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The Pike's Peak Rush, 1859*

By Joseph L. Kingsbury

The discovery of gold in Colorado occurred shortly after the panic of 1857, which had been most keenly felt by the people of Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Wisconsin, where development had been most rapid but was now at a standstill for lack of capital. In December, 1858, Greeley wrote from Racine, Wisconsin, "The hard year 1858 draws to a close. There is no lack of money provided one has the wherewith to buy it—but real estate mortgages, railroad stocks and bonds, notes of hand or promises to pay of all kinds are not the sort of promises that easily tempt a moneyed man to open his safe or pocketbook. There is on all hands such a superabundance of debts that promises are a drug, and faith in human solvency sadly alloyed with skepticism. Very many want to borrow; very few want to loan, no matter at what rate nor on what security. Railroads partly constructed and then stopped for want of means; blocks of buildings ditto; counties and cities involved by the issue of railroad bonds and practically insolvent; individuals trying to stave off the satisfaction of debts, obligations, judgments, executions—such is the all but universal condition."¹

That great excitement should follow the rumors of the discovery of gold in the Pike's Peak region was very natural. Papers in towns along the Missouri river began publishing long and exaggerated accounts of the quantities of gold to be found in the mountains,² and of the ease with which it could be obtained. Each paper emphasized that the town where it was published was by far the best place from which to start across the plains.³ Lists were given of the equipment prospective goldseekers would need.⁴ These articles were reprinted in many eastern journals, arousing the greatest interest. The *Kansas Weekly Press* had an article from a correspondent which asserted that three miners had brought back

* This article is an extract from Dr. Kingsbury's Ph.D. thesis on "The Development of Colorado Territory, 1858-65." The thesis was prepared at the University of Chicago and has not yet been published. Dr. Kingsbury is Curator of Historical Collections at the North Texas State Teachers College, Denton, Texas.—Ed.

¹ Rhodes, *History of the United States*, vol. 111, 54-5. See also Hollister, *Mines of Colorado*, 7-8.

² A speaker at St. Joseph is quoted in the *St. Louis Daily Bulletin* to the effect that in 1859 four million dollars was mined in Colorado.

³ Bancroft, *Colorado*, 373-7. *St. Louis Bulletin* (Advertising the Hamilton and St. Joseph RR.), Nov. 24, 1859; *Kansas City Journal of Commerce*, Jan. 15, 16, 29, 1859; Oct. 12, 1859; Feb. 6, 20, 22, 1859; August 26, Sept. 4, 15, 29, 1859.

⁴ *Kansas City Journal of Commerce*, Sept. 13, 1858. Oct. 12, 1858.

seven thousand dollars after two months' work on Cherry Creek. A few days later a letter from one of the Russell-Cherokee party was printed in the New York *Tribune*.⁵ It stated that from five to twenty dollars a day could be realized in mining at different points in the mountains and that there were fine opportunities for business along Cherry Creek. A correspondent of the Carrollton (Me.) *Democrat* pronounced this the richest mining region in the world.⁶

As interest grew, requests for advice on how best to reach Pike's Peak began to reach many editors. The *Tribune* (N. Y.) said⁷ that most people in the north and east would find the easiest way led from Quincy, Illinois, by the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad to the borders of Kansas. Gold seekers should go to St. Louis, and thence by rail to Kansas City. Persons from Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin or Michigan could go to either Omaha, Leavenworth, Atchison or one of the other small towns where animals for transport, mining implements, camping outfits and supplies could easily be obtained. A complete outfit, including provisions for six months for a party of four would cost about one hundred and fifty or two hundred dollars.⁸ People were urged to carry an abundance of food, of which the supply in the mining country was very small.⁹

Small parties began to reach Colorado in 1858.¹⁰ One, composed of about fifty people from Leavenworth, went up the Arkansas to Pueblo, prospected along the mountains from Colorado Springs to the Sangre de Cristo, and laid off a townsite at Colorado City which they named El Paso. A group from Iowa came up the Platte to the mouth of Cherry Creek, where the party was joined by some Georgians. They prospected along the creek and founded a town named Auraria. A second Leavenworth party established Denver across the creek from Auraria.

Early in 1859 large numbers of people began going west to the gold mines.¹¹ It was estimated that in April several thousand people were at Denver or Auraria who were merely the advance guard of those going to the mines.¹² In May, "Every stream and body of timber from Elwood to the Big Blue is alive with the tents of emigrants. They go in all shapes. Some with packs on

⁵ New York *Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1858. See also the Kansas City *Journal of Commerce*, Oct. 31, 1858. Nov. 16, 1858.

⁶ Kansas City *Journal of Commerce*, Nov. 5, 1858, stated that miners got from eight to ten dollars a day; Dec. 19, five dollars a day; Jan. 15, eight to ten dollars a day; Jan. 19, to thirty dollars a day, etc.

⁷ New York *Tribune*, Feb. 25, 1859. See also Kansas City *Journal of Commerce*, Feb. 20, 1859.

⁸ New York *Tribune*, March 15, 1859.

⁹ Kansas City *Journal of Commerce*, Sept. 25, 29, 1858; New York *Tribune*, Dec. 17, 1858.

¹⁰ New York *Tribune*, May 27, 1859.

¹¹ Kansas City *Journal of Commerce*, Jan. 23, Feb. 13, 1859; New York *Tribune*, April 12, 22, May 17, March 15, etc.

¹² Bancroft, *Colorado*, 373.

their backs trudge along on foot. Some, clubbing together, buy a hand cart, and putting thereon their little all, become for the nonce beasts of burden to draw their own carts. Some go with a single yoke of oxen, an Indian pony or a mule hitched onto the cart, while others go well provided, with a mule or ox-drawn wagon well-laden with all supplies of provisions and mining implements."¹³ On May 18th the St. Louis *Democrat* reported that 20,000 were on the roads to the mines.¹⁴

The earlier emigrants were for the most part from Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa, with a few from Illinois, Indiana and farther east,¹⁵ but by July they were from all parts of the country, and even from abroad. In an article on "Western Characteristics" the correspondent of the New York *Tribune* described the personnel of the travelers thus, "Among any ten whom you will successively meet there will be natives of New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Georgia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, France, Germany, and perhaps Ireland. But worse than this; you cannot enter a circle of a dozen persons of whom at least three will not have spent some years in California; two or three have made claims or built cabins in Kansas or Nebraska—at least one has spent a year or two in Texas. Boston, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, New Orleans and Cincinnati, have all contributed their quota to the peopleing of the new region. * * * One of the stations at which we slept on the way up was kept by an ex-lawyer from Cincinnati, whose wife, an ex-actress from the Bowery of New York did the cooking. Omnibus drivers from Broadway repeatedly handled the ribbons. Ex-border ruffians from civilized Kansas, some of them of unblessed memory—were encountered on the way at intervals none too long."¹⁶

As has already appeared, the method of travel across the plains was dictated by one's wealth. Many went with only a frying pan and bundle of clothes on a stick over the shoulder.¹⁷ Others bought pushearts which cost about five dollars, put their goods on these and pulled them across the prairie. The trip would cost such a person about twenty-five dollars.¹⁸ Still others bought one or more yoke of oxen¹⁹ or span of mules, and a wagon,²⁰ and were then able to carry provisions for from four to six months, and more elaborate mining machinery. Many of these made up parties which insured them against Indian attacks along the way.²¹ As the

¹³ New York *Tribune*, May 6, 1859.

¹⁴ Reprinted in New York *Tribune*, May 20, 1859.

¹⁵ New York *Tribune*, May 17, 1859.

¹⁶ New York *Tribune*, July 29, 1859.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, April 22, 1859.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, March 15, April 23.

¹⁹ *History of Larimer County, Colorado*, 33, 36.

²⁰ (*Colorado Magazine*, vol. 1, 288-91.) Parker and Huyatt, *Guide*, 15.

²¹ New York *Tribune*, March 15, 1859.

volume of travel grew the freighting firms of Russell and Major, and of Jones and Cartwright, combined and organized the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express. Forty-two covered coaches and some fast mules were secured and a daily coach service between Leavenworth and Denver was inaugurated,²² fare costing \$100—\$125, including meals. At first twelve days were required for the trip; after changing the route from the Republican to the South Platte, the distance (about 687 miles) was covered in about six or seven days.²³

Many of the people who went out in the spring of 1859 knew nothing about mining. When they reached Denver and Auraria, and failed to discover gold at once and in quantity, they began to inquire, "Where are the gold mines?"²⁴ Few large deposits had yet been discovered, and the highly sensational articles printed in papers all over the country were as yet totally unjustified, as far as actual discoveries had been made. People had also very little idea of the difficulties in mining gold. So, very soon, many became either despondent or hysterical, sold their baggage, or simply left it on the ground, and started back east, proclaiming that the whole thing was a humbug.²⁵ Great indignation was expressed against the publishers of newspapers in towns along the Missouri river.²⁶ The disappointed ones threatened to burn down the towns of Omaha, St. Joseph, Leavenworth, etc., for their alleged deception of the public. Many who had started across the plains were persuaded to turn back with the men returning from the mountains. Across the plains stretched a double line, some going out to the mines, others returning, uttering maledictions upon the heads of all who had influenced them to seek wealth at Pike's Peak.²⁷

It was the opinion of some that all the stories about gold had been started by people who had invested heavily in Kansas real estate. An earnest discussion of the question whether there really was gold in Colorado now commenced in all the newspapers, different correspondents publishing most contradictory accounts.²⁸ The *Tribune* (N. Y.) received a letter from a man lately returned from the scene of greatest mining activity. "Western Kansas had to be settled by some means, so shrewd speculators had entered

²² Byers, *History of Colorado*, 68-9; Hollister, *Mines of Colorado*, 99; Fossett, *Colorado*, 125; *New York Tribune*, May 31, 1859.

²³ Watrous, *History of Larimer County*. A good general account is in Smiley, *History of Denver*, 351-2. [Since the writing of this a more thorough treatment of this coach service has appeared in Hafen, *The Overland Mail, 1849-69*. Ed.]

²⁴ Barney, *Letters of a Pioneer*, 1-14; *Kansas City Journal of Commerce*, Jan. 27, 1859; Hollister, 85-6.

²⁵ *St. Joseph Weekly West*, June 15, 1859, May 15, June 5, July 10; *Kansas City Journal of Commerce*, Sept. 30, 1858.

²⁶ *St. Joseph Weekly West*, June 5, 12; *New York Tribune*, March 15, 1859.

²⁷ *New York Tribune*, May 31, 1859.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, for March 11, 15; April 12, 22; May 6, 20, 27, 28; June 14, and July 4.

lands, laid out towns, and had made up letters purporting to be written from the gold miners. These letters had been published in the newspapers of the territory (Kansas). The citizens of St. Joseph, Leavenworth, Kansas City and Independence saw that they would be the chief outfitting points, for which reason papers in these towns took up greedily all favorable news. Hence this unparalleled excitement. Furnishers of oxen and mules, wagons and equipment, provisions and goods have been enriched. They are now satisfied. Thousands of these gold diggers will never return (as was the case in California). Thousands will never be able to. Some will get hold of town lots and of Kansas claims, and others will be hewers of wood and drawers of water, and the important result will be a free state, densely inhabited."²⁹

To add to the general discontent, many of those crossing the plains suffered physical hardship³⁰ which became more severe as summer advanced. Many expected to live on game along the way, but the sudden change to a diet of little besides meat brought on attacks of indigestion which incapacitated a considerable proportion. As game grew scarce along the most frequented roads, many travelers were on the verge of starvation. Cannibalism was reported to exist, augmenting the horror. On May 20th five hundred persons were reported on the point of starving, only fifty miles from Omaha.³¹ One man had been found nearly dead, the only survivor of three brothers who had begun the journey; one who reached the mines was the only survivor of a party of nine. A St. Joseph correspondent at Fort Kearney reported that nine hundred wagons of disappointed Pike's Peakers had passed eastward, and men were selling their goods for food or leaving them on the plains as they became too heavy for their diminishing number of cattle to draw. A company from Plattsmouth, after proceeding some distance across the plains, suffered such hardships that they returned to the town. Their threats so alarmed the inhabitants that all stores and dwellings were locked and barricaded and many of the inhabitants fled.

The discussion over the existence of large amounts of gold at Pike's Peak had reached great length when Greeley³² of the *New York Tribune* reached the Missouri, on a tour of personal inspection. Joined before he reached Kansas City by Villard, of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, and Richardson of the *Boston Journal*,

²⁹ *Ibid.*, May 31, 1859.

³⁰ *Kansas City Journal of Commerce*, Jan. 22, 1859. *New York Tribune*, June 3, 1859.

³¹ *Ibid.*, May 20, quoting dispatch in *St. Louis Democrat*. See also *Tribune*, May 27.

³² *New York Tribune*, June 28, 1859; *Rocky Mountain News*, June 11, 1859.

he reached Denver in June and on the eleventh, visited the Gregory mines, and made a detailed examination, upon which a comprehensive report was made, signed by the three gentlemen. It opened with a significant passage. "We have this day personally visited nearly all the mines and claims already opened in this valley; have witnessed the operation of digging, transporting and washing the vein stone; have seen the gold plainly visible in the riffles of nearly everything and in nearly every pan of the rotten quartz washed in our presence; have seen the gold plainly visible, though infrequently to the naked eye, in quartz not yet wholly decomposed, and have obtained from the few who have sluices already in operation accounts of their several products as follows * * *." Detailed statements of the earnings to that date of various companies followed, which showed that in some mining claims six hundred dollars worth of gold dust had been taken in a day. Gregory was interviewed, and described the method by which he had made the discovery. Why so many prospectors were leaving was discussed, and also the qualifications of a good miner. People were urged to consider carefully before coming out to the mines, because one claim might yield good results, and another, nearby, prove very unsatisfactory. In closing they requested that papers using any part of the report print it in full.

Confidence in the statements that the mountains contained rich deposits was further improved by the gradually increasing amounts of gold dust sent east.³³ On June 28th, Wilkes Defrees, one of Gregory's associates, arrived at Omaha with \$4,000 in gold dust.³⁴ On September 27th, \$32,000 worth reached Leavenworth, the largest shipment to that time.³⁵ The correspondent in Denver of the *St. Louis Republican* stated that receipts of gold had been \$73,000, and shipments \$45,000.³⁶ The same person reported that Gregory had left for Georgia carrying with him \$25,000 in gold dust. In the face of such facts skepticism had to give way, and the belief of some became a certainty, that a new and important source of production of the precious metal had been discovered.³⁷

An interesting account of his visit is found in Byers, *Colorado*, 44; see also Vickers, *History of Denver*, 183, and Hollister, 83-85.

³³ *New York Tribune*, June 14, 1859.

³⁴ *St. Louis Weekly West*, July 19, 1859.

³⁵ *New York Tribune*, Sept. 27, 1859.

³⁶ *St. Louis Daily Bulletin*, Dec. 16, 1859, reported the arrival at Leavenworth of the Pike's Peak express with \$15,000; again on the 31st with \$10,000; Jan. 10th, with \$22,000; Jan. 17th, with \$21,000; Jan. 28th the express brought to Atchison \$28,000 and the day before to Leavenworth \$4,000. On Feb. 4, the same paper stated the total amount of gold sent from Colorado during the year before as two millions. Similar items occurred in the *St. Joseph Weekly West* after Sept. 1st. See also *St. Joseph (Indiana) Register*, edited by Schuyler Colfax, Nov. 28; Dec. 8, 1859; March 15, 1860.

³⁷ A letter from the director of the Mint to Senator Sumner (See *Congressional Globe*, April 17, 1862) stated that receipts for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1859, were \$4,171.70; for the next year, \$622,261.30. See also *Rocky Mountain Herald*, June 2, 1860.

A Winter Rescue March Across the Rockies¹

By LeRoy R. Hafen

The "Mormon War" broke in 1857. Across the broad plains of Nebraska came the United States troops, while dust-covered oxen pulled the heavy lumbering supply wagons along the winding white line of the Oregon Trail. The aspen leaves were already flashing a brilliant yellow and the chill of autumn was abroad when the little army reached the Green River valley in present western Wyoming. The Mormons at Salt Lake City had learned during the previous July of the intended military movement against them and had sent out Lot Smith with a band of scouts to destroy supplies and retard as best he could the progress of the United States troops. Lot Smith, clever and elusive, captured several of the trains of supplies which were in the rear of the troops. Soon the prairies were lighted with the dazzling blaze from flaming bacon, and clouds of smoke rose in billows from burning clothing and army blankets. When the advance troops reached the site of famous Fort Bridger, for fourteen years past the rendezvous of mountain trappers and recruiting station for overland emigrants, only the charred shell of the wilderness post remained.

The army found itself in a rather hazardous position. With supplies greatly reduced, winter snows already falling, and with one hundred miles of bleak mountains separating them from the Mormon metropolis beside the Great Salt Lake, it was decided to forsake plans of conquest for the present season and establish winter quarters. New supplies in quantity must be had and the nearest source was at Fort Union, New Mexico. To that depot a detachment must be sent for succor. Albert S. Johnston (later killed as a Confederate general in the Civil War) was in command of the United States troops at Fort Bridger. He ordered Captain R. B. Marcy to lead the expedition to New Mexico.

Six inches of snow covered Green River valley in late November as Captain Marcy organized his expedition for the winter journey across the Rockies. Mountain men agreed that a direct southeastern course from Fort Bridger would bring the party to Fort Union in twenty-five days, and snow beyond a depth of two feet, they were sure, would not be encountered on the high plateaus and over the mountain passes. Marcy was no tenderfoot, having seen twenty years of dangerous service on the frontier; so he insisted upon taking thirty days' rations. Sixty-six mules

¹The data for this story is taken from R. B. Marcy's *Thirty Years of Army Life on the Border*, 224 et seq.

were provided and among these sturdy animals the packs were properly distributed and the loads balanced and securely tied. The force consisted of forty enlisted men and twenty-five mountaineers. As guide and interpreter went Jim Baker, famous scout of the West, companion of Kit Carson and Jim Bridger. Baker had come to the mountains in the service of the American Fur Company at the age of eighteen and had for years roamed over the mountains and trapped the streams for beaver. Associated with Baker, in the role of interpreter went Tim Goodale, another frontiersman of fur-trade days. Tim's Indian wife, hardy and robust as her squaw-man, rode behind her master. Bedecked in her fringed buckskin, decorated with porcupine quills, with her round, bronzed face grinning from under a scarlet shawl she lent a rather unique note of color to the uniformity of the regular troops.

When all was in readiness the cavalcade set out from Fort Bridger, taking as planned, a southeastward course to the Green River. At the far eastern bend of this great affluent of the Colorado the sheltered valley of Brown's Hole was entered. Here, twenty years before, had been founded a fur trade post to which was given the name of the Texan hero of the Alamo. Fort Davy Crockett was now in ruins, its crumbling walls presenting mute evidence of the passing of the hectic days of the fur trade.

After following an ascending canyon for miles the party came out upon the Roan, or Book, Plateau which separates the waters of the Green and the Colorado rivers. Ten miles of trudging over this bleak stretch of white brought them to the great cliffs that terminate the plateau and break off almost perpendicularly two thousand feet to the Colorado River below. For miles along this escarpment but a single trail was to be found capable of descent by animals. In search of this went Jim Baker, while the soldiers prepared to bivouac on the edge of the bluff. Snow was cleared from patches of gray ground and eager hands gathered wood from scrubby bushes. Soon fires were crackling and spitting and throwing the shadows of dancing troopers against the freshly stretched tents. Mules were relieved of their burdens and permitted to glean a scanty fare from the half-covered bushes and buried grass.

Meanwhile, Jim Baker, the scout, followed along the edge of the cliff looking for familiar landmarks. The noise of the camp grew fainter and presently was replaced by the low muffled roar which rose from the river in the dark shadowed valley below. Familiar signs were unrecognized under the white snow mantle and the disconcerting search continued for hours. Finally the

jutting of a mighty rock beside a precipitous canyon revealed to the scout his whereabouts. It was now easy for him to find the winding path which Indians had cut along the face of the bluff. Triumphantly he returned to camp and the compliments of the Captain and men were as sauce to his meat and cream for his coffee.

When pale morning light illumined the snow-mantled Rockies to the east, the camp was astir. As the light broadened into day anxious men peered over the cliff into the deep canyon where flowed the river. Brown earth and bare rocks were discernible on the bottomland and happy exclamations of surprise ran through the camp announcing the absence of snow in the canyon. The narrow and tortuous path leading down to the river was steep and slippery. Although the mules carefully watched their footing, occasionally one would lose his hold and go tumbling down the incline, rolling a mad race with detached articles of his pack until some tree or projecting crag brought him to a stop. Meanwhile shouting men gathered the wreck of the race and repaired the damage as best they could. In the beautiful valley of the Colorado River the mules were turned loose to graze and the men enjoyed a brief respite from the frost of the snow fields on the high plateau.

The 8th of December found Marcy and his men in the valley of the Gunnison River, at the site of modern Delta, Colorado. Here were the ruins of another fur trade post, Fort Robidoux, founded in the thirties by a famous trader from St. Louis. Bands of Ute Indians here encountered, were found to subsist on rabbits, bugs and crickets, and were described by Marcy as a "ragged, villainous-looking set" who flocked about the troops trying to steal anything that took their fancy. These Indians were friendly enough until the suggestion was made that they furnish a guide to lead the troops over the mountains. Then they shivered as if with cold and shook their heads, saying they were not yet ready to die. Marcy offered the chief the value of three horses if he would guide the party to Cochetopa Pass, the only feasible route in miles over the continental divide. But the Indian was adamant, indicating that the white men would die if they tried to cross.

But Marcy and his men, knowing that their comrades at Fort Bridger waited for supplies, determined to push on. If all went well, six days of travel would bring the party to the desired Cochetopa Pass—"Pass of the Buffaloes"—so-named because it had been discovered and first traversed by wandering buffaloes. It is located on the continental divide where one would least expect to find a low pass. The best passes across the Rockies in this latitude would appear to be at the headwaters of the Gunnison and

Uncompahgre rivers from the west and the Arkansas and the Rio Grande from the east. But these promising streams lead on and on to the icy, barren wastes above timberline before the backbone of the continent is reached, whereas, a branch of the Gunnison leads to the low and practicable Cochetopa Pass. If the proper affluent were followed by the party all would be well.

On the 11th of December the ascent of the western slope of the Rockies was commenced. Soon snow began to impede progress and presently became deeper with a crust on the surface which cut the legs of the mules. Deeper and deeper it grew and the order of march was changed. Instead of having the animals break the trail the men were ordered in front and proceeding in single file, tramped down a path. But despite this solicitude for the animals the poor beasts began to weaken. The bitter pine leaves from the evergreens formed their only sustenance and on this unwholesome forage the famished brutes grew thin, weak, and began to die. Burdens must be lightened if the crossing was to be made, and accordingly, all surplus baggage was cached. But still the mules continued to perish. One day five were lost, and on the following morning eight others lay stark and rigid on the mountain side. Not only was the pace being greatly reduced but the food supply of the men was becoming alarmingly small. All the beef cattle had been consumed and the bread supply was very limited. To husband the strength of men and animals Marcy now ordered all baggage discarded except arms and ammunition and one blanket for each man.

The snow, now four feet deep, was so dry and light that the men when walking upright sank to their waists in the fluffy whiteness. Jim Baker decided to try snow-shoes, but found the snow too loose and powdery to sustain them. In breaking trail through the deepest part the men in front now found it necessary to crawl on their hands and knees to pack the snow so that it would bear up the other men and the animals. The leading man was usually able to go about fifty yards before he became exhausted and dropped out into a rear position.

Rations had been reduced and finally were exhausted before the summit of the divide was reached. The only food now available to the hungry men was the meat of the famished animals. It was evident that the animal which could best be spared was the pet colt belonging to Tim Goodale's Indian wife. It was not without bitter tears that she finally agreed that her pet should be sacrificed. The meat of the colt was tender and to the starving men was sweet and delicious. The next meal, however, was on an old, tough, bony mare that could perform no further service.

During the twelve ensuing days the men continued to live on the meat of starved or exhausted horses and mules. As the salt supply ran out they discovered that gunpowder sprinkled on the mule steaks took the place of both salt and pepper. The lean meat and the thin soup did not satisfy for long the cravings of the appetite. Within a short time after a meal the men seemed as hungry as before they had eaten. One of the privations most keenly felt was the lack of tobacco, the craving for which drove some of the men almost frantic.

In constructing the nightly bivouacs each set of two or three men would dig a hole seven or eight feet square down to the ground. A bed of soft pine twigs was laid and over this a blanket was spread. On the windward side two forked sticks were stuck in the snow and against these a windbreak of pine boughs was constructed. With a fire made in the snow pit the night was passed with a fair degree of warmth. It was during the day that the soldiers suffered most from cold. Their clothes were insufficient and were wearing out from the hard march. Men repaired their shoes with green mule skin and when this wore out wrapped their feet in blankets or pieces of their coat tails. But despite their care the feet of several of the men were frozen. The dazzling reflection from the snow brought on cases of snow-blindness, but Marcy explains that the men found a remedy for this by blacking their faces with powder or charcoal.

New Year's day passed without celebration. Captain Marcy recorded in his diary that night: "We have been engaged since daylight this morning in wallowing along through snow at least five feet deep, and have only succeeded, by the severest toil, in making about two miles during the entire day. From our bivouacs tonight we can see the fires of last night, and in the darkness they do not appear over a rifle shot distant."

For some days past Marcy and Baker had been troubled with very grave doubts as to whether they were following the course that would lead to Cochetopa Pass. With the summer landmarks obscured by snow, Jim Baker was not certain of his course. Finally he confessed that he was lost. Notes of despair were now heard in the camp and Captain Marcy grew melancholy and could not sleep. He sensed the responsibility and saw the dangers. All the men knew that but nine years before, the indomitable Fremont had met defeat in these same mountains; that his one hundred twenty mules had perished in the bleak region of timberline; that when the thirty-three men made a last fatal effort to return to Taos, New Mexico, eleven of them dropped by the way and slept under the snowy blanket. They knew too that fifteen years before,

Marcus Whitman, the famous Oregon missionary, had in this same locality lost his way while seeking Cochetopa Pass. There in his moment of despair he had dropped upon his knees in the billows of snow and commended his life and mission to the direction of the Supreme Guide. No wonder it was with direful forebodings that Marcy looked out over the endless stretches of white mountains.

An uncertain course was pursued another day. At night a Mexican, Miguel Alona, came to the Captain saying he was certain they had turned from the proper route three days before. Marcy questioned him and became convinced that the Mexican did know the country; whereupon he promised him a handsome present if he would guide the party safely to New Mexico, but added: "If at any time I find you leading us in the wrong direction, I'll hang you to the first tree." Miguel looked out upon the stretches of snow and walked about the camp. He returned. "I'll risk my neck on it, Captain." "Very well," said Marcy, "you are guide."

There was no sign of road or trail and the snowy mountains rose peak on peak before them. Not a living thing in sight except the ragged, pinch-faced men and the famished, tottering mules. It was too late to turn back, so they resolutely followed the course pointed out by the swarthy Mexican with the piercing eyes. A few more days of difficulty and nerve-racking uncertainty and the saving pass was reached. Ragged caps whirled in the air, raspy voices shouted and the Mexican guide grinned a grin of triumph. Seventy-five miles of snow-covered valley still separated them from Fort Massachusetts, but the road ahead was known. Two men on two of the strongest remaining mules were dispatched to the government fort at the base of Mount Blanca for help and supplies, while the remainder of the party moved slowly toward the point of intended rescue. Eleven days later the rescue party from Fort Massachusetts came in sight.

"The exhibition of joy manifest among the command exceeded anything of the kind ever beheld," wrote Captain Marcy. "Some of the men laughed, danced and screamed with delight, while others (and I must confess I was not one among the former) cried like children. I had not slept half an hour at a time for twenty days and nights and was reduced from 170 to 131 pounds in weight, and, of course, my nervous system was not at that juncture under very good control."

The wagons of supplies were put under guard to prevent the hungry men from gorging themselves, while a supper of soup was being prepared. During the night, however, several of the men stole out and feasted on hard tack and bacon. Next morning

they were suffering excruciating pain and one of the poor fellows died as a result of his indulgence. Two days later, at Fort Massachusetts in present southern Colorado, additional supplies were obtained and easy marches brought the party to the New Mexican settlements.

Here at Taos, the Mexican guide, hero of the journey, was rewarded with \$500 for his valuable services. This he carried forthwith to the monte bank and next day was again a beggar in rags. The squaw wife of Tim Goodale, who had measured up admirably to the severe tests of the exacting journey, was presented by Captain Marcy with a new pony in lieu of her pet colt which had been sacrificed for the larder. Jim Baker, who decided that he would forsake for a time the wilderness life, purchased a new outfit and when Marcy saw him again he hardly recognized the mountain scout. But Baker was paying the price exacted from the votaries of style. When complimented upon his new attire the mountaineer replied: "Confound these yere store butes, Cap., they choke my feet like hell."² It was the first time in twenty years he had worn anything but moccasins on his feet and they were not prepared to break-in a pair of ill-fitting boots. Before commencing the return journey, however, he cast aside the boots and resumed the softer foot gear of the mountains.

Marcy with his company proceeded to Fort Union, some miles east of Santa Fé, where supplies for Johnston's army were duly obtained. For the return journey, however, the Captain chose a longer but a safer route.

² Ibid., 406.

“Bill” Nye and The Denver Tribune

By Levette J. Davidson, University of Denver

Some of “Bill” Nye’s finest humor was contributed to the *Denver Tribune* in 1880, in the form of weekly letters from Laramie.¹ Many of them were included in this humorist’s first book, *Bill Nye and Boomerang* (1881), which was the beginning of Nye’s national fame. He had entered journalism in 1876 as reporter and assistant editor on the *Laramie Daily Sentinel*.² Later on he acted as correspondent for the *Cheyenne Daily Sun*.³ The *Denver Tribune*, however, offered him a wider audience and, by forcing him to depend less on local references for his laughs,

¹The *Denver Tribune*, vols. 14 and 15 (Colorado State Historical and Natural History Society). Vol. 13—for last half of 1879—is not obtainable.

²The *Laramie Daily Sentinel* (Library of University of Wyoming).

³The *Cheyenne Daily Sun*, Jan., 1879-April, 1880 (Dept. of State History, Wyoming).

led him to develop those broad appeals which, during the next two decades, made his many lectures and books of humor the joy and the admiration of thousands throughout the United States.

Nye's contributions to the *Tribune* began late in 1879 and appeared every week or ten days until the middle of October, 1880.⁴ They were usually printed on the editorial page, under the main heading "Bill Nye" and sub-headings suggestive of the contents. For the most part the articles consist of a column and a half or two columns of comment on a variety of topics suggested by current events in Wyoming Territory or by Nye's meeting with interesting characters or with unusual experiences. Sometimes the fun was spun out of the author's original attitude toward the everyday doings of the people of Wyoming or of Colorado. Apparently unhampered by any compulsion to write "news," Nye allowed his comic spirit to play over a wide variety of topics.

From these letters the students of frontier life in 1880 may learn much concerning the social history of the pioneers, and may come to understand the common man's attitude toward such topics as territorial politics, the Indian question, and mining booms. While reading, one is delighted, also, with the Western spirit in Nye's humor and with the wholesome personality of the man himself.

Often Nye was caustic in his comments in regard to officials sent out to Wyoming from Washington, and he sometimes satirized the over-ambitious territorial legislature. On one occasion, when this body—incensed at the high rates charged for Wyoming prisoners in the federal prison at Laramie—passed a law "declaring the penitentiary of Lincoln, Nebraska, the legal penitentiary of Wyoming Territory," Nye wrote: "If the session had not been limited to a certain number of days it was the intention of the assembly to declare Bunker Hill monument the legal monument of Wyoming Territory."⁵

After discussing the recall of an inefficient Secretary for Wyoming, Nye broke out: "I came here intending to build up the Territory and develop its resources. My idea was to make the plains of Wyoming blossom as the rose. It is, however, uphill work to advance the interests of the embryo State unless I have the co-operation of the Government. No man, single-handed, can pave the way for wealth and enlightenment, when every two

weeks a reclaimed lunatic or star idiot is sent here to get a square meal and give away the affairs of State to all eternity."⁶

The national government, with its machinery for taking the census, distributing free seeds, and bungling the Indian question, often furnished Nye attractive bait for satire and humor.

Highly colored is his account of the administration of Western justice to Edward Frodsham, a notorious character who had been donated by Laramie to Leadville. He had "won the notice of the public there * * *. A little band of American citizens one evening took him out on the plaza, or something of the kind, and hung him last fall.

"The maple turned to crimson and the sassafras to gold and when the morning woke the song of the bunko steerer and the robin Mr. Frodsham was on his branch all right but he couldn't see to get in his work as a songster. There seemed to be a stricture in the glottis and the diaphragm wouldn't buzz. The gorgeous dyes of the autumn sunset seemed strangely at variance with the gen d'arm blue of Mr. Fordsham's countenance."⁷

But the most frequent subject of Nye's letters is the Indian. Believing that the government agents and commissions grossly mismanaged Indian affairs, Nye attempted to vent the Westerner's disgust. His humorous outbursts must have been a relief to those of his readers who had had unpleasant relations with the red man. In his sarcastic account of the peace commission sent to investigate the Meeker massacre, he jokingly wrote of the Indians: "They haven't even a country paper they can call an organ, and I speak for them as I could wish them to speak for me if I were a low, degraded, ignorant brute and they stood in my shoes and were smart and influential and wealthy and wielded a death-dealing pen."⁸

Although Nye usually stressed the Indian's ignorance, laziness, dirt, low standard of living, love for whiskey, and treachery, he mixed in much burlesque of the romantic conceptions of the noble savage. He reported the following as part of an eloquent speech by old Colorow: "Where years ago, in primeval forests, the swift foot of the young Indian followed the deer through the shimmering light beneath the broad boughs of the spreading tree, the white man, in his light summer suit, with his pale-faced squaw, is playing croquet; and we stand idly by and allow it. * * * Above the hallowed graves of our ancestors the buckwheater hoes the cross-eyed potato, and mashes the immortal soul out of the speckled squash-bug. The sacred dust of our forefathers is nourishing the

⁴ Credit for discovering "Bill" Nye has been claimed by various persons, either for themselves or for others. Slosson Thompson, in his book, *Eugene Field* (1901), asserts that Field "wrote and got Nye to contribute a weekly letter to the *Tribune*." This is obviously incorrect, for Field did not come to Denver to the *Tribune* until 1881. Nye had "found himself" much earlier. O. H. Rothacker was editing the *Tribune* while Nye wrote for it.

⁵ *Denver Tribune*, Jan. 4, 1880.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 1880.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Feb. 1, 1880.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 1880.

roots of the Siberian crab apple trees, and the early Scandinavian turnip.”⁹

Another subject for much talk and speculation in 1880 was the mining boom in North Park. Nye seems to have gotten the fever, which resulted for him in the discovery of the mule Boomerang—a better “pay streak” than many a prospector was able to find. “I located a claim called Boomerang. I named it after my favorite mule. I call my mule Boomerang because he has such an eccentric orbit and no one can tell just when he will clash with some other heavenly body.”¹⁰

Nye regarded mining experts and promoters as eligible for membership in his favorite club. “I am now President,” he wrote, “of a society here called the Forty Liars, and which is doing an untold amount of good. We will have a tournament in July. Managers of the Little Pittsburg depression are cordially invited to attend and compete.”¹¹

A good example of Nye’s frequent use of homely details is his description of “Wyoming Weather and Its Lively Eccentricities.” After telling that a song was on his lips as he went out to milk his cow one morning, he continued: “The song had hardly faded into the nightly distance, and the sound of profanity and the heavy thud of the milking stool as it fell upon the high expressive hip-bones of the cow had but just died away upon the silent air of the morning, when a little breath of wind, soft as the touch of a brand new moustache as it gently caresses the broad white brow of the unresisting school-marm, came stealing across the plains fragrant with alkali and the faint suggestion of horses and other domestic animals that had outlived their usefulness, and were at that moment bleaching their bones on the divide.

“By and bye the cat’s paw grew till it was about the size of a cook stove with a reservoir to it. The sky became overcast. So did the ash-barrel in the back yard. Nature did not seem to feel so tickled. The sun was hidden by clouds, and also by flying fragments of felt roofing and detached portions of the rolling mill and machine shops.

“It blew hard. I will say now, in my calmer moments that at the rate it blew a man could make about eleven General Grant tours before breakfast, and he could eat an early breakfast, too.

“I could go on and say more of this violent wind, not over-drawing it in the least, but people would not believe it.”¹²

⁹ Ibid., Feb. 8, 1880.

¹⁰ Ibid., May 30, 1880.

¹¹ Ibid., March 21, 1880. Nye called his second book *Forty Liars and Other Lies* (1882).

¹² Ibid., Jan. 18, 1880.

Wherever Nye turned, he found material for humorous comment. Unusual and picturesque characters abounded in Wyoming and Colorado during the 80’s—the miner, the tenderfoot, the marauding Indians, the cowboy, the office-holder, the Mormon, the tramp journalist, the stray Chinaman, the gambler, the cattle rustler, the distinguished visitor from the East, and the traveling lecturer. Unconventional happenings were as plentiful; and Nye reported the gun-fights, Indian raids, frontier weddings, amateur dramatics, establishment of mining towns, jail breaks, and cattle brandings. With a spirit characteristic of the West he exaggerated, showed no respect for tradition or conventionality, and gave the real names of the victims of his satire.

A large part of Nye’s humor, however, grew out of his original reaction to the commonplace incidents of small town life a generation and a half ago. He referred to such homely actions or objects as putting up stove pipe, wringing out the colored clothes, chewing tobacco, frozen house plants, liver pads, table etiquette, the stray cow in the garden patch, early watermelons, comic valentines, church sociables, dirty shirts, and railroad lunches. Often the fun resulted from the freely-flowing eloquence or the bombastic and learned diction in which Nye treated these unliterary subjects. Puns, incongruous comparisons, and Biblical parodies abound.

Although Nye seemed to get great fun out of every-day living, there is a vein of seriousness in his writings. Good-fellowship and human sympathy were the bases of his life and work. Never is there joking at the expense of true religion nor at other sacred matters; hypocrisy, affectation, and dishonesty are the targets for his satire. Having undergone the usual experiences of common life, Nye was able to reach those who read little but the newspaper. He helped them to laugh at their hardships and to find interest in what often seemed inconvenient and dreary. Laughing at himself and his experiences, he led his readers to avoid taking themselves too seriously.

Nye probably did more from 1880 to 1896 (the year of his death) than did any other man to advertise Wyoming and the new West. Yet today his works are nearly forgotten. Since much of the appeal of humor lies in contemporary and local references, humorous writings are largely ephemeral. A new brand of humor is developed by each generation to fit the new conditions and the new interests. To the student of frontier history or of American literature, however, Nye’s works offer a field for profitable and

pleasant investigation. The *Denver Tribune*, by engaging "the Laramie humorist" to write for its columns during 1880, thus served not only its own subscribers but also the cause of American letters.

Antiquities of Moffat County, Colorado

By Jean Allard Jeancon

From time to time, during the last five years, rumors have reached the writer of ruins in Moffat County that have been attributed to the Cliff Dwellers. The first notice that came to hand was in December, 1920, when Mr. James Loftis, who then resided in a part of Moffat County called Pat's Hole, came into the office and told of cliff ruins in the neighborhood of his home-stand. Mr. Loftis was not very positive in his descriptions of the character of the ruins, and, although notes were made at the time, it was impossible for us to investigate the matter.

In February, 1921, a clipping from the *Steamboat Pilot*, a newspaper published in the town of Steamboat Springs, was sent to Mr. Ellsworth Bethel of the State Historical and Natural History Society. The full text of the article is given here:

"That lower Moffat County was once inhabited by a race of Cliff Dwellers is the opinion of the four Craig men who returned Monday of last week from a month's exploration trip of the Yampa and Green river canons in the Pat's Hole country. That only a large and well-equipped party of excavators, backed by a substantial government or state appropriation, will ever be able to uncover more than the merest fragments of the traces left by the extinct race, is the further conclusion reached by the quartet of Craig men, according to the *Empire*.

"In the party which made the trip to lower Moffat County were P. R. Keiser, Dr. L. S. McCandless, Ralph L. White and Neil W. Kimball. They left Craig January 7th and returned Monday, January 31st. Four days were consumed making the trip each way, the mode of travel being by light wagon to Youghal and then by pack train to the Pat's Hole country.

"Three caves showing evidence of having formerly been inhabited by Cliff Dwellers were discovered and entered. Two were in the Yampa river canon below the mouth of Hell Creek, and the third in a side canon leading into Red Rock Canon and thence to the river. This third cave was several miles from the river.

"In the last mentioned cave split cedar logs of small diameter cemented with a mud plaster, appeared to cover a nearly round

excavation some three feet in diameter. When this covering was removed and the rubble taken from the excavation, it was found to be about two feet deep. The cracks in the rock walls of the small excavation had been cemented with the same mud plaster that covered the roof and both the roof and walls showed marks of smoke. The excavation gave the appearance of having been used as a smoke house or oven.

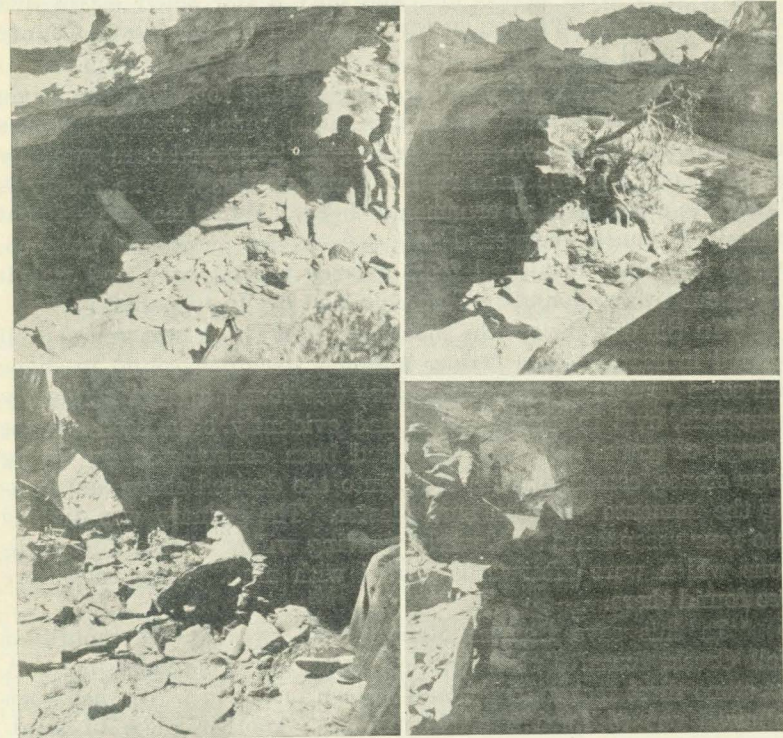


Plate I. Caves and Corn Bins in Lizard Canyon, Moffat County

"In the hole were found numerous fragments of crude pottery, made of sand and mud and baked hard. Sufficient fragments were found to partially reconstruct a pot or jug some ten inches high and seven inches in diameter. Large numbers of animal bones and several bones which looked to be those of human beings were found here, as well as crude sandstone utensils. The entrance to this crude fireplace was blocked by a huge stone, weighing several tons, which had been dislodged from the roof of the cavern and crushed the dwelling proper. By partially undermining this rock a large number of corn cobs, stripped of grain, were found.

Some of the cobs had been charred and partially burned. Most of the cobs were small, about 2½ inches in length, although one over six inches long was found.

“Cobs similar to these, with the grain still on, were found two years ago in Cliff Dweller ruins near Jensen, Utah. Mrs. Josephine Morris, formerly Mrs. Josephine McKnight of Craig, planted some of the grain and was able to raise one stalk of prehistoric corn. It grew to a great height and had only a few small leaves and very small cobs. The stalk was exhibited at the Uinta County fair at Vernal last fall.

“In the rubble surrounding the dwelling found by the Craig men were found a number of long, thin bones, resembling pipe stems, about four or five inches in length. They had been carefully hollowed out and the ends rounded and polished. One theory is that these were used as ornamental beads. Here, too, were found animal rib bones, sharpened to a stiletto-like point and polished, and a war club, fashioned from a large animal bone and weighing about twelve pounds. This club had begun to petrify.

“In the cave below the mouth of Hell Creek was found well defined indications of a former masonry dwelling, round in shape and some 15 feet in diameter. Here was found a large stationary receptacle, oval in shape, which had evidently been used for the storage of grain. The granary had been constructed by laying large stones, cemented with mud, into the desired shape and coating the immense tub with mud plaster. The granary was divided into four receptacles by cleverly weaving willow withes into partitions which were afterwards coated with mud. Corn cobs were also found there.

“In this cave Charles Mantle, who lives at the mouth of Hell Creek, found a corn grinder, fashioned from sandstone. A flat stone three feet in length and sixteen inches in width, had been hollowed out to form a crude mortar. Another piece of sandstone, fashioned into a pestle, was found close by.

“A third cavern disclosed further evidence of the tumbled masonry of a dwelling.

“Numbers of flint implements—arrow heads, spear heads, hatchets, and the like—were found around the cliffs. Some are extremely crude and would seem to be the work of prehistoric people, while others better finished, would appear to have been left by the Ute Indians.

“The Craig men are of the opinion that the discovery of cliff dwellings on the north side of Green River, below the junction of the Yampa, were either incorrectly reported as to location or else the discoverer, James Loftis of Youghal, was misled by the

odd formation made by erosion in the soft sandstone cliffs of Whirlpool canon.

“A mile or more below Echo park, where the two rivers combine to form the Green, at Mittens park, the river plunges into the almost inaccessible Whirlpool canon, with almost perpendicular walls. For four miles the river plunges downward and then widens out at Jones hole and continues at a more moderate pace through widening valleys to Jensen. Descent of Whirlpool canon is extremely difficult because ice is prevented from forming, both by the rapidity of the fall and the entrance of many warm springs which serve to keep the river open. The Craig men descended the canon, however, keeping for the most part on a narrow ledge which runs along the lowest stratum of cliffs, varying from 20 to 200 feet above the water. The entire north side of the canon was scrutinized with a glass, and, while the formations gave the appearance of the ruins of human handiwork, investigation proved that the formations were due to erosion.

“The Craig men who made the trip are strong in praise of the Pat's Hole country as a winter resort. Within five hours after they dropped off the rim of Blue Mountain at Youghal they descended some 200 feet and from deep snows and high winds entered a pocket in the Yampa River canon where there was no snow and where the wind never blows. In fact, in certain spots along the banks of the warm springs, the grass was already green.

“Approximately a thousand feet below the rim rocks of Blue Mountain lies a sagebrush and cedar-covered bench, almost flat, extending from Lily Park to Pool Creek or Harpers Corners, a distance of more than thirty miles. This bench varies in width from a mile to five miles. From this bench descent can be made by four or five trails to the Yampa River. Four trails—Johnson Draw, Harding Park, Hell Creek and Red Rock, give ingress to the river, but the majority of the canons are blind—luring the trailfinder on for many miles and then ending in an inaccessible ledge, making necessary the retracing of the trail to the starting point. This whole bench is known as the Pat's Hole country and the little park of forty or fifty acres, where the pioneer, Pat Lynch, made his home, is known as Echo Park.

“This bench land, furrowed with deep canons, is either covered with extra large sagebrush or by a heavy growth of cedars and pinon pine with a small sprinkling of dwarf spruce. There are many springs in this section, which, combined with the thick grass and mild weather, makes it an ideal winter range for cattle and horses.

"The country is a veritable winter paradise for game and during hard winters abounds with deer. This winter, however, because of mild weather and little snowfall, the deer are higher on Douglas and Blue mountains, in the sarvice berry pockets. The rocky ledges above the bench land are the natural habitat for mountain sheep and there are many of these animals still to be seen.

"Jones Creek, which empties into the Green River at Jones Hole at the lower end of Whirlpool Canon, is literally filled to the brim with native trout. The creek is only eight miles long and is fed from one immense spring which flows some seven feet wide and four feet deep. This creek is just over the line into Utah. Pool Creek, another short mountain stream fed by one immense spring, formerly contained many trout, but cloudbursts of the last few years have carried most of the fish into Green River.

"The sagebrush flats are filled with sage chickens, while grouse are found higher up. Sage chickens have been increasing of late years when they are being more extensively hunted in the upper country.

"Human beings are about the only kind of life that is really scarce in this section. Only five homes, or rather bachelor quarters, are to be found."

The above was the first authentic description that we had of the ruins, and while it excited a great deal of interest, it was impossible for the writer to follow up the information, and so the matter was dropped until such time as funds would be available to make an exploration of the country. As a part of the mapping of the archaeological remains in our state we included the Moffat county ruins and, early in August, 1924; we proceeded to Steamboat Springs with the idea of obtaining such information as we could at that place and then taking the field for the exploration. We were disappointed in finding that there was no one in Steamboat who could give us any information, and so proceeded to Craig, where Mr. Neil W. Kimball and Dr. L. S. McCandless furnished us with an account of their trip in 1921. Owing to the lack of funds we realized that the problem was too large for us to handle in a thorough manner this season, so we were able to make only a preliminary exploration, and seek for such information to guide us in making plans for the future as we could secure at that time.

Conflicting stories met us everywhere. One man said that he had been told stories of great pueblo ruins, but no cliff dwellings, another that there were no pueblo ruins but only cliff houses, still another, who had covered much of the country hunting for wild game to photograph, said that there were no ruins of any

kind. Taking the story of Messrs. Kimball and McCandless we started from Craig to attempt to satisfy ourselves as to the truth of the different stories. Our first stop was at Lay, where we met Mr. A. G. Wallahan. Mr. Wallahan has been a photographer of wild game for many years and knows the country of the Yampa and Green rivers as well as any man. He immediately said that, as far as his knowledge went, there were no ruins of any kind, but that he had heard rumors of a ruin on the old Miller place near Skull Creek. He also said that a trapper living in Brown's Park on the north side of the Yampa had explored practically every inch of the country and that he had never mentioned ruins of any kind.

From here we went to Skull Creek and there found that the Miller ranch was two miles further west and about three miles north. We also found that there was no one living on the Miller ranch at that time, but that a boy by the name of Tazwell East, who lived about three miles from the store at Skull Creek, knew of cliff dwellings in the neighborhood. As we were not able to locate young East at that time we attempted to find the ruins ourselves but failed. We returned to Skull Creek and that evening East appeared on the scene and we engaged him to conduct us to a canon where he said there were ruins.

The next morning we went two miles west and nearly three miles north and arrived at a canon that East called Lizard Canon. Here we found certain remains that will be described a little later in this article.

Before describing the ruins, it appears to the writer that a brief description of the country would not be amiss. South of the highway leading from Craig to Jensen, Utah, the country is composed of low rolling hills, with great desert valleys lying between them. There are several divides to cross before arriving at Massadona, which is about seventy miles west of Craig. From here on the country is more or less open desert, and great rolling valleys with hills on the south side and abruptly rising buttes on the north side. Ninety miles from Craig is Skull Creek, a dry stream bed at most times of the year. All of the country north of the highway from Massadona on is terribly cut up into immense canons and mesa lands. It is so gigantic in size and rough to travel over that in many places it is impossible to get down into the canons without the aid of scaling ladders and ropes. It would take many weeks of the most arduous labor to explore even a part of it. At a distance ranging from fifteen to thirty miles north of the highway is the great canon of the Yampa, which ranges in depth from 1,000 to 2,000 feet, and without a single practical path-

way for horses to descend into it in a distance of more than thirty miles. All of the country which approaches it from the south is terribly broken up and can only be explored with pack outfits and scaling ladders.

A better description than the writer can give of the country is contained in the report of the Hayden Survey of 1876, and extracts from it are quoted below.

"The most interesting upheaval or orographic structure in the western portion of the district between White and Yampa rivers is the great Yampa plateau, a high table land which, comprising between 300 and 350 square miles of area, exhibits very abrupt faces around nearly its whole circumference. * * *

"Along the northern line of bluffs which front the Yampa river, the plateau is higher than elsewhere. The height is about 3,600 feet above the Yampa and Green river junction, while the total elevation above sea-level is 9,000 feet. * * *

"The plateau can be ascended only from two sides unless we are light-footed and good climbers. * * *

"The wall-like barrier with which the hogback hills, in a curved line, circumscribe the plateau from Weary-mules-wash to within a few miles of the western end of the plateau is singularly striking in appearance. The hogbacks are really inclosures of a series of more or less well-expressed mountain basins, which lie along the debris slopes and spurs of the great Yampa plateau. The hogbacks are also frequently broken by washes through which the drainage during the winter and spring time finds its way out of the basin [See Figure 1].

"A gentle but very even rocky slope, with deeply cut drainage fissures in it, descends from the debris of the plateau wall to the foot of the hogback hills. The exposed faces of the plateau, as well as those of the hogbacks, consist of red sandstone, and in consequence of the brick-colored faces of these exposures contrast strangely with the grey and dull color of the surrounding scenery."¹

Access to the Pat's Hole country was out of the question this year as we would have had to send a messenger to ranchmen living there, a distance of thirty miles, that would take a day and a half each way, and then pack into the country, which would take two days more. Our funds would not permit of this, so we decided to limit our explorations for this summer to the investigation of the canon which East called Lizard Canon. It was so difficult to work in this canon that it took us a full half day to

explore a short mile that contained the ruins. The climbing was of the most difficult character, as in many places we had to help each other up the steepest places and go hand over hand going up or down. However, we visited all of the ruins and caves in the canon and the results will now be given.

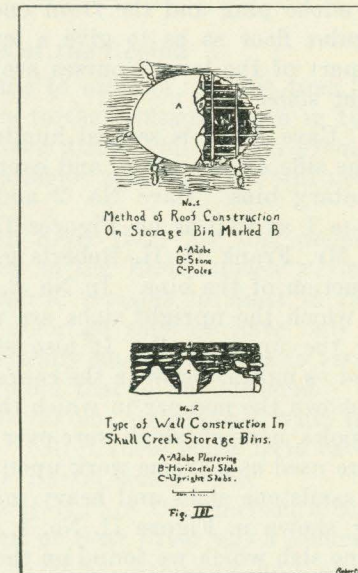
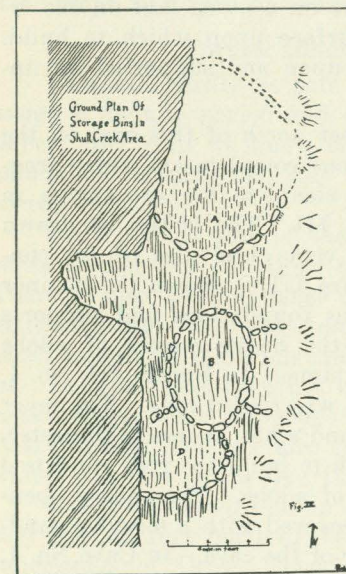
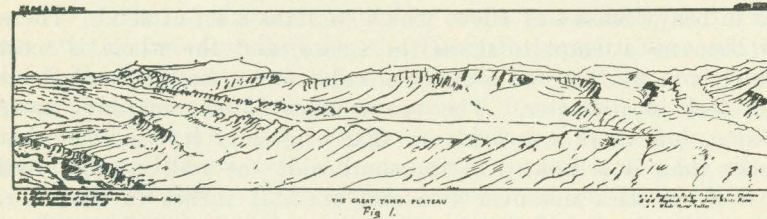


Fig. I. The Great Yampa Plateau

Fig. II. Ground Plan of Storage Bins in Skull Creek Area

Fig. III. Roof and Well construction in Skull Creek Bins

Lizard Canon is about a quarter of a mile west of the ruins of the Miller house, and emerges into the plain by a narrow mouth. Not over five hundred feet, on the west side of the canon, is the first cave. This is very shallow, not over eight feet high, about the same depth, and not more than fifteen feet in length. At one time there was a ledge, fragments of which are still in evidence,

¹ Belcher, Gustavus R., and Hayden, F. V., *10th Ann. Report of the U. S. Geological Survey*, 1878, Pages 369-370.

by which the former inhabitants of the cave could gain a comparatively easy entrance. Most of this is now gone and the part that remains is almost entirely blocked by a large piece of the roof that has fallen. In the cave are the remains of a corn cache or crib, built in the form of a truncated cone, similar in appearance to a bee hive. The materials are rough slabs of sandstone laid in heavy masses of adobe which contains a lot of sand. There has been no attempt to dress the stones, and the whole is most crudely put up. It was roughly circular at the bottom, and about four feet in diameter. The top courses of the masonry were missing, but there was evidence that originally it was somewhat higher than it is now. On the south side the wall is supported by a cedar stick not over two and one-half inches in diameter. The back end of the stick is attached to the rear of the cave by an adobe plug and the front end rests on a stone laid on the irregular floor so as to give a level surface upon which to build. A part of the lower courses are laid upon and supported by upright slabs.

Cave No. 2 is several hundred feet north of this one, on the same side of the canon, and contains one complete and three fragmentary bins. Cave No. 2 and the complete bin are shown in Plate I as well as on Figures II and III. The figures as drawn by Mr. Frank H. H. Roberts give a very clear idea of the construction of the bins. In No. 2, Figure III, is shown the manner in which the upright slabs are used as foundations and supports for the upper wall. It also shows the heavy masses of adobe used as mortar between the courses of stone. In Figure III, No. 1, is shown the manner in which the bin was roofed over. The layer of poles, none of which were over two and a half inches in diameter, were used as a frame work upon which to build the roof composed of sandstone slabs and heavy masses of adobe. The square opening, shown in Figure II, No. 1, was covered with a circular sandstone slab which we found on the floor of the cave. In Cave No. 1, the opening was almost in the center of the top of the bin and had the same kind of a cover. The walls were from four and four-tenths of an inch to six inches in thickness, very irregular and clumsy. The dimensions of the bins as shown in Figure II are as follows:

- A. Seven feet two inches by six feet four inches.
- B. Five feet three inches by four feet two inches.
- C. This was in such a fragmentary condition that it was impossible to even approximate its size.
- D. Three feet ten inches by four feet one inch.

The largest bin was two feet and nine inches in depth.

As will be seen from the measurements all of the bins were originally oval instead of circular.

Two more caves were visited, but the bins in both were too fragmentary to afford any measurements of interest. East told us that the remains in the two latter caves had been destroyed by boys who lived in the neighborhood.

No evidence of wattle dividing walls was found, as in the case of the bin described by the Kimball party. None of the bins in Lizard Canon contained potsherds or anything that could be ascribed to human beings, excepting a few corn cobs found in Cave No. 1. This probably is due to the fact that the boys of the neighborhood had explored the caves many times, hunting for relics, as they called them. There were no evidences of house dirt on the floors of any of the caves and in most of them the floor was windswept and bare of even sand.

Former Inhabitants of the Region

It would hardly be safe or sane to attempt, at this time, to assign a definite period and culture to the remains shown in this paper, and until we know more about them, and have a greater amount of material one may only attempt surmises that will need corroboration.

On the Utah side of the Green River there are well defined remains that can be safely assigned to the Basket-maker period. There is also an abundance of material remains to assist in this determination. However, on the Colorado side we have only a small amount of materials and practically no explorations to assist us. In some cases corn has been found that is unquestionably of recent date; bone implements that do not correspond with the Basket-maker tools are also found. All of these come from caves which are very much like the true Basket-maker cave.

It is well known that in the early part of the nineteenth century the territory north of the Yampa or Bear River was a common rendezvous of Crow, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Arapahoe and other Indians, and that the Utes roamed all over the country south of the river. Some objects have been found, sometimes in caves, and in other cases away from them, which are undoubtedly of modern origin, and it is rather difficult to differentiate between these and ancient ones that are in good condition. Only a careful study of abundant material, found in situ, can give us a criterion upon which to base our deductions.

A complete survey of the country would be an expensive undertaking but the results would justify the expense, and such an expedition should be made as soon as funds are available for the purpose.

The Pike Stockade Site and Its Purchase by the State of Colorado

On January 31, 1807, Lieutenant Zebulon Montgomery Pike, then on an exploratory expedition for the Federal Government, found himself on the north bank of the Conejos River about four miles above its junction with the Rio Grande River, and in what is now Conejos County, Colorado. He was then twenty-eight years old, and he had already commanded an expedition to the sources of the Mississippi.

Whether he was advised of the fact or not, it is nevertheless true that, when he reached the valley of the Rio Grande, Pike was a trespasser on Spanish territory. On his arrival at the Conejos, however, he built a stockade or small fort, and raised the American flag. His subsequent arrest by the Spaniards and his detention in Mexico are matters of common knowledge.

In recent years many people in Colorado have interested themselves in ascertaining the exact location of the Pike stockade, and in the preservation of the site itself. Among others, D. E. Newcomb, of La Jara, and former Chief Justice Charles D. Hayt, were active in the matter. On May 1, 1910, Mr. Newcomb, being satisfied (from traces of construction which he found), that the site of the stockade had been discovered, again raised the flag on the spot since definitely determined upon.

Brigadier General E. D. Thomas was then invited by The San Juan Pioneers, the County Commissioners of Conejos County through Mr. Luther A. Norland, Chairman, and Judge Hayt, to assist in determining the location of the site. He made a report under date of December 19, 1910. One copy of it was addressed to the County Commissioners, and another to Mr. Newcomb, Chairman of the committee of the San Juan Pioneers. These copies were identical, except for a preliminary recital in one as to the invitation coming from the Commissioners, and in the other as to its having come from the San Juan Pioneers. The report to the Commissioners was as follows:

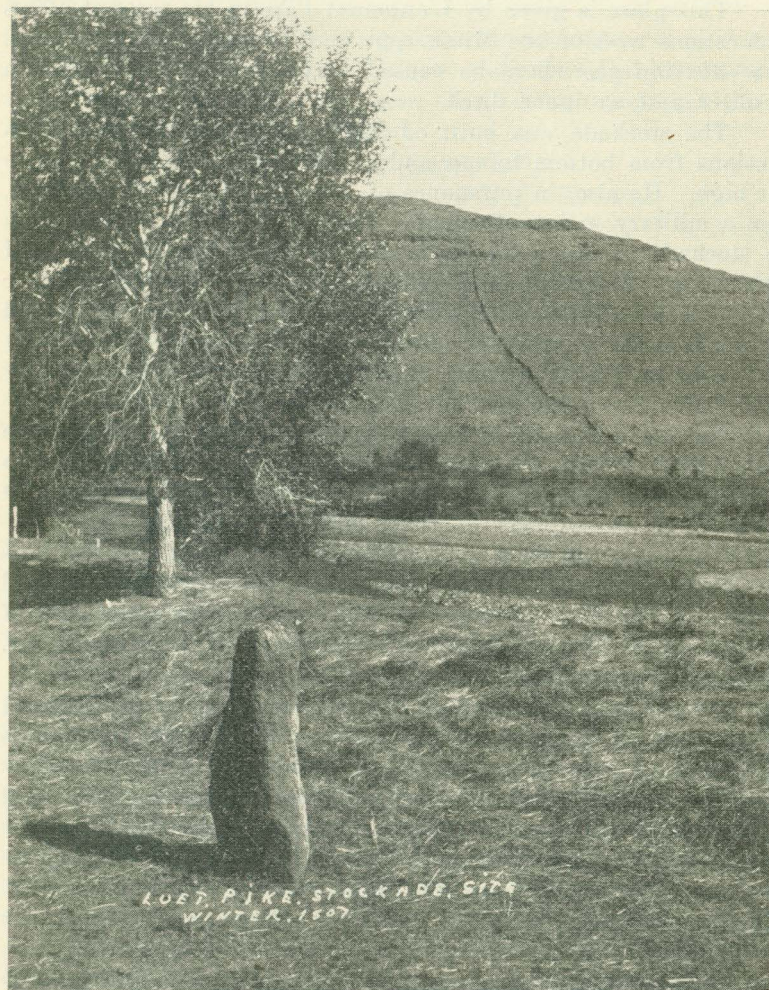
Denver, Colorado, December 19, 1910.

"Honorable Luther A. Norland,
Chairman, Board of County Commissioners, Conejos County,
La Jara, Colorado.

"Sir:

"Upon your written invitation, as Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners of Conejos County, Colorado, and also the personal request of Judge Charles D. Hayt of Denver, Colorado, formerly a resident of Alamosa, Colorado, that I should

come to La Jara and designate the old site of the stockade as well as I could from reports and other information, erected by Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike, U. S. Army, in 1807 on the Conejos River, Colorado, built by him, Lieutenant Pike, in February 1807; I proceeded to La Jara, accompanied by my aide, Lieutenant J. C. Waterman, 15th Infantry, Judge C. D. Hayt, and Mr. Field, both of Denver, Colorado, leaving Denver on the 17th of December, arriving at La Jara the morning of the 18th instant.



Site of Lieutenant Pike's Stockade, 1807. On the north side of Conejos River, east of La Jara, Colorado

"Shortly after arriving at La Jara, proceeded in company with several distinguished citizens of La Jara and Alamosa, to a place on the Conejos River, approximately five miles from its junction with the Rio Grande River, said place mentioned in song and story as the identical spot where Pike and his loyal soldiers and intrepid companions were to pass the aftermost and severest part of the winter of 1807, known by tradition and legend as the most harrowing winter in its severity in over a hundred years in the west.

"This place is given by Lieutenant Pike in his account of his explorations west of the Mississippi in 1806 and 1807 as a small area—36x60 feet—where he caused to be built a stockade with an outer and an inner ditch.

"The stockade was built of cottonwood logs of varying dimensions from bottom to top and in the neighborhood of twelve feet high. He also, in pursuance of his plan of a perfect defense, from a military point of view, caused a ditch to be run from the stockade to the river above the west curtain, as near as I could judge 100 yards south of the stockade, thus bringing to his aid in his defense water from the river to protect him and his small band of resolute and hardy explorers from the fierce and avenging hostile savages or perhaps from equally as blood-thirsty Mexican marauders.

"The main channel of the river at this time was close to the south curtains of the stockade, then unfordable and directly south of the south curtain of the fort. The river has since changed its channel and is now some 70 yards farther south.

"The place which I, in connection with others (old settlers who lived in the vicinity for years), have selected as the original location of the Pike stockade in 1807, lies on the north side of the Conejos River about 100 yards southwest of the house of Mr. Cortez and on his claim.

"I have been governed in my conclusions as to the original ground by a careful study of the accounts of the work and travels of Lieutenant Pike in the west, years 1806 and 1807. Furthermore, the high hill and hot springs directly opposite mentioned in his report, the distance from the mouth of the Conejos River to the location of his defensive stockade, and the present appearance of the water ditch on the south side of the original fort. This ditch or moat, evidently the work of man years ago, at the present time presents a well-defined, symmetrical appearance.

"This intrepid and loyal soldier, of heroic mould, devoted to his country, to his flag and to his profession of arms and the army, was one of the most picturesque characters encountered in the

west in its early and formative period. He was descended from sturdy Revolutionary ancestors and was imbued at an early age with patriotic sentiments and love of country which was constantly in his mind, and bore fruit until the day of his lamentable death at the fatal assault upon York, Canada, in 1813.

"Colorado, in my judgment, is much indebted to this famous explorer and intrepid discoverer of mountain passes and trails whereby its future and wonderful possibilities were, by his successful explorations and authentic reports, made known to the world.

"A suitable monument to his memory should be erected by a grateful and appreciative people, thereby letting the world at large know by their generous acts, that his hardships and daring in the west are not unappreciated.

"Very respectfully,

"E. D. THOMAS,

"Brigadier General, U. S. Army."

The spot designated by General Thomas was the one pointed out by Mr. Newcomb and Mr. Norland, and accepted locally. Old residents have since made affidavit that there was originally a marked depression there, and that old logs had been dug from the spot. Evidence of an ancient ditch or moat still exists. The north and west lines of the general tract have been surveyed by Jos. F. Thomas, former county surveyor of Conejos County, and the stockade site is in the northwest corner of the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Sec. 7, Tp. 35 N., Range 11 E. N. M. P. M. This is a portion of a tract entered by Edward Cortez, to whose heirs patent issued in 1912. The entire tract includes the South half of the Northeast quarter and the Northwest quarter of the Southeast quarter of the section.

The Conejos River shifts its course in this vicinity, and the stream is now farther north and closer to the stockade site than it seems to have been when General Thomas made his report. The encroachments of floods threatened some of the ground of the site, and after the summer of 1925 Mr. Norland, acting with the State Historical Society and others, constructed a wing-dam, made of spruce logs and filled with more than a hundred tons of rock, in order that the danger might be lessened.

As the result of the activities of Mr. W. A. Braiden, of La Jara, and others, and by an act approved April 24, 1925, the Colorado legislature provided for the purchase of the tract of one hundred and twenty acres including the site. (Session Laws, 1925, Chap. 20.) The bill for the act was introduced in the legisla-

ture by John W. Shawcroft of La Jara, a member of the House of Representatives. The act provided that the President of the State Historical Society, acting in conjunction with the Governor of the State of Colorado, should determine the location, and they have certified their approval of it as hereinbefore described. The state has now purchased the land from the heirs of Edward Cortez. The statute provides that the land as purchased "shall be and is hereby dedicated to the use of the public as a memorial park to perpetuate the memory of Lieutenant Pike and said park shall be under the supervision and control of the State Historical Society." No provision has as yet been made for a monument upon the site.

Little by little, there is a growing realization of the importance of preserving the historic sites in Colorado. There are many of them which could be protected at small expense through local community action, and it is to be hoped that much will be done in this line before it is too late. The immediate purpose of the present article, however, is to record the history of the efforts to locate and to preserve the Pike Stockade Site.

H. A. D.