

The Early Settlements of Southern Colorado

By Francis T. Cheetham*

Pioneering has always been hazardous, especially so in southern Colorado. The early settlements of that section were made against heavy odds. The usual hardships endured in making isolated settlements, were doubled by the hostility of powerful and warlike tribes of Indians who inhabited the mountains and plains. To settle this region was like driving a salient into an enemy's lines.

In the early part of the nineteenth century the United States government came to the realization that the tribes east of the Mississippi River must be moved west. The pressure was becoming too great. The Indians were clinging to their tribal customs and manners of living. To continue their tribal life required an open country. In 1826 the government decided to move the Creeks west of the great river.¹ This was followed by the removal of the Cherokees, Choctaws and many of the northern tribes, and of itself created an undue pressure, because these tribes looked westward for their hunting grounds.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Taos, New Mexico, was the northern outpost of the Spanish possessions. It formed the base of the northward movement. In 1815 settlements were made at Arroyo Seco and Arroyo Hondo, each about ten miles from Taos.² The manner in which this advance was effected was by venturing out first with herds of sheep and goats, in quest of suitable pasture. The herders first erected small adobe huts for shelter against the elements and Indians. Next they planted small fields, taking water for irrigation, by means of ditches, from the adjacent streams. That same year, 1815, a settlement was attempted on the Rio Colorado near the present town of Questa.³ Jacob Fowler in his Journal, said that when he passed on February 7, 1822, the village was "abandoned by the inhabitation for fear

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¹ Act of May 20, 1826. *U. S. Statutes at Large*.

² Grant papers in File No. 137, U. S. Surveyor General's Office, Santa Fe. Testimony of Juan R. Quintana in Quintana vs. Leon, Cause No. 343, Taos County District Court. See also R. E. Twitchell, *The Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, I, 380.

³ Letter of Julius DeMunn to Gov. Clark, *Old Santa Fe*, I, 380.

of the Indians now at war with them."⁴ Soon after the settlements at Arroyo Hondo and Arroyo Seco came those of San Antonio (now Valdez) and San Cristobal. In 1842 a permanent settlement was made at the Rio Colorado.⁵

On the west side of the Rio Grande adventuresome pioneers founded Abiquiu and Ojo Caliente, prior to 1747. In August of that year both of these plazas were raided by the Utes and Navajos, and the survivors fled to places of safety.⁶ Abiquiu was re-occupied after several unsuccessful attempts, in 1754.⁷ In 1808 it contained about 2,000 inhabitants. Ojo Caliente was resettled in 1768-9. These formed a base for La Cueva, Vallecito⁸ and Pataca.⁹ Vallecito was abandoned in the Ute war but was soon re-occupied.

That the Spaniards had hoped to invade what is now Colorado cannot be doubted. As early as January 22, 1788, they aided Chief Paruanarimuco and his band of Comanches in making a settlement called by the Spaniards, San Carlos, on the Rio Napesta (Arkansas).¹⁰ In 1833 an attempt was made to establish a settlement on the Conejos.¹¹ This failed, although, according to a statement of Richens L. Wootton, Espinosa, the bandit, was a settler on the Conejos. When Wootton first knew him, Espinosa was law abiding. He afterwards turned "outlaw" and became a menace to the country.¹²

During the Mexican regime, 1822-1846, numerous inroads had been made upon the homes of the frontiersmen, by the Navajos and Apaches. In 1844 the Utes were at war with the Mexicans.¹³ This impeded further efforts at colonization, on the part of the Mexicans. Governor Armijo, between the years of 1838 and 1846, endeavored to encourage the northern advance by making large grants of land to persons well known to him to be Americans, or in close contact with Americans.¹⁴

At the commencement of the Mexican war, Mexico claimed the territory north to the Arkansas river and from the headwaters of that stream north to the 42nd parallel. Texas also claimed a strip lying between the Arkansas and the Rio Grande, and north to the same line. The Lone Star republic had, however, never been able to establish her possession. The Indians also claimed the

country. The Ute tribe laid claim to the entire mountain district, including the San Luis Valley. They also extended their buffalo hunts eastward on the plains. The Comanches claimed the Greenhorn country, named after one of their great chiefs, and the South Park (the Bayou Salade of the trappers). The Arapahoes occupied the South Platte region, and one band of Cheyennes had moved from the North, at the instance of William Bent, and established themselves, under his protection, on the Arkansas river. The Jicarilla band of Apaches claimed the Las Animas country and roamed at will throughout northern New Mexico and southern Colorado.

With the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the sovereignty of Mexico passed to the United States. The claims of Texas were soon terminated.

Now let us see what happened. What was the status of the territory embraced in the state of Colorado?

Congress, in 1834, passed the "Intercourse Act," declaring all territory west of the Mississippi river, not included in the states of Louisiana and Missouri and the Territory of Arkansas, to be Indian country.¹⁵ This act, among other things, prohibited any trade in the Indian country without a license from the proper Indian agent. It further forbade any settlements upon lands reserved to Indian tribes. All of Colorado therefore became Indian country and subject to the provisions and restrictions of this act. On September 9, 1850, the organic acts, creating the Territories of New Mexico and Utah, were approved. That portion of Colorado lying between the Rocky Mountains and the west line of Texas and south of the 38th parallel was attached to New Mexico. That portion west of the Rocky Mountains, in contemplation of Congress, became a part of Utah.¹⁶ The balance remained Indian country until the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, May 30, 1854.

The "Intercourse Act" of 1834 tended to retard development, for it was difficult for the pioneers to subsist without trading with their neighbors, the Indians. Moreover, when the government began to treat with the several tribes, the settlers might find themselves upon a reservation and all their labors lost. Soon after creating the Territories of New Mexico and Utah, Congress realized that these acts superseded the "Intercourse Act." Therefore, in order to carry out its Indian policy, it passed an act extending the application of the "Intercourse Act" to those territories in-

⁴ E. Coues, *Journal of Jacob Fowler*, 102.

⁵ G. F. Ruxton, *Adventures in Mexico and the Rocky Mountains*, 204-5. Also, Files Nos. 61, 76, 93, U. S. Sur. Gen. Off., Santa Fe.

⁶ Twitchell, *The Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, I, 22-6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 233-4.

⁸ File No. 108, U. S. Sur. Gen. Off., Santa Fe.

⁹ Do. File No. 105.

¹⁰ Twitchell, *The Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, I, 328; II, 311.

¹¹ L. R. Hafen, "Mexican Land Grants in Colorado," in the *Colorado Magazine*, IV, 81-93. See also, File No. 109, Sur. Gen. Off., Santa Fe.

¹² H. L. Conard, "Uncle Dick" Wootton, 285.

¹³ Testimony of Jose Ma. Chavez, File No. 108, U. S. Sur. Gen. Off., Santa Fe.

¹⁴ A deed made at Taos, March 11, 1844, by Vigil & St. Vrain to Chas. Bent for one-sixth interest in the Las Animas Grant shows the trend of affairs. See *History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado*, (Baskin & Co., 1881), 338.

¹⁵ U. S. *Statutes at Large*, IV, 730.

¹⁶ See the able paper by L. R. Hafen entitled "Status of the San Luis Valley, 1850-1861," in the *Colorado Magazine*, III, 46-49.

sofar as it applied to trade and intercourse with the Indians.¹⁷ This made matters more vexatious for the settlers.

On December 30, 1849, James C. Calhoun, as U. S. Indian agent, concluded a treaty with the Ute tribe at Abiquiu, which provided that the government should "at its earliest convenience designate, settle and adjust the boundaries," etc., of the Utah country.¹⁸ In 1856, and again in 1859, various temporary reserves were designated by the U. S. Indian agent. By executive order made October 3, 1861, the Uinta Valley was set apart to the Uinta band of Utes. A treaty was made with the Tabeguache tribe October 7, 1863, which designated for a time the country to be held by that branch of the great Ute tribe.¹⁹ It can therefore be readily seen that the policy of the general government was not intended to favor or encourage the development of what has since become the great state of Colorado.

Before the United States acquired the territory which came to it from Mexico, some scattered and isolated settlements had been attempted, within the limits of the present state, aside from the establishments of the licensed traders. Trading forts alone are not considered within the scope of this article, for they were erected, not for colonization purposes, but for profit from conditions then existing.

As early as 1830, a Frenchman, by the name of Maurice, is said to have come out from Detroit and located on Adobe creek in what is now Fremont county. He gathered some Mexican families about him so that in 1840 thirteen houses had been erected. That year the enterprising firm of Bent & St. Vrain established a post in the neighborhood and placed Charles Beaubien in charge. In 1846 the place was abandoned by all save Maurice, the founder.²⁰

In 1842 some Mexican families from Taos squatted at the Arkansas river, near the mouth of the Fountain. Jim Beckwourth, who had fought his way to fame among the Crows, claimed to have been the moving spirit. He had just married a Taos woman and opened a trading post at Pueblo as it was named. He remained that winter and soon after migrated to California. As a trading post it could not meet the competition of the famous Bent's Fort, so it appears that the squatters did attempt some farming. This post was wiped out by the Utes on Christmas day, 1854.²¹

A settlement was made on the Greenhorn before the Mexican war. George Frederick Ruxton, the English traveler and army

officer, mentions it in the account of his journey from Mexico City to the Arkansas River in 1846 and 1847.²² Captain Beckwith, who accompanied the ill-fated Gunnison expedition in 1853 found six Mexican families residing there.²³ Alexander (Zan) Hicklin settled on the same stream.²⁴ Hicklin married Estefena Bent, a daughter of the late Governor Charles Bent and claimed the land through his wife by virtue of a deed made by Vigil and St. Vrain the original grantees, in 1844. Ovando J. Hollister in his map of Colorado of 1867 called this settlement Hicklin.²⁵

A party of twelve to fifteen men, in September, 1846, left Taos under the leadership of John L. Hatcher, and located at the Las Animas river, near the present city of Trinidad. Here, in the following spring, Hatcher and William Bent dug an irrigation ditch, broke up land and planted sixty acres of corn. Later in the season, however, the Indians came, stole the ranch stock and forced the white men to vacate.²⁶

John H. Hatcher was a mountain man of nerve and courage. He figured in the trials of the assassins of Governor Bent, at Taos in April, 1847.²⁷

George Gold, another mountain man of Taos, in 1848, attempted to make a settlement at Costilla, near the present Colorado-New Mexico line. He failed on account of opposition from the owners of the Sangre de Cristo Grant. The next year a number of families established themselves permanently on this stream. In 1851 a store was opened at Costilla by Moretz, Bielshowski & Koenig. This was afterwards sold to F. W. Posthoff, and by him to Ferd. Meyer, formerly a post trader at Fort Garland. The first water appropriation at Costilla was the Acequia Madre, or mother ditch, which was made in 1852.²⁸ A portion of this settlement extended into Colorado.²⁹

During the summer of 1851 a colony started a plaza on the Rio Culebra near the present town of San Luis in Colorado. Most of the people came from Taos and were induced to go there by Charles Beaubien, the then owner of the Sangre de Cristo Grant, which included the lands now embraced in Costilla county and a portion of Taos county, New Mexico. Don Carlos had been Judge of the Northern District of New Mexico, during the pre-territorial

²² Ruxton, *op. cit.*, 216.

²³ Capt. Beckwith's Diary, Ex. Doc. 1st sess. 33d Cong. No. 129, p. 33.

²⁴ "The Hicklins on the Greenhorn" by D. W. Working in the *Colorado Magazine*, IV, 183-8. Also, *History of the Arkansas Valley*, 765-6.

²⁵ O. J. Hollister, *The Mines of Colorado* (Springfield, Mass., 1867).

²⁶ Deposition of Calvin Jones in Matter of Adjudication of Water Rights, Water Dist. No. 18, Las Animas County. By courtesy of Judge A. W. McHendrie of Trinidad.

²⁷ L. H. Garrard, *Wah-To-Yah and the Taos Trail*, 223.

²⁸ Testimony of Ferd. Meyer in case of Ferd. Meyer v. Acequia Madre, Taos County Dist. Court, Cause No. 841.

²⁹ A short *History of San Luis* by Edmond C. von Diest. MS. in possession of Mr. Paul B. Albright of Taos, N. M.

¹⁷ U. S. Statutes at Large, Act approved Feb. 27, 1851.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, IX, 985.

¹⁹ F. W. Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, II 875.

²⁰ *History of the Arkansas Valley* (Baskin & Co., 1881), 545-6.

²¹ Ruxton, *op. cit.*, 216; Conrad, *op. cit.*, 364; T. D. Bonner, *Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth*, 383; Hafen, "The Fort Pueblo Massacre and the Punitive Expedition Against the Utes," in the *Colorado Magazine*, IV, 49-58.

days. Through his efforts the settlement on the Culebra proved stable and was soon followed by San Pedro in 1852-3, San Acacio and Chama in 1853-4.³⁰

The irrigation system of the San Luis district is a good index to the progress in the valley. Early water appropriations were made as follows: San Luis Peoples Ditch and San Pedro, 1852; Montez, 1853; Ballejos, 1854; San Acacio, 1856; Cerro, 1857; Francisco Sanchez, 1858, and San Luis Mill, 1859.³¹

The flour mill at San Luis was erected by Colonel Ceran St. Vrain and Harvey E. Easterday, both of Taos. The former was a noted trader who had had interests at Bent's Fort, St. Vrain's Fort, the Adobe Fort on the Canadian, Fort Maurice, Santa Fe, Taos and later in Mora. He had purchased a flour mill at Taos from Workman and Rowland who led a colony to California during the Texas troubles of 1841. In the first issue of the *Rocky Mountain News*, Colonel St. Vrain is mentioned as having arrived at Cherry Creek, Colorado, with a train load of flour from Taos. Easterday was a millwright. The firm of St. Vrain & Easterday opened a store at Canon City in the spring of 1860.³²

As San Luis grew and the social problems of the settlers became complex, Judge Beaubien promulgated certain rules for the government of the Plaza, which being translated from the Spanish are as follows:

“RULES FOR THE TOWN OF SAN LUIS OF THE CULEBRA

“Inasmuch as no civilized society can endure in good order, peace and union, which constitutes the happiness of the civilized peoples and establishes the superiority and advantages which Christian people enjoy over the manners of the barbarians, we come to propose to establish the following rules, viz:

- 1st. To maintain the cleanliness of the town and not consent that there be placed therein any nuisance.
- 2nd. That drunken revels will not be permitted in the presence of the families of the town, nor fights nor similar disorders.
- 3rd. That no person from outside will be admitted to live in the town, without having previously presented himself before the Judge or Justice of the Peace and received his permission, whether or not he may have acquired property in the town.
- 4th. It will not be permitted that any obstruction be placed in the entrances and outlets of the town.

³⁰ Von Diest Ms. *supra*.
³¹ In the Matter of Adjudication of Water Rights, Water Dist. No. 24, Costilla County. Decree of June 14, 1889. The correct title to said Cause being “In the Matter of a certain Petition for adjudication of Water Rights for Irrigation in Water District No. 24.”
³² *History of the Arkansas Valley* (Baskin & Co., 1881), 553.

5th. Every one who wishes to take a dwelling or lots in the town, will have to request it of the Judge, paying its value which will remain for the benefit of the chapel.

(Signed) CHARLES BEAUBIEN.

Witnesses, J. L. GASPAR, NASARIO GALLEGOS.³³

Fort Massachusetts was established by order of the War Department, June 22, 1852. Co. F. 1st Dragoons and Co. H. 3rd U. S. Infantry were garrisoned there under the command of Major Blake. This, no doubt, greatly relieved the settlers from the danger of hostile Indians, as the fort was only about twenty miles from San Luis. This post was unoccupied from November 3, 1853, to April 30, 1854, and open hostilities soon followed.³⁴

In the spring of 1854, a colony led by Lafayette Head was planted on the Conejos river at Guadalupe, nearly opposite the present town of Conejos in the county bearing the same name. Head was a leader worthy of mention. He came to New Mexico with Colonel Price's regiment during the Mexican war, and participated in the military operations at Taos, in February, 1847. It is not unlikely that Mark Head, one of the noted mountain men slain in the Taos uprising, was a near relative. Lafayette was made Indian agent at Abiquiu, and afterwards sheriff of Rio Arriba county. He represented his district in the New Mexico legislature in 1856 and 1858.

The settlement on the Conejos could not be dislodged, although the Indians attacked a few weeks after the first men arrived. It became the base for numerous plazas soon after established. In 1855 four appropriations of water were made. The second one was for Head's mill which was probably the first flour mill within the limits of the present state of Colorado. In 1856 eleven irrigation ditches were dug. Next year nine more were added.³⁵ From the dates of the water appropriations we may reasonably conclude that the Plazas of San Jose and San Rafel were founded about 1856, Rincones in 1857, San Juan in 1861 and Las Sauces in 1867.

The years 1854 and 1855 mark the beginning of the end of the claims of the Utes and Apaches to southern Colorado. They first went on the war path in March, 1854. On the 6th of that month they had a fight with Co. H. 2nd Dragoons at Cangillon river. On the 30th of the month they attacked a small force of troops, consisting of Co. I and a detachment of Co. F. 1st Dragoons, in the Embudo Mountains, near the village of Cieneguilla, New

³³ Book 1, page 256. Public Records Costilla County, Colorado.
³⁴ Archives of the War Department, Washington.
³⁵ In the Matter of Priority of Water Rights in District 25, Conejos County, Colorado.

Mexico. The Indians won a decided victory, and came near annihilating the regulars. A punitive expedition was organized at once, which overtook the Indians in the box canon of the Ojo Caliente River.³⁶

In spite of these hostilities R. L. Wootton, Charles Ottabee and others made a settlement that year at the mouth of the Huerfano. The following winter it was attacked and the settlers fled for safety. Pueblo was wiped out. Costilla was attacked but not abandoned. The governor of New Mexico called for volunteers. Six companies were mustered in under the command of Lieut.-Col. Ceran St. Vrain. An expedition was organized under the command of Col. T. T. Fauntleroy, 1st Dragoons. The combined force marched to Fort Massachusetts and from there to the Saguache country. On March 19, 1855, the troops engaged the Indians and defeated them. Two days later they again overhauled the retreating foe near Poncha Pass. On the 29th of April another fight occurred on the headwaters of the Arkansas, which was disastrous to the Indians and two days later they were again punished in the Saguache Valley. The volunteers under Colonel St. Vrain crossed the divide and gave the enemy another whipping at the Las Animas river. This cleared the San Luis Park and the Las Animas and decided for all time the sovereignty of those beautiful and fertile valleys.

In 1854 the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act loosened the shackles incident to the "Intercourse Act" from that portion of Colorado which was incorporated into those Territories. When freed of this handicap the lead in settlements gained in the south was soon overcome, yes, even distanced, in northern Colorado by the gold rush.

³⁶ Report of Brig. Gen. Garland, Department Commander, Ex. Doc. 2d sess. 33d Cong. Vol. I, part 2, p. 33.

Fort Jackson and the Early Fur Trade on the South Platte

By LeRoy R. Hafen

The trading company of Sarpy & Fraeb was formed in the late thirties and during its short life played an important part in the fur trade activity in the region that was to become Colorado. Although this company founded the trading post, "Fort Jackson," on the South Platte, and conducted a business of considerable proportions—as such undertakings were then rated—it has heretofore received no place in Colorado history or in the literature of the American fur trade of the West. The data here presented is gathered largely from the Chouteau-Maffitt Collection of fur trade papers in possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

The partners—Peter A. Sarpy and Henry Fraeb—had been prominent in the western fur trade for some years prior to their joint venture on the South Platte. Sarpy was of a French family from St. Louis and as early as 1824 had been appointed Indian trader at Bellevue, eastern Nebraska.¹ He continued in the Indian trade for thirty years. Fraeb was of German extraction. We do not know definitely at what date he entered the fur trade, but he was one of the partners in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company from 1830 to 1834. After dissolution of the Sarpy & Fraeb partnership Fraeb continued to carry on trading and trapping expeditions. He was killed near Battle Creek, Colorado, in August, 1841, while besieged by a large band of Indians.²

Pratte, Chouteau & Co., successor to the Western Department of the American Fur Company,³ financed the Sarpy & Fraeb ven-

¹ S. D. Bangs, "History of Sarpy County [Nebraska]" in *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, II: 293, 300. Mr. Bangs met "Col." Sarpy at St. Mary's, Iowa, in 1855, and writes of him (*Ibid.*, 299, 300): "He was about 55 years of age; rather below the medium height; black hair, dark complexion; well-knit and compact frame, and a heavy beard that had scorned a razor's touch for many a year. His manner was commanding; his address fluent, and in the presence of the opposite sex polished and refined. He preferred the freedom of the western prairies to the society and refinement of civilized life and was never happier than in visiting the Omaha wigwams under the bluffs near the old trading post, the Omahas regarding him as their Ne-ka-gab-he, or big chief. To one of their number—Ne-ko-ma, his reputed wife—he was more than once indebted for the preservation of his life when attacked by hostile Indians. She had been the wife of Dr. Cole, the surgeon of the post at the Indian agency at Fort Calhoun. Her influence with the tribe was unbounded, and to please her they were often feasted at Sarpy's expense. She is now [1887] living at the Omaha agency, enjoying a pension from his estate."

Sarpy was drowned in the Missouri river in 1861.—*Rocky Mountain News*, Dec. 18, 1861.

² Jim Baker was in this fight. Data regarding it from this Colorado frontiersman will be the basis of a subsequent article.

³ The American Fur Company, founded by John Jacob Astor, was chartered by New York state in 1808 and established its Western Department at St. Louis in 1822. Pratt, Chouteau & Co., of St. Louis, purchased the Western Department in 1834. The name was changed to "Pierre Chouteau, Jr., & Co." in 1838, and under this title business was conducted for more than twenty years.—H. M. Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, 167, 320, 383.

ture in the spring of 1837. Trade merchandise to the amount of \$10,909.75 was billed to Sarpy & Fraeb on April 10, 1837, and in addition cash and goods totaling \$564.57 were furnished from the retail store of Pratte, Chouteau & Co.⁴ Even cash for traveling expenses was advanced to Sarpy, and the men accompanying him were supplied with personal equipment and goods in varying amounts which were charged to the account of Sarpy & Fraeb.

This retail store account gives the names of a number of the company employees, among whom are listed: Michel Sioto, Ls. Lajeunesse, Wm. Primeau, Ls. B. Myres, John H. Albert,⁵ Chas. Kinney, ——— Bartlett, ——— Daugherty, Benito Garcia, Jacob Hawkins, Gilbert Jackson, ——— Trudelle, ——— Woods and Antoine Latereuse. A wage of less than \$200 per year was sufficient inducement to secure the needed number of men for this fur trade venture to the Rocky Mountains. Legal contracts were executed specifying the terms of employment. Some of these were in French on printed forms; others were written in English. For example, the contract of Michel Sioto—on a printed form, in French—provides for fifteen months' employment on the Platte River and vicinity as voyageur for \$200.⁶ Some of these fur company employees could sign their names to contracts and promissory notes, but usually a cross was the mark attached.

Wagons⁷ were employed for the transportation of the goods to the South Platte River, but the route taken is not definitely known. The party may have followed the trail up the Platte or may have journeyed along the road up the Arkansas and over the divide northward.

The weeks immediately following arrival on the South Platte were probably spent in building the adobe fort for reception of their goods. To this trading post was given the name "Fort Jackson,"⁸ but no documents have been found which give an explanation of the origin of the name.⁹

⁴ Chouteau-Maffitt Collection of fur trade papers owned by the Missouri Historical Society at St. Louis. Calendar Nos. 705 and 706.

⁵ John H. Albert in later years settled in southern Colorado and died at Walsenburg in 1899. He narrowly escaped the Pueblo uprising in New Mexico in January, 1847. In 1895 he attended the Mountain and Plain festival at Denver and on that occasion a photograph was made of Albert and two other early scouts, Jim Baker and Philander Simmons. This photograph and a story of the men appeared in the *Denver Post*, Jan. 24, 1904. Albert was one of the early trappers who could write. His signature is attached to a receipt from Sarpy & Fraeb, dated "Fort Lookout, Oct. 6, 1838."

⁶ Chouteau-Maffitt Collection. Calendar No. 704.

⁷ In a letter to Fraeb dated Feb. 18, 1838, Sarpy writes of a transaction which will reduce the load on the returning wagons.—Chouteau-Maffitt Collection. Calendar No. 720.

⁸ The identity of Fort Jackson has been but recently worked out. Rufus Sage in 1842 and J. C. Fremont in 1843 speak of four forts on the South Platte but name only forts St. Vrain and Lupton. The others they speak of as deserted. Wislizenus in 1839 mentions the forts named by Sage and by Fremont and mentions a third—Fort Vasquez. This leaves but one unidentified.

In the fall of 1924 the present writer discovered the ruins of this fourth fort at the head of the Platte Valley ditch near the town of Ione, but was unable at the time to find any clue to its name. H. M. Chittenden in his classic *Ameri-*

In September an inventory of the goods at the fort was taken and on December 2, 1837, part of these were sent down to the Arkansas river for trade with the Indians during the winter.¹⁰ (See part of the invoice reproduced on page 12.)

Sarpy & Fraeb's winter trade was not confined to Fort Jackson. James Robertson took goods to the Arkansas River and Sarpy went to the North Fork of the Platte in the vicinity of Fort Laramie. Competing neighbors were too numerous to be welcome on the South Platte and the fur trade competition was very keen in the whole region during the late thirties. Lancaster P. Lupton maintained the trading establishment of Fort Lupton (on the present Ewing ranch, one mile north of the town of Fort Lupton); Louis Vasquez and Andrew Sublette were in the field with Fort Vasquez (one and one-half miles south of present Platteville) as their depot; and Bent, St. Vrain & Co., in addition to their famous Fort Bent on the Arkansas, maintained Fort Lookout on the South Platte.¹¹ Fort Lookout was later known as Fort George and as Fort St. Vrain and was located on the right bank of the Platte, one and one-half miles north of the mouth of St. Vrain creek. The various concerns sparred for position and advantage in the trade, and liquor imported from New Mexico was a potent factor in the contest, for "Taos Lightnin'" would extract robes from the Indians when nothing else was effective.

A letter written by Mr. Sarpy to his partner, Fraeb, from the vicinity of Fort Laramie on February 18, 1838, gives interesting sidelights on the fur trade and its methods. He tells of the competition of Papin & Picotte and of B. Orriek & Co., and speaks of buying St. Vrain's robes to get rid of his opposition. He has 60 gallons of liquor remaining, and expects Carrier to come up from

can Fur Trade of the Far West does not mention this fourth fort, says nothing of Fort Jackson on the South Platte, and evidently found no data upon it. In writing of the South Platte forts in the December, 1925, number of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, I called attention to this "unnamed fort" and temporarily called it "Trappers Fort." This name was also used on my map of "Historic Forts, Trails and Battlefields of Colorado," in *Municipal Facts* (Denver, Colo.), May, 1925.

A recent perusal of the Chouteau-Maffitt Collection revealed considerable data on Fort Jackson and the activity of Sarpy & Fraeb. The exact location of their post on the South Platte is not revealed by the papers, but inferences and various types of evidence point to our "unnamed fort" as being in reality Fort Jackson. Also, the other three forts were definitely identified and known. Finally, the *Rocky Mountain News* of December 18, 1861, in telling of the recent death of Peter A. Sarpy, gives this added information: "He was for some years the proprietor of a trading post about thirty miles below this city [Denver]." This distance fits the location of the ruins near Ione. (Mr. Byers, editor of the *News*, had visited Sarpy at Bellevue, eastern Nebraska, previously). From the various data now available it appears indisputable that the ruins near Ione are those of Sarpy & Fraeb's Fort Jackson.

⁹ The fort may have been named in honor of ex-President Andrew Jackson, or was possibly named for Gilbert Jackson, one of the employees.

¹⁰ The inventory is in the Chouteau-Maffitt Collection, Calendar No. 722; the invoice is Calendar No. 729.

¹¹ See article by the present writer on "The Early Fur Trade Posts on the South Platte," in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XII: 334-41, and his "Map of Historic Forts, Trails and Battlefields of Colorado" *Municipal Facts* [Denver] for May, 1925. New data on Fort Lookout was recently found in the Indian Department Archives at Washington, D. C.

	Amount brought forward	
1 Doz paper covered Looking glasses	160c	1.60
6 Large Britannia Looking Glasses	33c	1.98
6 assorted Do Do	25	1.50
2 Doz finger rings	40c	1.80
50 Doz combs	60c	1.50
16 Assorted pins	14c	2.24
5 Battle Axes	1.42	7.10
25 Squaw Axes	20c	5.00
15 Copeland Knives	26c	3.90
6 Long Pins	5.11	30.60
6 Short Do	4.95	29.70
7 powder Horns	2.25	15.75
Blunts and gun wires		1.00
50 lbs powder	33c	16.50
100 lb Trade Salt	8c	8.00
1/2 Doz Knives, assorted sizes	2.80	15.75
1/2 Doz Knives, cutting	1.70	3.84
3 Sheet Iron Do	2.00	5.50
1 frying pan		1.30
2 Tin cups		1.20
15 gallons Alcohol	4.10	16.50
40 lb common Tobacco	11c	4.40
5 House Bells	15c	2.25
50 Sheet Iron		2.50
1 published Do	1.80	3.00
12 lb Vermilion	1.32	15.84
3/4 lb Brass Knives wire	55c	3.02
3 lb Iron wire	15c	45
3 Callers Axes	1.70	5.10
2 Colver Shirts	1.21	2.42
1 pair silver ornaments		1.50
1 Silver Half moon gorget		3.00
1 small sword		2.25
35 lb coffee	1/2c	17.50
60 lb Sugar	13c	8.10
10 lb Rice	5c	50
20 lb Lead for use	1.6	1.40
Total		\$ 937.93

Fort Jackson April 22^d 1838.
E. Guerin.

PARTIAL LIST OF GOODS SENT FROM FORT JACKSON FOR TRADE ON THE ARKANSAS RIVER, 1838

the South Platte with more. He says that he has 180 packs of robes and that if the Indians come in as expected he will get 400 packs. These he expects to take down the Platte in a barge. He asserts frankly: "My object is to do all the harm possible to the opposition and yet without harming ourselves."¹²

Mr. Sarpy probably carried out his announced intention and floated his robes down the Platte river, while those gathered from farther south were hauled by oxen and wagons down the Arkansas River road to the Missouri. The extent of the season's trade is indicated by this account on the books of Pratte, Chouteau & Co.:

"St. Louis, 30 June, 1838.

"Pratte Chouteau & Co.

To—Sarpy & Fraeb—Dr.

2761 Buffalo Robes.....	3371½	\$ 9,318.37
159 Buffalo Calf Robes.....	250	397.50
205 Red Calf.....	331⅓	68.33
53 Beaver.....	591⅓	325
2 Cub Bear.....	1/100	1/50
2 Fox.....	25	.50
5 Rat.....		.30
2 Otter.....		8.00
105 Tongues.....	56¼	59.06

\$10,046.93¹³

It is worthy of note that over nine-tenths of the product is buffalo robes, while beaver skins appear at an almost negligible figure.

Another instructive account appears in the Chouteau papers. The page is titled: "Memo of amount paid from the outfit of Messrs. S. & F. up to March 1, 1838." It lists 46 men and the total amount expended is \$2,856.89½.¹⁴

That the competition was not entirely to the liking of Sarpy & Fraeb is indicated by a letter from Henry Fraeb to Mr. St. Vrain, written from Fort Jackson on April 18, 1838. It says in part: "I made a proposition to Mr. George Bent offering to enter into co-partnership with your company for this summer's trade. Mr. Bent can give you more particulars."¹⁵

On April 20, 1838, Mr. Fraeb left Fort Jackson for St. Louis, leaving Abel Baker, Jr., in charge of the fort. J. B. Guerin was

¹² Chouteau-Maffitt Collection. Calendar No. 720.

¹³ Ibid., No. 733.

¹⁴ Some of the names listed which are of special interest follow: William Proveau, Lewis B. Myers, Gilbert Jackson, Juan Jesus, John H. Albert, Washington Kelley, Jos. Bartlett, Labonte, Charles Ottabee, Vasquez & Sublette, Bent & St. Vrain, James Robertson, and L. P. Lupton.

¹⁵ Chouteau-Maffitt Collection, Calendar No. 728.

given charge of the liquor trade and definite instructions regarding its conduct were left in writing. Buffalo robes were to be taken at \$3 and \$4 each and liquor sold at \$4 per pint pure.¹⁶ Interesting instructions were left for Baker, and these are presented as Document A, following this article.¹⁷

At some time during the summer of 1838, Fraeb, Sarpy, or both partners, conferred with Bent, St. Vrain & Co., and the decision was reached to sell Fort Jackson and its goods outright to the competing company. On October 3, 1838, William Bent reached Fort Jackson and apprised Baker of the sale. An inventory of goods at the fort was immediately taken and the transfer made.¹⁸ The men at the fort were paid off by the purchasing company and Mr. Baker, superintendent of the fort, went immediately into the employ of Bent, St. Vrain & Co. (A letter written by Baker on April 1, 1839, contains interesting bits of historical information and is reproduced as Document B, following this article.)

It appears probable that the adobe fort itself changed hands without a cash consideration, for no entry on the books indicate that money was paid for the adobe structure. Bent, St. Vrain & Co.'s Fort Lookout was less than ten miles north of Fort Jackson and the new proprietors could have little use for the Sarpy & Fraeb post. It was probably never again occupied for it was already deserted and "much delapidated in appearance" when Rufus Sage passed it in 1842.¹⁹

In the years that have since elapsed Fort Jackson passed from remembrance and the almost level surface of the site gives today but slight indications of the hidden foundation of the one-time primitive mart. The life and conditions the old fort housed and typified have as completely disappeared from the region.

DOCUMENT A²⁰

Fraeb's Instructions for Care of Fort Jackson

Fort Jackson, April 22, 1838.

A. Baker Jr. Sir:

I leave this Fort tomorrow for St. Louis and I leave you here in charge, of Fort Jackson and all the property here belonging to Sarpy & Fraeb in and about said Fort and also of the trade of said Fort excepting the trade of Liquor which is as according to your proposal and our agreement at the time of my employing

you that you would take charge of all the business and trade of this Fort except that of the Liquor you will therefore take charge of the trade & of all of the goods but not of the Liquor of that I have given the sole charge, to Guerin with instructions, the following instructions I wish you strictly to conform to, and act accordingly.

1st. You will take a correct account of stock of the goods you have in store, as soon as possible after you have more safely secured the Fort from invasions by altering the gate for the acct of stock that I have with me to take to St. Louis, is not perhaps exact from the insufficiency of time we had, to make it out.

2nd. You will keep the acets of Guerin's trade as well as of your own, you will settle no debts that any of your men may contract at any other Fort (nor purchase anything of any other Fort for the company) contract no debts whatever, unless it be an extreme case, and absolutely necessary.

3d. Don't let any of your men, leave the Fort unless it be necessary and in no case to leave the Fort over night, unless it be to go to Indians to trade, or go for meat.

4th. As you have not a sufficiency of men, you will hire two or three more your first opportunity, hire Spaniards if possible and don't give them over Ten Dollars per month.

5th. You will build a Store, Robe House, and a dwelling House, of Dobies in the north and west sides of the Fort according to the plans I told you yesterday.

6th. Should you have orders for goods from either of the superintendents of the Forts upon the River let them have goods but not without written orders unless the superintendent should order in person.

7th. You will for further security of the Fort then mentioned in article 1st as soon as your other duties will permit have the Fort cleaned and freed of the manure, in and about it to guard against fire.

8th. You will have your animals guarded while out in the prairie and Forted every night except that perhaps after any of them may have had a hard day's work, and you have no reason to think any danger is near you in such a case you can risk part of them out at night but let that part be small.

9th. After you have strengthened your Fort by hiring the men that you are authorized to hire in article 4th should you hear of Indians not too far from the Fort having Robes you will send a man with Guerin to trade.

10th. As regards trading meat, I dont want you to trade any

¹⁶ Ibid., No. 731.

¹⁷ Ibid., No. 730.

¹⁸ The inventory fills nine pages. A photostat copy of this list was recently secured by the State Historical Society of Colorado from the Missouri Historical Society.

¹⁹ R. B. Sage, *Rocky Mountain Life*, 209.

²⁰ Documents A and B were collated with the originals by Mrs. Nettie H. Beauregard, Archivist of the Missouri Historical Society.

surplus stock and dont pay any high price for what you do trade in trading for Robes let the prices of goods to whites calculated for Robes at \$4.00 each regulate your trade.

HENRY FRAEB FOR
SARPY & FRAEB.

Fort Jackson April 23rd 1838.

DOCUMENT B

Baker's Report on Disposal of the Fort

Fort Lookout April 1st, 1839.

Messrs Sarpy & Fraeb

Gentm

Your favor of the 25th July last came duly to hand pr Mr. Wm Bent Oct. 3d last upon receipt of which I delivered Messrs. Bent St. Vrain & Co Fort Jackson, with its merchandise Peltries Live stock, utensils etc etc with an inventory of the same a copy of which I herewith forward with their receipt for the same. I have not been able to collect any debts due you, and I herewith hand you enclosed, all the due notes in my possession, belonging to you, possibly should I retain them, I might be able to collect something during the summer, but as you have given me no instructions, how to transmit, should I collect, I enclose the notes viz Francois Sasanary's note dated Oct. 24, 1837 for \$141.25 payable on demand he is yet the west side of the mountains.

Henry Beers' note dated Oct. 24th, 1837 for \$34.00 on demand. He is in the Snake country.

Messrs Bent St. Vrain & Co. paid off all of my men, as well as myself, when I gave up Fort Jackson the amounts paid them is as following viz. John H. Albert \$124.52. John B. Guerrin \$57.33. Maurice Laduke \$19.00 (*who I hired to cut hay he was hired 1 mo & 3 days at \$20.00 per month*) A. Baker Jr. \$60.62½ amount Pd Spaniards, \$75.08 Total Pd by B. S. & Co. to men \$336.55½ enclosed I hand you receipts of the white men, Pd by B. S. & Co.

I delivered Mr. C. St. Vrain through Mr. W. Bent all of the private property of Mr. Henry Fraeb, viz. V. J. Herring's note,²¹ dated April 21st 1838 for \$32.00 payable on or before 1st Sept 1838. also 1 second hand, Dragoon cloth saddle cover, 1 pr Iron

²¹Valentine J. Herring, better known as "Old Rube" (Ruxton, *Wild Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 204), and Henry Beer, mentioned above, fought a duel over Herring's Mexican wife near Fort Jackson in the winter of 1841-2. Beer was killed. See account of the duel in Sage, *Rocky Mountain Life*, 209. This is most probably the incident which gave rise to the newspaper story of 1890 detailing a supposed duel between two fictitious characters—Madeiro Gonzales Lupton and Palette de St. Vrain—over a white girl held captive by the Indians, and which has been romantically set forth as the cause of the founding of Fort Lupton.

Stirrups 1 pr old Cassinott pants (*of no value*) 1 Rifle that you bought of Redmond

I have not been able to get any correct information relative to the Animals that were stolen by a Spaniard from Mr. Robertson at Arkansas River

Davis Labonte who left Guerrin in Taos, winter before last, is now in this country, but has no available property, and is out of employ,

Joseph Tesson Honorez is in the employ of Messrs Vasques & Sublette, and can pay nothing of what he owes you, he left your service, and joined the service of B. S. & Co. last spring, about the time Mr. Robertson left Fort William for the States, he went in B. S. & Co's party to the Navahoe Country, and when he returned, applied to me, for employment, having no use for his services, I did not employ him, although he was indebted to you for I knew, that instead of getting out of debt, he would get still deeper in debt.

Enclosed I hand the acc't of Messrs. Vasques & Sublette shewing a balance in your favor of \$35.00

I think I shall come to St. Louis next year, when I will deliver to you the Account books, of Fort Jackson, I should send them by the present opportunity, but I could not find time, to even write you before, without doing injustice to my present employers (Messrs B. S. & Co.) for I wintered at the North Fork, and have been here, but a few days, and until their waggons started from here, I had not a moments leisure, and now that all of the waggons, of all the companies, have left the River I cannot ask the bearer of this, (*who goes with but a single horse*) to take so inconvenient a package, as the Acet books would make,

Yours Respectfully

ABEL BAKER Jr

Origin of the Name of the Purgatoire River

By A. W. McHendrie*

The river which heads in the Sangre de Cristo Range of Colorado, runs through Trinidad and empties into the Arkansas River just east of the town of Las Animas, is commonly called the "Picketwire," a colloquial adaption of "Purgatoire."

On the maps of Colorado it appears as "The Animas," "Las Animas," "Purgatoire" and "Purgatory," indiscriminately. On some of the very early maps the full Spanish name is used to-wit: "El Rio de Las Animas Perdidas en Purgatorio" (The River of the Souls Lost in Purgatory). It is said that there are crude maps or sketches among the documents relative to the early Spanish occupation of New Mexico and the southern portion of Colorado now in the archives at Santa Fe, New Mexico, upon which this stream is marked with the full Spanish name above referred to. The writer has been informed that this name appears upon such maps bearing date as early as the middle of the eighteenth century, but this information has not been verified.

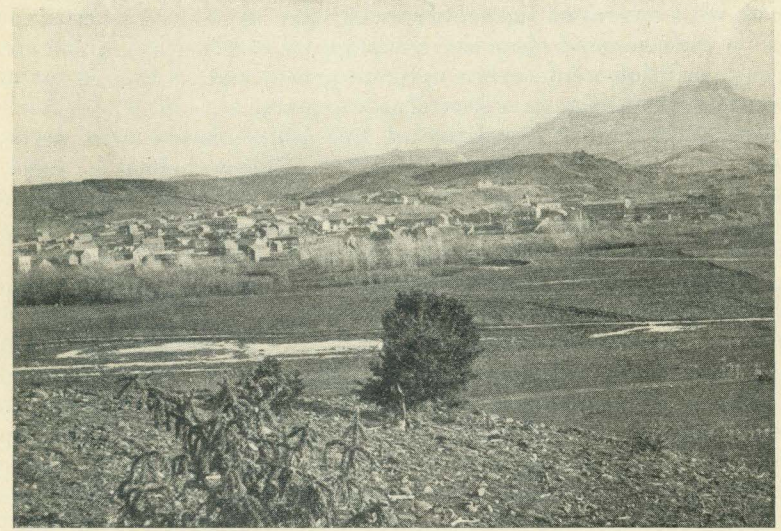
It is asserted by the earliest settlers upon this river that the entire Spanish name was commonly used by the Spanish speaking inhabitants of southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, but that the French trappers who operated in this region with Bent's Fort as their headquarters, usually called the river "Purgatoire." The early English speaking denizens of this community were largely stock men who accepted the French pronunciation and from the unfamiliar sound of the French tongue assumed that the meaning of the word had to do with the staking, or picketing, of horses, and therefore called the stream the "Picketwire."

For many years the reason for this name, and how and why it was fastened upon this stream, has been the subject of considerable conjecture. Obviously there was some definite incident or event connected with this stream which occasioned this peculiar and poetical name to become identified with it. When the first English and French trappers invaded this region they found the name attached to the stream and a tradition which explained it. The commonly accepted version of the tradition was that at sometime in the remote past a large body of men were attacked and massacred by Indians upon the banks of the stream and because

* Judge McHendrie, a prominent lawyer of Trinidad, has lived in that city for many years. He served as District Judge in that district and has long been a student of the history of Southern Colorado. His present contribution is of real value in two important respects. It seems to fix for the first time, the most authentic story of the origin of the name of the river. It also finds a very reasonable connection between this origin and a Spanish expedition which has not been thought of heretofore as extending into Colorado.—Ed.

there were no priests with the ill-fated group, the victims had died without the administration of the last rites of the church and their souls were therefore wandering forever in Purgatory.

The most detailed and apparently veracious recital of the alleged facts upon which the tradition is founded was given to the



TRINIDAD (ABOUT 1875) WITH THE PURGATOIRE RIVER IN THE FOREGROUND

writer by the late A. W. Archibald, who claimed to have been told of it at the Lucien B. Maxwell ranch on the Cimmaron in the winter of 1859. The narrator was a very old Catholic priest who had then been in the northern New Mexico field for forty or fifty years. The priest claimed to have had this tale upon his entry into this field from the lips of old Spanish priests and inhabitants of New Mexico whose familiarity with local tales and traditions dated back perhaps another forty or fifty years; and these individuals, in turn, claimed to have received the story from those who were old men at the time of the telling.

The story as told by the old priest to Archibald ran that at sometime away back in the early explorations of the Spaniards, a body of Spanish soldiery left the seat of the Spanish government in what is now known as Old Mexico, to search for the fabled golden city of Quivira. This expedition was commanded by a Portuguese officer in the Spanish army, with a Spaniard as second in command. Several priests accompanied the expedition, which was not only the custom, but a regulation of the government. Somewhere along the route the first and second officer became embroiled

in a quarrel, which resulted in the second officer killing his superior. The second officer then assumed command of the expedition and proposed to go on with the enterprise. The priests, however, felt that the slayer of the first in command was guilty of murder and would not proceed further on what they conceived to be an accursed or unhallowed mission. The priests accordingly turned back with several of the soldiers who likewise refused to continue under the command of an individual guilty of so serious an offense. The expedition went on but never returned, and its fate so far as accurate knowledge was concerned, remained a mystery. Some years later another expedition of Spanish explorers went north-east from Santa Fe toward the Quivira country (which lay somewhere along the Arkansas river in what is now western or central Kansas), and in this journey found upon the banks of a tributary to the Arkansas the rusted arms and armor of what had evidently been a considerable force of Spanish soldiery. The position and condition in which these remnants were found led the discoverers to the conclusion that the owners of these weapons and equipment had been surrounded in camp upon the banks of this stream and had been exterminated, presumably by hostile Indians. Doubtless being familiar with the fact that there had been a lost expedition and that there were no priests with it, they gave the river what to them was an exceedingly appropriate name to commemorate the tragedy. So runs the tale.

Apparently then the event which fixed this sonorous name upon this stream has been handed down by word of mouth for at least two hundred years. Certainly it would require some such an event or incident as hereinabove narrated to attach so significant a name to so insignificant a stream. It would then appear that if the existence and disappearance of some expedition of early Spanish explorers somewhere in this general region can be authenticated by extant historical data, we can then with reasonable assurance fix this river as the situs of this event. If the approximate date of such an occurrence can be determined upon, then we can also assert with reasonable confidence that there was at that time an actual, though temporary, occupancy of a portion of southern Colorado by white men.

I will quote all I have been able to find upon this subject from contemporaneous writers. I have not had an opportunity to inspect or verify the original documents referred to in these writings.¹ Assuming, however, that this documentary evidence supports the texts, there is little doubt that the expedition of Bonilla and Hu-

¹ Prof. J. Lloyd Mechem of the University of Texas, while in Spain secured a copy of the story of the expedition as told by the Indian servant of Humana. Dr. Mechem has been kind enough to lend this to the State Historical Society of Colorado and a copy has been made for our library.—Ed.

mana was attacked and destroyed by Indians on the banks of this stream somewhere between 1594 and 1596, which fixes the approximate date of the first actual occupation of southern Colorado by a civilized people.

It should be borne in mind in considering the data hereinafter set out that the writers—both of the original documents referred to and of the histories into which they were later injected—were not much concerned with locating this particular stream or in furnishing authentic data as to the particular territory involved. They were primarily interested in New Mexico, and the event with which we are now dealing was but a casual incident to the main purpose which the writers had. With this point of view in mind, the conclusion seems to me irrefutable that the tradition upon which the name of our river is based, is verified by the known facts. In any event the loss of the expedition of Bonilla and Humana undoubtedly occurred very much in the manner preserved by the tradition, somewhere in this general region. No other stream or place was designated in any manner commemorative of this fact. No stream or other natural monument in this whole region bears a name which has persisted so long and can be traced so far back into authenticated history as does this river. Hence, my conclusion.

The quotations upon which I base this assertion are as follows:

“Sometime during the years 1594-1596 Captain Francisco Leiva Bonilla, a native of Portugal, and Juan de Humana, were at the head of an expedition, sent out under the instructions of the governor of Nueva Biscaya, to suppress the warlike and rebellious tribes in the northern part of his province. Being successful in this, Captain Bonilla, who was cognizant of the current reports as to the wealth of the lands to the far north, determined to continue his operations by exploring New Mexico and Quivira. The governor of Nueva Biscaya heard of Bonilla's intention and immediately dispatched Pedro de Cazorla to overtake him and notify the men of his command that such an expedition was forbidden and declaring Captain Bonilla a traitor if he disobeyed the mandate. Bonilla, however, refused to pay any attention to the order, although six of his men refused to continue with him, and returned to Nueva Biscaya. There is no record of this expedition or what was done except in small particulars. After reaching New Mexico the next heard of Bonilla was at Quivira, or out on the plains in the neighborhood of that place. Bonilla and Humana quarreled, and in the conflict Bonilla was slain. After the death of Bonilla, Humana assumed command, and a short while afterward, when his party had passed through an immense settlement and reached a broad river, which was to be crossed on balsas, three of the Mexico Indians in the party deserted, one of whom, Jose, became

the sole survivor of this expedition and told the tale to Juan de Onate in 1598. After having proceeded to Quivira, so the story goes, and on their return, the command was attacked by thousands of Indians, the conflict commencing just before dawn. All were massacred except Alonzo Sanchez and a mulatto girl. It was said that Sanchez became a great chief among the Indians of the plains, but nothing definite is known as to this, as he was never seen afterwards by any white man.

“ [Footnote] Bancroft, H. H., *History of Arizona and New Mexico*, note pp. 108-109, says: ‘The authority for the first part of this expedition is Villagra, *History of New Mexico*, 37, 142. Villagra was an eye witness to the telling by the Indian deserter, Jose, of the story to Juan de Onate. Onate, *Carte de 1599*, 303, 309, says that he was instructed to free the province from traitors by arresting Humana and his men; also that Humana’s Indian (Jose) joined his force.’ Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, i. 117, seems to have seen a copy of this communication or another containing similar statements at Santa Fe. Neil, *Aprunt.*, 89, 95, calls Humana, Adelantado and Governor; says that he killed Captain Leiva [Leyba] his bravest officer and that his Indian, Jose, was found by Onate among the Picuries.”—Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History*, I, 298-9.

Villagra was an officer and the poet historian of Onate’s expedition. His report, written in verse, somewhat in the form of a journal, is extant and is recognized as the most, if not the only, original account of Onate’s occupation of New Mexico from 1598 to 1608.

As to the discovery of the remains of Bonilla’s and Humana’s expedition, Twitchell states at page 324 of Vol. 1 of his work, that between the 10th of September and the 15th of November, 1598, Captain Vicente Salvidar, an officer under Onate, left San Gabriel, near Santa Fe, then headquarters of Onate, with fifty men to visit the buffalo plains to the northeast. Upon this trip Salvidar found traces of the lost expedition of Bonilla and Humana.

From 1600 to 1608 he sent many exploring parties to the north and northeast of Santa Fe. It is assumed that the reports of the destruction of Humana’s expedition upon its return trip, as well as the reports of the activities of the sole survivor, Sanchez, among the Indians, were received from the plains Indians by some of these exploring parties.

Empire City in the Sixties

By Emma Shepard Hill*

Sixty-three years ago, or to be more exact, on the 22nd of October in the year 1864, just at the close of day—the short twilight verging into darkness—a light spring wagon containing six persons and a dunnage bag or two, drew up to the door of a white clapboarded house in the little mining camp of Empire City, Colorado. The occupants of this spring wagon—a conveyance unique at that time and in that region when travel was almost exclusively in the clumsy lumber wagon, on horse or mule back—were, besides the driver a family by the name of Shepard, from Sandusky, Ohio.

The man, Levi H. Shepard, in later years known as Judge Shepard—a lawyer of ability in the east, had, the summer before while on a business trip to Chicago, become interested in the rumors of gold but recently discovered in the mountains of Colorado, and the actual sight of quantities of gold dust brought by returning prospectors. He therefore joined a party about to start west, and traveling by stage, in due time reached the gold fields, spending the summer in investigating mines and mills about Empire. Fully satisfied as to the inexhaustible wealth of gold along the creeks and in the hills about Empire, he returned to the east and through the following winter in Boston was successful in organizing a company to finance his mining ventures. New York and Boston capital it will be remembered, furnished a large proportion of the financial aid in early mining enterprises. His arrangements completed soon after the Fourth of July, with his wife and two children, a girl of thirteen—myself—a boy of ten and an orphan niece of eighteen he started westward.

Outfitting in Atchison, Kansas, two weeks were spent in completing his preparations. Ten mules ranging in price from \$100 to \$200—\$1,200 in all—and three large freight wagons comprised his outfit. Two young men previously engaged in Boston were waiting to drive the double teams, their remuneration, three dollars a day with board and the opportunity afforded to cross the plains to the New Eldorado. Along with the household furniture, including a square piano, some mining freight was included. Especially is remembered two huge carboys containing nitric acid or some other deadly corrosive—securely crated against accident. A large roomy wagon in which the family rode, carried also trunks, bedding, provisions for use on the way and kitchen utensils. A foresighted father had purchased a year's provisions for his family

* Mrs. Hill is the author of two notable books on Colorado pioneering—*A Dangerous Crossing* and *Foundation Stones*. She lives in Denver today.—Ed.

including nearly everything then on the market in the way of dried and staple food, from flour and sugar, to dried apples and spices. It was well along in August when at last the packing and stowing away in the least possible space all these accessories of an overland trip of 600 miles was accomplished and the caravan gotten under way.

It will be remembered by old timers that the summer of 1864 was the time of the Indian uprising on the plains when whole trains of emigrants were annihilated, the scattered settlers killed, stock driven off, and homes burned, leaving desolation in its wake from the River to the Rockies. The thrilling experiences encountered by the Shepard family on this hazardous trip over a parched and arid desert among the hostile Indians have already been told by the daughter in her book published some years ago, entitled *A Dangerous Crossing*.

When this caravan now numbering some twelve teams—although at different times along the dangerous route the train numbered from 40 to 60 wagons, each wagon representing one or more men—reached the frontier village named Denver at the foot of the snowy range, and separated to go their several ways, the last rays of the setting sun were gilding the mountain tops, etching a picture never to be forgotten by the weary travelers. Denver at this time housed some 3,500 inhabitants and was as we would say today, a filling station and a receiving depot for emigrants and freighters. Large corrals did a flourishing business buying for small sums the worn out horses and mules of the many impoverished emigrants whose last dollar had been expended to reach the outskirts of the mining region. My father tarried in the little city only one day, being impatient to reach Empire before the snows of approaching winter made impassable the mountain roads.

A vivid recollection of this first mountain trip is fresh in my mind; the many steep pitches in a newly blasted road where the rough-locked wheels were insufficient to keep the loaded wagon from crowding the mules' heels, and must be supplemented by a stout rope from the rear axle to some convenient tree, unwinding slowly; the rarified atmosphere oppressive to lungs but recently from sea-level; the cold raw air from nearby snow banks which penetrated our summer clothing, said garments suitable for August when the journey began; the quilts and blankets in which we wrapped ourselves suggestive of the Indians which had menaced our way; and at last the needed rest at the mining camp called Idaho Springs.

Here my father was fortunate in securing a man with team and wagon who consented for a remuneration to take the family, worn out by continual jolting, in a springless covered wagon—the

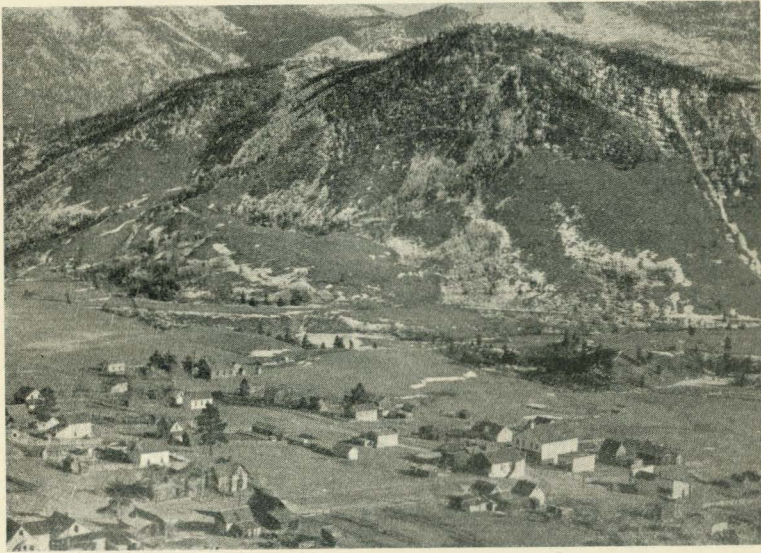
fourteen miles yet remaining. These fourteen miles were perhaps the most beautiful of all the way; the level stretches of road skirting the banks of dashing Clear Creek, with now and then a sand bar where sluice mining was in operation, and finally at the top of a long rocky ascent, the scattered lights of the village gleaming in the growing dusk, and our journey's end. Eight long and dangerous weeks had passed since leaving Atchison, Kansas, our starting point.

The welcome received upon our arrival at Empire has lingered in my memory to this day. A large living room with open fireplace, piled high with blazing logs, dimming the light of the several kerosene lamps, and a glimpse into the room beyond where a bounteous meal was spread on a table, a real table, around which one could sit in a real chair, not on a box or a wagon seat as we had done for the past ten weeks. Two or three half-grown boys lounged about the room playing with a little creature the size of a rat but with long legs, that frisked from one boy to the other. Myself, a timid girl, hesitated to inquire what the thing might be, finally gathering courage from the smile of the younger boy, a lad of my own age, I ventured to ask. The boy did not laugh at my ignorance but proudly told me it was a dog, his dog, a black and tan terrier. In my long life I have never seen so small a specimen of a full grown dog. This commodious dwelling was the Peck House which is still, with numerous additions—the leading hostelry in that little city. Our own home to which we went as soon as our freight arrived, was a story and a half log house which had been secured for us in advance by Mr. Peck. This log house still stands as one of the land marks of a past generation.

The busy mining camp of Empire where 700 or more people dwelt was built mostly of substantial log houses, a few frame buildings, mostly stores, notably Peck and Patterson's general store and Frank Andre's hardware store, and on the outskirts of the town, shacks and tents. The little valley lay between the sloping sides of four high mountains. To the east Covode Mountain, thinly timbered, and with out-croppings of quartz, never rich in mineral; to the south Douglas Mountain with plateau of luscious grass half way to the top till the dense forest of evergreen trees finished the picture, the reverse side of this mountain precipitous rock ledges; to the west the distant, rugged Mt. Lincoln where among the burned and fallen timber the red raspberry grew in such wild profusion; and nearer at home to the north just back of the town, old Eureka, its sloping side forming a background for the village. Just beyond Eureka was the densely wooded side of Silver Mountain where the richest gold mines were already showing the work being done in the immense ore dumps, the many shaft houses and the ore trails

zig-zagging across the face where trees were fast giving place to the mining industry.

It was always a surprising fact to us that since the first miners—only a handful of them—arrived on the banks of the Platte in



EMPIRE, COLORADO

1858, that in a short six years so many busy mining towns—Central, Black Hawk, Nevadaville, Idaho Springs, and many smaller camps now gone from the map—should have sprung up and the population in that brief period have increased to something like twenty thousand. Mining was booming and prospectors were arriving in camp by the hundreds every day.

The winter following our arrival was one of the most severe in memory, snow to the depth of three or more feet covered the ground till spring and fierce blizzards piled fresh snow to enormous heights. Snow sifted through the cracks of ill-fitting windows and thin battened doors, hissing on the stove, but wood was plentiful for the getting and a degree of comfort was enjoyed. Being late in the season my father was unable at once to send his ten mules to the valley to winter and hay was scarce, being hauled over the mountains from Bergen Park beyond Idaho Springs. The price of \$200 a ton was perhaps reasonable considering the time and place, but the expense was heavy though being borne by the company. A neighbor, a mining man, traded a mule which with its mate, was worth \$500 for one ton of the costly fodder. The year's

provisions which a foresighted father freighted across the plains were our salvation, flour reaching the price of \$80 a barrel, sugar 50c a pound and no butter or eggs obtainable for less than \$3.00. Women learned to make delicious cakes and puddings without either. So rigid was my training along that line that even when those articles were abundant, we have used them sparingly.

My mother, a refined Christian woman, believed that the home should be attractive even in a mining town on the frontier. She had phenomenal success with flowers, a slip of any plant grew in beauty for her, and with geraniums bright with blossoms in the windows, and lace curtains which with other good furnishings had made the perilous journey into the far west, our rooms were inviting, and with the piano—the only one in the town—and my mother a sweet singer it is needless to say that few evenings passed without more or less company. School was at that time a problem. A small log house with crude desks had at a previous time been fitted up but a suitable teacher was not always available. Now the orphan niece, a senior at high school at home, was offered the position and a creditable session was maintained till spring. Among those pupils were as we remember, two brothers, Frank and Ike Pine, their father later a state legislator, and Hugh Steele. Hugh's father was governor of the Territory of Jefferson in 1859-60 before the name was changed to Colorado. Hugh Steele was at one time state senator, again served as representative, and as president of the Pioneer Society, later as secretary, which office he filled for twenty years or until his death in 1923. The family moved to Denver in 1865.

A small Episcopal Chapel had been partly completed and at irregular intervals a young rector from Central officiated. My people were Presbyterians in the east but my father religiously attended any divine service which was offered should there be none of the sect more nearly of his own choice. One Sabbath morning the congregation, already assembled, was awaiting the arrival of the priest or bishop who was expected to come from Denver. The young rector pacing restlessly back and forth finally espied from the open door, two horsemen just rounding the distant bend in the road. So excited he became that he threw up his hands shouting at the top of his voice—"Here they come full tilt." Some moments were required for the audience to assume a decorous attitude. The Methodists had more regular preaching than the Congregationalists, (to which body my family belonged). The Reverend B. T. Vincent, then a young man, often visited the mountain towns, and a circuit riding preacher came at stated times.

Early in 1866 the Reverend Crawford, a Congregational minister stationed at Central, who frequently came to Empire and

called together the brethren of the Presbyterian and Congregational faith—differing only in church government—went east, returning with three young ministers—the Reverends Thompson, Goodrich, and Mellis. Now the Congregational constituents at Empire established their own church, Sunday school, prayer meeting and Woman's Missionary Society. The townspeople owned a cabinet organ, a Mason and Hamlin, and it was the unwritten law that any church service should have the use of the instrument, consequently it was moved from one place to another whenever the need arose. The fact that my mother sang and that I could play the piano, together with my father's rigid religious convictions, made it imperative that I should play at any and all church services. Thus be the skating never so good or the bob-sledding so enticing, prayer meeting night found me always at the organ. Sometimes the whole crowd of young folks would attend these services, when my father had given his promise that after meeting I could join in the sport. Whether this enforced attendance was conducive to a Christian faith, I am not competent to judge.

The usual small town dances were frequent. At these parties, although I was allowed to go, only square dances were mine to enjoy, while the other young people could waltz and schottische or gallop around the room in the riotous polka. An occasional masquerade or a set of tableaux, varied the program. Every one went to church sociables and a community Sunday school was well attended. One stormy March Sunday the sexton failing to open the school room, and the children, having gathered at the usual hour and not willing to be denied the privilege, forced a window, built a rousing fire and school proceeded along the accustomed lines. Not till the session was nearly over was the door unlocked.

As already stated, in those years when the mountains were densely timbered and before the smoke of smelters and cities had changed the plan of nature, the depth of snow and the lateness of the season in which it fell is interesting to recall. In May, 1869—this from an old diary—the snow fell nearly every day, the whole landscape, mountains and valley looked like the middle of January. The young people had made plans for a dance on the 23d with music from Georgetown, but the snow was so continuous and so deep that it was postponed till the 27th. But again a blizzard was raging, and the snow not having melted was deeper than before. However, three fiddlers braved the snow, coming the seven miles from Georgetown. Their arrival was quickly heralded throughout the village and although late in starting the dance continued until the wee small hours of the morning.

At the formal opening of the Barton House in Georgetown in 1869, an event of unusual brilliance, through the kind solicitation

of Mrs. Peck—the grand-dame of Empire society—I was allowed to attend. There was, of course, a banquet followed by a dance. The supper being none of the best, one of the older gentlemen secured a bottle of champagne of which I drank a glass, my first and last. Of this dissipation my father remained in ignorance. Our party reached home at daylight quite to the scandal of the uninvited.

In the summer of 1865, and the two summers following, large numbers of Ute Indians came over Berthoud Pass to Empire. Some 1,500 Utes claimed Middle Park for their summer home, and each year the government sent an agent to Empire to distribute their annuities of beef-cattle, flour and blankets. These Indians, a thousand or more including squaws and papooses with their tents and trappings, usually camped on the farther side of Clear Creek in a little grassy valley called "The Ranch." They roamed the town begging "beeskit" and "wheesky" and between their own ponies and the government cattle the grass in the little valley was stripped clean. The townspeople were always glad to see the last of them. Around a blazing camp-fire these Indians held nightly pow-wows, the squaws beating the tom-toms while the braves danced. Often the young white people went to look on. One evening with a party of boys and girls, while watching the dance I felt a hand on my shoulder and looking up saw a young chieftain in his paint and feathers who motioned me to share in the festivities. In his gruff voice and in very good English he said—"Squaw dance, Squaw dance," but it seemed to us the better part of discretion to return immediately to the shelter of town, for we remembered that only a year before while still on the plains on reaching the Old California Crossing where lived a French-squawman, he had offered my father six white ponies for his squaw papoose—meaning me. Hence my reluctance to join the dance.

Wild fruit grew in abundance on the mountain sides and among the fallen timber. The red raspberry on low bushes, the wild currant, the gooseberry and the huckleberry—these last on bushes six inches high, and we gathered leaves and berries, green and ripe together, with a tiny rake—later separating the ripe fruit by plunging all into a pan or a tub of water. No cultivated berry has half so fine a flavor. The hillsides were gay with flowers—the golden-rod, the flaming fireweed, the purple larkspur and in shady places the wild red rose. Besides the streams nodded the fairy blue-bells and the shooting stars, while at the edge of many a snow-bank we have seen the tiny blue forget-me-not in large clusters.

There were, of course, wild animals in the heavy timber, bears and mountain lions—a creature resembling the panther and with

a panther's blood-curdling screech. For the most part these beasts were harmless unless attacked. A big brown bear was seen one morning investigating the saw-dust pile at a lumber mill near town. A mother bear and cubs were glimpsed through the clouds near a mountain top while hunting horses nearby. In the brush by the side of the steep road to Upper Town, a panther kept pace with one of my girl friends and her brother who were returning late at night from a party—his yellow eyes plainly visible in the darkness. Mountain sheep were sometimes seen high up among the rocks, but they were fleet of foot and difficult to reach. On one occasion as late as 1871 an English hunter of note espied three sheep on the steep rocky side of Douglas Mountain. The others in the party gave him the chance of bringing down the game. His first and second shot each sent a sheep rolling like a stone down the mountain side, but the third shot only broke a leg of the remaining sheep and the wounded creature disappeared among the rocks. Since 1909 the killing of mountain sheep has been prohibited, there being no open season for their destruction.

The property of the Atlantic Mining and Milling Company in which my father was interested was on Silver Mountain where also was the Conqueror Lode, the richest gold mine in that region. The quartz from this mine was fine and moist, resembling mortar and was with difficulty hauled to the mills for treatment. In July, 1869—(extract from an old diary)—a terrible fire swept the side of Silver Mountain, burning to the ground the whim-house of the Atlantic mine and charring the timbers of the main shaft twelve or fifteen feet below the surface, effectually ending work for the season.

By almost superhuman effort the mine buildings and shaft house of the Conqueror were saved, but the strenuous exertion of one of the Disbrow brothers, owners of the mine, caused congestion of the lungs and within a week he passed away. A large Masonic funeral was accorded him; Masons from Central and even from Denver doing him honor. The Conqueror workings were closed down for more than a generation. With the revival of the mining industry, it may come into its own again. Silver Mountain was densely timbered and for many nights afterward the smouldering fires in the tree tops looked like the lights of a distant city.

The most successful mill was the old fashioned stamp mill, but millions of dollars were spent on process mills, processes invented by men with no practical knowledge of the peculiar quality of much of the gold being mined at that time. Most if not all of these inventions failed to save the fine gold. The streams were and still are lined with huge frame structures which originally housed expensive machinery, which machinery in the majority of

cases never turned a wheel. It was in one of these process mills that my mother was seriously injured.

The Leibig Mining and Milling Company was at that time—in 1866—a flourishing concern. The mill, an immense frame building with the latest pattern of costly machinery, stood on the bank of Clear Creek just below the town. The superintendent-manager, Mr. John Leeper, was well and favorably known in mining circles. He was also a deacon in the Congregational church, a good singer, and a pleasant gentleman. He would today be called "a good mixer."

One day he invited a party of women to inspect the mill, my mother and myself being of the number. In passing an immense, swiftly revolving fly wheel, the gearing of which was partly sunken into the floor and not boxed as it should have been, the hem of my mother's dress caught in the shafting and instantly began winding around it. Mr. Leeper, just behind her, quickly grasped her under the arms and both were pulled to the floor. The others in the party could only shriek until their cries were heard by the workmen, but not until the head-gate was shut down did the shaft stop turning. The awful creaking sounds that we had heard were not the breaking of her limbs, as we feared, but of the floor boards. We thought she was dead, but when released found she had only fainted. The miracle of no broken bones was due to the steel wires of the crinoline she wore, which could not wind tight enough to prevent slipping. In time she recovered from the dreadful shock. How much of the precious gold this process saved I would not venture to guess, however, Mr. Leeper was recalled by the Company and left Empire in the winter of 1868-9 and before I left the vicinity in the early '70's, the building had been stripped of its costly machinery and its wheels were idle.

Another of these process mills was operated by an English company and an Englishman by the name of John Cullom was superintendent-manager. This mill was within the town limits. In the winter of 1867-8, Mr. Cullom made a trip to England, returning with the orphan children of his brother, a girl and four boys. The girl was about my own age and became one of my best friends. Mr. Cullom brought also a large contingent of Cornish miners. Many of these men brought their families with them, or later, sent for them.

Among the Cornish were several young men of good education who made a very acceptable addition to the society of the little town. I recall the names of Jim and Jack Osborn, Billy Davidson, and Jonathan and Harry Bowman. Mrs. Jonathan Bowman was very religious, claiming perfection. Now the Presbyterian creed we had been taught recognized only perfection of the Saints, thus

her assumption savored of heresy. However, she was a devout Christian and an earnest worker in the Methodist church.

After silver was discovered in 1865-6 near the present site of Georgetown, gold mining declined around Empire and the camp at Georgetown flourished. Our first visit to the new camp is still a vivid remembrance, for swinging from the lower branch of a cottonwood tree, at the edge of the camp was the dead body of a claim jumper. Claim jumpers were dealt with much after the manner of cattle rustlers. In the little town of Buena Vista, where we lived in the early '80s, when the Midland Railroad was building to Leadville, a not uncommon feature in the early morning was the sight of a hanging body. Judge Lynch was a jurist, whose decision was final, there was no appeal to a higher court.

After my marriage at Christmas time in 1873 and my removal from that vicinity, my interest in the mining communities of Empire and Georgetown, naturally grew less. While my parents still lived in Georgetown, I made occasional visits there, but the transient population of a mining town or community quickly changes and of late years I have been unable to keep in touch with these scenes of my girlhood.