sunday morning by Mr. Hall, from where they were brought to Wheatland by automobiles by Dr. Phifer and David Cochrane.

A double funeral was held at the Congregational church at four o'clock Monday afternoon. Rev. Paxton conducted the services and interment was made in the Wheatland cemetery.