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Early History of Bent County

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My father, John Wesley Prowers, was born near Westport, Jackson County, Missouri, January 29, 1838. His boyhood was not a happy one. When he was quite young his mother married a second time. John Vogil was not kind to his small step-son and gave him few advantages. Father's formal education ended with just thirteen months in the public schools.

In 1856, at the age of eighteen, he accepted a position with Robert Miller,¹ Indian agent for the tribes of the Kiowas, Comanches, Apaches, Cheyennes and Arapahoes of the upper Arkansas region. Together they set out from Westport, Missouri, with a wagon train loaded with annuity goods, Bent's new fort² being their destination.

Upon their safe arrival at that place, Agent Miller sent out word for the Indians to come in to the Commissary to receive their portion of the annuity goods. For a period of fully two months father passed out sugar, bacon, cornmeal, oatmeal, salt, beans, coffee, clothing and numerous other articles to the Cheyennes, Arapahoes, and other tribes who came to the fort.³

For father, young and newly come from the East, the excitement and romance of the life at Bent's Fort held a great fascination. He watched as the covered wagon trains on the Santa Fe Trail stopped at the fort to have an ox shod, or a wheel tire welded; he saw bearded trappers from the mountains, in fringed buckskin suits, bringing in their winter's trapping of beaver skins; sometimes Mexican men in wide sombreros and vivid sashes rode in bringing the romance of the land to the south, or an occasional French-Canadian stopped for the night with tales to tell of a mysterious north-land. More often bands of Cheyennes or Arapahoes rode in from the plains, on their wiry Indian ponies, bringing buffalo robes to trade for white man's goods; perhaps, most of

*Mary Prowers Hudnall was the first child born to John Wesley Prowers, cattle-king and prominent business man of Bent County, and his Indian bride, Amache Ochinee. Interview obtained and material written by Mr. and Mrs. James Rose Harvey.

¹Frank Hall, *History of Colorado*, IV, 74.

²*The Trail*, VIII, No. 9, p. 6.

³*Colorado Magazine*, VII, 184.

all, he noticed the shy glances of dark-eyed Indian maidens in beaded deer-skin. Whatever it was, father decided not to return to Missouri, but to make this country his home.

So, as soon as his work with Miller was finished, he accepted a position with Col. William Bent, Indian trader at the fort, and remained in his employ for seven years. During this time he was continuously on the trail, in charge of wagon trains, freighting in supplies⁴ from the trading posts on the Missouri to those west. He made in all twenty-two trips across the plains. Occasionally his western terminal was Fort Union, sometimes Fort Laramie, more often Bent's New Fort on the Arkansas. Twelve of these trips were



MRS. MARY PROWERS HUDNALL
(June, 1945)

made on his own initiative, and in each case he realized a goodly profit from the trade goods he freighted in. After five years these trips became mere routine to father, but in 1861 the return trip to Fort Bent took on new significance for him. The moment he entered the adobe walls of the fort he glanced eagerly around to see if a certain pair of dark eyes had noted his return, for father was in love with a little Indian princess, Amache Ochinee. Amache (father shortened her name to Amy) was the daughter of Ochinee, a sub-chief of the Southern Cheyennes, called One-eye by the white

⁴Baskin's *History of the Arkansas Valley*, 880.

people.⁵ With her father's consent, Amache married my father, John W. Prowers, near Camp Supply in Indian Territory, in the year 1861. She was fifteen years of age. They started house-keeping in the commissary building at New Fort Bent.⁶

In the winter of 1862 when father made his usual trip to Westport he took his young bride east with him and when he returned to the fort she remained behind with father's aunt. Here at Westport, Missouri, on July 18, 1863, I was born. My young Indian mother named me Mary. For the next three months she anxiously watched the Santa Fe Trail to the westward, longing for the return of my father with the wagon train so that she might go back to the prairies and the life she loved.

My first home in Colorado was on the cattle ranch that father had established in the big timber on Caddoa Creek. I was five months old when I arrived here, as it took us two months to make the trip home by ox-wagon. There were three large stone buildings on the ranch at Caddoa when father took mother and me there to live.⁷ In 1862 when a band of Indians, the Caddos, were compelled to leave Texas because of their fidelity to the Union, the U. S. Government undertook to locate them on the Arkansas. General Wright selected a site at the mouth of the creek still known as Caddoa, and had three large stone buildings erected. The Caddos came up and inspected the place and decided not to accept it. So preparations for their occupancy were abandoned. In 1863 father decided to purchase it as a ranch from which to herd cattle and to furnish supplies to the troops coming through.⁸

As father made his trips back and forth with the wagon trains, he used to gaze out over the vast acres of grassy prairies and picture grazing there, not buffalo, but great herds of cattle all bearing his brand. He saw the possibilities in the cattle business in this open range and dreamed of being a cattle king. Then he set out to make these dreams a reality. In 1861 he took his savings east with him and purchased from John Ferrill of Missouri, a herd of 100 cows.⁹ These he brought in and turned out to graze on the range from the mouth of the Purgatoire to Caddoa. Then in 1862, for \$234, he purchased a good bull to run with the herd. From that time on father tried continually to build up his herds, weeding out the original Short-horn strain and replacing them with Herefords, as they seemed to stand the cold winters much better than the Short-horns.

⁵George Bird Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 167, says: "One-Eye, so called by whites: his real name was Lone Bear, Nah'ku'uk'i'yu'us."

⁶Colonel Milton Moore, *Great Divide*, Nov. 27, 1921: "John W. Prowers lived in the Commissary bldg. with his Cheyenne squaw. Wearing a calico dress and a blanket, she was standing with several other Indians in blankets watching our departure."

⁷Baskin's *History of Arkansas Valley*, 834.

⁸*Ibid.*, 834.

⁹Hall's *History of Colorado*, IV, 280.

During the winter of 1864 and 1865 we were often at Fort Lyon, where father had charge of the Sutler store and acted as interpreter for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians at the post, part of the time being regularly employed by the commanding officer, sometimes acting voluntarily. He was also government contractor and employee.¹⁰

In the middle of November, 1864, we were at the ranch on the Caddoa where father was herding government beef cattle, horses, and mules. The white settlements on the Arkansas river at the time were few and isolated; they were Colonel Boone's, eighty miles west of Fort Lyon; the stage station at Bent's Old Fort; Moore and Bent at the mouth of the Purgatoire; father's ranch at the mouth of the Caddoa and Fort Lyon.¹¹ Relations between the plains Indians and the white people were growing more and more strained; the chiefs of the Arapahoes and the Cheyennes, puzzled by the ways and the many words of the white people, often came to father for explanation and advice. At this time Chief Black Kettle and Grandfather Chief One-Eye told father that Black Kettle had been to Denver, where he talked with the big white chief Governor Evans, and with Col. Chivington; that they could not make any treaty with them but had been told that they must deal with Major Wynkoop, then in charge at Fort Lyon. They said that they had returned all the white prisoners they had held and were ready to do anything Major Wynkoop asked. He had told them to bring in their families and lodges and they were now going out to do his bidding. Father told them to camp near us on the Caddoa and that he would accompany them to the fort as interpreter if they wished to hold council. One-Eye, my Grandfather, at once brought in his family and lodges and camped near the ranch. Black Kettle left his family and lodges camped on Sand Creek, but brought in a number of his sub-chiefs with him; father and Ochinee accompanied the band of chiefs into Fort Lyon. They found that Major Wynkoop had been relieved of his command and that Major Anthony was in charge.

Major Anthony promised them that he would do all in his power to bring about a permanent peace; in the meantime they were to go back to their camp on Sand Creek and let their young men go buffalo hunting, as he could not issue them any provisions until further government orders came from Leavenworth. He then said he could not keep them at the fort for the night. Father asked that they be allowed to come to our place. They remained camped near us for two nights; they said they were sorry that Major Wynkoop had been relieved but believed that Major An-

thony would do all he could for them. Father assured them that everything looked favorable, gave them presents of sugar, coffee, flour, rice and bacon, and tobacco bought for them and sent out by the officers of Fort Lyon. Major Anthony had agreed to come out to father's place for another council with them. He did not come but sent out the Fort interpreter, John Smith, to talk with them, who said that Anthony had sent word for them to go back to their lodges on Sand Creek and remain there for they would be perfectly safe. Father shook hands all around and the Indians left for their camps on Sand Creek. That was the last any of us saw of my Grandfather, Chief One-Eye.

One Sunday evening, the last week in November, about sundown, the men of Company E of the First Colorado Cavalry, by orders of Col. Chivington, stopped at our ranch on the Caddo, disarmed father and his seven cow-hands, and held them prisoners, not allowing them to leave the house for two days and nights. At the end of that time Captain Cook ordered that he be released. No explanation was offered as to the cause of his arrest but in light of later happenings we thought it was due to the fact that father had an Indian family, and might communicate some news to the Indians on Sand Creek.¹²

On Nov. 29, 1864, in the early dawn, Col. Chivington and his men fell upon my mother's people camped on Sand Creek, with the American flag and a white flag flying over Chief Black Kettle's tepee. Grandfather Ochinee (One-Eye) escaped from the camp, but seeing that all his people were to be slaughtered, he deliberately chose to go back into the one-sided battle and die with them rather than survive them alone.¹³ The Southern Cheyennes would have been completely wiped out as a tribe had it not been that a small band of them had left camp the morning before and had gone up the creek on a hunting trip to obtain meat for the Indians, who had been issued no government supplies for several weeks. Grandmother was not killed, as she and the wives of some of the other chiefs had been detained at Fort Lyon, as hostages, that the Cheyennes and Arapahoes would keep peace.¹⁴ Mother, Father and I were out at Big Timbers when we heard of the massacre. We immediately hurried to Fort Lyon to be with Grandmother, and to be of what help we could to the stricken Cheyennes. Father was called by the government to testify at the investigation held at Fort Lyon. He told his story there as he often, in later years, told it to us children and as I have given it here. Mother was always very bitter about the Sand Creek Massacre. A number of years later,

¹⁰Colorado Magazine, VII, 185.

¹¹Baskin's History of Arkansas Valley, 834.

¹²Report of Sec. of War, Senate Doc. 26, 39th Cong., 2d sess., p. 107.

¹³George Bird Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 167.

¹⁴Report of Sec. of War, Senate Doc. 26, 39th Cong., 2nd sess., p. 84.

while she was attending a meeting of the Eastern Star in Denver, a friend brought Chivington over to introduce him to mother, saying, "Mrs. Prowers, do you know Colonel Chivington?" My mother drew herself up with that stately dignity, peculiar to her people, and ignoring the outstretched hand, remarked in perfect English, audible to all in the room, "Know Col. Chivington? I should. He was my father's murderer!"

Whether Col. Chivington's act was justified or not still is a subject for controversy among students of Colorado history. At any rate, the U. S. government tried to make reparation to the



THE OLD JOHN PROWERS HOME AT BOGGSVILLE (NEAR LAS ANIMAS)

Indians; the treaty of 1865 stated that each person of the Indian band who lost a parent or was made a widow upon that occasion should receive 160 acres of land. They could choose this land wherever they wished from their reservation in the Arkansas Valley.¹⁵ Naturally they chose the best hay land along the river bottom. Father acquired much of his cattle range in this manner; of course grandmother and mother each received this land grant from the government. Then father bought out the claims of other Indians. Julia Bent, a daughter of George Bent by a Cheyenne wife, received the 160 acres which surrounded Fort Lyon. Father bought this quarter section from her to enlarge his range.

¹⁵Kappler, *Indian Affairs—Laws and Treaties*, 889-90.

In 1868 Father moved his family to Boggsville, a small settlement about two miles south of the present city of Las Animas. Thomas O. Boggs, for whom the place was named, had returned from New Mexico in 1866 with L. A. Allen and his brother-in-law, Charles L. Rite.¹⁶ He started improvements on his ranch at once. Both Thomas Boggs and Kit Carson were thrown out of employment when the trade in buffalo robes at Bent's Fort was broken up. Kit Carson moved from Fort Garland to Boggsville in 1867. He had obtained title, through his friend Ceran St. Vrain, to two ranches on the Purgatoire, the first about a mile south of Boggsville and the other at the end of Nine Mile Bottom.¹⁷ He made some improvements on these ranches, but settled at Boggsville in a house belonging to Thomas Boggs. These two friends went into the sheep business together, using as range their combined ranch lands.¹⁸ They always seemed to me more like brothers than partners.

Father built a fourteen-room adobe house; our family was increasing with the years. In all, there were nine of us Prowers children. I was the eldest, then Susan (who died in infancy), Kathrine, Inez, John, Jr., Frank, Leona, Ida, and Amy. Our old home, and that of Thomas O. Boggs, are both still standing at Boggsville (1945).

Some of the neighboring ranch families were: R. M. Moore, Col. Wm. Bent, E. R. Sizer, Urial Higbee, Luke Cahill and C. L. Rite.

After father had his home built, and mother, I, and my two small sisters comfortably settled, he started the first irrigation project in the county. Thomas Boggs, Robert Bent, son of Col. William Bent, and he dug a large irrigation ditch, under which farming was started at Boggsville and at the Bent place. Over 1,000 acres were put under cultivation. It proved a very profitable enterprise for prices were high: Corn 8 to 12 cents per pound, flour \$8 to \$12 per hundred and potatoes at 25 cents per pound.¹⁹

In February, 1870, by a legislative enactment, Bent County was organized. Las Animas was designated as the County seat. The first election was held on Doctor Sizer's ranch, seven miles south of the present site of Las Animas, on the Purgatoire River, during the first week in November, 1870. Father was elected County Commissioner; John M. Boggs, County Clerk; Bob Baker, County Assessor; Josiah Russell, Probate Judge; Thomas Boggs, Sheriff; C. L. Rite, Justice of Peace; and Henry Rule, Constable. These were the first officials of Bent County. And the County Seat was changed to Boggsville at this election. Our little settle-

¹⁶Hall's *History of Colorado*, IV, 75.

¹⁷Baskin's *History of the Arkansas Valley*, 836.

¹⁸W. M. Boggs Manuscript, State Historical Society Library.

¹⁹Baskin's *History of the Arkansas Valley*, 835.

ment now became an important business center. Father opened a large general store and a Post Office was established here.

While engaging in all these other activities, my father's primary interest remained in cattle. In 1871 he bought "Gentle the Twelfth" of Frederick William Stone of Guelph, Canada. From this time on he set about systematically improving and enlarging his herds and acquiring larger range. During father's lifetime he fenced 80,000 acres of land in one body and owned forty miles of river front on both sides of the Arkansas river, controlling 400,000 acres of land.

In the fall of 1871 father shipped in eight dozen prairie chickens and turned them loose on our ranch, as an experiment. Judge M. Robinson and Luke Cahill tried the same experiment, turning loose sixteen dozen Bob White quail at the mouth of the Purgatoire. In two years all the prairie chickens had disappeared, but the quail had thrived and increased; there are still many in the county. Hoping to increase the wild game in our county, in 1880 father had two bucks and three does, white-tail deer, shipped in and turned at large near Prowers Station Ranch. This specie is still to be found along the Arkansas River, on Fisher's Mountain, near Trinidad, and on south into New Mexico.²⁰

There were now so many little folks among the population at Boggsville, that the crying need was a school. When I was six years old, father sent me to Trinidad to live with my Uncle, John Hough, and attend school there. For three years I attended the school conducted by Rev. E. J. Rice, known as the Rice Institute.²¹

The first school in Bent County was a private or subscription school, opened in the fall of 1869 by Miss Mattie Smith, who later became Mrs. John M. Boggs.²² In 1870 a school district was organized, with R. M. Moore as President, C. L. Rite, as Secretary, and father as Treasurer. In September, 1871, the first school house was completed, a one-room adobe building, and Mr. P. G. Scott was elected as teacher for the next two years. School opened with fifteen pupils. I do not remember the names of all of them; there were my two sisters, Kathrine and Inez Prowers, Bent, George, and Ada Moore, Charlie and Theresina Carson, and Laura Rite, some Mexican children and one colored child.²³

I look back with pleasure to these years on the ranch at Boggsville. Mother was a quiet, sweet woman, and very intelligent. She readily picked up the English language. She never talked the Cheyenne language at home, only occasionally with her own people.

²⁰Colorado Fish and Game Department records.

²¹Colorado Magazine, XIV, 113.

²²The Trail, IX, No. 5, p. 14.

²³Colorado Magazine, IX, 24.

The Cheyennes were often at the ranch and grandmother spent a great deal of time with us. She told us the story of how Chief Ochinee lost his eye, one day in a game of sling-shot. She tried patiently to teach me the Cheyenne language but I never progressed beyond a vocabulary of five or six words. She would shrug her shoulders in disgust and say, "Oh, you too dumb learn Cheyenne talk."

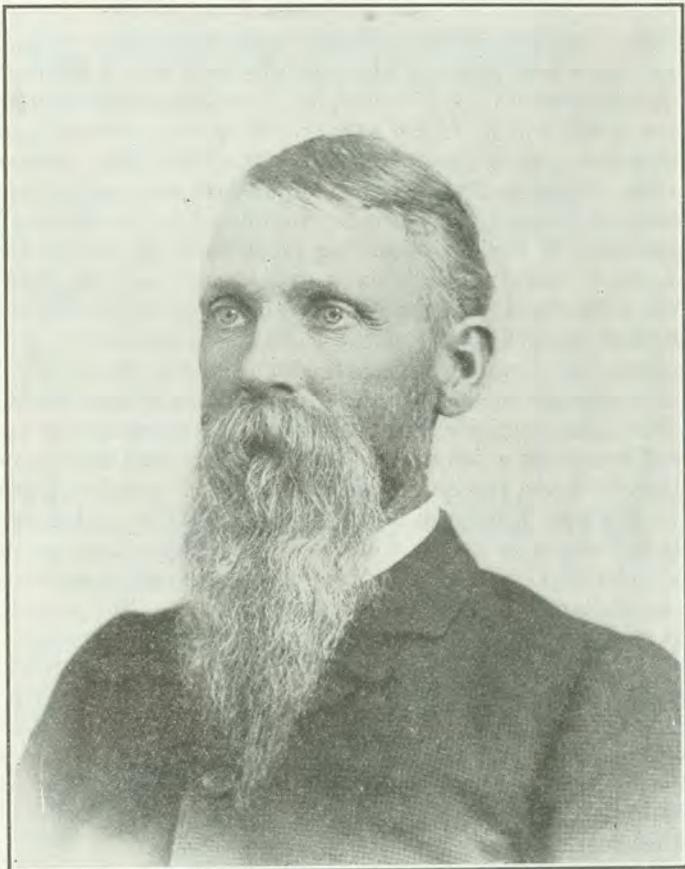
Father was always exceptionally good to mother's people, and they all loved and honored him, paying heed to his advice as to their relations with the white people. The Cheyennes were always welcome at the ranch; father saw that they were well treated and that they had a good present to take along when they returned to the tribe. Many a time I have seen father send out a rider on the range to select a riding horse for one of mother's relatives.²⁴ Often a band of Indians returning from the hunt, would ride up to the ranch carrying their bows and arrows and ask father to send out a team and wagon to bring in the game they had killed.

Mother clung to many of the Indian customs and we children learned to like them. At Christmas she always prepared us an Indian confection made thus: She would slice dried buffalo meat very thin, then sprinkle in generously with sugar and cinnamon and roll it up like a jelly-roll. Then on Christmas day she would cut slices from the roll and pass it around; this was our Christmas candy. We kids just loved it, but father looked on rather askance, and would slip over to the store to return with a wooden pail of bright colored Christmas candies for us. Every season mother used to gather prickly pears for sweet pickles. She would burn off the stickers, and cook up the pears in vinegar and sugar. They were delicious. She knew all the prairie herbs and their use by the Indians; she gathered mint to make medicine; sage leaves were dried and steeped into sage-tea which she felt was just good for everything. We always had preserves made with the wild plum, choke-cherries, grapes, etc. And of course we had our spring greens of lambs-quarters (*Chevopadium album*) and wild lettuce (*Lactuca scariola*).

I loved to go to the Indian camp with grandmother. She showed me how the Cheyennes caught the dry land turtles, roasted them in the oven until the shells popped open, and then scooped out the delicious white meat and ate it. It seemed to me that the Cheyennes ate almost everything. They killed for food the jack-rabbit and used the skins for clothing, they ate buffalo, antelope, deer, elk, prairie-dogs and squirrels. But they never would touch fish. Grandmother lived to be ninety years old but she never succeeded in teaching me the Cheyenne language.

²⁴*Ibid.*, VII, 186.

Father often used his popularity with the Indians to protect the white settlers in the Arkansas Valley. From the years 1868 to 1873 the Indians were restive and things went from bad to worse. At first they merely killed a few beef cattle for their camp needs. Then they grew bolder, making frequent raids upon the



JOHN W. PROWERS

outlying ranches, killing the herders, running off horses, mules, and cattle. The Sizer ranch was attacked two or three times, the barn burned, and cattle stolen. On election day an attack was made all along the creek. Thomas Kinsey, a judge of election was killed while on his way from Sizer's ranch to the voting place at Boggsville.²⁵

²⁵Baskin's *History of the Arkansas Valley*, 844.

The Bent, Boggs, Carson, and Sizer estates all lost stock, as did my father. The settlers on the Purgatoire gathered for defense at Boggsville, and those in Nine Mile Bottom, at the ranch of Urial Higbee. Father and Thomas Boggs both had adobe houses, and these were considered the only safe kind in case of an Indian attack. Then, too, we had large corrals for the stock and father had a general store where all could obtain supplies.²⁶ When the body of Thomas Kinsey was found, a general alarm was sent out. All the ranchers hurried their families in to Boggsville, there to await developments. A small party of soldiers was sent out from the fort to follow the Indian raiding party; in the skirmish which followed four Indians and two soldiers were killed, twenty-five miles south of the fort. Most of the Indians escaped, taking with them a lot of the stock stolen from Boggsville.

In the fall of 1873 the Kansas Pacific railroad built a branch from Kit Carson to the south side of the Arkansas River, where a new town, West Las Animas, was at once laid out. The Indians resented the coming of the railroad, knowing it meant the end of their way of life. They threatened to wipe out the new little town. A war party of 300 Cheyennes appeared at dusk, silhouetted against the horizon, a long line of horsemen all carrying guns. Father rode out to meet them. He told them how much they meant to mother, for they were her people, he pointed out that he himself had always been good to them, had given them presents and even now, if they would return to the ranch with him, he had good presents for all. Father took them all to the ranch, had a large number of cattle killed, and feasted the Cheyennes all night. In the morning he took the chief and sub-chiefs to the fort where a peace council was held, thus averting the danger to the new town of West Las Animas.²⁷

In the fall of 1873 we moved into the city of West Las Animas; father established the commission house of Prowers and Hough. The town was a mixture of wooden and adobe buildings. Some of the first settlers were: Hunt, a saloon-keeper; William Connor, who moved the American house over from Kit Carson; Hughes Brothers, lumber dealers; Shoemaker and Earhart, merchants; and one other commission house, that of Kilberg, Bartels & Co.

I found the activity at the Commission house very fascinating. I liked to see the funny little engines puff in with their loads of freight. Father received these goods from the railroad, paid the freight, hired teams (mostly ox-teams), and shipped the goods on in that way to their destination. What a busy place Las Animas was in those days! There was a large territory to the

²⁶Julia S. Lambert's story in *The Trail*, IX, No. 3, p. 17-18.
²⁷*Colorado Magazine*, VI, 114-15.

south which had not yet been penetrated by a railroad. Las Animas was the shipping point for government freight to all their posts in the Southwest, and it was through the two Commission houses here that most of the merchants in southern Colorado, New Mexico, and part of Arizona got their goods. From the south came long wagon trains hauling in hides, pelts, ores and live-stock to the railroad, to be shipped east; they unloaded their wagons and camped on the prairies near town, awaiting their turns to load freight for the south. There were no fences or fields close to town; sometimes the prairie was dotted with freighter's camps as far as one could see.

Needless to say, father made plenty of money from the commission business. He operated, also, a large retail store in partnership with W. A. Haws. Their clerks knew little Spanish, so father brought in a young man from Trinidad, Philippe Gurule, whose chief and almost only business was to act as interpreter in the store. Many wealthy Mexicans operated freight trains and the English language was an unknown tongue to them.

In 1875 father helped organize the Bent County bank. In 1873 he was elected to represent the county in the Legislature. In 1880 he was again elected to the General Assembly as a representative of Bent County, where he originated and pushed through the bill on apportionment, commonly termed the "Sliding Scale Bill."

West Las Animas was so called because there was a post office at Las Animas, opposite Fort Lyon, and the name West Las Animas held until the Las Animas post office was moved to West Las Animas, which then dropped the West from its name.

In 1875 the county seat was moved from Las Animas City to West Las Animas, where it remained.

In 1873 a printing press was brought to Las Animas city by C. W. Bowman and on May 23, the first issue of the *Las Animas Leader* was in the mail. Later the paper moved to the new city, West Las Animas, where it is still going to press each week.

My first instruction in religion came with an elderly missionary, named Father Clark, when he came riding up to the ranch house, on a white mule. He wore a long white beard which reached below his waist. He alighted, came in, and announced that he would hold services there that night. So a rider was sent out to all the nearby settlers. A goodly number gathered in our livingroom that night, and I listened open-mouthed to a lurid sermon that I shall never forget. Father Clark was very dramatic and very earnest in his work; he made a regular circuit of our valley, and he never forgot to take up the collection. The cattle-men were all very liberal with him. Although father was not a church member, he always gave

generously to resident pastors, no matter what denomination. In 1872-73 Rev. John Stocks of the Methodist church held services at Las Animas, and Rev. E. C. Brooks acted as Methodist pastor from 1873-74.²⁸

When a four-room brick school was built at West Las Animas in 1875, Mother Amache said that I need not return to Rice's Institute at Trinidad that fall. I attended school here until I was twelve years old, when father decided I needed to "learn some manners," so I was sent to Wolfe Hall in Denver for three years.²⁹ When I entered school in 1875, Rev. John F. Spalding was Rector; Miss Anna Palmer, Principal; Miss M. Corbyn, Assistant Principal; and Lizzie Brown, teacher of music. My cousin, Ida Hough, went with me. There were eighty-five girls in attendance. School began on Sept. 8 and ended in June, with two terms of twenty weeks each. We had three weeks vacation at Christmas and Easter. We paid by the half year; for board, washing, fuel, lights and tuition in English branches, the cost was \$175 per term. Music cost \$25 more; so it cost father \$400 a year to send me to Wolfe Hall. Each of us took with us a Bible and Prayer book, six table napkins and a napkin ring; all these and our clothing must be plainly marked with our name. A record of our conduct was sent to our parents each month, a record of our grades, and whether we were late or absent at class, study, chapel, table or dormitory. We were carefully trained to "improve our manners and cultivate the graces of refined society." I was happy at Wolfe Hall and made good progress, becoming particularly interested in music.

At the age of 15 years I went to Lexington, Missouri, where I attended Central (now Bethany) College until my graduation in 1879; I majored in music. It was here that I met and fell in love with A. D. Hudnall of Kansas City. In 1880 he came to Las Animas and we were married; father gave us one of the nicest weddings ever staged in Bent County, and we received many beautiful, expensive gifts. We spent the first six months of our married life in Kansas City, Missouri, while Mr. Hudnall closed out his business interests there; then we returned to Las Animas where my husband had charge of father's dry-goods store for many years. He was chief buyer for the St. Louis, Missouri, stock-yards for six years, then for the Kansas City stock-yards for twenty-seven years.

We had a nice life together. I really believe people had more real fun in those days than they do now. We were not always dashing about here and there. We had more time for community

²⁸See E. C. Brooks article in the *Colorado Magazine*, VI, 113.

²⁹See Register of Jarvis Hall and Wolfe Hall, 1875-76, p. 14, State Historical Society Library.

life, and we had REAL parties. Christmas, the 4th of July, New Years, and Thanksgiving were always the signal for a community party; we held them at the old hall, a block east of the present City Hall. There was always a big dinner, turkey, roast beef, wild meat; the long tables groaned under the load; and we danced until daylight. My husband was always a rather strict churchman; he did not approve of dancing or music. I loved both. I often played for the dances, and then I was young, I just couldn't help but dance. They were mostly square dances, and lots of fun. He was always cross about it but I let him pout it out. And the Christmas parties! We would have the biggest tree the boys could cart in from the mountains; and the presents were real ones, not ten-cent store stuff but diamond rings, gold watches, and sterling silver tea sets. The cattlemen had money and they really spent it.

In 1882 father built a modern slaughter-house at Las Animas.³⁰ He bought up the range cattle, killed them, and shipped the meat east, some going as far as New York City.

When the railroad was extended from Kit Carson to La Junta, it ended the forwarding business of Prowers & Hough. Father then devoted his time to his other interests and particularly to his cattle business, which was always his favorite enterprise. He employed lots of riders and cow-hands, mostly Missourians, rarely Mexicans.

His brands were the Box B, and the Bar X. He built up his herds until at the fall round-up of his ranch, the cattle shipment was a matter of train loads, not carloads. Sometimes as high as eight train loads left our ranch for eastern markets. At one time, the fall check-up showed 70,000 cattle bearing father's brands. It was his day-dreams of 1860 realized now, twenty years later.

On February 14, 1884, at the age of 46 years, father died at the home of his sister, Mrs. Hough, in Kansas City, where he had gone for treatment; he is buried in the Las Animas cemetery. Many years later mother died in Boston; she, too, is buried at Las Animas, where a large, beautiful, red-granite monument carved in Scotland, marks the Prowers graves.

In 1889, when a new county was created by the General Assembly, from the eastern part of Bent County, they paid father the honor of naming it Prowers County.

Father never belonged to a church or a lodge and did not believe in them; but he was a devoted husband and father and gave each of his eight children a liberal education. There never was a better woman than my Indian mother, Amache Ochinee Prowers. She was very active in community life and church work, and was

a devoted member of the Eastern Star. When the Granada relocation center was formed at the beginning of World War No. 2, it was called "Amache" in honor of my mother.

Kit Carson was a great friend of the Prowers family. He was quiet and reserved; to me he seemed more Spanish than American. He was always good to the Indians; my mother's people, the Cheyennes, were particular favorites of his. We played with and grew up with the Carson children. Kit Carson died in May, 1868, and his wife preceded him in death by just a few days. They were buried side by side in the garden of C. L. Rite, at Boggsville.³¹ The following winter the bodies were taken up and moved to Taos, New Mexico.

Mr. Hudnall and I had three children; our son, Prowers Hudnall, was born in 1882. While sheriff of Bent County he was stabbed to death by a criminal. Our daughter, Inez, Mrs. Frank Nelson, is living in Las Animas; and our youngest son, Leonard "Chief" Hudnall is now with the Colorado Fish and Game Department in Denver; his proudest boast is that during the three years he attended Carlisle University, he played football with Jim Thorpe, the world's greatest football player.

My grandchildren are Lee "Dick" Hudnall, leading business man of Las Animas; Mary Ferreti, Robert, Leonard, Jr., Jack, Lee and Wanona Hudnall, and Gail Batten. I have now nine great-grandchildren.

Of the nine Prowers children, only three are still living (1945). I have a sister, Mrs. Ida Hawkins, residing in San Diego, California, and another, Mrs. Inez Comstock, living in Chicago.

³⁰Colorado Magazine, VII, 186.

Development of the Peach Industry in the Colorado River Valley

MARY RAIT*

The removal of the Ute Indians from the area along the Colorado River, from the point where Grand Junction is located to a point fifteen miles east, where the mountains converge to form a narrow canyon, opened a period of experimentation by the whites who immediately entered the area.

Fruit raising was early found to be the most profitable branch of agriculture, and for some years it was the most important industry. The fruit set out in greatest quantities around Grand

¹Baskin's *History of the Arkansas Valley*, 836.

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Junction during the early period was the peach. The tree reaches the age at which it has a crop in four or five years, while the apple does not yield a profitable crop until the tenth and sometimes as late as the twelfth year. Around Palisade the majority of the early orchards set out were apple. There was later an exact reversal of these conditions.

A common mistake of early orchardists was to plant a little of every variety of fruit. As the amount produced became great enough to exceed local demand and that of nearby mining towns, which furnished a good early market, it was learned that many of these varieties were not suited for commercial purposes.¹

Each year the acreage of orchard lands increased. The land in the east end of the valley slopes to the southward, thus receiving the sun's rays more directly, the valley is narrow, sheltered by mountains, has a frequent canyon breeze, and the soil is excellent for fruit. A few enterprising and far-sighted farmers had set out orchards before there was any other development in that section. They hauled water from the river to little trees, a task requiring high courage and endless labor. Irrigation ditches were soon built to carry water to several thousand acres of land, which included some of the finest fruit land in the valley.

The town of Palisade was laid out at the east end of the valley in the spring of 1893, on the main line of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. In a short time much of the upper valley was plowed and set to trees. The settlers raised grain and vegetables between tree rows while they waited for trees to come in to bearing.²

A spring frost destroyed the fruit in most of the valley in 1896. The Palisade district, because of its natural advantages, had a crop as large as could be matured without injury to the trees. This occurred again in 1898. More young peach orchards were reaching maturity there each year and car lots of fruit were shipped daily. This shows the reason for the reversal of the apple and peach areas, and led to a veritable boom in the Palisade section.

Building in Palisade and vicinity was rapid. It had a remarkable growth for a little village. Real estate values increased with amazing rapidity. A new irrigation company, making use of a pumping plant, built a ditch, cutting close to the Book Cliffs, which brought water to a fairly large area of valuable peach land. So eager were settlers to take advantage of this opportunity that numerous orchards were set in advance of the ditch, and water hauled to them for at least one season.

During the year 1906, when the boom was near its height, the population of Palisade increased thirty per cent, four thousand

¹*Grand Junction News*, February 10, 1894, p. 1.

²*Grand Junction News*, Jan. 2, 1893, p. 1, and Sept. 9, 1896, p. 1.

acres of peach land were added to the irrigated area, fifty per cent more fruit was shipped than during any previous year; building improvements doubled; and real estate reaching a total value of \$1,075,000 passed through the hands of real estate dealers.³ Late in 1908 a six-acre peach orchard, improved, sold for \$24,000. Many sales were made for prices nearly as high as this, and these extremely high prices held for a number of years. Real estate sales for 1908 totaled two million dollars.⁴

Sales and prices dropped during ensuing years, and it was not until the war years of 1942, 1943 and 1944 that prices soared in



THREE YEAR OLD PEAR TREES IN CAPTAIN THATCHER'S ORCHARD NEAR GRAND JUNCTION IN THE 1890's

peach areas. Turnover of land was rapid, and prices approached the peak reached thirty-five years earlier. The crop of 1943 brought the highest price, and the largest gross return the valley had yet enjoyed. The acreage of peaches had been increasing for some years. This was due to the fact that peaches had yielded a better average income than any other crop produced in the valley, and that new land had been planted to peaches. Federal irrigation projects had opened up sheltered land lying close to the mountain rim north of the valley, and land south of the Colorado River which is well adapted to raising peaches. These factors have led to a large acreage of peaches being planted around Grand Junction, and this land is producing large crops.

³*The Daily Sentinel*, December 31, 1906, p. 1.

⁴*Palisade Tribune*, January 2, 1909, p. 1.

The *Orchard Bulletin* of Stark Brothers, a pamphlet issued by the company in 1905, 100,000 copies of which were sent to all parts of the United States, gave first place on its first page to an article entitled "Colorado's Peach Orchard." This was, perhaps, the most extensive advertising any part of the valley had received. It read in part:⁵

Palisade is the peach orchard of Colorado. . . .

The district is so small the little town might be compared to the office of packing house of one orchard, in which some 3,000 people find employment at this time. The favored district is three and a half miles west, two miles east, and from one to four miles north and south of the little village. It contains practically all of the peach crop of Colorado. It is the only section of Colorado, if not of the United States, which has never had a failure of peach crop. All fruits succeed equally well there. Pears are profitable, apples are good. . . . Peaches average the best profit, in some cases netting \$1,200 to the acre. . . . Most of the orchards are from five to ten acres in size.

Statements in the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad folders, and local papers, based on figures from various growers advertising widely the high yield from lands, and the large return on capital invested in this area, helped keep up the price of real estate.

A partial crop failure in 1908, due to a late freeze, led fruit men to declare that another failure would see prices of real estate drop.⁶

The shift in the lower valley from peaches to greater amounts of apples and pears was accomplished during the same years. In 1897 for the first time Grand Junction pears and apples were placed on the market.⁷

It was felt by many that the valley needed advertising in order to get the best market for fruit. Mass meetings were held in Grand Junction and a "booster fund" raised.⁸ The Edison Film Company, assisted by the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce, made a set of Grand Valley fruit slides in the fall of 1909. These slides were run for a week in Madison Square Garden, in October, 1910, and the New York City Board of Education asked permission to use them in the New York City schools together with other pictures of irrigated countries.⁹

Grand Valley was well advertised at the Chicago Land Show held in November, 1910. A great amount of literature was distributed, two lectures were given, and the Grand Valley pictures shown every day during the show. The president of the show invited Mr. Mahoney, secretary of the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce, to speak to a congress of fruit growers from thirty-

⁵*Grand Junction News*, December 30, 1905, p. 1.

⁶*Daily Sentinel*, January 28, 1909, p. 1.

⁷*Grand Junction News*, August 17, 1897, p. 1.

⁸*Ibid.*, July 27, 1909, p. 4.

⁹*Daily Sentinel*, October 7, 1910, p. 4.

seven states on the Grand Valley and its resources.¹⁰ At Chicago the Colorado exhibit was judged from the finest, and Colorado River Valley fruit took most of the prizes. Mesa County took forty-three premiums.¹¹

The superior size and quality of the valley's fruit is proved by the fact that, from 1890 to 1902, Mesa County was awarded first premium for fruit displays at all of the state fairs but one.

The *Fruitman's Guide*, published in New York, and perhaps the most representative paper of the fruit trade, speaks in 1909 of Elberta peaches from the Valley as "in a class by themselves, the finest in the world." A car of Palisade peaches reached New York that year; they sold for a fine price and grading and packing aroused much favorable comment.

Growers felt that there was no danger of over production of fruit, for the development during the first fifteen years was paralleled by steadily increasing prices. Their problem, they felt, was to specialize and to improve their product.

There was difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of refrigerator cars whenever the crop was especially heavy. Peaches and early pears, being perishable, had to be rushed to market, and they crowded the railroads. The cars must be iced in Grand Junction, sent to the loading point, filled with fruit, then returned to Grand Junction and re-iced before they started to market. There was not sufficient ice to supply the need, and there was delay in getting it shipped in. It was hard to have the necessary laborers on hand for so short a job.

Prices became discouragingly low due to tremendous crops of fruit, lack of railroad facilities for handling these large crops, and lack of organization and cooperative effort among growers. The peach industry, especially, developed faster than people could organize and keep up with it. It was inefficiently handled for a number of years. The fruit ripened before growers could get it picked, packed and shipped. Both pears and peaches were sent out of the state too ripe; these reached market in a damaged condition. Many who had bought land under boom prices were unable to pay out on it.

Growers blamed the railroads for failure to supply the needed equipment; they felt that high freight rates were at least in part to blame for the wide gap between prices paid on the market for fruit and returns to growers. Numerous Interstate Commerce Commission hearings were held in Grand Junction before this matter was satisfactorily adjusted.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, November 4, 1910, p. 1.

¹¹*Ibid.*, November 21, 1910, p. 1.

For the peach industry, these were the darkest years. The trend of prices started upward during World War I. In spite of partial crop failures and price fluctuation, the upper end of the valley has been generally prosperous.

By the 1920s farther markets were reached. In 1929 more Elberta peaches were shipped to New York than to any other point. Shipments were also made to Boston, Quebec, New Orleans, as well as nearer points.¹²

The problem of organizing to market fruit early engaged the attention of Grand Valley growers. The first few years the fruit was sold locally or sent to commission houses by individual growers. In 1891 the Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association was organized. This association was a pioneer in its field. It was incorporated with a capital stock of \$25,000, a purely local organiza-



MESA COUNTY EXHIBIT AT THE STATE HORTICULTURAL FAIR BUILDING, SEPTEMBER, 1891

tion, started by a few growers. Its purpose was to market Grand Valley fruit more advantageously. The Fruit Growers' Association was of inestimable benefit to the growers of the western slope; grading and packing of fruit was made more uniform, glutting of small markets was generally prevented. Four-fifths of all the fruit produced was handled by the association for a number of years after its organization, and all of the growers profited from its operations.¹³ The percentage of fruit handled by the association was later estimated as high as ninety-five per cent.

¹²*Daily Sentinel*, September 12, 1929, p. 8.

¹³*Grand Junction News*, March 17, 1896, p. 1.

It was learned that Denver commission houses transhipped Grand Junction fruit to Durango, Rico, and other nearby points, and undersold direct shipments of the local association to those points. The association corrected its early practice of shipping practically all of the fruit to Denver houses, and shipped to markets farther east, all fruit going beyond Denver being packed in refrigerator cars. The first shipment to Chicago did not reach its destination in good condition. The peaches were not properly packed for so long a haul, did not sell well, and a considerable loss was suffered.¹⁴

The Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association prospered from the first. After 1897 the capacity of the building was increased every year to 1904. Large dividends were declared in stock or cash.¹⁵ In 1902 the association doubled the capacity of its house in Grand Junction and opened a branch in Palisade, adequate at that time to care for the crop there.¹⁶ In 1906 the capital stock was increased to \$100,000 as the business was growing rapidly.¹⁷

The directors of the association attempted to organize the growers of the western slope. They wished to control the entire output of fruit in order that they might improve prices through placing fruit more advantageously in markets. They found it impossible to bring in all growers. They stated that as long as Palisade and Whitewater growers continued to ship independently, and to put most of their fruit on Colorado markets, growers would receive poor prices. The association shipped in, and sold to growers, supplies for packing fruit, and spray materials. The association investigated and advised growers on the best methods of controlling insect pests, time to spray, and chemicals to use in sprays. They also sent out field men who instructed the growers and worked for uniformity in pruning, harvesting and packing of fruit. This was all valuable service, as many settlers had not had previous experience in fruit growing, and conditions differed from those found in older fruit districts.¹⁸

Some growers and town people had advocated cooperative marketing since 1895, the first year a quantity of fruit was shipped. They wished the growers to hire an agent who should handle the fruit, to be paid a salary, not a commission. The advantages and disadvantages of the plan were discussed freely. No attempt to carry out such a plan was made until much later.

¹⁴*Ibid*, September 25, 1897, p. 1.

¹⁵*Ibid*, January 26, 1901, p. 3.

¹⁶*Daily Sentinel*, June 6, 1902, p. 1.

¹⁷*Grand Junction News*, December 30, 1905, p. 2.

¹⁸Henry Hottes, interview, December 29, 1930.

A number of Palisade growers organized the Palisade Fruit Growers' Association in 1903. Those pressing for a separate organization did so largely from local pride. The upper valley growers did not wish to aid the development of a Grand Junction organization. They resented the use of Grand Junction labels on their peach boxes, wishing the fruit to advertise their own town. The old association thought it best to leave the field, but some of their largest shippers from Palisade and most of the stockholders insisted on continuance of business there.¹⁹

The Palisade Peach Growers' Association, organized in Palisade in 1906, was the first association to try out a community packing house. The member brought in his fruit, orchard run, and it was packed at the association platform. Members felt that this avoided unnecessary scattering of such skilled labor as packers and box makers. The fruit and pack could be more easily inspected, and could be in the car on ice immediately after it was packed.²⁰ At this time the community packing plant was in the experimental stage. Lack of room to handle the fruit, expense of equipping the plant, waste of the fruit itself, difficulty of supervision, and mismanagement made the effort a failure.

The Western Slope Association was another cooperative effort. The grower purchased as many shares of stock as he had acres of bearing orchard, the fruit from which he wished to ship through the association. This was an effort to keep control of the association in the hands of the fruit shippers themselves.

These various associations flourished; during the prosperous years of the fruit industry their annual reports all showed finances in good condition, and they paid large dividends. With the coming of hard times the weaker ones were forced out of business, or consolidated with stronger organizations. Throughout the first three decades the Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association handled the largest part of the valley's crop. By 1912, on account of low returns for fruit, growers quite generally criticized the associations.

In 1914 the biggest crop of the finest fruit, with the best pack and grade sold for the lowest price in history. The Grand Junction Association's annual report placed the blame on disloyal, panicky growers, dull business, war disturbances, high price of sugar, and failure of growers to follow instructions. It recommended the "elimination of orchards on poor land, the reduction of poor varieties of fruit, and the retirement of unintelligent, unscientific orchardists." The middleman, blamed by the growers, was declared to be the least of many causes for poor prices.²¹

¹⁹*Grand Junction News*, December 26, 1903, p. 1.

²⁰*Daily Sentinel*, March 18, 1907, p. 1; *Palisade Tribune*, Feb. 3, 1907, p. 1.

²¹*Daily Sentinel*, February 18, 1915, p. 1.

The criticism was made by the growers that the Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association had become an immense commission house. A newspaper statement, typical of the sentiment, showed that cash and stock dividends had made great profits for the investor.²²

No scheme of organization could be found which was agreeable to the existing organizations and this commendable plan was dropped. However, a joint marketing committee composed of representatives from each association was appointed. Even this effort at uniformity was maintained only during the fruit season of 1914.

The United Fruit Growers' Association of Palisade, a cooperative sales organization, was founded in 1923. This association took over the plant of the Western Slope Association. There was general dissatisfaction with existing organizations, and a feeling that they were operated for profit. The main object, however, was to get the selling and distribution of peaches under one head. In this effort the new association was not wholly successful, but more nearly so than any other organization had been since various associations were started. Plans were drawn up by leaders in the movement, all of whom were fruit raisers. The organization was formed, and all producers in the Palisade district were urged to become members. A majority did so.

One factor in the success of the new association was the fact that the Co-operative Marketing Act, passed by the Colorado legislature in 1923,²³ profited by the experiments and weak points of co-operative marketing rulings before that. The organization could bind members by contract to ship all produce with it. A co-operative organization could handle capitalization much as a corporation could. Before this, such organizations had been handicapped on this score.

The United Fruit Growers Association is unique in a few respects, and was the most truly co-operative of any fruit association known. Estimates obtained from a large number of growers showed that the average amount necessary for supplies per acre of producing orchard was \$112.50. The grower's contract with the association, therefore, provided that each member give a note to the amount of \$112.50 per bearing acre. This note is due December 1st of each year, and bears no interest until maturity. The member's note is renewed each year unless he wishes to withdraw from the association.

The association used the growers' notes as collateral, borrowed money and paid cash for supplies, thus the new association

²²*Ibid.*, February 16, 1915, p. 1.

²³*Session Laws of Colorado*, 1923, 411 (House Bill No. 242).

was financed without capital being advanced, and without selling stock. The discount obtained for paying cash for supplies more than paid interest on the notes. The association levied a package charge for handling fruit, the same as that charged by other associations. The organization is non-profit taking. As funds accumulate, the amount above a reserve working fund is returned to members on the basis of the amount of fruit shipped.²⁴

A more recent and more successful effort to maintain a central packing shed has been made by the Producers' Association. The organization is entirely grower-financed. Many growers bring fruit to the association platform, where it is packed; but the association also handles packaged fruit from its members.

Efforts to develop cooperation in marketing have been more successful recently. A committee of fifteen, one member from each small community, met, talked and worked in the late 1930s. They obtained an enabling act from the state legislature allowing an industry within definite boundaries to set up a board of control. In Mesa County members of this board are nominated by various communities and by the fruit shipping associations. Appointments are made by the state director of agriculture from lists submitted to him. The board ascertained from growers the provisions they wished enforced. For the peach industry these include standard weight, grade and inspection of peaches to be shipped. This has prevented shipment of small or poor quality fruit. The individual grower or association is required to post the selling price at which he will offer fruit to the public in the office of the board of control some hours before the price becomes effective. This is the only device the board has to maintain uniform prices and keep prices even throughout the season, but it has been remarkably effective.

The board also carries on advertising activities. A small levy per package is made, the fund to be used for nation wide advertising. The board advertises for labor for the harvest season, and has been instrumental in securing laborers and accommodations for them throughout the valley.

The harvesting of a large, perishable fruit crop necessitates a great deal of additional labor. Especially in the peach district, where about 2,500 cars of Elberta peaches must be harvested within two weeks, a large amount of help is needed for a short time. This should be skilled labor, if the fruit is to be harvested with the least loss. However, enough trained laborers are never available.

Laborers who come in from the outside frequently come too early and in too large numbers. Lack of employment or late employment often causes hardships among these people. This has

been partly due to misrepresentation by employment bureaus and to injudicious advertising.²⁵ A few years there has been a shortage of labor and loss has resulted. If there is rain, followed by warm weather, the fruit cannot be moved fast enough. Local labor bureaus were established in Grand Junction and Palisade to aid in placing laborers. During war years there has been a serious problem which has been partly solved by the use of boys, girls, women, and imported laborers as both pickers and packers. Many men in Grand Junction have left their work for a few days and gone to Palisade to help save the peach crop in years when this help was needed.

Some years a larger number of transients have come to the valley than could be used. Taking care of the number of these who are destitute presents a real problem.

The use of the automobile has so facilitated the movement of labor that a larger number of people come in, and more of them bring families and camp. Many of these people know when to come to the valley for work, and they return year after year. There are also "fruit tramps" who work this district as they follow the fruit industry through the country. The larger per cent of experienced labor thus available has helped solve the problem of marketing fruit with less waste than formerly.

The extension division of the Colorado College of Agricultural and Mechanic Arts has helped to obtain and distribute the seasonal labor in this area. The United States Employment Service has worked with the growers. Since it was set up, the War Food Administration has brought in Mexican nationals and Jamaican laborers who have helped with the peaches as with other food crops. They are under control of the War Food Administration and are shifted when and where that board thinks they are most needed. Prisoners of War have been used as labor the last three years. A fund is created to bring the group to the valley by a levy on the growers. These efforts to solve the labor problem have been generally successful.

Talk of a canning factory for Grand Junction dates to an early period. The chief motives of promoters were to avoid dumping on an overloaded market and to utilize ripe fruit. It was held that such factory would affect the price of fruit in general, an expectation never realized.

Numerous small canneries have been operated in the area, but none used any quantity of peaches until a cooperation cannery was built in Palisade and put up its first pack in 1941. This cannery contracts with orchardists for tonnage of peaches to be delivered, using only the ripe, first-class fruit. The Delta Cannery buys and

²⁴G. W. Bowman, Interview, November 16, 1930; A. M. Echternach, Interview.

²⁵*Grand Junction News*, September 14, 1909, p. 3.

cans ripe peaches sorted out from the firm ones packed for shipping. Frozen foods industries have just entered the field.

A development which has been made possible by the construction of good roads is extensive trucking of fruit to mountain districts and to nearby states. This trade utilizes some of the ripe fruit, some which is firm but would not reach eastern markets, as well as standard grades of fruit. It is usually profitable to both the trucker and the grower, and has handled an increasing amount of fruit. The tendency is toward large trucks, larger loads, and longer hauls. Some of the trucks which go greater distances have mechanical refrigeration. It has been estimated that trucks carry about twenty per cent of the crop in recent years.

During its comparatively brief history, the peach industry in this area has met many problems, most of which have been satisfactorily solved. It is today a growing and prosperous industry which promises further development in the future.²⁶

Jesse Summers Randall and Pioneer Georgetown

HELEN SIDNEY DIGERNESS*

The Randall name goes far back in English history. William the Conqueror's Domesday Book mentions the Randall who was awarded fiefs, making him a land proprietor. The Randalls came to America in the seventeenth century, the first being John Randall, a London business man. From him Jesse is descended.

Jesse's father, Abram Joshua Randall, was born at Westmoreland, Oneida County, New York, in March, 1823. After ill health prevented graduation from Hamilton College he went to Kentucky and taught country schools in Fleming and Bath counties. While teaching in Fleming county he married the daughter of the aristocratic plantation family of Summers. Jesse, the second of four children born to Mary Ann Summers and Abram Randall, was born on the plantation in April, 1848.

In 1854 the family returned to New York, where Abram taught school near Rome for three years. In 1860 they moved to Iowa, where he taught school in Bradford county and in Mountair, Iowa. In 1862 when Jesse was fourteen, Reverend B. C. Galliday was attracted to him and induced the father and mother to let Jesse accompany him and learn the printing business. The boy's first job was on Galliday's *American Union*, at Sidney, Iowa. He later

²⁰Some of the material in this chapter is based on the writer's observations and experience and on conferences held with various leaders of the communities concerned.

*Mrs. DigerNESS, now of Denver, is a granddaughter of J. S. Randall.—Ed.

accompanied his parents to Osceola and worked on the *Sentinel* of that town till 1865, when he went to Des Moines, where he was employed with Mills and Company until 1869.

His father heard of Georgetown in the Territory of Colorado from friends who had been there at the time of the discovery of silver in 1867. They told him of an opening there for a teacher. The first teacher in Georgetown was Miss L. H. Lander. While Miss Lander was crossing a foot log that served as a bridge across Clear Creek which flows through the town she fell in and was drowned in the swift current. Abram Randall was the unfortunate woman's successor. The first school was in a small log cabin in the long straggling village of Georgetown and it opened in the spring of 1867.

Jesse gave up his job in Des Moines in June, 1869, and came to look after his father, who was in poor health. Abram Randall died in Georgetown in January, 1925, when he was within two months of reaching his 102nd birthday.

Jesse came to Cheyenne on the Union Pacific and then by stage to Denver. He stayed over night and then went on to Georgetown on a coach pulled by four horses. The roads were steep and it took the greater part of the day for the trip of less than sixty miles. They ate lunch and changed horses at Fall River House.

The population of Georgetown then was between three and four hundred and it ran up to five thousand in 1875 and 1876.

Jesse and his father boarded with George Reynolds till they went to batching in a log cabin opposite the present Randall home.

Jesse took charge of the printing department of the *Colorado Miner*. The *Miner* had been established in the lower part of town, named Georgetown after George Griffith, who with his brother D. T. Griffith discovered lodes there in 1859. The upper part of the settlement was named Elizabethtown, for the wife of George. The two villages were later consolidated as Georgetown in 1868.

The world was taking notice of the silver mines of Georgetown and of Silver Plume, two miles up the creek.

Alex Cree purchased the *Colorado Miner* from A. W. Barnard in March, 1872. The next year Edward Oliver Wolcott became associated with Cree. In 1873 the *Miner* was changed to an evening paper and in 1874 the *Daily Miner* was discontinued, as it did not pay, and in 1877 was sold to E. H. N. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson was fair-minded and if he knew it, never broke the Golden Rule. He is buried in the cemetery at Georgetown and his son Norman gave a fund for the upkeep of the cemetery in honor of his father.

Jesse Randall left the *Miner* in 1875 and opened a job office, after having taken a vacation in the summer of 1874 and returning to Des Moines, where on June 11 he was married to Miss Cornelia A. Hendricks.

Two years in the job printing business gave him funds and opportunity to establish a newspaper, the *Courior*, the first number of which came out May 24, 1877. It soon became one of the best weeklies in the state, with an extensive and rapidly growing circulation.



JESSE SUMMERS RANDALL

In the *Courior* building stands the little Washington hand press on which he turned out the first number of that remarkable paper. It is the same press that with a few cases of second-hand type bought from the *Rocky Mountain News* of Denver was freighted by wagon in 1867 to Georgetown and on which as it stood in a small shed, the *Colorado Miner* was first printed. Jesse Randall bought the original "plant" of the *Miner* after it had been discarded when new equipment came to the only newspaper of the great silver camp.

The *Courior* was a crusader for decency. Randall made enemies and they were powerful. The fight against him extended to Washington.

William A. Hamill came to Georgetown in 1867 seeking his fortune. His sister was the wife of Joe Watson, who built the first

fine residence there. It still stands, now known as the Alpine Lodge, containing works of art purchased in Europe. This mansion is in the midst of large grounds ornamented with a fountain of classic design and surrounded by a stone fence.

"Bill" Hamill occupied a cabin in the rear of the Watson house. He made a fortune in mining and was superintendent of the Terrible Mine at Silver Plume. Entering politics he became the boss of Clear Creek county, and rode rough shod over all opposition.

The county convention was to be held in the court house at Georgetown, the county seat. The delegation from Idaho Springs came to get his scalp. To keep them out, he had the blacksmith place two strong iron hooks on the sides of each door and in these were bars of two-by-fours. The boss, who wanted to be United States Senator, held his hand picked convention behind the barred doors. The Idaho Springs delegates held a separate convention in the Barton House, since they could not enter the court house. Hamill swore he controlled the Republican party in Clear Creek county and he would continue to control it. Further, he ordered that there be no Democratic ticket filed and therefore no Democratic candidate for office.

In those days the politicians did not file a ticket until late, just in time to make it legal. Agreeable to the Boss' orders, the County Clerk closed his office early Saturday afternoon to prevent the Democrats from filing their ticket, and disappeared. After a frantic search for him the Democrats sought Sheriff John C. De Votie, the only candidate elected on the Democratic ticket in the election of 1880, and the sheriff with plenty of witnesses went to the court house, broke a window in the Clerk's office and laid the document on his desk.

The *Courior*, which has been stanchly Republican, gave all the details of the high-handed proceedings and denounced both the closing of the Courthouse and the attempt to shut the Democrats out of the election. It attacked Hamill and waged warfare on him and all his works. The result was Clear Creek County, that had been going a big Republican majority at every election, elected every Democrat, filling every county office for the first time in history.

The Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners and other Republican leaders told Jesse Randall they were going to ruin him and run him out of town for not supporting the Republican ticket, and they immediately started a boycott that was financially disastrous. The Secretary of Interior in Washington lost no time in aiding the boycott. In later years Jesse Randall could

afford to chuckle about it all, but at the time it was mighty serious business.

"Do you know," he said, "they even fired a cannon at me from the Alpine Hose house directly across the street from the *Courier* building? Hamill had donated the 1,299-pound fire bell that hangs in the seventy-foot-high tower."

In those days on a Sunday there would be three or four sections of the train filled with tourists and picnickers bound for the thrill of riding the world-famed Georgetown Loop, a marvel in those young days of engineering skill. That high iron bridge over Clear Creek stood till a few years ago. The automobile had taken the place of the train and there is now a broad highway leading over Loveland Pass, named, somewhat ironically it seems, in the light of what has happened, for W. A. H. Loveland who gave us our first railroad and our only one, which served these mountains so well and so long.

In the *Courier* office hangs the sword and photo of "Commodore" Decatur, Jesse Randall's friend and fellow worker of sixty and more years ago. He was a good looking, well dressed mystery man. He was a booster, a pusher of mines and roads. He laid out the road that leads to Argentine Pass. He never made a dollar for himself but got a lot of fun out of living. He was later found to be Stephen Decatur Bross, brother of the Illinois lieutenant-governor with deserted wife and children in the wake of his disappearance and the hero of some frontier experiences that read like fiction. He was a professor in a school near Poughkeepsie, New York, when he disappeared in the early '40s, leaving a wife and two children.

In the early days there were a number of snow slides at both Silver Plume and Georgetown where loss of life was large. Then a land slide came down just west of Silver Plume, at the mining camp of Brownville, named for the big Brown Mine discovered by William Brown. That entire village, with its cabins, large boarding house and all were buried many feet deep under the rocks. There was no loss of life, as the men, women and children heard the noise like thunder and seeing the mountain coming in on them all fled to safety.

There were disastrous fires in Georgetown. One Fourth of July a building near the *Courier* office was set afire by an explosion. Four or five vacant adjoining buildings were soon ablaze. The large crowd of spectators formed a bucket brigade which saved the *Courier* from getting more than scorched. The other buildings were never rebuilt.

On the main street is a three-story brick building known as the Cushman Block, built by William H. Cushman, the banker who loved Green Lake so much that he spent the bank's funds to make it a fine summer resort. He was arrested in New York and died before his trial. The two upper floors were the opera house, with a fine stage, a lot of scenery and an orchestra pit and comfortable chairs. Traveling theatrical companies coming to Denver took the trip to Georgetown and some played two nights. Buffalo Bill Cody brought his Indians here and gave his Wild West show.

When Denver's first railroad, the Denver Pacific, was to be dedicated and the last spike driven, June 24, 1870, Billy Barton, the proprietor of the Barton House of Georgetown, and the miners here sent word that Georgetown would furnish a spike of pure silver for the ceremony. It was welded out of ores from the Georgetown mines. Billy Barton and his miners who took the spike to Denver to present it, got drunk, pawned the spike and slept through the ceremony. Governor John Evans made his speech at noon. The first train had come down the track, the band was playing and all of Denver was gathered around the platform to see the Governor drive the silver spike. At the moment the spike was to be presented there was silence, no Billy Barton. The attorney general of the territory, General Sam E. Browne, being quick witted, stooped down unobserved, picked up an iron spike and tearing a sheet of white paper from his notebook, he quickly wrapped it tightly around the spike and handed it to the Governor, saying in a loud voice, "Here's the silver spike from Georgetown, with the compliments of the people of Clear Creek County." Governor Evans held the spike in such a way that the white paper passed for silver. Governor Evans later redeemed the spike from a pawn shop.

In 1893, following the demonetizing of silver, the mines closed, and banks went under. The *Courier* went along just the same, even though it lost heavily in business failures as well as bank failures. Even in 1900 the circulation was around four thousand.

In April, 1938, the citizens of Georgetown and Silver Plume paid Jesse S. Randall a high tribute in the words that came over the air from the National Broadcasting Company's station KOA for the world to hear.

The mayors of the two towns, headed by a delegation of citizens representing mining, commerce and other activities, told at the microphone how Clear Creek County was staging a revival, how the long silent mountains were again echoing from the blasts of mine whistles. They described the natural ski course to be opened at Silver Plume, the beauty of Georgetown and its accessibility as a summer resort, with sky-blue lakes, excellent fishing, hunting, and glorious vistas to reward the mountain climber, and invited

everyone to come and see and stay. Old timers told of the famous visitors in the days when the camps were on everyone's lips and the highlights of stirring romance were touched on.

"We are telling of the riches of this part of Colorado, the story that for sixty years and more Jesse Randall has been telling in his *Courior*," said the mayor of Georgetown. "Our editor has never lost faith that the old town he saw in its glory would some day come back; he has never failed to issue the *Courior*; week after week it has come out to keep alive the faith and confidence of the others who remained; and to him we pay tribute tonight and we point to him as a living illustration of the spirit of the pioneers who builded, against appalling odds, what we are enjoying today in this magnificent Colorado of ours."

In other words the editor who never deserted his post was given credit for holding his town together by keeping alive interest for it and repeatedly telling his story. Business buildings stood deserted on the main street and comparatively few residents remained, but the world was not allowed to forget what was once the world's greatest silver district. Miners were encouraged to keep at work, for the editor knew there was treasure to be had for the digging. The *Courior*, for six decades had been the heart of its district. And now one of the first acts of the newly organized Chamber of Commerce of the community was to acknowledge the citizens' debt to their newspaper.

It was fitting that the oldest member of the Colorado Press Association should hear what his fellow townsmen thought of him. Largely they represented a new generation. Very few of the men and women who made history with him were left. Jesse Randall sat by the livingroom stove in his comfortable residence at the foot of the towering wall shutting in Georgetown to the south, and the radio brought him these words to repay him for what he had given through the long quiet years, to the town he loved. He did not go to Denver with the delegation which was entertained by the Denver Chamber of Commerce, but the next evening, when the Denver men returned the visit and assembled at the famous Hotel de Paris in Georgetown at a banquet, he was again the recipient of warm compliments as one of Colorado's most useful and loyal sons.

The name of Jesse Randall in connection with minerals was widely known. Since his arrival in Georgetown he had familiarized himself with geology and mineralogy and had established a reputation for his knowledge of these sciences. He gathered together a very fine collection of minerals.

A number of plates used by the *Courior* and also the early day linotype used to set type for the *Courior* are on display in the State Museum.

Mrs. Jesse Randall passed away on July 4, 1938, followed six months later by Jesse, on January 24, 1939. Mrs. Randall's passing was a blow that he could not recover from. Surviving him are his daughter, Mrs. Pearl Randall Sidney, with whom he lived, and a son, C. H. Randall, who is now editor and manager of the *Courior*.

Grand Mesa in the 1880s

AS TOLD BY EDGAR A. RIDER TO RAY PECK*

Edgar A. Rider visited Grand Mesa in the fall of 1886. The top of the Mesa was not used at that time on account of its inaccessibility. An old Indian or hunting trail led up to the top in the vicinity of Land's End Point, which was then called Whitewater Point. Mr. Rider states that by hanging to a horse's tail it was easier to get up there. The Miller trail was started in the fall of 1886 by Larry Miller, Picket Brothers, and Rider. The trail was completed in the spring of 1887; and the first stock were placed on Grand Mesa that year. This applies to the Whitewater end of Grand Mesa. Whitewater Point Trail was improved and cut out in 1887. Horses were taken up to the top that year. Mr. Rider believes that Kannah Creek people had cattle on top that year. The Whitewater drainage, now covered by sagebrush, was then covered with bunch grass up to a horse's eyes. No sagebrush was visible, although a little was present; and they had to hunt it out for a bellyache cure, sagebrush tea then being considered a blood tonic and a cure-all.

Both elk and deer were present on top of the Mesa; but were more numerous on the benches below the rim. No sign of buffalo were found on the Mesa.

The first cabin on top of Grand Mesa was probably built by Willis Smith or Frank Lucas, Mr. Rider believes.

In 1887 Rider and Pickett ran about 100 head of horses on top of the Mesa, and made a trip that year into the head of Kannah Creek and took shelter in the above mentioned cabin, which had been built some time previously. Mr. Rider and Mr. Pickett made a beef pasture in 1887 and rode around over the top looking for springs that would run that year, so as to make a permanent location, and located a spring at Pickett Creek that was running during that dry season while other springs were dry; so they felt that any spring running that year was good. They commenced cutting logs in the fall of 1887, and in 1888 laid the cabin up, which is

*This is the material from an interview obtained in 1938 by Mr. Ray Peck of the National Forest Service of Grand Junction.—Ed.

still there. There were two 30-foot ridge logs, 18 inches in diameter, of dry standing spruce.

The old Ute trail went up Sink Creek to the bench, and thence northeast around the big blowout above the Vincent ranch. In 1886 this was an old trail, and the old tepee poles and Indian signs were quite apparent along the trail. The trail could be followed by rocks that had been turned up, exposing the white limestone sediment that collected underneath. Many old tepee poles were scattered around the spring near where the Middlemist ranch is located.

An old cap and ball pistol was found at the Middlemist spring in the buck brush. The wood handle had decayed away and the buck brush had grown up through the trigger guard. The buck brush was about an inch in diameter, showing that this weapon had lain there a long time.

Fishing was fairly good in Kannah Creek. Elk were numerous and beaver were practically exterminated at that time. The old beaver dams were still intact in Whitewater Creek, and there was very little erosion at that time. Deer and mountain lion were quite numerous, and many horses were lost from mountain lions. Dead horses were nearly always found in the heavy down timber, where the lions had apparently driven them. The horses were then hemmed in, while the lions could jump from log to log and kill the horses quite easily. Bear often fed on the carcasses of horses killed by lions.

Stears and Buzzard were running cattle below the rim, and went into that area in 1885 or earlier. Pickett and Rider bought out the Stears outfit in 1886. The first cattle were put on top in 1887. About fifty head were put up that year. It is believed that Mac Miller put some cattle on top, up the Miller trail, about the same time. It is believed that Mr. Miller bought out the Buzzard cattle about that time. From that time on, the cattle use of the top area increased materially. The bench was used for spring and fall range. When Mr. Rider left in 1890 the feed was still excellent, and there was no noticeable decrease.

In the fall of 1885 a forest fire burned quite an extensive area on Whitewater Creek, and it is said that it was started by an old ranchman. The fire was evidently started to clear out the brush so that cattle could be more readily handled. The fire that destroyed the spruce timber under the rim was in the summer of 1888. The Pickett and Rider cabin was located near the spring which is close to the present location of the Anderson Brothers cabin. The fire burned over a large area under the rim and came up to the top a mile or so east of the cabin, near where the present

forest boundary turns north. It is believed that this fire started in late July or early August. What is now known as the Middlemist reservoir, on the north side of Whitewater Creek under the rim, was built by Mr. Rider and Mr. Pickett in 1894. The small cabin near the reservoir was built at that time, and was probably built in 1885 by Tom Stears. Another cabin was standing on the south side of Whitewater Creek at about the same elevation, and was probably built by Mack Ray or Ed Fleak.

No trout were in Whitewater Creek. Beaver dams extended down the creek to where the present Land's End road crosses and very little erosion was apparent, even in the desert area. The desert at that time was covered chiefly with white sage and buffalo grass, shad scale, and not much greasewood was present. It was excellent winter range at that time for cattle, and fat cattle were taken off the winter range and shipped as beef.

The fall of 1888 saw several large outfits come in, among them the H.L. It was rumored that these cattle came from New Mexico and were accustomed to traveling long distances to water; that when introduced into this country they traveled between the Grand River and Whitewater Creek and many were lost during the winter months, as they apparently did not know enough to seek the shelter of the cedars under the rim. They died from exhaustion in going from water hole to water hole. From that time on, the winter range was overstocked and rapidly deteriorated, which necessitated the stockmen putting in alfalfa and other winter feeds.

Life in North Creede in the Early Days

MRS. A. H. MAJORS*

After the demonetization of silver and the closing of mines, property values rapidly declined in Creede. To some people fire seemed the way out. A few fires had been quickly extinguished, but one winter night the fire alarm rang out—or rather tooted and shrieked out, as the railroad engine gave the alarm—and even then a two-story building, a short distance down the street, was in flames and the breeze sweeping up the narrow canon.

In a very few minutes a bucket brigade was formed—the only means of fighting fire at that time. Men, and women, too, quickly responded to the fire call, and in an incredibly short time a long line was formed, the ice in the creek was broken, and pails and even

*Mrs. Majors of Creede contributed an article to the November, 1944, issue of our magazine.—Ed.

cooking kettles, were pressed into service to carry water to the flames. But the fire jumped from one building to another—all dry wood and built close together—so it seemed for a time that nothing would be left of the camp but ashes.

My husband ran up the stairs and called to me that our time had come, to save what I could.

First our young son was warmly dressed, even to mittens and a cap with ear protectors, then with his new book under his arm he sat quietly watching proceedings.

Our two trunks and satchels (no suitcases then), a basket, some boxes, even a dishpan, were quickly lined up against the wall in the narrow hallway, and filled with the most prized household possessions, favorite books, warm bedding and clothing—especially for that little boy!

And now these things were ready to be carried to the flat cars, which the railroad company always ran up when a fire alarm was given, to carry the belongings of North Creede folk out of the fire zone.

Then came a never to be forgotten surprise. The street door swung open and three women of the demi-monde came up the stairway! The one who first reached the top addressed me by name, and said it would be impossible to save our building, and that they had come to help me, to forget who they were and tell them what to do.

When told the things in the hall were ready to be taken to the flat cars, they carried them over, even the heavy trunks, then stood guard over them! These things had to be carried down the stairs, across the street, across the narrow foot bridge over the creek, then lifted up onto the flat cars.

The street was filled with swearing men and weeping women, some with babes in arms, little children carrying favorite toys and dolls, one child clinging to a pair of red shoes—all running from the fire which threatened their homes.

Furniture of all kinds had been tossed into the street to be carried to the flat cars. There was bedding, clothing, rugs, even bric-a-brac and dishes. One couple, who had parted, got into a quarrel over a feather bed. He was pulling on one end of the bed, she on the other. Suddenly he let go; suddenly she sat down.

Mrs. Stephenson, the charming wife of the railroad agent at North Creede, created a bit of merriment, even in all the excitement, by appearing at the fire clad in her best suit, hat and veil. In the hysteria of the moment she had not realized she had put on her hat and veil.

But the fire was finally under control. Then those women carried our belongings back. There was help available for the return of the things, but at first everyone else was fighting fire. I felt most grateful to those poor outcasts, and would gladly have treated them with kindness, but they never saw me again. Gave me no chance to speak to them.

There were licensed houses and saloons, and families of respected people, living in cabins and cottages—all doors opening on the one and only street in North Creede. Probably such conditions never obtained anywhere else, unless possibly in some other new mining camp.

These people of the half world were never presumptuous, loud or boisterous in public places. They visited the stores to do their shopping, but never in an intoxicated condition, or smoking. It was only the women of the half world who smoked in those days.

Another interesting and most unusual experience, was at the time of the death of a tiny girl of my Sunday school class. Her mother kept a boarding house, and doing the work for thirty or more boarders left little time for anything else. In reply to my proffered assistance, Mrs. Steele said she was just wishing for a set of dainty white garments in which to lay her baby away. Sewing was not my long suit, and my experience along that line had been exceedingly limited, but putting on a brave front I assured my good neighbor I would be happy to do the sewing. She gave me some patterns and told me to buy any and everything needed for the work. On reaching home the patterns were spread out and carefully studied, and the doubts and misgivings grew and grew. Finally a pattern was pinned on some dainty material and a beginning was made.

But— isn't someone coming up the stairs? Then a knock at the hall door. On answering the door, my astonishment was great to see a woman of the demi-monde standing there.

A note had been received from Mrs. Steele a few minutes before, saying her next door neighbor, Mrs. W., would like to help with the sewing if she would be permitted to do so. The possibility of help with that sewing gave my spirits such a lift that the odd wording of the note was not even noticed. (But the name—Mrs. W.—had no meaning for me. I had never heard the name. There were several hundred people in the canon then. This woman had married a miner some weeks before and was living an honorable life. Being next door to the Steeles, she had become attached to the child.) My expression no doubt was one of surprise, as she started walking backward toward the open stairway, and seemed on the verge of tears as she exclaimed, "Why Mrs.

Steele said you were expecting me." It had not occurred to me that this was the Mrs. W. of whom Mrs. Steele had written. I quickly stepped toward her, and taking hold of her arm, explained that I had not recognized her as Mrs. W., that she was very welcome, and that I would be grateful for her assistance. She proved to be quite adept with the needle. We spent the entire afternoon and evening sewing, and finished the little garments. They were beautiful and the child looked lovely in them, in her pretty white casket. Mrs. W. was a woman of some education, and had read a number of good books. She talked about books and her life as a child on a farm in the middle west, and expressed herself well, but seemed very depressed and sad. I never saw her again, as they left Creede shortly afterwards.