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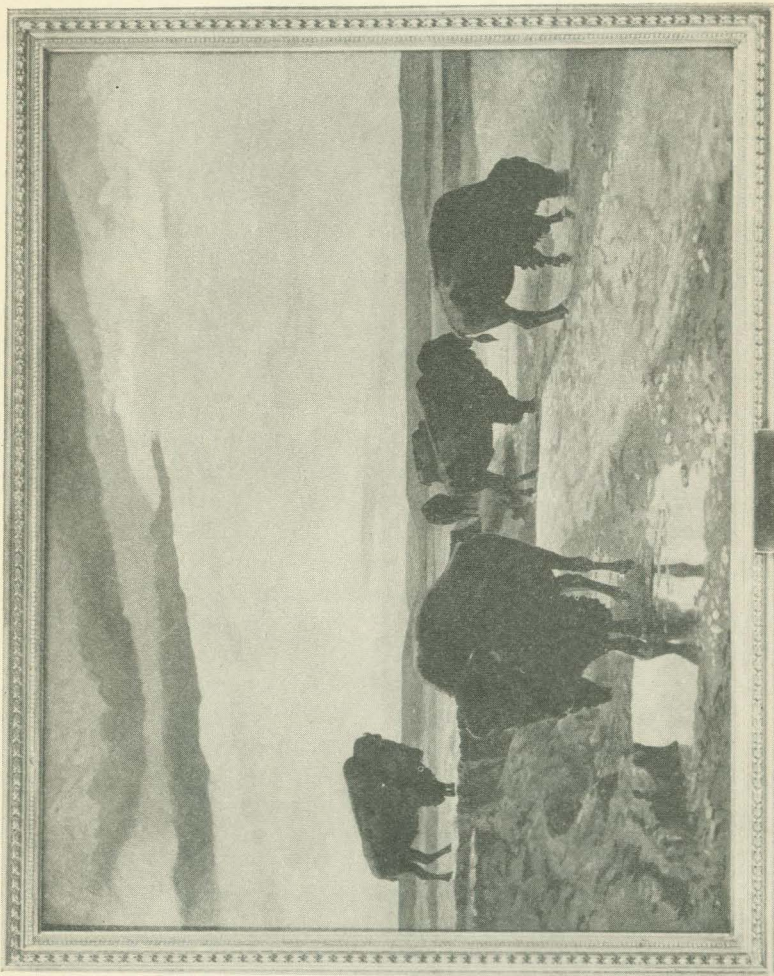
## Butchering Buffalo

By Chauncey Thomas

A distinction is here made between hunting buffalo for sport and butchering buffalo for profit. This first does not interest us in this article. Killing buffalo for profit, as are killed today practically all our domestic meat stock, is what we shall consider here. We shall also confine ourselves to the white man activities, for the Indian never killed any wild animal for amusement, as does the white sportsman.

In killing buffalo the white man employed two methods, mostly. One, the most spectacular, was running the wild cattle on horseback, and shooting them as they ran. This method is what gave to Colonel Cody his now world-wide nickname of "Buffalo Bill." When the buffalo were shot down for amusement by the white horsemen, the hunt usually was straight away, and the meat, shot dead or wounded, was left where it fell. But when the buffalo were killed for meat from horseback, then the hunter, or hunters, tried to run them in a circle and thus to drop the carcasses over as small a space of prairie as possible, which greatly aided in salvaging the meat when the skinners and the meat wagons came up.

Contrary to the popular misinformed legend of today, the buffalo did not muster in huge herds, but in comparatively small knots, of from a few, half a dozen or so, up to usually less than thirty animals. From fifteen to twenty-five animals of all ages and both sexes was the usual herd unit. These units tended always to keep slightly apart from each other, when not disturbed by man, and to stay together if they could, for how long one cannot, of course, say definitely, but probably, like certain bird flocks, at least for one season. Hundreds of these units near each other created the impression of a huge herd as one unit, in which each individual acted more or less alone, as do domestic cattle to a large extent in large herds. But even the domestic, if they can be called such in the Texas trail herds, usually held about the same place in the long line of horns from day to day, and certain ones were usually in the lead, often for practically the entire drive. In short, the buffalo were organized, roughly speaking, among themselves much as domestic range and wild horses in-



BUFFALOES AT THE WATER HOLES  
 Painting by the pioneer artist, J. D. Howland. Presented by Mrs. Wolfe Londoner to the Society of Colorado Pioneers, and by it given to the State Historical Society.

ternally classify themselves, each unit under a leader. And as with the horses, both wild and semi-wild, the fighting leader was the strongest male, who brooked no rival, but the actual trail leader was some wise old female; so it was with the buffalo, and if irony may be pardoned for the sake of a touch of humor, the same method seems to apply to the human herds.

It is necessary to keep this formation of the buffalo in mind if one would get a clear idea of how they were hunted or slaughtered. The killers for meat and hide, both red and white, based their methods on this small herd unit, and this leadership, and did not work on the individual animal, except when merely a few were wanted. But killing wholesale by both Indian and white man rested on this unit-herd of usually about a score of animals.

The buffalo was, and always will be, a vicious, surly, stupid animal. He depended on his nose for danger warnings, and had comparatively short range eyesight, just like the deer. Hearing, in all animals of the plain, cuts little figure in their defense, though the ears rank with the nostrils in all woods animals, such again as the deer. On the other hand, the antelope, as much a prairie animal as the buffalo, depended almost solely on the eye, and according to most accounts, used their nose but little. Another characteristic of the buffalo that was important from the killing of them point of view was their tendency to act somewhat like sheep—follow the leader and move blindly, if at all, as their fellows went, often at random. Another element in their hunting was that, if the buffalo were comparatively free to move in any direction, when alarmed, they almost universally ran south. This, at least, was noticeably true of the migrating herds, north in the spring, south in the fall, because, as some naturalists have more or less correctly assumed, the south instinctively meant refuge for the buffalo, in other words, home. But, contrary to popular misconception again, all the buffalo did not migrate, even before the white man came. Some of them stayed in the north throughout the severe winters of Canada even, not as individuals or small herds only, but apparently racially. And some of them never migrated from the plains of Texas northward, so far as we can tell, although any definite deductions either at the time or at this late date are very uncertain, because of the hundreds of miles of buffalo range in all directions, the millions of buffalo and the impossibility of telling one from another. All we do know was that at all times of the year there were buffalo in Texas to the Rio Grande and in Canada and all places between for perhaps nearly 2,000 miles north and south, also that there was a yearly migration of buffalo

north in the spring and south in the fall, much like the movement of wild ducks and geese. Wild ducks and geese will winter in the far north if they have food and open water, and the same rule apparently was true of the buffalo.

So far as I can ascertain, covering about 40 odd years of trying to do so, the buffalo were not naturally a mountain animal. Of later years, after the white man came across the West, say from 50 to 100 years ago, there were, without doubt, two somewhat distinct kinds of buffalo—the larger, lighter-colored animal of the plains, and the smaller, darker-colored one among the mountains. But we have seen the same thing of the coyote, a natural plains wolf, that did not go into the mountains till he followed the white man's cattle into the hills, and today we have two kinds of coyotes, just the reverse of the buffalo in size, by the way, the smaller, lighter prairie coyote, the same as for centuries back, and today the larger, darker mountain coyote. This that we have had a chance to observe about the coyote may be, and probably is, true about the two kinds of buffalo that the white men came to know. Also, to bear out this deduction, there are legends among the mountain Indians, and especially those west of the mountains in the upper Columbia river drainage, that the buffalo came among them within the past century, and came always from the eastern passes. The probable truth is that the whole Rocky Mountain territory, the actual mountainous part, was largely bare of both human and animal life till the pressure of the white on the red gradually drove life into, and even entirely across the Rockies. Deer, elk, bear, buffalo, antelope and wild horses lived along the wooded streams across the plains, as all historians know, and the Indians with their food supply, of course, till they all were gradually pressed west into the mountains. There are a few undoubted exceptions to this, as in the case of the Ute Indian and the deer, but it is well known that all mountain Indians were always going out onto the adjacent plains after meat, and were comparatively poor tribes, such as the Utes, and, farther north, the Crows. This fact alone indicates that the wild animals preferred the plains, under natural conditions, before the white invasion, the buffalo among them, and that the so-called later date mountain buffalo was like the mountain coyote of today, a later-day product.

Going back now to the migrating buffalo. The buffalo had no fixed trails, he merely followed the grass in the spring and went south more or less directly from where early fall found him. Often these lanes of travel were hundreds of miles apart. Thus the Indians, or some tribes who owned a large extent of

territory, like the Sioux, the Blackfoot, or the Cheyenne, to insure meat for the next year, used to burn off the high dry prairie grasses in the fall so that the short, juicy tempting curly buffalo grass would lure the great brown tides into their territory. This caused many Indian wars, of course, for a tribe had to eat, and if the buffalo came not into their territory, the foodless tribe had to invade the land of another tribe where the buffalo that year were plentiful. This was especially true with the mountain vs. the plains Indians, such as the Utes and the Cheyenne-Arapahoes, or the Crows-Blackfoot.

The whites coming west, ignorant of such a vital Indian need, assumed incorrectly that these great prairie fires were set by the Indians out of pure deviltry, just to annoy the whites, but such was not the case at all. It was a necessary Indian custom long before they ever saw a white man, a means of luring their meat and leather, food, clothing and housing supply for the next year, somewhat as the white man plows and plants in the fall for next year's crop.

And that is why, of all things white, the Indian feared, hence naturally hated, the white man's plow ranked first. The turned furrow ruined forever the buffalo feed, that meant no buffalo, and that meant no Indian food, and that meant fatally—no Indian. The Indian did not, on the whole, contest the western white invasion till the white began to break the sod. Plowing to the Indian in all ways was as fatal as fire is to the timber man. For him it ruined everything. Hence the Indian hatred of the plow. It is an interesting detail here that though the Utes and Agent Meeker had had endless friction for a long time, when Meeker plowed up the race track the Utes exploded. They looked on plowing as the city white regards booming.

Now a great deal of sincere but totally blind sentiment has, and is, wasted over the passing of the buffalo. But just as the plow and the buffalo could not exist together, neither could domestic cattle and the buffalo. Farming, or a white home of any kind, was impossible where the buffalo was. That savage beast, with a great many ways of the hog, broke down fences, tramped down crops, killed domestic cattle wherever it was. Either the ox or the buffalo had to go, the two could not exist in the same place any more than weasels can live in a hen house, and the chickens live there, too. A few buffalo have been trained, just as lions and bears and tigers have been trained, but as a race the buffalo was as savage and hopelessly wild as the bear, tiger, or lion, and from where the white man wants his home, the dangerous and destructive wild animals have to vanish. This

was, and is, true of the buffalo, and a sigh for buffalo is like a lament for the lion. The wild buffalo, like his counterpart, the wild Indian, had to go if the white man stayed. And under the merciless iron way of all things, so it was. Inevitable, not wanton.

As said before, the white man hunted the buffalo in two main ways—either on horseback in a circle as small as he could drive the running wild cattle, or else from a “stand.” In the dictionaries today we find the words “buffalo, buffaloe, to buffalo” and “stand, get a stand, had a stand . . .” as verbs. These two now almost accepted terms came into English from one of the two main methods the whites used in slaughtering buffalo. And the method, one impossible for the Indian, was this—

The white meat-and-hide harvester rode out on his horse till he had located, perhaps a mile away, one of the buffalo unit herds of about a score of individuals. If they were lying down, or quietly feeding, he kept out of sight and rode around them so as to get the wind blowing from the herd to himself. This prevented them scenting him or his horse, and later his powder smoke. The plains are everywhere more or less rolling, and this fact gave the white killer plenty of cover. When within perhaps from a quarter to half a mile of the placid bunch of buffalo, depending on the lay of the land and the cover it afforded, the hunter picketed his horse, or better yet, tied it in the cottonwood timber along some handy stream, then on foot cautiously crept into the face of the wind directly toward the unsuspecting herd. Often some stray individual buffalo suddenly was aroused, and if this one alarmed the herd, then he had to try again, often another herd.

But if all went well, the hunter easily got to within not less than 300 yards nor more than 400 estimated yards of the animals and made himself comfortable behind some convenient cover. Often he lay in the open, though prone, as the wild animals noted with alarm only moving objects, and paid little or no attention to the prone figure, which, it was perhaps correctly guessed, the buffalo mistook for a wolf, and the wolves were always around the buffalo, as the wolves, like the Indians, lived on the buffalo to a large extent, mostly on the sick, wounded, crippled and stray calves. The wily wolf seldom attacked an animal that could fight when he could get just as much and good wolf fodder by simply waiting for it to drop of its own natural accord. Anyway, the quiet buffalo paid no attention to the partly hidden, comparatively motionless figure of the prone white hunter from 300 to 400 yards down wind. If the wind

changed, with a few snorts, away went the herd from that dangerous smell. But on the plains, as on the sea, the wind blows almost constantly, and does not shift its direction haphazardly.

The hunter spread out his 30 to 40 cartridges in easy reach, set up two crossed sticks that he carried to make a muzzle rest for his rifle, perhaps took a chew of tobacco, or a nip from his bottle, and went to work. It was from then on not hunting, it was just killing. The buffalo, of course, were used to the thunder, so paid little attention to the distant dulled boom of the big rifle. But the hunter must not miss, if he did his chances were usually gone right then and there, for the herd strung out and left, first on a walk, then on a growing gallop.

The hunter picked out what he decided was the old cow leader, and shot her midships, a kidney shot if he could make it. He wanted to anchor and bleed her, to hold the others. The scent of blood aroused the herd and they universally attacked and gored that wounded one. While these were engaged, the hunter picked his next shot, always some individual on the edge of the herd that showed symptoms of leaving, and thus drawing the rest of them with it. Again the heavy bullet hit, and the selected victim either fell in its tracks, or staggered blindly. This was kept up, shot after shot, each shot aimed to drop any animal that seemed trying to lead out from the now excited and milling herd. The hunter must be an expert dead-sure rifle shot, and a rapid one, for the now intermingling animals were getting more and more uneasy, and would break away any time they had a leader. So he had always to shoot down the accidental or impromptu leader, and very often the whole dozen to two dozen buffalo were thus piled up in a very small space, probably not over one or two acres, handy for the skimmers, or much less often, for the meat gatherers, in their wagons.

The hunter's work was now done. He calmly picked up his tools, walked back to his picketed pony, and cantered back to camp, where he put in the rest of the day reloading his empty rifle shells, casting bullets, and getting ready for the next batch of work. This included some rather wide riding at times to locate more buffalo, keeping an eye peeled for Indians, and general superintending of the whole layout, as the hunter was king in that outfit. He never touched a hide, nor a pound of meat—that was skimmers' work. And general camp work, like cooking and horse tending, was the teamster's business. His work was to shoot down the buffalo, that and nothing more, and on him everything and everybody in the whole outfit depended. It was as much beneath his skill and dignity to do any of the other work,

as any other work other than riding was beneath the real old-time cowboy—not the present-day ranch hand or movie actor or dude nurse.

The hunter dropped each day, or several days apart as the weather, buffalo and other conditions required, only as many animals as the skinners could handle. Not from any sentimental concern about the buffalo, but simply because dried buffalo hides, delivered at the railroad, were worth in the '70s, when the great buffalo extermination took place, about \$2 each, and his cartridges cost about 25c each. They all, like the Indians themselves, preferred cow buffalo hides, as the hair was more evenly distributed than over the bull hides, and the hides hardly paid for the work if sold only as leather stock, regardless of its value as a robe. Of course, all poorly haired robes were tanned back in the states for leather, but the outfit was harvesting robes, not rawhide.

The hide hunters, who wiped out perhaps 90 per cent of the buffalo, left the meat where it fell, as it was unsavable with the means they had at hand. Sometimes, however, the tongues were cut out and dried, or salted, for sale later. And again does sentiment paint an incorrect picture of buffalo affairs in the proverbial "delicious buffalo steaks," and especially the hump meat. The fact was, and still is, that buffalo is mighty poor beef, it is tough, stringy, more or less tasteless compared to the meat of the steer. The workers on the railroad construction rebelled at buffalo meat and demanded, often before going out to the job on the construction train, that they be fed white man beef and not those delicious buffalo steaks. Hence we find long herds of Texas cattle trailing north to feed the construction gangs and the army with white beef, right in the midst of several million remaining but fast vanishing buffalo. The Indian, on the contrary, preferred buffalo to all other meat, and regarded the white man's ox with slight favor, but, of course, he ate ox and even horse meat when he could not get his beloved buffalo. Incidentally, the Indian preferred mule to horse meat, and would often put an arrow through a prairie dog rather than an antelope, to provide his lunch.

Even the hide hunters did not eat buffalo, except when they had to, but usually packed along in their wagon, or wagons, the usual white man's rations, of which the principal part was pork, either bacon—preferred—or salt sides, famous now and then, as sowbelly. But bacon preferred, thank you. Soldiers, railroaders, cowboys, hunters, those that came in more or less daily contact with the buffalo, never ate buffalo if they could help it, but

left it to the sentimentalists who never ate it. In actual fact, they all left it to the buzzards and the wolves.

Only the hides were taken. Horns, heads, and bones, could not yet be preserved, nor marketed. After the killer had done his part, here came the skinners, horseback if it was slow traveling for the wagon, or all in the wagon if the going was good, and they set promptly to work. The carcasses were never hung up and knife peeled, as we do in a modern slaughterhouse, but a cut was made down the inside of the legs, along the belly and around the neck, high up under the horns, and here on the neck the hide was started with the knife. Then a team of horses ripped the hide off the back, from neck to tail, with a touch of the knife here and there as needed. Two men would thus peel from 20 to 30 animals in a day's work. Then came scraping off surplus meat and especially fat, and dumping the green heavy hides into the wagon box. Then back to camp where the hides were staked out, salted and dried, then folded and bailed as tightly as circumstances permitted. Often the hides were merely folded flat once, along the spine, hair in, and packed loose and flat into the wagon. I say wagon, but that was only with the smallest possible outfit. Usually it was two wagons and often more, to hold the dried hide crop, because one wagon had always to be free to go out to the "stand" where the hunter had "buffalood" the herd (see dictionary referred to, please) and this might be anywhere from one to ten miles away.

Prices on hides varied, naturally, with their quality, the market for them and where they were delivered. The rate at most plains railroad points for common average dried hides was about \$2 in the '70s, as I have said. One notes even double that price in many inventories dated back even 50 years, but presumably that was for hides delivered "at the River," hundreds of miles away by wagon going, and before the new-come railroads had lowered the price by making transportation faster and by far cheaper.

An Indian-killed and tanned buffalo robe can readily be distinguished from a white man's one, as a rule, because the Indian robe is almost universally split up the back, then sewed together again with sinew, and often from two original hides, because the Indian women could not readily handle the entire hide in tanning by hand, and the white vats could. Also, most of the Indian robes, besides being in two pieces thus, were usually more or less decorated on the leather side in characteristic and tribal designs. Besides, to an expert finger and eye, the tanning is far different, Indian and white man.

The hides varied in quality for a number of reasons, just as do ox hides, or sheep. Now and then came in a "silk" as it was called, a hide with especially soft silky hair. These "silks" were apparently not merely an extra fine quality of the ordinary hide, but seemed to be a sort of separate variety. And now and then came in a pure white, an albino, of course, or even occasionally a pinto hide, with the white and brown colors in patches like certain cows today, or "circus" ponies, mostly beloved, these latter, and mostly bred by the Comanches. Now and then came in a cream colored robe. But, of course, almost all of them were just common buffalo brown, with common curly hair on them. These silks, pintos, white and cream colored robes, of course, are today, as they were then, very rare, and commanded individual prices. The usual price, however, for a silk, which was the least rare of the special colors and kinds, was about \$20, that is, about ten times that of an ordinary robe. These colored robes, and especially the pure white, by the way, were objects of veneration among the Indians and were treated with great religious ceremony, and often finally sacrificed in times of great tribal stress or thanksgiving.

Romantic rumor has it that the great warrior, though not a chief, Roman Nose, who led the Cheyenne cavalry at Beecher's Island in one of the most significant charges ever staged in this, or any other country, wore a white buffalo robe, but this is probably totally untrue, as it was against all tradition for such a robe to be used as raiment, no matter by whom. It is more likely that, if such a robe actually appeared in the greatest Indian battle ever fought in Colorado, it was carried as a banner, not worn, by the medicine man who also led the charge with Roman Nose, but off somewhat to one side the front line. Roman Nose rode dead center, deliberately and knowingly, to his death for the sake of his people and his country, as heroic a soldier as ever led a charge, even that of Balaklava, which the charge practically duplicated.

I have never seen one of these sacred robes, nor do I know where one can be seen today. They were and are very rare, and today are priceless relics of something that can never be again.

Speaking now of the buffalo hunters' rifles—"The Buffalo Sharps." Few, even expert gun men, today know what it was, and I carefully put down here exact details, for sake of future history. I know of but two such rifles in Colorado today, and not very many were manufactured, for that matter, as the demand for them was short-lived. It took only a few years to practically wipe the curly cattle off the plains, and most of the

work was done in about three years in the late '70s. Hence the perhaps less than 2,000 "Buffalo Sharps" rifles made outlasted their targets, and as there then was practically no use for the big, heavy guns, they naturally were not preserved, but soon largely disappeared in junk heaps. The Sharps rifle is of two kinds, one the hammerless, or "muley" Sharps, which was not invented till the buffalo were largely cleaned out, and the older, or "hammer" Sharps. This latter was the real Sharps rifle. The latter, or muley one, merely took the name for advertising purposes, though it was a good rifle in itself, but far too light a gun for buffalo.

Besides, the real Sharps rifle was made in various calibers and weight of gun, and there are plenty of them scattered around the country even today, but very, very few of them are the real "Buffalo Sharps." Now heed—the "Buffalo Sharps" was .45 caliber, it shot a straight brass center-fire re-loadable shell just  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches long, and was loaded with 120 grains of black powder, and a smooth, hollow-base, 550 grain lead bullet wrapped in a paper patch. Loading these shells was a work of art, something very skillful. This for the loading. The rifle itself has a 30-inch barrel, whole gun weighs 16 pounds, and has a large hammer on the side, and double set triggers. The barrel is octagonal. The sights were a matter of individual needs, due to whatever the hunter's eyes required. A few used the usual common open sights, most of them used a rear peep sight mounted on the tang of the stock, and some used telescope sights. Sometimes the rifle was fixed to use all three systems of sighting, as the hunter might desire under changing conditions.

The bullets were first cast in a mold from a mixture of about 15 parts lead to 1 part tin, then this cast was put into a swage and under a hammer it was formed to exact shape, size and density. This operation was essential, if the hunter was to hit his buffalo fatally each shot, and remember, one miss usually ended the "stand." Only the best grade of powder was used, and if the hunter could get it, which he usually could in those days, he used only the best quality of imported English black powder, which shot cleaner and was from 10 to 15, perhaps 20 per cent more powerful than the best American powders. This was due to better grind and selection of the original ingredients, charcoal, sulphur and saltpetre.

Shooting against the wind, to keep his scent from the "buffaloed" animals, deviation of the bullet to one side by the wind did not, as a rule, have to be taken into account. As the range was practically known to a few yards, the rifleman knew

just how high, or low, to set his sights for the first, and most important shot, and as a rule, was successful in estimating his elevation very closely. The gun, heavy as it was, gave a very healthy recoil. I once owned one of them, a genuine "Christian Sharps Buffalo Sharps," and know the rifle well from personal experience.

It was very accurate, too. In accuracy, at the distance it was used, from 200 to not over 400 yards, it was fully as accurate on a buffalo rib target, as the best of modern high-power 30 caliber Springfield rifles. I have owned and shot them, too, so can compare the two guns in their actual performances. If well shot, the Buffalo Sharps would easily put all of its shots into a 1-foot circle at 400 yards, and nine out of ten of them into a common dinner plate, if not a closer group. I used to hit a circle the size of a silver dollar, just 1½ inches, three to four times out of five shots at 100 yards from a prone rest and with telescope sights, which was just about what most of the buffalo hide hunters did in their daily work under good weather conditions. So much then for the famous "Buffalo Sharps." No rifle, be it even a Sharps, is a "Buffalo" unless it fulfills the above conditions as to length, caliber, load, weight, and other characteristics. The bullet traveled about 1,500 feet per second, and had a muzzle energy of about 2,700 to 2,800 ft. lbs.

But this was the premier of buffalo guns. Of course, all kinds of rifles were used, even in stand shooting. Two of the most popular were the .50 caliber Springfield (Cody's favorite) and the .45 caliber Springfield rifle, the common army guns, with ordinary army cartridges in them. I have had, incidentally, old buffalo killers tell me that the army forts gladly furnished any one who could kill buffalo all the cartridges they wanted free of cost, just so they actually were shot into buffalo, just to get rid of them, and thereby cripple the Indian activities. The army went on the correct theory that the Indian could not make war without the buffalo for which he fought so hard, and as it was the army's business to get the Indian, therefore, get rid of the buffalo as fast as possible.

I repeat that there were many ways of hunting the buffalo, but the "stand" method is the least known, and the least understood, though it killed the most buffalo as it was the hide hunter's favorite system, so I have passed over the other ways, as well known, and have centered on "the stand" when "they had them buffaloes"—those young but vigorous dictionary terms, pure Americanisms.

There remain two items that must be mentioned to clear the

record: In Texas at one time the hunters used the same big "Buffalo Sharps" I have described herein, but with one difference, it was .50 caliber, and was often called, therefore, the "Texas Fifty." It was never called the "Buffalo Sharps," that gun was always the .45 caliber I have specified.

After Christian Sharps, the inventor and maker of the original genuine Sharps rifles, failed in business, another concern in St. Louis took over their manufacture, but turned out a cheaper and inferior grade of rifles, known unofficially as the "St. Louis Sharps." An expert can readily tell the difference between the genuine and these imitations.

And speaking of how the Indians wore the buffalo robe, that is, when they needed this heavy protection. Except the medicine man on occasions, the Indians usually wore the robe hair inside, next to their bodies. This custom was probably a mixture of fashion, and also comfort, for the robe is naturally warmer worn that way, and is also softer to the bare human skin than would be the rather coarse, rough leather side.

When the buffalo hide was tanned for tepee covering, a water-shedding roof, the hair was removed, and another tanning method was employed, just what it was I do not know, but it often left the leather, or perhaps rawhide would be the better term, so that when looked through from the comparative darkness of the inside of the tepee a tortoise-shell effect was given. I know of but two of these original real pre-whiteman buffalo hide tepees in existence today, one is in the British museum and the other in the New York City museum. There may be others, or some made at a later date and not all-Indian, that I do not know.

The buffalo leather, minus hair, was not used much for Indian clothing when lighter and softer leather could be had, such as deer skin. The favorite clothing was that of the mountain sheep, and of a barren doe sheep in particular. Incidentally, the mountain sheep, so-called, the big-horn, is not a sheep at all, but an antelope. It is misnamed. Clothing leather was often worn pure white, as white as cotton cloth, by the Indians "before the white man came," by both men and women, and richly ornamented. Yellow buckskin is merely white leather smoked to make it dry easier and softer. Elk made the least desirable leather, and was almost worthless for a robe, because the hair breaks easily, as does deer and antelope hair.

"Bellowing buffalo"—whenever that term appears, it reveals nothing but a limber imagination. The buffalo cannot bellow; like the giraffe, the buffalo is lacking in vocal cords. The

only sound he makes is a grunt, much like the pig, but he cannot bellow any more than can a pig or a horse. When a man, either verbally or in print, has killed an unwounded bear single handed with a knife; or has been hugged by a fighting bear; or seen a grizzly climb a tree; when he can "fan" a six-shooter with lethal results; or has been attacked by wolves, and especially coyotes; when he has heard the buffalo bellow; or his uncle, grandfather or some one else has and told him about it; then he has also observed the hoop-snake take a long roll; the joint-snake unlock its numerous sections and come together again; the owl, prairie dog, and rattlesnake making love one to another; an irrigation ditch running up hill; and a horse running with its mouth open for more air—this reliable romancer is just a windy faker. The buffalo cannot bellow.

The old-time cowboy prided himself on his saddle, the stage driver on his whip, and odd as it may seem, the hide hunter, the man who did the shooting, not the skimmers, on his bed. He had the finest blankets money could buy. These three things the cowboy, the stage driver, and the hide hunter would not sell, nor lend to anyone. Except this one item in each case respectively, everything else was just tools, guns, horses, knives, revolvers, and they used what they could get, but these three items had to be just so, or none of the three would have anything to do with them, the cowboy his saddle, the stage driver his whip, the hide hunter his bed.

My uncle, Jack Sumner, one of Powell's men on the first trip through the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, was a buffalo hunter for two years out of what is today Orchard, Colorado, a little farming town down the Platte about 80 miles below Denver.

I have eaten but have never hunted buffalo, for they were gone from the plains before I was old enough, though I remember seeing them, not the zoo kind, but the wild herds that stopped the railroad train I was on, on the old Kansas Pacific, the "Smoky Hill" route in the middle '70s. There were a few in Middle Park, Colorado, at the head of the Troublesome, when I hunted in there from 1886 to 1891, but we left them alone. It meant almost a lynching to molest them. So much did ten years do to the buffalo.

Once an Indian stood silent on the top of a peak in the Rockies. To the east spread the plains, to the west were tumbled mountains, it was a hundred clean miles to all the skyline. He looked long in motionless silence, then slowly swept his arm around the whole horizon, and to the white man beside him said: "Gone." Then again he became a statue.



## Yuma

By Helen Slater\*

Too often the praises of the deserving are left unsung; not because of any ignoble purpose, but more often because those who praise are unaware of the worthiness of the unpraised.

And so for this reason I want to depict the struggle that has been waged on the plains of northeastern Colorado by the pioneers for the establishment of a civilization. Inasmuch as all of this plains country has been developed in very much the same way, in writing particularly of Yuma, I will also be relating a development that is general on the Colorado plains.

Should you be visiting this country now you would find Yuma a sturdy little city in the county of Yuma, having about two thousand inhabitants, and linked to the outside world by the Burlington railroad. It lies 160 miles east of Denver and is only about 40 miles from the state line. It is neighbored on the west by Akron, the county seat of Washington county, on the east by Wray, the county seat of Yuma county, and on the north by Haxtun in Phillips county. The town itself is like most any other town of its size, although people in Yuma still jokingly maintain that "Yuma does it different." The country surrounding Yuma is now dotted with flourishing farms where the land is productive and cattle ranches where that industry is best adapted. Yuma is a trading center for these people and is steadily growing.

Now, revert your line of thought, and let us see what Yuma and her surroundings were like not so many years ago.

The Yuma country was originally a part of the Louisiana Purchase and later became a part of the Kansas territory. When Colorado gained her statehood in 1876, the Yuma country helped to bound the state on the east. It was then a great trackless waste of prairie sweeping from horizon to horizon.

The Kiowas, the Comanches, the Ogalallas, the Sioux, all fierce red men, fought for supremacy on these plains. How fierce their battles were was never witnessed by white man, but we know they must have been terrible because even now it is possible to find arrowheads almost anywhere on these plains. Even where the land has been cultivated for years, by overturning the earth deeper, where it has been blown and piled, you will be rewarded with the arrowhead, that little, yet mighty missile of chert, and sometimes even by other interesting relics.

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\* Helen Slater is a high school student of Yuma, Colorado. Her essay was awarded first prize in our Historical Essay Contest.—Ed.

The red man came to the end of his trail. The white man marched steadily on toward the setting sun. Rails of steel, following on his heels, linked him with those left behind. Along these rails were water tanks for the thirsty engines, and wherever these water tanks were, tiny settlements sprang up. It was thus that Yuma was born. Humble? Yes, but remarkable, for when she consisted of only a few meagre shacks and shanties she had a school in one of them.

Fred F. Weld, one of those early settlers, had a homestead on the quarter north of the Burlington railroad. Miss Ida P.



BUSINESS DISTRICT OF YUMA, COLORADO

Aldrich owned and homesteaded the south quarter. In the year 1885, these two pioneers joined hands in matrimony and in land interests, and established the first town site. Why the town was named "Yuma," a name of Indian origin, is unknown. Many of the towns on the Colorado plains were named for noted Nebraskan statesmen. Laird was named for Senator James Laird, and Roggin for Edward P. Roggin, the Nebraska Secretary of State. "Yuma" is a name that is loved by all who fought and lived that she might live.

When the first settlers came here, Yuma was in Weld county, in fact, all of northeastern Colorado was in Weld county. At this time there was still a great deal of government land, sometimes stretching for a hundred miles. During the summer months fine buffalo grass grew on this land. Cattle kings from Texas were quick to take advantage of this fine grazing land, and they brought their herds of cattle by thousands and by the tens of

thousands to turn them loose to get fat and sleek. But the cattle found that crops were very much more to their taste and liking than buffalo grass, and proceeded to invade the poor homesteaders' fields. Naturally bitter animosities arose between these farmers and the cattle kings. The farmers, having no other come-back, killed and ate the meat of the Texas cattle when they found them on their land. This, of course, gave rise to many disputes. On one occasion a farmer was arrested when found eating Texas beef. He had his trial upstairs in one of the frame buildings in Yuma where now stands one of the finest brick structures in the town's business section. The first thing the jury did in secret session was to find out how many of the jurymen had ever eaten the forbidden meat. Everyone of them admitted he had, and one said he had just finished butchering one of the cattle that morning before coming to serve jury duty. You can decide for yourself the verdict.

There was a general agitation for the formation of new counties at this time. Of course the cattle barons were opposed to new counties, and therefore, tried to collect a large fund to prevent the passage of the bill in the state legislature, which would create new counties. But the homesteaders caught on to their game, turned the tables on them, and succeeded in getting the bill passed. Thus it was in 1887 that Washington and Logan counties were formed. Yuma was a part of Washington county.

From the beginning of 1888 until March of 1889, a period of only one year and three months, Yuma grew from a few shanties clustered around a water tank to a town. During this time of growth a two-story school house of four rooms was built, supplanting the upstairs of the old Weld hotel. There was one teacher, a Miss Mary E. Elmore. She taught all grades and her pupils ranged in age from six years to twenty-five years.

Akron and Yuma, then evenly matched, had a bitter fight over the county seat. Akron, however, succeeded in out-voting Yuma by bringing in all her horses, cattle and other farm assets.

In August, following the big boom, a fire broke out. There had been no rain for weeks and weeks and everything was parched. The light frame buildings burned like tinder. There were only three wells in the town, one a dug well. Of course, the fire was uncontrollable.

The need then and the need now in Yuma and her territory is "Water." Then many of the homesteaders had to go eight or ten miles in order to get water. Drilling wells was an expensive process and very few of them had money for anything but the barest necessities of life. They hauled the water in-

barrels. The people put their empty barrels out and the hauler came along and exchanged them for full barrels. Of course, this meant only one thing. A typhoid fever epidemic broke out and many families were saddened and discouraged, but most of them carried on.

The next year after the fire there was a severe drought. This same year marked the formation of the new county of Yuma. Yuma and Wray now fought for the county seat. Yuma, however, had learned by experience from Akron, and by bringing in all her horses and cattle, out-voted Wray. Thus Yuma became the county seat.

During the next two years, 1891 and 1892, crops were very abundant and the country prospered.

But the prosperity was not for long. For the next two years, 1893 and 1894, there were heavy wind storms and no rain. People left the country as rapidly as they could. Those who were able to stay through this misfortune were almost completely wiped out by the grasshoppers. Many stories have been told about those grasshoppers. They were fond of salt and swarmed on the wooden handles and levers on farm machinery, eating them to pieces. They would line up for miles on the railroad track and when the train came slipping and grinding over them, a terrible burning odor permeated the air for miles around for hours after. Those were terrible years. Only the very fittest survived. Those who did remain went into the cattle business and for ten years Yuma was nothing but a cattle country.

It was in 1902 when Yuma was practically deserted, that Wray wrested the county seat from her and has held it ever since. Wray had grown considerably wealthier, her settlers south of her had learned how to really farm the good soil they had, and they had prospered.

Then came Yuma's awakening in 1905 when a new immigration began. Since 1905 Yuma has made a steady growth with a boom from 1915 to 1920. It was during those years that Yuma became instead of just a town, a little city.

And here we are in 1928. Shall we ask ourselves if all this bitter struggling and fighting for a sustenance from the soil and for the establishment of a community has been worth-while? Isn't it self-evident? There must always be pioneers, some who have the initiative, the courage, and the faith to tackle the unknown. Our pioneers tackled, met seemingly endless obstacles, and ultimately conquered. They were like "Giants in the Earth," so says Rolvaag. How we admire them. But we must "carry on" what they have begun. We must love the pioneer, the farmer,

and look on him with honor. The farms and the farmers are the keystone of our bridge over which will pass posterity. They are to be respected and encouraged, not ridiculed or criticized.

Will not the efforts and accomplishments of our pioneer farmers and home-builders have been all in vain if we fail to "carry on" and keep building up our rural Colorado.

We have our plains, our soil, and some day we'll have more water; we have our ideas, and best of all—our workers.

Colorado is a wonderful state. Her potentialities are limitless, and her northeastern plains and her towns of the plains are going to "carry on" for her the work which her undying pioneers, those "Giants in the Earth," began.

## The Founding of Dolores

By Ruth S. Clark\*

In the extreme southwestern corner of Colorado, in the county of Montezuma, lies a beautiful, but little known valley. It lies at an approximate distance of sixty miles from the Utah line and eighty miles from the New Mexico boundary, running in a northwesterly direction into Utah. In and around this valley, history has been made.

Located at a great bend of this valley, there was, in olden times, a town, but it is now gone, the last remnant having burned but a few short years ago. This town, known as "Big Bend," was the original of the present-day little village of Dolores.† The old town, two miles down the river was moved to the present site in the spring and summer of 1892, when the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad was built.

The town takes its name from the river, which was named in 1776 by a Franciscan priest, Silvestre Escalante.

In and about this river and town have been woven many strange and beautiful legends, concerning what became of the former inhabitants of the valley and as to how the river received its mystical name, Dolores, which is of Spanish origin and means "sorrowful" or "doleful."

Perhaps the most beautiful, and one of the generally accepted legends is Alfred Castle King's‡ "Dolores the River of Sorrow." The historic value of the poem may be small, indeed, but the literary value will, perhaps, justify a quotation from it.

\* \* \*

This people so artless and happy  
Knew nothing of carnage and war;  
They lived in such quiet and plenty  
They knew not what weapons were for.  
They planted the maize and potato  
And the kind river caused them to grow,  
And they worshiped the river with singing  
That blent with its musical flow.

\* Ruth S. Clark is a student of North High School, Denver. Her essay received second place in our Historical Essay Contest.—Ed.

†The postoffice at "Big Bend" was known in Washington as Dolores, but to the settlers of the country it was known as "the Big Bend of the Dolores."

‡A blind miner poet, whose poems of the Far West have gained some recognition in the literary world. This poem can be found in a volume by him called "The Passing of the Storm."

They gathered the maize in its season  
Unmindful of famine or foe  
And chanted their thanks to the spirits  
That dwelt in the canyons below.  
But one evil day from the northland  
Swept an army in battle array,  
Which fell on this innocent people  
And massacred them all in a day.

\* \* \*

But the river still mourns for its people  
With weird and disconsolate flow,  
Dolores, the River of Sorrow,  
Dolores, the River of Woe.

The early development of the country was, as is the case with all new and isolated sections, necessarily slow. All the accurate historical facts that I have procured are from one of the early settlers in the country, Mrs. S. O. Morton. Being one of those few who first attempted to build a wilderness home in the little settlement of "Big Bend," Mrs. Morton remembers the years of 1880 and 1882 as troublesome ones, due to the frequent uprisings of the Indians. However, in the summer of 1882 Mrs. Morton and her husband settled on a forty-acre tract that they had purchased from "Billy" May, and started a store. "Billy" May was postmaster at the time, but shortly afterward, in 1884, W. F. Ordway took the office and held it until about 1924.§

The Indians were less troublesome by the early and middle '80s, and the stores of "Big Bend" were really trading posts. All supplies had to be freighted in from Durango, a distance of nearly seventy miles, and the roads were typical of a pioneer country, little more, in fact, than mere cow trails. The Indians traded their furs and blankets for food from the white man's stock and for whiskey from the white man's "cellar."

"Big Bend," so-called because it was located in a huge bend of the river, was probably nothing more at first than a mere cow-camp. Later, it being the center of the country, a postal service was established at the Crumbley ranch, a few miles above the present site of the town. Later this was moved down to "Billy" May's place, where the town of "Big Bend" was. In 1889, John J. Harris put in a store there and later the Mortons started theirs.

§ One of the longest records made by a postmaster in the United States.

The first school to be taught in the country was on the John Brumley (now the John Johnson) place. It was taught in a cellar and the first teacher was Miss Lula Swenk (now Mrs. Irvin McGrew, of Imperial Valley, California).

In 1885 and '86, Major Hannah and a company of men undertook to water the Montezuma valley, a vast region lying to the south of the Dolores river valley. To do this a two-mile tunnel for carrying water was constructed and is still in use. The project met with success and the valley receives its water today from this water tunnel built by Major Hannah. Major Hannah's camp was at the present site of the town, two miles up-river from the then town of "Big Bend."

In the spring of 1892 the Denver & Rio Grande railroad was nearing completion in that part of the country, and as the route that topographical conditions made it feasible to follow missed the town of "Big Bend" by better than two miles, it was necessary to move the town. The new town site would be located on the Phelps ranch, at the junction of Lost Canyon and the Dolores river, and early in the spring, John J. Harris purchased the Phelps ranch.

During the early summer a group of the most prominent business men of the new community gathered and formed a town company. Those who were present at the time were: J. W. Gilluly, treasurer of the Denver & Rio Grande railroad; Otto Mears, constructor on the Denver & Rio Grande; Cooper Anderson, auditor of the Denver & Rio Grande; Fred Walsen, ex-State Treasurer; Judge Adair Wilson, attorney; and John J. Harris, merchant and banker.

The town company was duly organized in the summer of 1892, with Judge Adair Wilson acting as president and John J. Harris, secretary-treasurer.

To Mr. Harris went the honor of naming the new town, and in consideration of the fact that the postoffice at "Big Bend" was known as Dolores in Washington, D. C., and also that the river skirting the southern edge of the town also carried that name, Mr. Harris named the new town "Dolores."

The town was duly incorporated under the laws of Colorado in 1900, and carries on its government under a state charter.

Modern Dolores is noted chiefly as a railroad shipping point for the three regions surrounding it, namely: the Dove Creek district to the west, and probably at the present time the least important of the regions (fattened hogs, small grains, some dry-land potatoes and dairy products are sent to the market from this region through Dolores); the Disappointment district to

the north (from which cattle and sheep are exported); and the Montezuma Valley district (which is the most important, for its fruit and hay raising). However, most of the hay is consumed on the winter cattle and sheep ranches, while a great amount of the fruit is shipped out. Especially noted are the peaches that come from this valley.

Dolores is a shipping point also for the McPhee & McGinnity Lumber company, who ship large loads from their mill down the river to their warehouses in Denver. Dolores lies near one of the few remaining large yellow pine forests in the United States and it is from this forest that the lumber is cut and shipped to Denver.

Dolores, situated as it is, between towering bluffs and on a lovely mountain stream, is an ideal location for summer tourists who seek new country. The trout fishing is good and can be had by merely standing on the river bridge and hanging a line in the water.

The future of the town is as uncertain now as it was fifty years ago. Perhaps even more so. It has no ready access to the busy outside world and so stays nearly still.

However, it is said by engineers that the Dolores river has sufficient power in its fall from Rico, twenty miles up-stream, to light a large section of the United States if it were properly harnessed. The development of Dolores as a water-power center does not seem at all out of the question.

As a shipping center for the surrounding country, Dolores will doubtless hold its own for many years, as there seems to be no other feasible outlet.

Perhaps the beautiful surrounding scenery will some time in the near future induce the advertiser to get busy and make another summer resort in the heart of the Rockies. Beautiful streams, Indian relics, from mountain to desert in six hours, and good trout streams and lakes should make the little town a tourist's paradise.