

## Sidelights on the Pike's Peak Gold Rush, 1858-59

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The general story of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush is fairly well known. In this account I shall devote my attention at this time to certain features of the movement—the routes followed by the Pike's Peakers and their supposed advantages, the means of transportation across the Plains, the supplies that sage advisers told the Peakers to take with them, and a few minor matters that serve to make clear the characteristics of this great, though temporary, migration to our part of the country.

The Russell and Lawrence Companies came to the mountains by the Santa Fe route. Smith and Oakes, who appended a guide

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\*Prof. Willard, Head of the History Department of the University of Colorado, has searched the Missouri Valley newspapers of 1858 and 1859 for material on the Pike's Peak Gold Rush. The article here published is the address, somewhat reduced, which Dr. Willard gave at the Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of Colorado on December 11th last.—Ed.

to the mines to Luke Tierney's account of the Russell Company's journey, advised the Northern, or Platte route. Both of these were well known standard routes that had been used by the people of the Missouri Valley. When it was established by the sight of gold, and by rumors of more gold than was ever seen, that there was wealth in the Rockies, there began a battle of the routes that raged as long as the Gold Rush continued. Shortcuts were laid out to the old routes. The respective merits of the roads north and south of the Platte to the west of Fort Kearney were discussed and two central routes appeared—one by the Republican Fork and the other by the Smoky Hill Fork. Both of these were at times called the Great Central route.

A great amount of energy was expended in attempts to induce the gold seekers to start on their way from this or that small town on the great bend of the Missouri. Remember, please, that the towns at the eastern end of the several routes and cutoffs were at best small and for the most part very new towns, that they were hard up as a result of the Panic of 1857 and of frontier conditions, and that the prospective flood of gold seekers meant prosperity to such of them as could attract the attention of the emigrants. If you will keep these facts in mind you will understand why the towns were excited and why they at times exaggerated their advantages as starting points for the mines.

I have a great deal of sympathy with the emigrant who reached the great bend of the Missouri in the spring of 1859, and who had the problem of deciding which route to take to the mines. He was met by clamorous advisers who were certain of the advantages of the route beginning at their town, and, if he read the papers offered him, his confusion would only be worse confused. After reading some fifteen to twenty of the Valley papers I am as bewildered as the anxious Peaker.

There were, it would appear, certain criteria that were applied to the several routes, certain necessary features that were supposed to establish a route as good or otherwise. There must be water, grass and wood; these were essential. There must be easy fords across rivers and streams. The route must be as short as possible, for the gold seekers were anxious to reach the mines. And the roads on the way should be good. These various qualities were ascribed to the several routes in varying quantities.

The Santa Fe route was obviously somewhat longer than the middle routes by the Republican or Smoky Hill, but, so it was claimed, it had countervailing advantages. A Mr. S. G. Ramsey, interviewed in March, "spoke of the Santa Fe road, and remarked that it seemed very strange that there were any who could be found

to abandon an old traveled road, known to be the best natural road in the world of the same length, go off upon other routes, about which little was known, and that little against them."<sup>1</sup> As early as the previous October, General William Larimer wrote home that "The Santa Fe road is the best natural road in the world,"<sup>2</sup> and this impression seems to have been verified by the facts. Other merits of the Santa Fe route were that grass on it was to be found two or three weeks earlier than on the more northern routes, and that there was ample water, grass and timber. The Santa Fe route was always a vigorous rival of the others lying to the north, though not as much used in the heyday of the Gold Rush.

The Platte River route, lying to the north, was the other old established route at the time when the gold fever started. Various minor trails led to Fort Kearney and the emigrant could then take his choice of either the north or south bank of the Platte. There were vigorous advocates of both banks. There was ample water most of the way, for the traveler followed, with few cutoffs, the Platte and its South Fork to the mines. There was also ample timber and grass most of the way. A veracious description of the distances between stopping points and the characteristics of the North Platte route, published in the *Daily Missouri Republican* on February 8, 1859, lays stress upon the abundance or lack of abundance of wood, water, and grass. In most instances it states "wood, water and grass, plenty." In connection with Saleratus Pond its comment is "no wood and water bad." And in connection with Sand Hill Pond, "some water—no wood or grass." It is very easy to see what the emigrants demanded. Over against the many advantages of the Northern route were set its greater length and the dangers of the crossing at Fort Kearney. The advocates of the route along the north bank pointed out that the roads along the south bank were bad. The major objection to the route was, of course, its greater length.

The two central routes, those by the Republican and the Smoky Hill forks, were shorter than those mentioned. That was their great advantage, their great merit. All the other merits claimed for the other routes were claimed for them as well. The *Lawrence Republican* of February 24, 1859, has this to say of the Smoky Hill route to the mines: "The distance by this route from the city is only 470 miles—or over 200 miles shorter than by any other route, besides finding wood, water, and grass in much greater abundance than by either the Northern or Southern routes." The fate of those who journeyed to the mines in the spring and early summer

<sup>1</sup>*Daily Missouri Republican*, March 19, 1859, from the *Kansas City Journal of Commerce* of March 13.

<sup>2</sup>*Lawrence Republican*, November 11, 1858. Letter dated October 14.

of 1859 is a sufficient commentary upon this claim—it was not true, save as to the distance.

The same advantages were also claimed for the route by the Republican—shortness, and abundance of water, wood and grass. The advocates of the Smoky Hill route claimed that the Republican route was longer than theirs—it was a little longer. But the advocates of the Republican route had their say. The *Leavenworth Times* of April 30 has this to say in its favor: “On this route *there is no poisonous or alkaline water, nor sage brush*, two peculiarities and disadvantages of the Santa Fe route; there is no sand except in one body of forty miles in extent, and this is along the Republican, with plenty of water, timber and grass close at hand. They further say that the region over which they have just traveled is *the best grass country in the West, that there is an abundance of water and timber for emigrants*, and that in these essential respects, it is *far superior to the Platte route.*”<sup>3</sup>

The battle of the routes waged fast and furious during the spring and the warriors in the several towns sought every means at their command to win. I quote from the *Lawrence Republican* of March 3, 1859: “We have received from the publishers Pearn’s Map of the Kansas and Nebraska Gold Regions. We are sorry to say that, if its delineations of the country adjacent to the gold mines are no more accurate than the outlines of the country and important places to the east of the mines, it is *worthless*. For instance, the map carries the Republican Fork into the very heart of the gold mines, when it is notorious that it does not extend so far by hundreds of miles. The map indicates Prairie City, but *entirely omits Lawrence*. Other inaccuracies and gross omissions cause us to believe it totally *unreliable*, and of no use to the emigrant.”

Berthoud’s “Map of Routes to the Gold Region of Western Kansas,” published at Leavenworth in the winter, shows only Omaha, Leavenworth and—in very small type—Lawrence, of all the river towns, and then proceeds to show Leavenworth as the starting point for all the routes. Another map of which I have a reproduction shows all the central and southern routes heading at Wyandotte and though it names Atchison, Leavenworth, and Lawrence, places them on no route of any kind or description. The *Weekly Western Argus*, published in Wyandotte, has a different tale (April 9, 1859). It notes: “By reference to the maps prepared by the speculators of Leavenworth City and Kansas City, it will be seen that on each the actual location of Wyandotte is made the apparent location of the city which is to be *puffed*.”

<sup>3</sup>*Daily Missouri Republican*, May 4, 1859, quoting from the *Leavenworth Times*.

“Leavenworth City is brought down 35 miles, placed directly at the mouth of the Kaw river, and on the strength of that locality, it is claimed that ‘Leavenworth is 283½ miles nearer Pike’s Peak than any other given point on the habitable globe.’”

“On the Kansas City maps, that thriving little village is removed from the confines of its native hills, transported 2½ miles, and gently dropped down upon the accessible town site of Wyandotte, and forthwith the city goes up. ‘See our locality! how accessible! and, what is more, we are nearer the gold diggings than any other city this side of Boston!’”

I take it that the emigrants would hardly know the truth about the maps and that there would be much confusion. The guides that were printed were hardly more helpful, for they, like the maps, were boosting one route and one city.

After all it was a matter of life or death to the river towns. Omaha clung to the Northern route by the Platte because it was near the end of that route and because, if travelers came there, it prospered. Kansas City for the same reasons held out for the Santa Fe route. Leavenworth claimed for a time to be equally accessible to all routes, save the Northern, then worked night and day for the Republican Fork route. After the Leavenworth and Pike’s Peak Express Company selected that route its judgment appeared to be verified and it gained the major portion of the terminal trade. Lawrence and Nebraska City favored the Smoky Hill route in the end; they had to oppose Leavenworth. And so on through the list, it was not so much a matter of the merits of the several routes as the matter of inducing the Peakers to outfit at their town. If Kansas City advocated the Santa Fe route, the rival towns in the vicinity had to point out the demerits of the Southern route and stress the merits of a different route—in this case the Smoky Hill.

We may take it that after some thought the gold seekers selected one of the several routes and started westward towards the rivers. My next concern is, therefore, the matter of the means of transporting men and goods across the Plains.

One thing is quite clear and may be said at the start, and that is—there was no usual or normal means of transportation in use. The emigrant selected any kind of vehicle that met his fancy or his pocketbook. Some traveled on foot, some on horse or pony back. Some selected hand-carts, some wheelbarrows. Some traveled in or with light wagons or buggies; some purchased prairie schooners. There was the greatest possible variety and though the covered wagon, beloved by those who celebrate frontier days and all kinds of anniversaries, was there, it was accompanied by the humble hand-cart and many nondescript varieties of vehicles along the routes to Pike’s Peak.

Contemporary descriptions of the motley crowd that hurried across the Plains during the spring of 1859 are far more illuminating and convincing than anything I could write. Here is one taken from a letter dated at Atchison, March 16, 1859: "The Salt Lake mail arrived here yesterday \* \* \*. The conductors report hundreds of persons en route for the gold regions, traveling in every conceivable manner—some with mules, others with hand-carts, *a la Mormon*, and one company brought up the rear with the running-gear of a buggy, upon which was loaded mining tools, camp fixtures, etc., and was drawn by eleven men, the foremost of which was a young man of delicate appearance, dressed in a fine cloth coat, 'stove-pipe' hat, and patent leather boots."<sup>4</sup>

A Leavenworth letter of the 17th of March gives a picture of the Pike's Peakers in that busy frontier town: "If his pockets are well lined, he soon supplies himself with all that is necessary, \* \* \* from a gold rocker to a yoke of cattle \* \* \*. But as a general thing, the 'Peakers' are not overburdened with this world's goods. Most of them evidently neglected the injunction to put money in their purses when they traveled—either because it escaped their memory or that they had none \* \* \*. Those who are flush purchase cattle, mules and wagons, and go well provided with all that is necessary to make a trip in the prairie with comfort and pleasure. The next class takes the hand-cart and wheelbarrow, while the poorest, I fear, and the most numerous, take it on foot. The hand-cart appears to be quite a fashionable vehicle with the 'Peakers,' as it is cheap and has a decided advantage over a knapsack or carpet-bag \* \* \*. Many of the carts are hauled by women. I have seen five beautiful girls, all dressed in Bloomer costume, hitched to one of these carts, and trudging along with song and laughter. The recollections of these trains has almost induced me to join a hand-cart company to the Peak, but by this mode of conveyance only provisions enough for the road can be carried, and a person reaches the mines without anything to eat, and no money to buy the necessaries of life, if they are to be had, of which I have very great doubts. The footmen must suffer terribly in their insane efforts to reach the mines \* \* \*. Yesterday I saw some men starting out with their mining shovels over their shoulders and their diminutive carpet-bags on the end of them. There were not five days' provisions in the whole party. One party of sixteen or twenty started with an old horse, and fifty pounds of hard bread. Their intention was to kill game on the road and to sleep in barns at night."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>*Daily Missouri Republican*, March 19, 1859.  
<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, March 23, 1859.

The long quotation from the Leavenworth writer gives many of the elements of the crowd, the footmen with their carpet-bags or knapsacks, the hand-cart men, the more well-to-do travelers with their wagons, large or small, drawn by mules or oxen. I have another quotation which brings in even more of the picturesque. It is taken from a letter dated at Kansas City, March 21, 1859: "Here they come by every steamboat, hundreds after hundreds from every place—Hoosiers, Suckers, Corn-crackers, Buckeyes, Red-horses, Arabs and Egyptians—some with ox wagons, some with mules, but the greatest number on foot, with their knapsacks, and old-fashioned rifles and shot-guns; some with their long-tailed blues, others in jeans and hob-nailed jockeys; in their roundabouts, slouched hats, caps and sacks. There are a few hand-carts in the crowd. They form themselves into companies of ten, twenty, and as high as forty-five men have marched out, two-and-two, with a captain and clerk, eight men to a hand-cart, divided into four reliefs, two at a time pulling the cart, which contains all the provisions, camp equipments, working tools, et cetera, for the eight persons thus arranged."<sup>6</sup>

The hand-cart men received, perhaps, an undue amount of attention because of their picturesque qualities. The footmen with their carpet-bags were also given a large amount of attention. On the other hand, because they were so well known, the large wagons with their white covers and teams of oxen or mules were not stressed so much. Light wagons, buggies and the like are mentioned here and there and early in the spring there are a number of references to horsemen—riding often on ponies.

The Westport wind wagon has received a considerable amount of attention from writers who love the more or less grotesque phases of life. Despite this I am going to mention it once more. A Westport correspondent writes of it in April: "A friend sojourning here prior to his departure to Pike's Peak \* \* \*, visited the prairie ship, or wind wagon, today. He says that there is not gold enough at Pike's Peak to risk his body in that 'awful' looking thing. The inventor is named THOMAS, instead of THOMPSON, and he takes advantage of these windy days to sail his ship a short distance over the prairie."<sup>7</sup> The wind wagon is described as follows: "It is a queer looking affair, and I was forcibly struck with the picture it presented, on visiting it yesterday, and thought at once of Don Quixote and the wind-mill. The affair is on wheels which are mammoth concerns, some twenty feet in circumference, and the arrangement for passengers is built somewhat after the style of an omnibus-body. It is to be propelled by the wind,

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, March 27, 1859.  
<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, May 1, 1859.

through the means of sails. As to the wheels, it looks like an overgrown omnibus; and as to the spars and sails, it looks like a diminutive schooner. It will seat about twenty-four passengers.<sup>78</sup>

Before leaving the means of transportation I wish to say something about the animals that drew the vehicles. It was generally agreed in the Valley that oxen or mules were the best, oxen for heavy wagons and loads, mules for steady work and quicker travel. Horses, so it was stated, could not endure the hardships of the trail. Curiously enough, we find an occasional reference to dog teams. The *Wyoming Telescope* of April 9 reports: "The *Aledo Register* says that Mr. R. S. Osborn of that place is about starting for the gold regions with a dog team. He has a light wagon, two Newfoundland dogs, two greyhounds and two pointers for the lead, and expects to distance all competition." I agree that this sounds like a good story, but there is another reference to, perhaps, the same individual in the *Nebraska Republican*: "Our citizens were somewhat amused yesterday morning by the appearance in our streets of an individual on his way to the mines. His establishment consisted of two large dogs attached to a small wagon on which were his mining implements, provisions, clothing, etc., all amounting to about five hundred pounds."<sup>79</sup> With this curious incident I leave the subject of means of transportation.

There was a great deal of advice given emigrants concerning the proper outfit for crossing the Plains and remaining in the mines. This advice is found in the newspapers, in letters from the mines, and in the pamphlet guides. Some of the descriptions of outfits were very detailed, covering all needful purchases, some were in general terms. They had, however, much in common.

It was usual to recommend the purchase of enough supplies to last for six months for, as it was repeatedly stated, provisions and all else were costly and scarce at the mines. Certain commodities were found on practically every list: oxen, a wagon, flour, bacon, sugar, coffee, whisky, beans, mining tools, a rifle, gunpowder, cooking utensils and so on. The *Nebraska Advertiser* on December 16, 1858, recommended: oxen, 2 yoke, and a wagon costing \$200; 10 pairs of blankets, costing \$64; 800 pounds of flour, costing \$24; 600 pounds of bacon, costing \$60; a half-barrel of Bourbon whisky costing \$21, and 100 pounds of coffee, costing \$14—these being the most costly purchases. Among the minor purchases advised by the careful writer were: two coffee pots, 25 pounds of soap, one coffee-mill, 1 skillet, 5 pounds of soda, 2 dozen pipes and stems, 6 pounds of ground pepper and 1 box of pickles. The total cost of

<sup>78</sup>*Daily Missouri Republican*, April 20, 1859. The letter is dated at Westport, April 14.

<sup>79</sup>*Wyoming Telescope*, April 9, 1859.

the outfit for four men for six months was given as \$254.38, and the total weight 2,641 pounds.

Smith and Oakes, in their appendix to the story of Luke Tierney, also recommended an outfit for four men for six months.<sup>10</sup> They advise 3 yoke of oxen and one wagon. The most costly purchases advised by them were 400 pounds of bacon, 1,000 pounds of flour, 200 pounds of sugar, and 100 pounds of dried beef. They, like the other writer, advise the purchase of 25 pounds of soap and a large quantity of beans (150 pounds), but they cut down the allowance for drinkables to 6 gallons of brandy, costing \$6. The total cost of their outfit was estimated at \$517.25. The *Weekly Kansas Herald* of Leavenworth advised practically the same outfit with a total cost "in Leavenworth City market" of \$514.25.<sup>11</sup>

Another detailed list appeared in the *Nebraska Advertiser* of Brownville, and was based on four men for six months. Among the new items were 1 lantern and 10 pounds of candles, and 1 grass scythe and snathe. The total cost was estimated at \$600.<sup>12</sup> The *Kansas City Journal*, still later, gave the cost of an outfit for six men for six months at \$365.<sup>13</sup> The editor strongly advises against using the stage lines to the mines and shows how the gold seekers can save by purchasing their own outfits. By doing the latter: "they have their own teams and wagons when they get to their destination, their own tent, or as will be—their own home, their own food for five months already laid in; perfectly free, independent and rich, compared to what they would be by paying money to these pretended lines which look so well in colored handbills."

The letters sent home from the mines occasionally give advice as to special types of things that should be brought to the mines—I am not referring now to outfits. R. C. Berger, writing from St. Vrain's Fort on November 6, 1858, was evidently a good business man, for he advises: "Tell Dave Seigle to bring out a stock of his clothing; they will sell like hot cakes. Liquors, groceries, and all kinds of provisions will be, in fact are, in great demand."<sup>14</sup> The same Mr. Berger wrote on November 17: "Bring your carpenter tools: there will be any amount of business for builders next season."<sup>15</sup>

Sam Curtis, also a good business man, wrote to his brother in Omaha, late in the winter: "If you come out, come with mules, if you can get them. They are worth here more than they are in the States, and cattle are worth less." He adds: "Bring a Navy size

<sup>10</sup>Luke Tierney, *History of the Gold Discoveries on the South Platte* (Pacific City, Iowa, 1859).

<sup>11</sup>*Weekly Kansas Herald*, January 8, 1859.

<sup>12</sup>*Nebraska Advertiser*, February 17, 1859.

<sup>13</sup>*Daily Missouri Republican*, March 26, 1859.

<sup>14</sup>*Nebraska Advertiser*, December 16, 1858.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, December 23, 1858.

revolver, or, if you have a pony and can get it, a Dragoon size. They are the same length, but carry a heavier ball. Bring a plain rifle, set trigger, patent breech \* \* \*. Order one now, or a half dozen from S. Hawken, St. Louis \* \* \*. Sugar, whisky, and Hawken's rifles command higher prices than anything in this country."<sup>16</sup>

So runs the advice given to the gold seekers. It is obvious from the descriptions I have read of the emigrants that many had neither the money nor the wisdom to avail themselves of this advice. With a fortune awaiting them at the other end of the trail, many, perhaps most, of the Peakers of '59 were quite willing to take the risk of starting out with insufficient supplies.

With the consideration of some minor matters I am about to leave the subject of sidelights upon the Gold Rush to Colorado in 1858-1859. I shall make brief mention of guides and correspondents.

Several of the men who went to the mines in the summer or autumn of 1858 returned home during the winter and offered their services as guides during the spring of 1859. I cite as an example the notice inserted by A. J. Bowen in the *Herald of Freedom*, February 26, 1859: "The undersigned designs a trip to Pike's Peak and the Gold Region, sometime between the middle of April and the first of May. Having visited that region last summer, and spent several months there, and on the plains, and having become acquainted with the route by practical observation, he offers his services to such persons as may desire a *guide* on such an expedition."

Another reference will suffice, this from the *Kansas Tribune* of January 13: Mr. S. R. Shepherd and others propose starting for the mines: he "made the trip across the plains last summer, is well acquainted with the route, and, we should think, pretty thoroughly initiated into the art and mysteries of camp life on the Plains. He would be glad to pilot out a large company when he goes. This is an excellent opportunity for persons who have never been over the plains, as there are many difficulties in the way to a new beginner."

I have but little to say about correspondents, though their letters give us some of the best information we have about the mines. When the early companies started for the gold region some editors of the home newspapers asked a member to write home about the journey and the situation in the Rockies. Other correspondents wrote letters without being specially requested. So we have A. A. Brookfield, one of the company that founded Boulder,

<sup>16</sup>*Nebraska News*, February 12, 1859.

writing home at more or less regular intervals to the *Nebraska City News*. Thomas S. Golden wrote home from Arapahoe City telling about the conditions there. General William Larimer wrote to the *Leavenworth Times* at frequent intervals in October and later about the progress and activities of a Leavenworth company.<sup>17</sup>

The *Lawrence Republican* announced on September 23, 1858: "We have made arrangements with an intelligent gentleman who is starting for the gold region, to correspond regularly and fully with the *Republican*, giving a full account of the country, the facilities for obtaining gold, and all other things of interest that may fall under his notice." In due season this correspondent, William O'Donnall, sent letters to the *Republican*, the first of which was published under the heading "Letter from Our Special Gold Correspondent."<sup>18</sup>

Before leaving the subject of correspondents I must refer to A. D. Richardson, the Kansas correspondent of the *Boston Daily Journal*. His letters offer an extremely illuminating commentary upon the conditions in the Missouri Valley during the autumn and winter. In the spring he, with Horace Greeley, came to the Rockies, and sent his observations (later to be published in book form) to the *Journal*. His letters are among the sanest, as well as the best written, that I have discovered.

I have had to omit many interesting incidents and some curious phases of the migration to what is now Colorado, but I trust that I have shown what light, even if it be a sidelight, the Missouri Valley newspapers may throw upon the Gold Rush of our early days.

<sup>17</sup>See a copy of an early letter in *Lawrence Republican*, November 11, 1858.

<sup>18</sup>*Lawrence Republican*, November 11, 1858. See also the issue of October 14.

## Early Education in Colorado\*

A. J. FYNN and L. R. HAFEN

It would doubtless be impossible to find in the whole history of our country a more satisfactory chapter than the one recording our educational progress. The achievements in that particular field have, on the whole, contributed in large measure to our civic pride. The various beneficial educational changes which have been constantly going on during our comparatively short national existence

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\*Before his untimely death, Dr. Fynn had begun the writing of an article on early education in Colorado. He did not live to finish it. To make it more nearly exhaustive on the early period I have incorporated my own gleanings from the newspapers and other documents of the period. The quotations, references to sources and the explanatory notes are my additions.—Ed.

are held in our estimation as were the children of the famous matron of old, our "most precious jewels."

As civilization has moved across the continent, every step has been accompanied with efforts to make popular education more and more the fundamental agency in our national life. It was Washington himself who, in the first presidential farewell address ever delivered to the American people, asserted that in proportion as governments rest on public opinion that opinion must be enlightened; there must be intelligence at the foundation. As the country has increased in years this sentiment has grown stronger. The older American pioneers, from John Harvard on, contributed freely from their modest means the simple schoolroom necessities of those earlier days, and rejoiced in the remarkable expansion of New World ideas. From humble isolated achievements more strongly organized and complicated agencies took the field until today educational advance has become the shibboleth of the nation.

The pioneer gold camps of the West were, much to the surprise of the ordinary observer, disproportionately tenanted with college graduates, drawn thither by the demands for uncommon scientific knowledge of the treatment of ores and the complicated legal relationship between miners and mine owners. Many persons of high caliber joined in the "Westward Movement."

The great Pike's Peak gold rush of 1859 brought a mighty throng of gold seekers to the Rocky Mountains. Few, if any, had come with the thought of making a home in the new land. But as rich mines were discovered in the regions of Central City, South Park, and on the headwaters of the Blue River, more people came to think of the region as one that invited permanent settlement. Denver and Auraria, the twin towns at the mouth of Cherry Creek, were from the first the chief outfitting points for the mines and the principal center of population. As summer wore on, the more serious settlers in these towns thought of the need of establishing a school and other institutions of community life. Leadership in this direction appears to have been taken by Henry H. McAfee, a hitherto unfamed educator of pioneer Colorado. He addressed to the *Rocky Mountain News* a communication dated at "Auraria, Kansas Territory, August 22d, 1859," in which he says:

"As a citizen of this embryo city interested in its prosperity and progress, and watching with earnest solicitude every movement which will tend to advance us in the scale of civil progress and social development, your subscriber has noted one point of deficiency, one serious omission, which it should be the first duty of every newly organized community to supply. I allude to the School House—the watch-tower of social advancement of our day \* \* \*. In the surprising development of energy and activity

which has constructed cities in a few months, the interests of education and religion have been for a time neglected, no school house or place of religious worship is to be found in our city. Shall this longer be said of us? Shall not the want of a place for public meetings and a school be supplied, and supplied soon? It may be if our enterprising citizens will it so. Shall a move be made in this direction? Hoping so, I am yours, H. H. M."

The editor of the pioneer newspaper adds this comment:

"We commend the above to the careful perusal and consideration of every citizen of Auraria. It is certainly time that some movement was being made in the matter. The prospects are bright, and there can never be a more fitting time than the present to commence the improvements suggested by 'H. H. M.' in his excellent communication."

In the *News* of September 22, 1859, we note this item:

"School House.—A movement has been set on foot by the citizens of Auraria and Denver to raise means to erect a union school house for the use of both towns the coming winter, and we learn from Mr. Ross, who has been circulating the subscription paper, that about two hundred and fifty dollars are already subscribed and he thinks there is no doubt but that a sufficient amount can be obtained to build a comfortable house for school purposes this fall. Those wishing to contribute to this enterprise will find the subscription paper in the hands of Mr. Ross."

This worthy project to build a school house appears not to have been consummated, but in the next issue of the weekly paper—that of the 29th—we read:

"WESTWARD THE STAR OF EDUCATION AS OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY.—We hail it as another significant sign of our times and our future, that a first class school, under the charge of a competent professional Teacher, is already established among us. It is a maxim which for ages has stood the test of time, that popular Education is the surest handmaid to a people's welfare, and the cheapest safeguard of its society and liberty; contemporary and coincident to a healthy civilization \* \* \*. Next to the Church of God the School is the most useful institution, and the best wealth in any community and, particularly so in this new, wealthy and wonderful country of ours. We rejoice to see that a commencement is made, and we bespeak for the infant enterprise the timely support and best wishes of parents and property owners in both cities \* \* \*.

"Please notice Card of Prof. Goldrick's School in another column.

<sup>1</sup>*Rocky Mountain News*, August 27, 1859.

"We have read flattering notices of him as a gentleman and successful teacher."

From the advertisement referred to we quote:

"UNION DAY-SCHOOL. THE SUBSCRIBER would respectfully announce to the citizens of Auraria and Denver city that the above School will be open for the reception of pupils on Monday next, October 3, in the room lately occupied by Col. Inslee, Auraria, until a more commodious and comfortable school room and school furniture is made ready.

"From many years' experience as Principal and Superintendent of Schools and Academies in the East, and a familiarity with the latest approved modes of teaching and successful governing he trusts to be able to secure the speedy and substantial improvement of all grades of pupils that may be committed to his care, and to build up a first class school, wherein the young will be thoroughly grounded in the elementary and practical studies, and the more advanced prepared for college or the counting-room.

"Pupils may enter by the month, and continue while convenient, as each scholar shall receive a due share of individual attention, adapted to his or her peculiar wants and capacity.

"For particulars, inquire at the school room, or refer to R. L. Wootton, Esq., Auraria, and Joseph Richard, Esq., Denver City.

"Terms moderate.

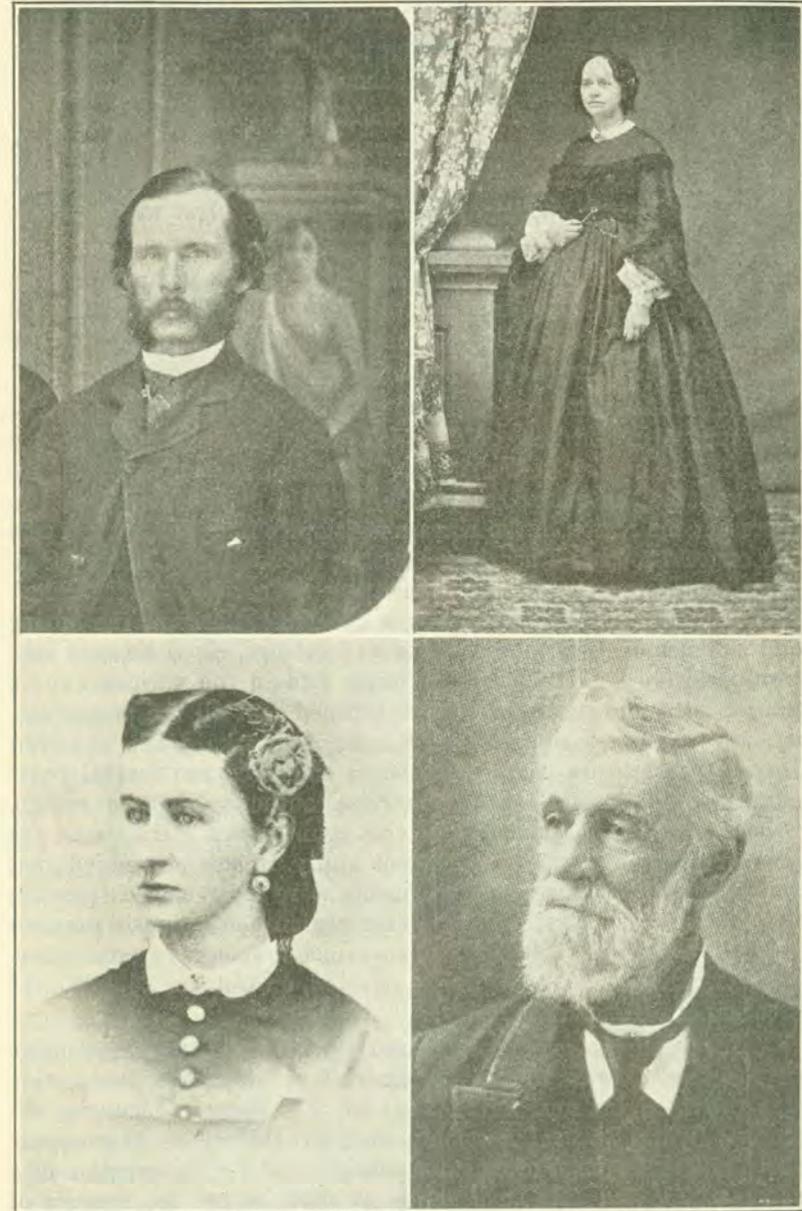
"O. GOLDRICK, Principal."

Let us take a glimpse at this pioneer school teacher of Colorado. On reaching the settlements at the mouth of Cherry Creek some time before, he had created somewhat of a sensation, for he came as a bullwhacker, driving his ox team, yet dressed in broad-cloth suit, "stove pipe" hat and kid gloves. But he soon adapted himself to the life about him.

"Prof." Goldrick had been born in Sligo, Ireland, in 1833. He was educated at the University of Dublin and at Columbia College, New York. After engaging in teaching for some time and in the book-publishing business at Cincinnati, Ohio, he came to Colorado.<sup>2</sup> In addition to becoming the first school teacher here, he established the first Sunday School and later became one of Colorado's famous pioneer journalists.

On October 3, 1859, the first school in Colorado opened. The first teacher himself later wrote that it was held "in a small log cabin near the corner of Twelfth and Blake Streets, West Denver. The hut had a flat roof, which was a great conductor of snow and rain, much to the dripping discomfort of the dear little urchins

<sup>2</sup>History of the City of Denver, Arapahoe County, and Colorado (O. L. Baskin & Co., Chicago, 1880), 451.



PIONEER SCHOOL TEACHERS OF COLORADO

Upper: O. J. Goldrick and Lydia Maria Ring

Lower: Indiana Sopris and Abner R. Brown

during wet weather. A small hole in the gable end sufficed for an unglazed window, and a strip of wagon cover tacked to the lintel hung down to the ground, covering the hole that the log carpenter left for a door until some saw mill should supply dressed lumber.

“There were ten or twelve scholars in attendance during the first week, and the first month averaged a daily attendance of fifteen or sixteen. Two or three of these were Indian half-breeds, three or four were Mexican half-breeds, and the rest were, strange to say, mostly from Missouri \* \* \*.”<sup>3</sup>

It was a private school and the tuition of \$3 per month from each pupil produced an inadequate salary. So Mr. Goldrick acted as a correspondent for eastern newspapers and thus earned \$20 per week to supplement his income as teacher.<sup>4</sup>

In the meantime the efforts made towards the establishment of government in the new gold region were about to result in the creation of “Jefferson Territory.” Back in November, 1858, the first political move had been made, when a person was elected to represent the region in the Kansas legislature and another was sent to Congress to seek a hearing. During the winter of 1858-9, Congress considered the matter of creating a Territory in the Pike’s Peak country but no measure was enacted. Through the spring and summer of 1859, numerous mass meetings, elections, and conventions were held in Auraria-Denver and in the various mining camps, but no government was established that all the people recognized. Some considered that Kansas, Nebraska, Utah, and New Mexico—Territories whose boundaries embraced the several parts of present Colorado—should exercise authority in the region. Others said that inasmuch as all this country was Indian land the laws of existing Territories did not apply. Some contended that since the seats of existing governments were far removed from the new settlements and since the mining region had interests peculiar to itself, a new and independent government should be established. The advocates of this view finally effected, on October 24, 1859, the creation of Jefferson Territory.

Provision was made for popular education in the Constitution of the new Territory. A Superintendent of Public Instruction was provided for and Article VII of this historic document declared: “The General Assembly shall provide at its first session for a uniform system of common schools, and for the creation of a school fund, and take such action as shall be for the interest of education in the Territory.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>*Colorado Magazine*, VI, 72. This is from an article written by Mr. Goldrick in 1882.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Rocky Mountain News*, October 20, 1859.

At the election of October 24, 1859, when the Constitution was adopted, a full set of Territorial officers was chosen. Henry H. McAfee, previously mentioned in this article, received 1,919 votes and was duly elected Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The members of the Territorial legislature who assembled at Denver on November 7th did not acquit themselves very creditably from one standpoint; they ignored Article VII of the Constitution and enacted no general school law. However, in the law incorporating and consolidating Denver, Auraria, and Highland, approved December 3, 1859, it was provided: “That the council of said city are hereby authorized and required to provide for the support of common schools therein, at the expense of the city.” Rather elaborate provisions are incorporated in the law, including those for purchase of lots, erection of buildings, the levying of a one mill school tax on property, segregation of negroes in the schools, election of a Board of Trustees, examination and certification of teachers, etc.<sup>6</sup>

When the General Assembly adjourned without enacting a Territorial school law, the Superintendent of Public Instruction resigned, saying, “I cannot consent to hold an empty office.”<sup>7</sup>

Even the law for schools in Denver-Auraria-Highland was a dead letter, for Jefferson Territory never developed into a real government with power to enforce its enactments.

Let us return now to Goldrick’s private school, the only educational institution in the Pike’s Peak country in 1859. In the *News* of October 20th we read the following: “OUR UNION SCHOOL:—We are glad to notice this modest but important institution is prospering beyond the sanguine expectation of its friends, in both cities. It already numbers some twenty pupils, and more have been promised. The grades range from the little ones, just learning their a-bs, to those in Reading, Writing and the useful branches of Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography &c.

“Special attention is paid to correct spelling, good reading and elegant and expeditious penmanship, and a thorough readiness in arithmetical calculation. Instructions in Elocution, Book-keeping, Letter-writing, business forms and correspondence, will be given throughout the course. The discipline is just what it ought to be; not too harsh, nor yet too indulgent; and Prof. Goldrick’s mode of instruction is simple enough for the smallest, while it is scientific enough for the largest, who may avail themselves of its benefits. Let the small and large both attend this session; let par-

<sup>6</sup>*Provisional Laws and Joint Resolutions Passed at the First and Called Sessions of the General Assembly of Jefferson Territory* (Omaha, N. T., 1860), 277-79.

<sup>7</sup>Letter of resignation dated Jan. 31, 1860, and published in the *Rocky Mountain News*, February 8, 1860.

ents co-operate and encourage their improvements and guard their conduct and conversation when at home, and our word for it, they will not hereafter have cause to regret the investment."

About the first of November, a larger and more comfortable cabin, that boasted a regular door and a glazed window, was rented at the corner of Tenth and Blake Streets for the accommodation of the school.<sup>8</sup>

The second school in the territory of present Colorado, so far as our records indicate, was established in Golden. In the *Western Mountaineer*, Golden's pioneer newspaper, of December 14, 1859, appeared a call for a meeting of citizens to organize a school. The parents met on the 15th and appointed a committee to determine the number of children for whom a school was wanted. On the 17th, the committee reported 22 children ready for instruction. Another meeting was held on the 21st. A committee was appointed to look for a house and a teacher and it was decided that parents able to pay tuition for their children were to do so, the balance required for the school to be raised by subscription.

On January 4, 1860, the following item appeared in the Golden newspaper: "We are pleased to announce that arrangements have been perfected for a school in this city. The committee have procured a house for the purpose on the corner of Third Street and Washington Avenue, and employed Mr. Thomas Dougherty as teacher, who is a young gentleman well qualified for the position. The school will commence on Monday next. Parents in the neighboring towns can procure board for their children in private families, at a very reasonable rate, and we hope they will embrace the opportunity of sending them."

The school was duly opened by Mr. Dougherty on January 9, 1860, with eighteen students in attendance.<sup>9</sup>

In the meantime, Goldrick had made arrangements for another change in the location of his school. In the *News* of January 4, 1860, we read: "The Denver City Union School will be opened in a few weeks in a new and commodious building, with comfortable school furniture and a supply of the latest and most interesting school books." He also arranged for an assistant teacher to come out from "the States," for the spring immigration was expected to increase the school population.

The school opened in its new location on May 7, 1860. A "log building with glass doors, shingle roof and supplied with school desks, on Fourteenth and Holladay [Market] Streets, was occupied for the school; also of nights it was used for a free reading room and of Sundays for the services of Rev. J. H. Kehler's Protestant

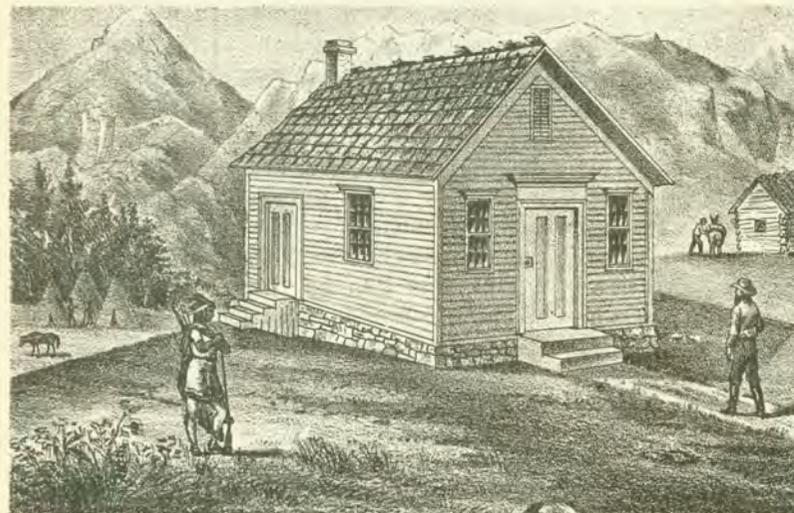
<sup>8</sup>Goldrick's article in *Colorado Magazine*, VI, 73.

<sup>9</sup>*Western Mountaineer*, January 11, 1860.

Episcopal Church, the first nucleus of the 'St. John's Church in the Wilderness.'

"The writer [Goldrick] found his school growing so rapidly that, in May, 1860, he engaged the services of a bright young lady assistant, a Miss Miller, from Iowa."<sup>10</sup>

On the same day (May 7) that the Union School opened in its Denver City location, another school was opened by Miss Indiana Sopris. Miss Sopris was the daughter of Capt. Richard Sopris, prominent Colorado pioneer of 1859, who a few days previously had returned to the new country, bringing his large family from Indiana.<sup>11</sup> Miss Sopris' school was held in the house previously occupied by Thomas Pollock, pioneer blacksmith and merchant, and was located on Ferry Street, near Seventh.<sup>12</sup>



THE FIRST SCHOOL BUILDING OF COLORADO.  
ERECTED AT BOULDER, 1860.

<sup>10</sup>Goldrick's article, *op. cit.*, 74; *Rocky Mountain Herald*, May 5, 1860; *Rocky Mountain News*, May 9, 1860. None of the accounts give her first name. The Federal Census, taken at Denver in August, 1860, does not list a Miss Miller. There is a Josephine Miller recorded as living at Golden. Her occupation is not given and she is reported as having come from Pennsylvania, so she is probably a different person. The original Census Book of 1860 is in possession of the State Historical Society of Kansas. We now have a copy of the original in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado.

<sup>11</sup>The *Rocky Mountain Herald*, May 5, 1860, contains an announcement of the arrival of the Sopris family and an advertisement of the "Select School" to be conducted by Miss Sopris.

<sup>12</sup>Miss Sopris was born in Brookville, Indiana, in 1839, and had had some teaching experience before she came to Colorado. She became one of the first public school teachers here, in 1862. She married Samuel Cushman in 1866. She spent most of her life in Colorado, and died in Denver at the age of 86. See T. F. Dawson, "Colorado's First Woman School Teacher," *Colorado Magazine*, VI, 126-31.

The third woman school teacher in the region was Miss Lydia Maria Ring, who began her school in the latter part of May, 1860.<sup>13</sup> She was a more experienced teacher than any of her predecessors here and continued longer in the profession. She was one of the best known of the pioneer teachers in Colorado. After conducting her school here for some years, she returned to Kansas and later, upon returning to Denver, was given a most cordial reception.<sup>14</sup>

A summer school at Mt. Vernon, the town at the mouth of Mt. Vernon Canyon, west of Denver, was announced in the *Rocky Mountain News* of June 13, 1860. The wording of the advertisement would indicate that a school may have been conducted there previously: "The Summer Term of the Mt. Vernon School will commence on Monday the 25th inst. Terms liberal, those living at a distance from the village and wishing to send their children to a good school can procure their board in the village reasonable. J. R. Dean, Principal." This pioneer town, that has now disappeared except for one house, was in a sense the capital of the Territory in 1860, for R. W. Steele, Governor of Jefferson Territory, resided there.

The town of Boulder came prominently into the educational picture in 1860. She boasts, in that year, the erection of the first school house, expressly built for school purposes, in the Territory. Abner Roe Brown, who had previously taught school in New York and in Iowa, came to Colorado in the summer of 1860, and was the leading spirit in the enterprise at Boulder. After an unsuccessful venture in the mines he came to Boulder and about June 15 established a private school. The tuition was \$1.50 per month for each pupil. One room of Mr. Street's two-room log cabin was rented for the purpose. Mr. J. W. Partridge brought a saw mill and shingle machine to the town and the people conceived the idea of building a frame school house. All joined in the enterprise. Logs were cut, hauled to the mill, and were sawed into lumber on shares. The school teacher, Mr. Brown, who was also a carpenter, agreed to do the carpenter work on the building, if the citizens would board him free. So the school house, 24 by 36 feet in size, with a ten-foot ceiling and a shingle roof, was duly completed on October 15, 1860, at a cost of \$1,200.<sup>15</sup> It was one of the famous buildings of Colorado and a fit precursor of the impressive State University that was to succeed it in the same city.

The fall of 1860 found private schools again in operation. Miss Ring reopened her school October 1st in the Union School

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.* Indiana S. Cushman says that Miss Ring began her school about two weeks after May 7th.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>Abner R. Brown, "Reminiscences of Colorado's First Schools," in *The Mecca* (Denver), June 16, 1900. Mr. Brown died at Canon City on Sept. 2, 1922, at the ripe age of 93 years.

Building near McGaa (Market) Street bridge.<sup>16</sup> The "Denver Seminary," under the charge of a Mrs. Wood, opened at about the same time. It was held at the corner of F (Fifteenth) and Lawrence Streets, in a building that was used on Sundays by Rev. Rankin's congregation.<sup>17</sup> The *News* of October 31st speaks of the Denver Seminary as "one of the permanent institutions of the city."

A move for Free Schools in Denver was inaugurated in the City Council on October 12, but appears not to have been carried out.<sup>18</sup> Education was still dependent upon private schools.

The political development in the region finally culminated in the creation of Colorado Territory by Congress on February 28, 1861. Col. William Gilpin, the first Governor, arrived at Denver on May 27th and soon the machinery of government was in motion. The first Legislative Assembly convened at Denver on September 9, 1861. "An Act to Establish the Common School System" was passed by this body and approved November 7, 1861. It contained rather elaborate provisions for the establishment and conduct of the schools. But it was not until 1862 that free public schools were inaugurated. With their establishment the first phase of educational development in Colorado came to an end.

<sup>16</sup>*Rocky Mountain News*, October 3, 1860.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, October 15, 16, 1860.

## Cowboy Life on the Open Range of Northeastern Colorado

FRANK TANBERG\*

I was born March 23, 1871, at Decora, Iowa. The first twelve years of my life were spent in Iowa, South Dakota and Minnesota. My father came to what is now Merino, Colorado, in 1883 and worked for the Pawnee Cattle Company. The rest of the family arrived at Merino on July 5, 1885.

In the fall and winter of 1885, I started to work for the Pawnee Cattle Company at Merino, and also attended school there during the winter. The school was held in one room of the depot; the teacher was Mrs. McMillan, the agent's wife; and there were less than a dozen pupils. We had only three or four months' school during the year.

\*This story was obtained from Mr. Tanberg of Messex, Colorado, by Miss Mary Armour of Sterling, Colorado, while she was working on the Historical Society's C. W. A. Project of last winter.—Ed.

In 1886, when I was fifteen years old, I went to work for J. L. Brush at Iliff on the JB ranch. My first work on this ranch was that of horse wrangler, my duty being to take care of the horses in the daytime for the outfit during the roundups. In the spring we started out at Benkleman, Nebraska, where the various outfits were to meet, and from there each outfit took different parts of the country to work; that is, to gather the cattle that had been on the range during the winter months. If I remember correctly, the outfit worked up the Republican River. We gathered quite a herd that had drifted from the Platte River down to the Arikaree and think we had about 2,000 head of cattle, then started back and turned them loose at Julesburg.

There were about five or six outfits. I recall several at this time: the 22 outfit; Trowell outfit; 131 outfit; JB outfit and several others. Each outfit consisted of a mess wagon, bed wagon, cook, about twelve men (these being cow hands and bosses) and each cowboy had from seven to eight horses. There were "Reps" from other outfits with us, sometimes eight or ten with us, and they would go along with us to gather cattle for the outfit which they represented. When we would get back, these "Reps" would round up the herd and cut out what cattle belonged to the several representative outfits and take these cattle back to their ranches. The various outfits would work their own country or range and brand the calves. One day's branding would be from ten to three hundred. The roundup generally started in May and sometimes lasted six weeks to two months. You might say there were three roundups each year: the spring roundup, when they would gather cattle that had drifted away from their home range and take them back; the calf roundup; and then in the fall would be the beef roundup. This would consist in gathering the best grass-fed beeves for shipment to market. The names of practically all of the boys that were with us are: Dick Buchanan (foreman), Bill Fitch, Andy Weir, Walter Buntin, Paxton Delano, Charles Kelly, Frank Wilkinson, Walter I. Brush—these being cowboys—Walter Bascom, cook; Frank McCullen, night wrangler; and myself, horse wrangler.

In the spring of 1886, on our return with the cattle from Benkleman to Julesburg, Walter Brush (son of Jared L. Brush of the JB ranch) was in the lead of the cattle and he spied a black object on top of a sandhill. He rode up to the spot and it happened to be a buffalo. This buffalo jumped up and ran past the chuck wagon and Walter ran from where he found it down past the wagon and shouted to me to take after the buffalo. This I did, thrilled to pieces, and ran it for about one and a half miles. I was afraid to rope it at first, so chased it a while until I thought I

could handle it. Then I roped him; jumped off my horse, got my old frog-knife out and stabbed him. The blood flew as high as my head. I ran back to my horse and sat on the horse until I was sure the animal was dead. I should have said that when I roped him, I ran around him and "wrapped him up with the rope" and made my horse hold him. When I felt satisfied that he was dead I skinned him—mind you, I was all alone getting this buffalo—and cut out one hind quarter and a "roll" out of the other hind quarter. Being horseback, I could not take the whole thing. I also took the hide, with this meat, to camp. This was about a three-year-old bull. I was just past fifteen years then and I remember the date very well—it was August 9, 1886—and have always counted it as a great day in my life.

Dick Buchanan, the foreman, when he came to the wagon, asked where "Frankie," the horse-wrangler was, and the cook told him that I was chasing a buffalo. Dick said, "That will be the last of the kid, horse, buffalo and all." Just a little while later I showed up with my buffalo. The whole outfit was eating dinner when I got back, and when they saw me and the horse loaded down they realized that I had killed the buffalo all right, and they helped to take the meat and hide off my horse. Dick was tickled as much as I was; in fact, all of the boys jumped around in great fashion. For several days we lived "high" on buffalo meat.

There were supposed to be fifteen or twenty buffalo in that country and evidently this one had strayed away from the others. There was a lake where they would drink and no doubt this one had been to water and then had gone up to the hill and laid down. After dinner Walter Brush and another cowboy went back to where I skinned the buffalo and got the "hump," which is supposed to be the best meat of the animal.

The next year, 1887, I saw another grown buffalo about this same place when I was on circle. Another cowboy by the name of Rex and myself chased him, and the harder we chased the farther he got from us, and we were not successful in getting him. In the fall of 1887 I saw a cow buffalo at Buffalo Springs, about twenty miles south of Sterling. This was the last wild buffalo that I saw in Colorado, although there were two or three seen later by other parties.

In 1888 I worked for Murray Brothers, who owned a harness and saddle shop in Sterling. They owned a bunch of range horses out at Cedar, about fifty miles northwest of Sterling. We rounded up these horses, then fixed up our bedding, buckboard and grub and started for Leadville, Colorado, with the horses. The Murray boys expected to sell these horses at Leadville, but had very poor luck, as they were too small for that country.

Still longing for the J. B. Ranch, in 1889 I went back to work for this outfit at Iliff, and they sent me to work on the north side of the Platte River, gathering their cattle that had crossed the river. I was with the 70 wagon and also the LF outfit. During the fall of this year a cowboy by the name of Allen Pierson and myself took a notion we would climb the west Pawnee Butte. Well, the next thing was to climb up a straight perpendicular wall of clay about thirty feet, and from there on up was rock. We found a point of rock projecting out about a foot and decided to get our saddle ropes and try to rope this rock. Well, we tried and tried and were just about ready to give up when I finally roped it. Both of us took hold of the rope to see if we thought it would be safe for us to climb up. We decided it was safe, and Al started up, but he swung away out into space; he did not have any footing, so I thought the best thing to do was to hold the rope next to the wall of the rock, which I did, and up the rope he went. He kicked dirt all over me getting up there, and he finally said, "Well, I'm up." I brushed and shook the dirt off my clothes and looked up at him and he was walking around to see if anyone had ever been up there, or if he was the first fool, but he could not find any signs that would indicate that anyone had ever ascended this butte. He came down on the rope and we went back to camp and cited our experience to the other boys, but they would not believe us, and we wanted to bet our saddles and beds that we could do it again, but they gave us the "horse-laugh."

The year 1890 I worked for the LF outfit as a cowhand, and the winter of this year I worked for the JB and 131 as a line rider. The other cowboys that rode with me were Cathy Propst, Bill Clark, Jim Gillette and Jim Miller. Our line was between Sterling and Akron, Colorado. We had our camps along this line, two men to each camp and one in Akron. Our duty was to keep the cattle back west of this line. East of this line the country was pretty well settled up and the cow outfits did not want their cattle destroying any crops of the settlers. We did not have any trouble keeping the cattle back as the weather was the finest I ever saw—it being in the fall. But in the spring of 1891 we had some very bad storms and our line was broken and the cattle drifted east. The snow was knee deep to a horse. We could track the cattle by the blood in the snow. Well, we moved our camp to Eckley, Colorado, and started our line again in order to hold the cattle back from going any farther east. We rounded up all the cattle that we could find and started back to the home range. Well, here is a true story that I must tell on ourselves that happened on this trip as we were taking the herd back home.

The first day out we had cheese and crackers for lunch. This seemed like pretty "dry" eating, so I said, "Let's rope a cow and milk her." That was O. K. with the boys. I roped the cow, but we didn't have anything to milk in. One of the boys said, "I'll get my slicker (raincoat) and we will milk in it." So we did, and then broke up our crackers in the milk. Some of the boys had a pint of whiskey, and we poured this in with the milk and crackers and, oh, what a mess, but we all enjoyed it nevertheless. After lunch we started on with our herd to the Platte River.

In 1891 I worked for the 131 outfit across the Platte River from Sterling. There were only seven "Bills" that worked for this outfit that year, namely: Bill Fitch, Bill Turner, Bill Clark, Bill Tidwell, Bill Jones, Bill Nobles and Bill Wyman.

In 1892 I went to Montana to work as a cowboy for the Continental outfit. Their brand was a hash knife and milliron. These were the cow brands. The horse brand was H on the shoulder and S on the thigh. This outfit claimed 75,000 head of cattle, 2,000 head of horses and 500 head of saddle horses. They had three roundup outfits; had three ranches. The home ranch was on Box Elder Creek, twenty-five miles north of Camp Crook, South Dakota; the horse camp was on Box Elder; and another cow ranch was on Little Missouri River. I worked for this company for three years and then came back home to the Sterling region in 1894.

On May 25, 1895, I was married to Amy Kelly and settled down. I might add here that the little inland town of Kelly, about sixteen or seventeen miles southeast of Sterling, was named for my wife's parents, W. C. Kelly and wife, who settled there in 1886.

I tried farming for two or three years but did not have very good luck, and I am almost of the belief that you cannot make a farmer out of a cowpuncher. So I got me a cow camp and went into the cow business for myself. I still have my ranch, located about one and a half miles west of Messex, Colorado, and raise a few cattle and farm just enough to have feed for the cattle. Our range is all settled up, therefore the cattle are cut down to smaller bunches and are run in pastures.

We have two children, Elsie and Russell. Both are married and each of them have two children. Elsie married Maynard Repp; their children's names are Ruth and Lois; Russell married Alta Geer and he is looking after the headgates of the North Sterling irrigation district. Their children are Edward and June. Like all grandparents, we think these children are just about right.

Practically all the years of my life have been spent as a cowboy and in Logan County. I feel that if I had it all to go over again it no doubt would be in this same line. There is something

rather fascinating about it, and when you get started in the work you feel that that is about all you are fitted for or care to do. I suppose, perhaps, we had hardships, but everyone else did also, so none of the people complained—just went along and did the best we could. Of course, Logan County has changed a great deal in those forty-eight years, but at the same time I am glad that I was one of the “chaps” of those early days.

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## The Founding of Cripple Creek\*

EDGAR C. McMECHEN

The fever that burns in the blood of men when glittering yellow gold is found at the grass roots, and the spectacular rise of millionaires from the ranks of mechanics, small storekeepers and teamsters, so far overshadowed other events in the Cripple Creek district that contemporary historians neglected an absorbing story of events that led to the founding of the town of Cripple Creek.

The popular and romantic version of the first gold discovery in the Cripple Creek district credits Bob Womack, the cowboy, with having found free gold in Poverty Gulch, and with having located there the Grand View claim. That Bob Womack later carried specimens of gold ore to Colorado Springs and displayed them to friends seems to be a well-established fact.

Among the Bennett & Myers records, however, is the report of a mining engineer, A. H. Kidney<sup>1</sup>, which gives the date of the first gold discovery as 1874, at a point between the eastern slope of Mt. Pisgah and the western slope of Gold Hill. The authorities given for this statement are four early residents of the district: D. F. Blackmer, Fred R. Berbower, D. F. Reynolds and D. H. Franks.

General Frank Hall, in his *History of Colorado*,<sup>2</sup> states that Cripple Creek was visited by prospectors in 1859, but that the first gold discovery was made in October, 1881, by Theodore H. Lowe, nephew of William M. Womack of Kentucky, while surveying his uncle's ranch in the vicinity. Lowe, a very capable mining engineer, is credited with having located the Grand View and with having given Bob Womack, also a nephew of William Womack, a

\*Except where otherwise noted, the material upon which this article is based was supplied by Mr. Horace W. Bennett who, with his partner, the late Julius A. Myers, owned the cattle ranch upon which the town of Cripple Creek stands.

<sup>1</sup>Report of A. H. Kidney on the Gold Quartz Hill property (Mt. Pisgah), to E. A. Reser of New York, April 20, 1907.

<sup>2</sup>*History of Colorado*, Hall, IV, 102.

half interest in the claim, with the understanding that he was to do some development work upon it.

In view of these conflicting reports it is interesting to know Mr. Horace W. Bennett's views in regard to the legend that has grown up around Bob Womack's name.

"A good deal of misinformation has been published about Bob Womack," said Mr. Bennett recently, in an interview. "Bob had been in the country for several years when Bennett & Myers acquired the Broken Box Ranch. We employed him as a cowhand and found him to be but an indifferent cowboy. We called him Crazy Bob, because of his erratic character. He liked to ride a horse about the country at a run until the animal was exhausted. To the best of my knowledge, none of the early miners regarded him as a good miner, and I believe that reports crediting him with the discovery of gold in the district have been very much exaggerated."

Bennett & Myers became interested in the Cripple Creek district through the purchase, on July 15, 1885, of ranch property owned by Philip Ellsworth, a wealthy glove manufacturer of Gloverville, New York. Several years before this date, in 1882, George H. Thompson and Frank Anderson, who then operated a second-hand store on Larimer Street, Denver, had bought up several homesteads in the district west of Pikes Peak. In some manner, they established contact with Ellsworth and painted a glowing picture of the opportunity to make money through establishment of a large cattle ranch in the vicinity. They represented the value of their holdings to be \$150,000, and induced Ellsworth to invest \$75,000 cash for a one-half interest. A herd of 1,500 cattle was placed upon the property, which consisted of 700 acres of patented lands, controlling four water fronts: Cripple Creek, Grassy Gulch, Pisgah Gulch and one other. Control of these waterfronts made the owners virtual masters of a vast grazing area on the public domain, which they proceeded to enclose with a substantial, stake-and-rider log fence, thus adding 50,000 acres to their domain.

However, the cattle ranch proved to be an utter failure under the Thompson and Anderson management and, in the early summer of 1885, Ellsworth visited Colorado to investigate. He found that the money he had invested had been dissipated, that the herd of 1,500 cattle had dwindled to 600, and that Thompson and Anderson had no property, except their one-half interest in the ranch, upon which he might recover. He engaged an attorney, Oscar Reuter of Denver, who forced Thompson and Anderson, under threat of more serious action, to deed to Ellsworth their entire interest in the Broken Box Ranch.

Among others visited during the course of his investigations was John R. Hanna, then president of the City National Bank of Denver. Ellsworth, by this time, was anxious to rid himself of the property. Hanna suggested that he might be able to interest the real estate firm of Bennett & Myers, and Ellsworth visited their office early one morning. He found a young man seated at a desk, apparently a callow youth employed in a clerical position, or a son of one of the firm members.

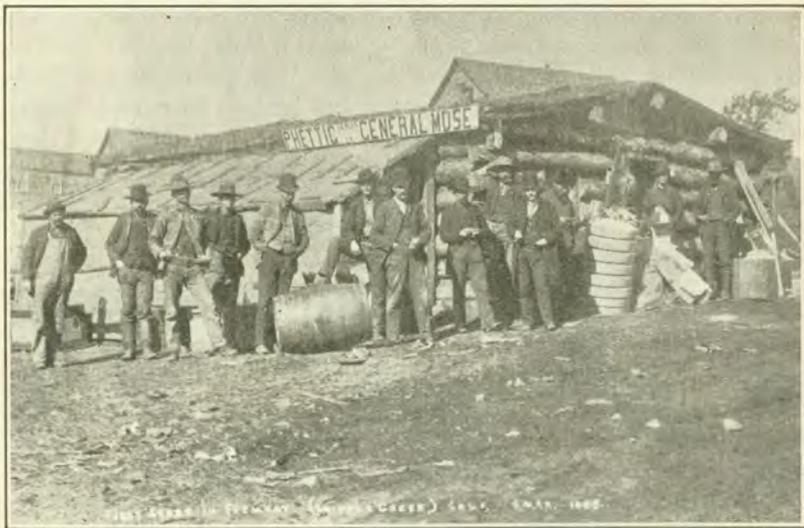
"When will your father be in, sonny?" asked Ellsworth, after a brief glance about.

"My father," replied the youth, "has been dead for some years."

"I am looking for Mr. Bennett."

"That's my name. What can I do for you?"

Ellsworth was much surprised at the youth of the senior member of one of Denver's leading real estate firms, but proceeded with his business.



THE FIRST STORE IN FREMONT (CRIPPLE CREEK), 1888

"I have a cattle ranch west of Pikes Peak," he said, "that I wish to dispose of, as my interests lie elsewhere." He gave an outline of the situation, and explained that the ranch had been poorly operated, most of the cattle had died of starvation because no hay had been provided for them during the winters, or had succumbed from cold because of their weakened condition. Ben-

nett listened to the explanation without comment until Ellsworth had concluded. Then he observed dryly:

"It seems to me, Mr. Ellsworth, that your location is not suited to the cattle industry. Your ranch is at such a high altitude, the cold is so intense in winter, the snows so deep and, apparently, the feed so scarce, that I do not believe anyone could make a success there."

"I admit that it does not seem to be a cattle country, but perhaps it might be operated successfully with better management. At any rate, my object is to get rid of the property as quickly as possible as I haven't the time to fool with it."

"We have no money to put into such a proposition. And we would not be interested in buying a skating ranch."

"Well—I want you and your partner to visit it anyway," said Ellsworth. "Come as my guests and enjoy a few days' outing. And then—if you still are uninterested no harm will be done."

Again Bennett replied that his firm did not have the cash for a proposition of this magnitude but, if Mr. Myers would consent to go, they would make the trip merely for the outing and a few days of sport. The next day the party went to Colorado Springs, engaged horses and rode over Cheyenne Pass. They arrived at Cripple Creek about 10 o'clock in the morning on the second day of travel. As they rode, Bennett noticed many dead cattle in gullies and ravines. When they descended to the meadowland along the waterfronts, he was amazed to see that they had been sown with bluegrass, timothy and alsike. Uncut hay, luxuriant in growth, stood knee high.

"Why didn't your men cut this grass and stack hay for winter use?" he demanded.

"Either they didn't know enough about ranching," replied Ellsworth, "or else they didn't care whether the cattle died or not."

The party camped on the home ranch of the Broken Box on the land where Cripple Creek now stands. Mountain trout teemed in the streams, to the delight of Myers, who was an ardent fisherman. His partner had noted the hundreds of grouse that sailed off through the timber as they rode, so tame that one could have knocked many over with a club. Their favorite sport was hunting. Every meal was a delicious repast of mountain trout or grouse, sizzling in the pan on the blazing campfire. After their return, Ellsworth visited the partners again and asked what offer they would make for the ranch. Bennett replied that, while they had enjoyed the trip and the ranch would be ideal as a place for summer sport, they could not afford such a place for a recreation resort and had no money to invest, anyway.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," persisted Ellsworth. "I'll give you the entire outfit, land, cattle, fences and all for \$7,500." Bennett could hardly conceal his amazement.

"That's ridiculous, Mr. Ellsworth. You know you could market your remaining cattle and realize that amount. The property is worth far more than you ask."

"Not to me," was the swift reply. "I've had all the experience I wish in cattle ranching. I want to forget the whole unfortunate affair. I have spent too much time here already. I want to leave on the afternoon train and, hereafter, I'll confine my investments to glove manufacture. With you it is different. You are on the ground, and you observed yourself that sufficient hay can be cut to winter a large herd of cattle."

"If we bought it our only purpose," said Bennett slowly, "would be to have a pleasure resort for ourselves and friends. We have not reached the stage yet where we can afford such a luxury."

"I'll make it easy. Two thousand five hundred dollars cash and your note for the balance for five years at 4 per cent interest will take everything. I want no security. My inquiries at the bank satisfied me that if you agree your note will be taken up when due."

Under these conditions Bennett completed the deal before Myers had come to the office. Myers was astounded when he learned of the transaction, but probably no more so than his partner. The new owners, of course, had heard of the Mt. Pisgah excitement. Hundreds of prospectors had swarmed the slopes of that mountain a few years before, but the incipient boom had exploded because, at that time, the baffling secret of Cripple Creek's wealth was not understood. In Gilpin county, in the San Juan and, in fact, at every point where gold had been discovered in Colorado, it had been associated with well-defined outcroppings of quartz, easily discerned at the surface and traced through the country without difficulty. In the Cripple Creek district gold is found in the breccia that fills the old volcanic vent and there is no quartz present, even when the veins extend into the surrounding red granite walls. Gold here is found in sylvanite ore. While a competent mining engineer would have recognized this ore had he found it, the experienced prospectors, without sufficient knowledge of geology, were unfamiliar with the ore at that time and hence had passed it by.

While camped at the ranch Bennett had visited Bob Womack's gopher hole on the Gold King and had picked up some samples from the dump. These he submitted to E. E. Burlingame, the pioneer Denver assayer. The latter gave one look and said contemptuously:

"There is no use wasting your money for an assay of this stuff, Mr. Bennett. There's no gold in it."

After the presence of gold had been established definitely at Cripple Creek, Bennett again visited the Gold King, secured more samples and returned with them to Burlingame, insisting upon an assay. The same ore that had been condemned before yielded \$3,000 to the ton. Had the assay been made in the first instance Cripple Creek would have been discovered two years earlier than recorded in history.

A short time after Bennett & Myers had acquired the ranch, Burt Potinger of Colorado Springs came to Denver and offered \$15,000 for the property. When this offer was refused he inquired curiously as to the reason.

"Oh," said Bennett, "I have an idea that there may be gold there after all, so I believe we'll hold on a while and find out." The other looked at the speaker for a moment in pitying silence, then laughed.

"It's a good thing to be an optimist," he observed finally, "but not a damned fool optimist."

Rather than let the land lie idle, Bennett & Myers decided upon a second attempt at cattle ranching. They purchased a fine herd of white-faces, directed that hay be stacked for the animals for winter feeding, and placed in charge George W. Carr—an experienced cowman of the type that would be designated by modern writers as a two-gun man. Under this efficient administration the venture proved a decided success and considerable money was made.

In 1889, probably as a result of Bob Womack's persistent propaganda, another run in the Cripple Creek district began. Old prospectors and tenderfeet began to drift in until several hundred were scattered in tents and under bough shelters over the grassy slopes and timbered hills. A telegram came from Carr, pithy and pointed:

"Prospectors digging up the range everywhere," it read. "Shall I make them jump?" In western cowman's parlance this meant revolver practice with the nimbly dancing feet of the prospectors as targets. Bennett immediately consulted the law firm of Benedict & Phelps to learn whether he and Myers held other than surface rights to their patented area. Judge Benedict, an able lawyer, but somewhat gruff in manner, said positively:

"You own everything from China to the skies."

Bennett wired Carr to meet him at Florissant. From that station on the old Midland Railroad they drove to Cripple Creek. It was apparent that a boom was on its way and Bennett immediately employed a civil engineer to plat a town on the home ranch.

This was named Fremont in honor of the Pathfinder. The miners, however, had grown used to the name of Cripple Creek. Some years before an old cow had become mired in a bog along the stream's edge and, in extricating it, the cowboys had pulled so heartily that one of the animal's legs had become crippled. For several years she had hobbled over the range and the cowboys had called the stream Cripple Creek because of this accident. The town founders yielded to this sentiment and the name was changed officially within a short time. Even at this early date Bennett & Myers sold between 300 and 400 lots.

The firm no longer retained control of the 50,000 acres of public domain, because public sentiment had opposed fencing by private interests, and President Cleveland, in 1885, had issued an order directing removal of all fences from it. However, there was ample patented land for township purposes and Cripple Creek never extended beyond the original 160-acre homestead of the Broken Box.

Because of the contiguity of Colorado Springs it is not surprising that an attempt was made by capitalists from that city to start a rival town and induce, if possible, settlement on their land. This embryonic settlement, about one mile from the present town of Cripple Creek, was named Hayden Placer, in honor of the noted topographer who surveyed Colorado under direction of the United States Geological Survey.

Cripple Creek had secured a United States postoffice immediately after the platting had been done. The Colorado Springs men secured an order removing the mail center to Hayden Placer, but their Denver rivals were not to be caught napping. The next day before, the chuckles of the Haydenites had died away, a second order issued from the postmaster general at Washington transferred the postoffice back to Cripple Creek.

Bennett & Myers well understood that towns do not develop without foresight and planning. There were then two hotels in Cripple Creek, the Palace and the Windsor. A contract was entered into with one John Hundley, who operated the first stage line from Florissant to the new gold field. Hundley, under its terms, was to make his first stop at the Palace and the second at the Windsor. Soon word came to Bennett in Denver that the Colorado Springs people had erected a fine hotel, called the Clarendon, at Hayden Placer, and that Hundley was stopping there first. Bennett wired the Concord Stage Company, secured a price upon two fine, new Concord coaches and took the train for Florissant. There he took passage on Hundley's stage. No comment whatever was made until the driver stopped in front of the Clarendon.

"This," remarked Bennett pleasantly, "is not in accordance with our contract, Mr. Hundley." The burly driver cackled dryly.

"I don't care a damn about contracts, Mr. Bennett. My friends are in Colorado Springs and here's where I make my first stop."

"Very well. We will put two Concord stages on this route." The fare from Florissant was ten dollars per passenger.

"The more the merrier," said Hundley. "You'll have to charge the same fare and I'll take chances on getting my share of the business."

"I hope so," said Bennett. "Because we are going to haul in passengers free of charge."

"Hey—wait a minute," was the startled rejoinder. "Suppose you and me talk this over a bit." After that Hundley made his stops according to the original contract.

The Colorado Springs interests were not to be defeated so easily, however. James M. Parker of Colorado Springs had been operating in Cripple Creek the First National Bank. Without notice he moved the institution to Hayden Placer. Bennett was in Cripple Creek at the time and took the next train for Denver. Almost before Parker had become settled in his new location, the Bi-Metallic Bank of Cripple Creek opened its doors with David H. Moffat, president of the First National Bank of Denver, as its head. William Barth, wealthy real estate owner of Denver, and Horace W. Bennett were the vice-presidents. This type of competition proved to be too much for the Colorado Springs capitalists. Within one year the town of Hayden Placer died peacefully. In a few years the last vestige of it had been swept away. The town of Victor, organized by the Stratton-Carleton interests, was so located that it offered no rivalry to Cripple Creek. Rather, it was an asset, and never attained a size sufficient to check the growth of its older neighbor.

## The Snowslide at Tomichi<sup>1</sup>

RHODA FLETCHER ROBERTSON\*

At the old mining town of Tomichi, that finger of civilization which extended to the furthestmost boundary of Gunnison County, the winter of 1899 had not been unduly severe. Neighbored by the now barely extant mining village of White Pine, two miles westward, Tomichi began its career with as much promise and vigor as her sister city. Development of mining

<sup>1</sup>The data for this story were obtained from residents of Tomichi and White Pine and from newspaper accounts.

\*Mrs. Robertson lives in Salida, Colorado, today.—Ed.

properties held forth much lure of riches to be had for the digging and the livelihood of the settlement was maintained on these assurances.

With the advent of the month of March, weather tables turned. Snow began falling and continued unceasingly for ten days. The steep slopes which hedged in the little village were cumbered heavily and cabins and mine buildings emerged just above the line of whiteness.

Situated as it was in the wedge of the headwaters of Tomichi Creek, the village was menaced by that direst of catastrophes which may occur to a mining settlement, but a method had been employed to divert snowslides from the town, and several had been successfully turned aside.

Among the inhabitants of Tomichi were Mr. and Mrs. D. W. Sweeze—or Sweezy—with their two young sons, who were about eight and twelve years of age, respectively. On the morning of March 2, 1899, the family had completed their morning meal and had gone their various ways. Mrs. Sweeze began a washing and the small boy, Perry, was playing with a pet cat. The father and the older boy had gone to the yard to cut wood, and the other pet of the household, a dog, accompanied them.

An ominous roar suddenly penetrated to the ears of the people in the village. Mrs. Sweeze, bending above her steaming tub of suds cried, "My God! A snowslide! Run!" But before the order could be executed, the avalanche was upon them with tons of hurtling snow and debris of the mountainside gathered in the descent.

From the stern shoulders of Granite Mountain and over the barrier erected to change the course of such a demon of disaster, the sinister charge of the slide reared and flung its mantle of enveloping death upon the village. Buildings of the Magna Charta mining property were deluged and covered. Assay office, blacksmith shop, boiler room and a portion of the machinery sturdily bore up under the impact of the shock.

Mrs. Sweeze never left her kitchen. Perry, the younger boy, called to his mother when the noise of the slide subsided somewhat. She responded from the other room where she had been at work, but after answering her son, she groaned a few times and then was silent.

Rescuers were hastily recruited from White Pine, and frantically they began to dig amid the enveloping banks of snow and rocks and sticks. Where the Sweeze house had stood, a party of men digging were amazed to hear a voice. It was that of eight-year-old Perry who called, "Boys, can you hear me?" Told to wait patiently, the little fellow did not make another sound until he was pulled from his icy shroud, unharmed.

Mr. Sweeze and the older boy were swept in the path of the avalanche to a distant spot, and their bodies were not recovered until several months had elapsed. In some places, the depth of the snow reached two hundred feet, and only the process of sunshine and warmer weather effected a release from the icy tentacles.

At the mine boarding house, death made each a touch and a draw. Mrs. Alta Stout, the cook, had been ill, and was lying on a cot in the dining room. Like Mrs. Sweeze, her demise occurred within the walls of her own household.

One of the men who was boarding at the cookhouse, Michael Smith, a present resident of White Pine, was eating his breakfast at a table in the kitchen. Almost coincident with the roar of the avalanche, Mr. Smith saw the walls of the front of the house closing in about him. Instantly all was dark, and he was unhurt in a small space in which he could sit upright. The snow settled about him, but in the confines of his narrow prison, the table on which a few moments before he had been eating breakfast, his hands were free, and reassured that he would soon be released, he settled himself into the most comfortable position possible. At last he heard sounds far above him. With a knife which he had carried with him into his lowly quarters beneath the table, he gave a series of raps, known as signals to his fellow miners when engaged in their work within the mines, and known as "tommy-knockers' raps."

Hearing the sounds, the rescuers redoubled their energies and after four and a half hours of imprisonment, Mr. Smith was finally extricated from beneath a fifteen-foot grave. Aside from suspended circulation and some nervous shock, he too was unhurt, and now, thirty-four years after the calamity, he still marvels at the narrowness of his escape from the jaws of a horrible death.

Fearing another slide, the remaining inhabitants soon deserted the village of Tomichi, and moved to the adjoining town of White Pine. Aside from a few later attempts to discover bonanza fields of ore, Tomichi was never again popular as a city of residences and today the only remaining vestige of a once inhabited spot is the skeleton of an old well.