

Thunder on the Rio Grande, the Great Adventure of Sibley's Confederates for the Conquest of New Mexico and Colorado

LE ROY BOYD*

He was a failure; he was a magnificent failure. He lost a war for his country.

Yet Major Henry Hopkins Sibley was the most important officer in the United States Army at the time that General Beauregard gave orders to his batteries at Charlestown to fire on Fort Sumter, thus opening the War Between the States.

On May 13, 1861, like many others in the Federal army, he resigned his commission and entered the service of the Confederate States, receiving from President Jefferson Davis the rank of Brigadier-General. He was, perhaps, the most brilliant general officer in the Southern ranks, the only one of the glittery galaxy of Confederate warriors whose mind grasped the grand strategy necessary to win the war.

Today his name has become almost obliterated from the rolls of great army men. For he lost a battle, and his downfall was primarily caused by a Methodist preacher!

*Mr. Boyd is a newspaper man of Las Animas, Colorado, and a student of Western history.—Ed.

Before his defeat he had one of the most outstanding records of any man in either army. The old *Free Lance* of Fredericksburg, Virginia, in his obituary published August 24, 1886, stated that "General Sibley was an active, intelligent and enterprising officer. His social qualities being of high order were ever appreciated by his fellow officers."

He was born in Louisiana in July, 1816, and in company with many other Southern gentlemen the army was to be his career.



GENERAL HENRY HOPKINS SIBLEY

He graduated from the United States Military Academy on July 1, 1838, and received his commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Dragoons. Two years later he was a First Lieutenant.

As a rule, however, promotions in the old army were slow, and it wasn't until 1847 that he was a Captain. The rank of Major didn't come until 14 years later, in 1861, though for his gallant services in the Mexican war he had been breveted a Major.

His record shows action in the Florida war, 1838-39 and 1840-41. He participated in the siege of Vera Cruz in the Mexican War, took part in the battles of Cerro Gordo, Contreras, Churubusco, Molino del Rey, and was with the army that captured Mexico City to bring the war to a close.

In the Utah expedition against the Mormons in 1857, led by Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, who later was killed at the Battle

of Shiloh, he had charge of the transportation of supplies and gained valuable experience that he was to make use of five years later.

During Jefferson Davis' incumbency as Secretary of War under President Franklin Pierce the army began an infiltration of the West that made possible later development. One of Davis' dreams was of a transcontinental railroad whose eastern terminal would be on the lower Mississippi, preferably at Vicksburg. He gave the army the task of finding a possible route for such a railroad and the troops used the assignment to further their explorations of the resources of the territory won as a result of the Mexican War.

Davis' plan for strengthening the army in the west included the construction of large central forts, from which "radiated" smaller posts as protection against Indians. It is one of the ironies of fate that Sibley, then a Captain, laid out and supervised the building of one of those large forts, that of Fort Union in New Mexico, for this strategic post was to be one of the main objectives of his campaign when he led an army of Texans up the Rio Grande River against New Mexico and Colorado in 1862.

In addition to performing his assigned duties Sibley was also active in other ways. He designed the Sibley tent that the army has never discarded, and in winter those tents were heated by Sibley stoves. He invented the Sibley saddle for the cavalry; this is known today as the McClelland saddle because the Northern General made a few slight changes and gave his name to it. At the time of the Civil War small bronze howitzers that could be carried on the backs of mules through rough country for use against Indians were known as "Sibley guns."

It will readily be seen, therefore, that Sibley was a first class soldier with more than average ability. Much of his service had been in the West, so that he knew the country at first hand. Jefferson Davis also was interested in the territory (while Secretary of War he had imported camels to be used by the army in the arid sections of the southwest), and when Sibley went to the President of the Confederacy that summer of 1861 with his plan for conquering the West he found a sympathetic listener.

As they talked over details of the plan neither could foresee that Sibley would meet his nemesis at La Glorieta Pass a few miles from Santa Fe.

Sibley's plan, as it was known, if successful could have won the war for the South.

In brief the plan called for an army to march up the Rio Grande River with Fort Union as its first objective. With re-

inforcements to be raised in the Pecos River region the Confederates were then to move on Denver, and Fort Laramie in Wyoming was to be a subsequent objective. This would cut the three main transcontinental trails connecting the west coast with the North and divert gold from the mines in California and Colorado to the Southern treasury.

As soon as this had been accomplished Indian cavalry regiments, officered by whites, were to be raised and equipped, and this highly mobile fighting force would be used in a flanking movement against Federal troops in the middle west. In the meantime California and New Mexico Territory, where secessionist elements were strong, were to break off from the Union and join the Confederacy.

Davis gave Sibley a commission as a Brigadier and placed him in charge of operations, his army to be raised in Texas. Everything possible to insure the success of the campaign would be done, but the whole matter had to be kept secret so far as the fiery editors of the South would permit.

For in those first years of the war the Confederacy's policy was to fight a war of defense, whereas Sibley's campaign was to be emphatically one of offense. The public mind, conditioned to local glorious victories in Northern Virginia, would have been unable to understand the motives back of the invasion, and the commissioners being sent to European capitals would have found it difficult to harmonize the fact of the invasion with their representations of the South's noble war for independence.

The truth was that Sibley, seemingly the only one in that first year to comprehend the full field of operations of the war just beginning, was too far in advance of the leaders on both sides. Not until 1864, with Generals U. S. Grant and William T. Sherman collaborating, was a grand strategic plan to be developed, and by that time the war had deteriorated into a conflict of attrition.

When Sibley arrived in Texas he found that the territory now included within the limits of Arizona and New Mexico had been declared a part of the Confederacy at a convention held at Tucson in 1861, and a delegate had been elected to the Confederate congress. A number of grandiloquent proclamations concerning freedom had been published designed to enlist the aid of Mexicans living in the territory for the projected invasion.

Sibley also found that the Texans, under the leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel John B. Baylor, had cleared the state of Federal troops, captured a number of forts with military supplies, and advance units of Confederates had penetrated New Mexico above El Paso. A number of Union officers located in the region had resigned their commissions in the Federal army to accept service

with the Confederates, and without sufficient supplies and adequate artillery support to meet the invasion the plight of the United States forces was desperate.

Colonel Edward R. S. Canby, commanding the Federal forces, concentrated his troops at Fort Craig, about midway between El Paso and Santa Fe, and hurried urgent requests to his superiors for reinforcements and supplies, but these requests were ignored by the swivel chair generals. Canby also appealed to Governor William Gilpin of Colorado Territory, who, being a practical man, set about raising a regiment of militia. These reinforcements, however were not ready to move until the following February.

To understand the situation and subsequent events one should know the relationship between Sibley and Canby, the two opposing commanders. They had been at West Point together, where they had become close friends, and when Sibley was married Canby was his best man. Canby later married the bridesmaid at that wedding, and by that marriage became related to Sibley. Most historians state they were brothers-in-law, though a later writer states their wives were only first cousins.

Before starting his campaign Sibley wrote Canby a warm letter asking him to transfer his allegiance—and his command—to the Confederacy. He offered an alternative suggestion that Canby withdraw his forces from New Mexico to prevent needless bloodshed. Canby answered firmly, though in just as friendly terms, that he was unable to comply with either suggestion and that he would oppose the invasion to the best of his ability.

Throughout the entire campaign the correspondence between these two men remained almost personal in tone—in fact, almost brotherly. As soldiers they were at war, but that war was not permitted to interfere with their long friendship. And Canby was to save Sibley's diminishing army from annihilation by holding in restraint a Major-preacher who wanted to charge the retreating Southerners.

All that was later, however. When Sibley assumed command of the Army of the West on December 14 prospects for the success of the campaign were more than favorable. He had good officers, much better than those of the North, superior cannon, and his army consisted of about 3,500 hard-bitten, hard-fighting, and hard-drinking Texans. Sibley, though, had been unable to get enough wagons, so that much of his supplies had to be forwarded by a shuttle system.

On February 7, 1862, with about 3,000 men and 15 pieces of artillery, he started his army up the river from Fort Thorn, and on the 16th the Confederates had drawn near to Fort Craig.

Canby had 3,810 men, but being acquainted with the nature of many of those men he refused the battle Sibley offered him. The Texans thereupon moved over the river and marched north to get on the other side of the fort.

On February 21 the Confederates had reached the vicinity of Valverde north of Fort Craig and apparently were about to recross the river to get on the trail. Canby decided to risk taking the initiative and was drawn into the trap.

The two armies made contact about the middle of the forenoon, and before long a full fledged battle was in progress.

Sibley commanded the Southerners at the start of the engagement, but in the afternoon he turned the command of field operations over to Colonel Thomas Green. After that he seemed to leave the matter of battle tactics to his efficient officers for the rest of the campaign.

On the other side, Canby, hearing the increased fire, spurred to the front from the fort and assumed personal command of the Union troops, trying to hold steady his raw levies of militia. The Texans, however, were a tough bunch.

Captain Alexander McCrae in charge of the Federal battery was killed and his guns captured. Colonel Kit Carson, commanding the New Mexico militia, used his pistols in an effort to keep his men in line. But at last the Federal troops gave way before the fire superiority of the Confederates. Canby was able to withdraw his men from the field, though, and to the safety of Fort Craig.

Next day Sibley sent emissaries to Canby demanding the surrender of the fort. Canby refused to do so, and the emissaries reported to Sibley that the place was too strong for a frontal attack.

To a military observer Sibley appears to have made a mistake in not pressing his advantage. He could have destroyed the disorganized and beaten Federals or at least have compelled their capitulation.

As it was, however, Sibley had a more important objective, and he didn't want to spare the time that a reduction of the fortifications would have required. Anyway, there wasn't much that Canby's troops, cut off from further help and supplies, could do in the way of resistance.

Sibley, therefore, gave orders for his army to move north, and on March 2 the Texans reached Albuquerque, their first important objective. A halt was made here only long enough to gather supplies and make preparations to move on Fort Union. But more

than supplies were obtained here. Wells-Fargo is reported to have started a shipment of \$200,000 in gold for New York, and because the Overland route was blocked with snow the shipment was sent by the way of Albuquerque, and this gold fell into the hands of the Southerners when they took the city. Sibley apparently considered the capture of this gold more important to the Confederate cause than the destruction of Canby's army.

At Albuquerque Sibley's spies brought him word that a Colorado regiment of militia was marching south to reinforce Fort Union, which was the key to his whole campaign.

It should be remembered that Sibley had superintended the construction of this fort, and knew how important it was, because of its strategic location, to his plan. Its capture would strengthen his hold on northern New Mexico and give him a base for operations in a movement into Colorado. He accordingly made his dispositions for an advance against the stronghold.

Lieutenant-Colonel William R. Scurry, who had command of the combat division of the Confederate army at this time, was ordered to move forward, occupy Santa Fe, and seize La Glorieta Pass which lay a few miles from that city on the old Santa Fe Trail.

Scurry made camp in Apache Canyon at the western entrance to the pass, and an advance base of supplies, which in the next few days was to have a direct bearing on the outcome of the campaign, was also established there. On March 26 Scurry sent Major Charles L. Pyron with about 500 men to make reconnaissance in force up the canyon and over the summit of the pass.

The primary cause of the Confederate disaster that followed was a Methodist preacher turned warrior!

At the beginning of the war the Reverend John M. Chivington was the Presiding Elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Colorado with headquarters in Denver. When the Colorado First Regiment was organized he was offered the chaplaincy. He replied, though, that he wanted a "fighting" position, and he was accordingly given a commission as Major.

On the march south to Fort Union he quarreled with his commanding officer, Colonel John P. Slough, who called him "a crazy preacher with the idea he is Napoleon," and the result was that the two men divided the regiment between them. At Fort Union Colonel Slough quarreled with Colonel Gabriel R. Paul, in charge of the post, over the matter of seniority, and for a time it appeared the Union forces would remain ineffective because of the bickering among the officers.

There was a question, too, of what policy should be adopted; whether the Federal troops should wait at the fort for Sibley's attack, move forward and meet the Confederates in the field, or destroy the post and fight a "delaying" action.

Chivington's was the dominating personality of all those gathered at the fort. At a council of war he declared the only orders he knew were to march south and reinforce Canby, and he literally brow-beat the unhappy Slough into a forward movement. Chivington's battalion, which by the way he had kept so far as humanly possible away from liquor, took the lead.

Hearing that Santa Fe was held by only "about 100 men, with two pieces of artillery," Chivington pressed on with the intention of taking the town, and on March 26 ran head on into Major Pyron's reconnoitering force coming up Apache Canyon. Both sides were surprised at the meeting, but immediately engaged in battle.

After three and a half hours of fighting the Confederates retreated down the canyon. Since it was almost night Chivington remained where he was and prepared for an attack which he expected to come in the morning. When Sibley's men failed to appear, however, Chivington retired to the main Federal camp at the eastern end of the pass, and after a few hours rest took his men along a wild trail over the mesa to attack the Confederate camp in the rear.

On the 28th Scurry left a small guard over his wagon camp and with 1,100 men moved up the pass. Almost at the same time Slough set his 700 troops in motion.

The two armies met near the summit of the pass, and one of the fiercest engagements of the whole war was fought there.

Late in the afternoon Slough decided he had accomplished a "reconnaissance in force to annoy and harass the enemy," and he made ready to retreat. Scurry, having received reinforcements of 125 men from his camp, formed his lines for a sixth and final assault on the Federals.

So far the advantage lay with Scurry, and with some of the Union troops already streaming from the field this last charge would have given him undisputed possession of the field and opened the way to Fort Union. Before he could give the order for the charge, however, a courier galloped up to him with the information that the camp with all his supplies had been totally destroyed by Major Chivington.

For Chivington's men had arrived at the crest of a precipitous mountain overlooking the camp about the middle of the afternoon.

Letting themselves down a one thousand foot cliff with ropes and straps they surrounded the camp, burned more than 70 wagons, shot more than 500 horses and mules, and incidentally burned all the liquor.

As soon as they had completed their destruction they retraced their steps over the mesa and rejoined Slough that night.

The Confederates' ammunition was low, and with the destruction of their reserves their situation had become desperate. Scurry sent forward a flag, and Slough, not yet acquainted with what Chivington had done, granted the truce. During the night Scurry withdrew his force to the camp in Apache Canyon.

The Texans were now without blankets and had very little food. The slaughter of their horses and mules had put them afoot in a country of great distances. The condition of their wounded was terrible, for all the medical supplies had been lost when their camp was burned.

Colonel Slough, though, had found that war is not all gold braid and glory; he had had his fill of fighting, and he made no attempt to resume hostilities.

General Sibley arriving on the scene from Santa Fe and seeing the plight of his men gave orders for the troops to return to that city. He remained there until April 5, hoping for reinforcements that would have enabled him to take the initiative again but which never came.

Canby, on the other hand, was able to effect a juncture of all his troops, and with his superior force made ready to move cautiously against the Confederates. Sibley was compelled to retreat to Albuquerque, which he fortified. Canby thereupon invested the place, but left an opening through which the Confederates could escape.

It was clear to Sibley now that he was beaten, and nothing was left for him but to retreat. He buried some of his cannon¹, and on April 12 he led the remnants of his army out of Albuquerque and began the long weary retreat down the river.

Canby caught up with him three days later at Peralta, and some half hearted skirmishing took place between the blue and the gray. It was here that Chivington, who by now had assumed full

¹Some of these were dug up after the war and were brought to Colorado. They are on exhibition in the State Museum, Denver.

command of the Colorado militia, offered to annihilate the Confederates, but Canby, desiring no such bloodthirsty a project, refused him permission to attack. Sibley was allowed to continue his retreat with little hindrance on the part of the Federals.

Sibley's greatest difficulty lay in the bad luck that pursued him with more vigor than that showed by Canby's men. His troops deserted, many of them striking out for California. His rations were low, and none was to be had from the Mexicans along the route. He had an insufficient number of horses and mules for his transport and was compelled to burn half his wagons.

The worst blow fell, though, near Fort Craig. Colonel Kit Carson was at that post with his New Mexico militia, and Sibley, seeking a way around the fort took the advice of someone who told him of a detour through the hills. The country was rough, uninhabited, and without water, and the march over the detour completed the demoralization of the Confederates. Sibley finally got back to El Paso with less than 600 men, and when he reached Austin in July his army had dwindled to 350 officers and men.

There was some talk of a courtmartial. Sibley, however, disregarding the primary object of the campaign and rationalizing his defeat, answered that New Mexico and Arizona weren't worth the effort of holding them. In his report to the Adjutant and Inspector-General of the Confederacy he said further: "But, sir, I cannot speak encouragingly for the future; my troops having manifested a dogged, irreconcilable detestation of the country and people."

Upon receiving information of Sibley's defeat as well as of the collapse of Baylor's military government in the territory the Southern leaders decided to clamp a censorship, such as it was known in those days, on all news of the failure of the expedition. This wasn't hard to do, for important events had been taking place around Shiloh, or Pittsburgh Landing, in which a fellow by the name of U. S. Grant had a hand.

It has been impossible to get authoritative information concerning Sibley's activities during the rest of the war. It is certain, however, that his star never rose again in this country, and he, as well as his expedition which might have changed the course of the war, has remained in historical obscurity.

After the war he became a soldier of fortune and entered the service of the Khedive of Egypt, holding a responsible position in the Egyptian army. Later he returned to the United States and made his home at Fredericksburg where he died on August 23, 1886.

Pioneer Railroading in Colorado*

NATHANIEL W. SAMPLE

In 1871 General W. J. Palmer, who was Commander of the Regiment in which I served during the war, purchased three narrow-gauge locomotives from the Baldwin Locomotive Works for a railroad in Colorado called the Denver and Rio Grande in which he had become interested. By some good fortune I was selected by the officials of the Works to accompany the shipment of these locomotives to Colorado and to see that they were placed in service to the satisfaction of the Railroad. These were the first three locomotives purchased by this Railway and were delivered in Denver loaded on flat cars because they were of a different gauge from the tracks over which it was necessary to take them from Philadelphia and consequently they could not go on their own wheels.

The locomotives were placed in service and began hauling trains over the road, which was being completed to Colorado Springs.

Having some knowledge of locomotive and machine shop work, General Palmer and the railroad owners desired me to remain in Colorado and help keep the locomotives running and in repair. This was arranged and I began a term of service with the Denver and Rio Grande Railway which was to last for almost thirty years. The railroad began to grow and extend itself southward and westward into the gold and silver mining districts and soon serious operating problems arose on account of the steep grades and sharp curves which were necessary in the construction of the track over the mountains. The principal one of these was how to hold the long freight trains on the grades of 3 to 4%. Hand-brakes on the cars were found to be too expensive because they required a brakeman on each car in addition to the steam and Le Chatelier brakes on the locomotive. The Le Chatelier brake is a simple device by which the locomotive is reversed while going down grade, the pistons working against air pressure thus created in the cylinders and causing a braking effect on the engine. Hand brakes were also unreliable because frequently the train would get a start down hill before the brakeman could get the brakes applied.

*This story was sent to us by Mrs. Minnie Hall Krauser, who provides the following biographical note:

"Nathaniel Welshire Sample was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, on August 14, 1843, and attended school at Litz Academy, near his home town. At the age of 16, in 1859, he entered the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia as a machinist's apprentice, remaining there until 1862, when he enlisted in the 15th Pennsylvania Cavalry. While in the Army he attained the rank of First Lieutenant and was called upon to be a member of General Sherman's Staff. His military career continued until the end of the war in 1865 when he returned to Philadelphia and resumed his work with the Baldwin Locomotive Works. He served in various departments of the Shops until 1871 when he was sent to Denver with the first three locomotives for the Denver and Rio Grande Railway just completed by the Baldwin Works. These were named: No. 1 Montezuma, No. 2 Tabi-Wachi, No. 3 Shawano."

"The story of his work in Colorado is best told in the accompanying extract from an Autobiographical Sketch of his life which he wrote in 1926, about a year before he died."—Ed.

This question reached a crisis and General Palmer called a conference to discuss the situation and see if something could be done about it, as it was evident that the railroad could not be operated unless some device was found which would brake the trains satisfactorily. The question was put up to me by General Palmer for my suggestion and I recommended Westinghouse Air Brakes, then a comparatively new invention. After much discussion it was decided to try these brakes on the freight trains and General Palmer advanced the necessary money from his private funds for their purchase. It took a lot of money and greatly depleted the General's personal fortune. The Westinghouse Company began to deliver these brakes in 1872, the first brakes to be applied to freight equipment in the United States. In 1877 I was appointed master mechanic of the railroad and in 1880 superintendent of motive power. During these ten years much experimenting with the air brakes was done and some new devices perfected in connection with them still in general use on railroads all over the world. But the brakes were a success and their use was extended to passenger trains so that the road became as safe to ride over as any railway built over level country. The railroad soon had 1,600 miles of narrow gauge 3 foot track and about 1881 we built a new shop a few miles west of Denver and named it Burnham in honor of Mr. George Burnham of the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia, who had always shown much interest in our work on the Denver and Rio Grande. He presented us with a fine library of the best books for use of the employees. The shops at Burnham were built almost entirely new and were very well planned and equipped and many high officials of railroads all over the United States and Europe paid frequent visits to Burnham. Over 1,000 freight and passenger cars were constructed in these shops between 1880 and 1890.

After we started to operate the freight trains down the long mountain grades with the "straight" air brakes, we were presently confronted with another difficulty. The brake shoes on the driving wheels of the locomotives generated so much heat that the tires became loose and dropped off the wheels at the bottom of the hill. We fixed this by removing the driving wheel brakes entirely and applying the air brakes on the train only going down grade so that the train held the locomotive. This practice was followed for a long time without accident, but later improvements in air brakes and the introduction of the automatic brake made it possible to apply engine and train brakes separately.

Another source of anxiety was the heavy snows in the mountains in winter. Often the road was completely blocked for days but with the aid of steam rotary snow plows, eventually introduced, we managed to keep the trains going. Then in summer we were

harassed with floods from melting snows and heavy rains which caused serious and costly washouts. Sometimes a wooden bridge would give way and let a train down into a canon or gulch. Streams which for months would be almost perfectly dry would in two or three hours become roaring torrents. Locomotives and cars have been washed away and sunk in the quick sands never to be recovered.

During these early days we had to contend with the rough conditions incident to the pioneer life of the West. Trouble with Indians, train robbers and desperate characters made it necessary to carry fire arms and frequently use them in defense of life and property. Labor difficulties were a constant menace in the mining districts and on the railroad and many times it was necessary to call on the Government for troops to stop the riots.

Many times my life was threatened by outlaws. Once in a town in Southwestern Colorado on the narrow gauge, a man who had been a locomotive engineer but whom I had discharged lay in wait for me all night near a saloon with a gun, but when my train arrived, by some chance, I went up another street and didn't pass his way so he didn't get me.

For the most part, however, I had a lot of fine railroaders who worked for me. Some of the best men from Eastern railways curious to try the adventurous life of the West came and got jobs on the Rio Grande and running the trains over the steep mountain grades gave the engineers, firemen and trainmen all the excitement they wanted and they got through without many accidents and always to their great credit.

These railroaders all commanded high wages and usually got them. Mr. P. M. Arthur, Chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers made several trips over the road with me and agreed that the job of locomotive engineer on the Rio Grande was a great responsibility and should be rewarded by good pay.

Wild animals were numerous and buffalo herds were still about on the plains for several years after I arrived in Colorado. One day, riding horseback in the foothills, the horse suddenly shied with fright and stood still. I looked about to see what the trouble was and observed a huge rattlesnake coiled and ready to strike at the horse or the rider or both. I pulled my revolver and shot at the coiled serpent and when I got off the horse to see the results of the shot was surprised to note that its head had been shot off. It had evidently made a quick strike directly at the bullet as it flew through the air and caught it in its wide open mouth. Bear, deer, Rocky Mountain sheep, wild turkeys, ptarmigan, quail, grouse and wild duck furnished good gunning for our idle moments, which were few, and those who didn't hunt could always find very excellent trout fishing. These sports were not so good in

later years as the country became more thickly settled, but I understand the trout streams have been restocked so that they have almost their old-time attraction for anglers.

By this time I had two new jobs. In addition to looking after the motive power and machinery on the Denver and Rio Grande, I was doing this work also for the Rio Grande Western and the Rio Grande Southern, so I was kept continually on the move and couldn't stay at home very long at a time. This home consisted of my wife, who was Nellie Town to whom I was married in 1880 and three children, Nathaniel Junior, born in 1881; William, born in 1884; and Caroline, born in 1890.

In 1891 the Rio Grande was placed under new management and I was appointed General Superintendent, which job I held until 1900. Very little new railway was built under the new regime and it became a question of operating the existing road as economically as possible, especially since business in Colorado had been very bad for three or four years about 1893. This job got to be a very considerable strain for me along about 1899, and I was forced to take a long vacation in this year. After this I began to wonder if I hadn't been too long at this hard railroading business and with another change in the management I left the railroad, but what to do next was the question. My friends wanted to elect me Governor of Colorado on the Republican ticket, but I declined as I am no politician. During the winter of 1900-1901 I was kept busy by Colonel Dodge of the Rio Grande Western on some consulting work. In 1900 my old friend, Mr. Samuel M. Vauclain, at that time General Superintendent and a member of the firm of the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia, came out to Colorado and invited me to return to the Baldwin Works. He desired to start an apprenticeship system so as to have trained men for the future demands of the locomotive building industry and wanted me to take charge of it. I decided to accept and returned to Philadelphia in 1901. We started a system based on the old indenture idea. We had a two years' course in the shops for graduates of colleges; a three-year course for graduates of high schools, and a four-year course for boys who had gone along in school as far as they could. There were at times in the neighborhood of 250 of these young men at work in various departments. This system of training was regarded as a success and continued for about ten years; then it was modified somewhat to meet changed conditions. I am always pleased to note that a great many of the best men employed in the works today as Managers, Foremen, Contractors and first-grade Mechanics were trained under that apprenticeship system.

"Squeaky" Bob Wheeler's Hunting and Ranch Life in the North Park Country

MR. AND MRS. JAMES ROSE HARVEY

Robert Wheeler was born in Buchanan, Michigan, on May 22, 1865. He came from a proud old English family; early records show that three of his ancestors came over on the Mayflower.¹ When he was only three years old, his mother died. His father, Edward E. Wheeler, hired a woman to care for the family—there were nine children, but three of them died while very young. When Bob was twelve years of age, he hired out to his uncle for a term of four years, at the end of which time he was to receive \$300. The youngster soon tired of his bargain and left his uncle's employ with no money, but with a lot of experience in the hard work of a farm.

For the next seven years, Bob made his home with various farmers in the neighborhood and worked for barely more than his board, room and clothing. As he grew up, he heard more and more about the wonders of Colorado from his elder brother, Luke, who had gone out west when Bob was only seven years old. In 1885, young Wheeler, now twenty, decided that he had enough money saved to buy a ticket to Fort Collins, Colorado, and to purchase what he considered the proper outfit for the trip.

Late in the afternoon of July 13, 1885, a young gentleman, clad in a tight-fitting, striped suit, tan spats, narrow buttoned shoes, a long coat, a tall silk hat and kid gloves, stepped off the train at Fort Collins. Bob Wheeler had arrived!

In the evening Wheeler set out to look over the young city. He found the college a going concern but on a very small scale. The streets were covered with grass and there were no street cars. On the corner of College and Mountain Avenues, he happened upon a little excitement which was just what he had expected to find in the West. A rather unkempt person, with long hair and a longer beard, had unhitched his horses, turned them to graze in the streets, and was busy pitching his tent and building a camp fire right in the main section of town. While Bob stood taking in the scene, an indignant citizen came puffing up with the sheriff, who tapped the unwelcome camper on the shoulder and suggested that he "move on." The long haired mountaineer carefully set a pot of beans to heat on the camp-fire, then stood up and reached a long arm for his Buffalo Sharps rifle. "Get the hell out of here and quick!" he shouted at the astonished sheriff. "I'm stayin' and my horses are gonna eat the grass out of these streets, so a

¹Genealogy of the Wheeler Family, Denver Public Library.

body can walk down-town without gettin' grasshoppers down his neck!" The sheriff did not stop to argue the point with a Sharps rifle on the other side of the argument; he left but soon returned with the mayor, Bill Miner, explaining that a crazy man had camped on the main street and would not move on.

"If it isn't old Ballinger of North Park," cried the mayor as he arrived at the scene. "You old son-of-a-gun, you just camp where ever you want to and as long as you want to, but don't put in a bill for them critters of yours mowing the streets."



"SQUEAKY BOB" WHEELER

Bob Wheeler was disappointed—he had thought Bill Ballinger looked tough enough for some gun play.

Jim Sweeney, one of the best law enforcement officers in the West was sheriff of Fort Collins when Bob arrived. Bob hunted up the sheriff and explained that he had a brother Luke, who had lived in North Park since 1875, but that he had no way of making the trip out to his ranch. Jim Sweeney at once offered to lend him a horse and explained how he might find his way over the mountains. It was a rough trip of 130 miles. The sheriff was an amused spectator as "tender foot" Bob Wheeler rode out of town, his high silk hat glistening in the sun, his long coat floating out behind, riding a wild horse to a place he knew nothing about, not even how to get there.

It didn't take the horse long to learn that he had a "green-horn" on his back, so he promptly bucked him off, and broke the cinch which held the saddle on. Bob started walking, leading his horse. Some time later he met three men, an old man, a young cowhand and a little boy. The old man, moved by Bob's apparent inability to cope with the West, took a piece of rawhide and fixed the cinch; while these repairs were being made the cowboy made wise cracks about a tender-foot that couldn't even ride a horse. Finally he offered to "take the buck" out of the horse, if Bob would give him five dollars, which he agreed to do. The cowboy switched saddles and vaulted lightly into place but, the horse having proved so successful in his first bucking spree, went into action. The cowboy was bucked higher than a kite and hit the ground hard. The older man took a hand and Bob's mount soon listened to reason. Wheeler traveled with these three for two days, until they turned off to some ranch. As they left, the cowboy asked for his five dollars. When Bob refused to pay up, the cow-hand prepared to take it out of Bob's hide. Again the older man took a hand and "cussed hell out of the young fellow for trying to collect when he had done the horse more harm than good."²

Wheeler found seven stopping places on his trip from Fort Collins to North Park. They were: Forks Hotel, Fred Christmas' Place, Dead Man, Boyd's Place, Virginia Dale, Laramie, Wyoming, and North Park.

At Virginia Dale, Bob fell in with a party of three young cowboys about his own age, and for the rest of the trip they had a lot of fun. Many good natured tricks were pulled on the young newcomer. During the night one of the fellows took Bob's high silk hat, and climbing to the top of the highest spruce tree near camp, placed it on the very top spike of the tree. In the morning when Bob was searching frantically for his beloved head-gear, the three kindly pointed out the hat-rack they had thought suitable for such a high hat. Bob promptly seized an ax and cut the tree down. Just before it hit the ground, the hat sailed off and fell upon the spongy carpet of pine needles unhurt, whereupon Bob recovered it most gratefully.

When Bob arrived at the ranch both brothers were due for a shock. Luke had not seen Bob for thirteen years and had not even been forewarned of the intended visit. Bob saw a stranger with hair down over his shoulders, long whiskers obscuring his face, clad in at least three pairs of overalls; while Luke gazed in astonishment at a "dude" with long coat, silk hat and kid gloves, who approached him in the hayfield and asked for a job. Luke firmly refused to give the applicant a job saying, "I can't hire no city dude to handle a pitch fork with kid gloves, in my hay

²Quotation from Squeaky Bob.

meadow. We got real work to do." When Bob saw he was about to be turned down flat he walked sadly away muttering, "You're one hell of a brother." Luke's mouth dropped open, his burly arms shot out and gathered his kid brother in a bear-hug; he introduced him to his ranching partner, Cook Rhea, and practically offered him the ranch on a silver platter.

Bob now became an accepted cow-hand in good standing; he fed stock, milked cows and helped in the milk room and the hay field. He complacently thought of himself as a real western cowboy. But not so Denny Nicholson, a young fellow who worked for Luke. He persisted in calling Bob a tenderfoot, no doubt due to the city clothes Bob still wore. Bob stood it as long as he could but finally he "called" Denny on it. It was unfortunate that he reached the end of his endurance while they were in the milk room, for in the rough and tumble fight that ensued, the racks holding the pans of milk and cream were overturned and the whole placed churned up pretty thoroughly. Bob got the best of Denny but by that time he had gone berserk. He turned to Bill Brown, an interested but silent spectator, and knocked him down also, just for percentage. Then he hunted up his brother, told him what he thought of him, his ranch, his ranch hands and the entire West, and announced he was leaving the place at once. Luke gave him "a couple of horses, a good gun, four head of cattle and a goodby." Bob herded his four cows around the park for a few days until hunger took the fight out of him, when he drifted back to Luke's ranch. Here he stayed in partnership with his brother for twelve years.

He had succeeded in dislodging the name of tenderfoot but he soon acquired another that stuck for a life time. When Bob was eighteen he suffered a severe attack of bronchitis which left him with a peculiar "squeak" in his voice. In ordinary conversation it was not so noticeable but when he became enthusiastic or excited his voice would assume a higher and ever higher key until he was "squeaking" like a steam calliope. It was ever the way of the West to single out a person's peculiarity and, not unkindly but matter-of-factly, to attach this distinguishing feature to him as a nickname. Bob at once became "Squeaky Bob Wheeler." Strange to say, he liked the name, and thereafter even signed his checks as "Squeaky Bob."

Luke took his young brother in as a partner, giving him a full half interest in the ranch and cattle. Luke Wheeler, in the ten years he had lived in North Park, had developed a number of sources of income. Bob, with the enthusiasm of youth, was soon helping with each enterprise. With the aid of two ranch hands, the brothers milked 45 head of cows, and churned 35 pounds of butter a day. The churning was done by a water wheel; when

the butter came, it was gathered in the churn and rolled several times through spring water, then it was salted, worked down, molded into three-pound rolls and packed in huge wooden tubs filled with salt brine. Here it was allowed to accumulate throughout the summer, until the last of October or the early part of November. The brothers avoided the spring and summer market which was usually low. By holding off until late fall they could command a higher price, usually 35c per pound. When it was market time they loaded the tubs of butter into wagons and drove to Hahn's Peak which was then a flourishing mining camp. Here they found ready sale for 1,000 pounds each fall. The remainder was taken into Cheyenne where the old Inter-Ocean Hotel and the Bristol store purchased 6,000 pounds of butter annually from the Wheeler brothers.

One morning in early June Bob found an odoriferous visitor in the milk house. A skunk had dropped in for a "spot of butter." When the question of possession of the milk house was finally decided in Bob's favor, it was necessary to empty out all the cream and butter. Somehow, one tub of butter in the brine was overlooked and not discovered until two years later, when it was found to be as sweet and good as the day it was made.

The butter industry was not always as prosaic as one might imagine. As Bob told the following incident his voice mounted higher and higher up the scale: "While making a trip to Cheyenne one fall with our butter we camped on the Laramie prairies. My brother, Luke, and I were sound asleep under the wagon when I heard a hell of a commotion and started to crawl out to investigate. A shot from a six-shooter hit the ground just a few inches from my head and a gruff voice barked an order to remain under the wagon if we wanted to stay alive. That was just what we *did* want to do, so we crawled to the exact center of the wagon and lay there, watching. The man tied the tongue of our wagon to the wheels with the point toward the sky; to this he attached a rope and knotted a noose at the end of it. On this makeshift gallows he calmly proceeded to hang a man by the name of 'Cy Partiage.' We learned later that he had stolen a cayuse horse worth about \$40. In those days a horse thief was looked upon as public enemy No. 1."

Another source of income for the Wheeler brothers was hunting meat for market. There were large herds of deer and elk roaming the mountain parks. Bob once saw in Hog Park, a portion of North Park, over 400 elk in one herd. Luke's partner, Cook Rhea, had hunted buffalo with "Buffalo Bill" when he was supplying meat for the Union Pacific railroad. He was an excellent shot. On one hunting trip Luke and Bob Wheeler, Cook Rhea and a neighbor shot and killed 51 elk within two hours; Bob, alone,

killed 13 with his 45-70 Burgess rifle without moving from his tracks. There was no waste in this hunting for market. The meat was jerked and smoked; the fresh cuts were placed in a strong salt brine for 36 hours, then hung in a large smoke house. This was a log building in which all the cracks were tightly chinked. Here a fire was kindled and then green aspen and willow branches were placed on the blaze, causing an intense smoke. The meat was allowed to cure for 24 hours. It would then keep for a long period of time and was known as jerked meat. The taste was very similar to the present chipped beef.

The hides were pegged on the ground and treated with arsenic and alum for two days. They were then piled up or stood on end until packed in wagons for the Denver market trip.

The entrails were all placed in a pile and a strong log pen was built about them in the shape of an A, the point being a good sized tree, with the log fence running out fan fashion on either side. The entrance was left open; in it was placed a large bear trap, chained to a heavy log and covered with leaves and pine needles. As the entrails spoiled and the odor carried for miles, bears were lured to the feast, only to be caught in the trap as they tried to enter the log stockade. One winter the Wheelers caught six bears—three black and three brown ones.

As soon as there was enough meat and hides to fill three wagons, Bob and Luke made a trip to market. They generally used one six-horse, one four-horse and one two-horse wagon. The meat was sold to the Watkins meat market in Denver. It brought 19c a pound. The hides were marketed for 18c a pound. Bob remembers one trip with three wagons, which netted the brothers \$1,000 after all expenses were paid.

Antelope meat was never sold on the market. The pioneers considered it the finest meat in the world for frying, but it was not good for any other method of cooking; then, too, there was "not much meat on a critter."

In response to the question: "Did you ever eat beef?" Bob's eyes twinkled. "Hell, no!" he squeaked, "why kill our own stock when there was plenty of elk, deer, antelope, bear and sage chickens to be had for the shooting? We never stopped for fish, you had to work like the devil all day and take a beating in the willows and rocks in the creek for just a few pounds of trout, while you could go out and get a 500-pound elk in an hour. None of the old-timers in North Park fished for trout in the early days."

"But bear—now there was a meat for you! It was sweet and tasted very much like pork. The bear was the source of all our lard and we always rendered out large kettles of it in the fall for our year's supply. We shot or trapped the bears in the late fall when they were just rolling in fat, ready to go into

hibernation. Elk, deer and antelope have tallow but you can not make lard from tallow; the bear, like the hog, has what it takes to make the lard, and the best flavored lard in the world for baking. Tallow or suet was used for making candles and soap, to coat over leather boots and so forth. But bear grease was used for most everything from greasing wagons to frying doughnuts and slicking down our hair when we went to square dances. And biscuits! You just haven't tasted biscuits until you try them made with bear lard. We diced up the bear fat, filled a big, black iron kettle with it and added water. As it boiled down, the steam carried off the strong odor and taste, leaving the pure bear grease. All old settlers believed that any meat was at its best when cooked in its own grease."

The first bear that Bob happened upon, in the fall of 1885, sent him racing back to the cabin at break-neck speed, falling over logs and rocks in his haste to find Luke. But he lost his fear of them during the years that he ran a trap line. One winter day he found a big male cinnamon bear in one of his traps up Lime Creek. Just as he shot it he saw two cubs frantically clawing their way up a tree; he killed both, but their screams had reached the she bear's ears. She came charging in on Bob, still carrying in her mouth a big piece of fat she had picked up from the bait pile. It was close quarters and required fast shooting on Bob's part. In desperation he leveled his rifle and fired. The old bear dropped just a few feet from where he stood. Bob proudly announced, "That was four bears in less than thirty minutes."

In 1887 a state law was passed establishing a big game season and making it illegal to sell wild game on the market. This ended a profitable source of income for a number of the pioneers. Old Bill Ballinger, whom Bob had first encountered camping on the streets of Fort Collins, was reluctant to comply with any law that deprived him of his one source of ready cash. He went right on shooting elk. When he had enough for a wagon load he set out for Denver in broad daylight, with only a light tarpaulin thrown over his cargo of hides and meat. He had hardly left North Park when he encountered the newly appointed game warden, Charles Wandows, who signaled him to stop. Old Bill watched the officer get off his horse and start toward the wagon. He picked up his Buffalo Sharps and remarked dryly, "All right, warden, take a look into the wagon if you want to, but your next look will be square into hell!" Wandows certainly must have dismounted only to inspect the cinch, for he now got hastily back into his saddle and started on the gallop for other parts of the state.

Squeaky Bob found a new enterprise to replace his lost wild meat revenue. In 1892 he took a contract to break 300 horses which had been collected from Idaho, Utah, Wyoming and Colo-

rado. This was the last lot of horses to be shipped to New York City for use on the street cars there. Bill Miner, mayor of Fort Collins, and Harry Schidner hired Bob to break the horses in the old Fair Grounds in Fort Collins. Bob found two cowhands who were willing to work with him and soon had most of the horses broke so that they passed the test but there were always a few wild horses known as "killers" who would give their lives rather than be broke by man. There was one of these in this bunch of horses, a big black horse that stood better than sixteen hands. When a man entered the corral the big black charged him, ready to stamp out his life. Squeaky Bob took over the breaking of this horse. He made a double foot rope on him and when the animal charged, Bob would throw him on his head and on over. This soon took the charging out of him. After a number of weeks' work Squeaky had the black broke enough to drive him in a surrey. One day his helper took the horse and as soon as the big black found out that Bob did not have the lines, he cut loose with everything he had. Wheeler made a run to catch him and the horse kicked back, catching Bob's right hand against the buckboard. Two fingers were dangling by just the skin when Squeaky lifted up his hand. He took out his knife and cut them off. For the rest of his life he had a souvenir of his big black "killer."

Bob and his brother ran 300 head of cattle. The pioneer's idea of prime beef differed from that of today. Old timers said no finer meat was ever put in a man's neck than a grass-fed four-year-old beef. The Wheeler brothers kept their stock at least three years, more often four years, before they were considered ready for market. The beef in North Park was largely sold to Montie Blevins, who paid \$45 to \$50 a head, then resold them on the Denver market.

Bob was not above appropriating a maverick now and then. One day a heifer jumped into the corral with his milk cows. It had no brand on it. Squeaky seized opportunity by the horns—he ran his brand on the strange animal just as soon as he could heat the iron. Luke, who had grown up in the tradition of a western cattle range, was thoroughly disgusted with his young brother and would have nothing to do with the deal. Soon Frank Cunningham rode up and asked if Bob had seen a stray heifer. Squeaky brought out his most choice cuss words and indignantly demanded to know if Cunningham was accusing him, Robert Wheeler, of stealing a cow. Frank Cunningham at once apologized to Squeaky, told him to forget the whole incident as he had just thought the animal looked like one of his herd, and, in way of further apology, he presented Bob with a quart of good whiskey.

When Luke saw the clever fashion in which his brother had bluffed out Cunningham, he wanted half interest in the heifer, but he never got it.

Bob soon had a herd of thirty Hereford and Durham cattle all his own. The neighbors were mildly curious about the remarkable increase in his cattle holdings. Some of the "wild-thinkers" around the park got out the story that Squeaky had "got ahold of two Texas steers and that they each had at least two calves each spring."

Squeaky could tell hunting incidents by the hour. During the long winters in North Park, he found much enjoyment in the hunt and had numerous narrow escapes. Antelope were in great herds in the open stretches. One morning Squeaky shot a large one. The animal started off on the run. Believing he had hit it, Bob put his horse to the gallop after it, expecting to see it fall soon. Racing his horse beside it, he leaped from the saddle and landed on the head of the antelope with such force that both were thrown to the ground. Before the animal could recover from its stunned condition Bob drew his knife and cut its throat. Upon examining the carcass Bob found that his shot had not even touched the animal. "A fool stunt if one was ever pulled," remarked Squeaky complacently.

"Now, a bull elk," continued Bob, "is one of the most vicious of animals when wounded or cornered. One time I shot one, knocked him down, set my rifle against a tree and went over to cut his throat. Just as I leaned over him, the bull jumped to his feet and lunged at me. My friend, Bert Reed, was quick to use his rifle and saved my life, for as the elk fell his antlers dug deep into the ground just missing my feet. At other times I have seen elk and even deer run 300 yards after having been shot clear through the heart. I believe they run on a deep breath of air, taken just before they are hit, and which they hold in their lungs."

Under the pre-emption act, Squeaky Bob took up a 160-acre homestead near the west end of Milner Pass, about twenty miles north of Grand Lake. He built a cabin at the head of Big Creek, just two miles from Big Lake. Having never tried his hand at carpenter work, he experienced no little trouble in putting up a cabin, alone. The nearest lumber was at Mountain Home, fifty miles away. Bob decided to use logs which could be had for the cutting. He leveled off the ground which was a heavy loam, and it made a fine hard floor when wet and packed down. This he covered with deer, elk and bear robes that lasted for years and were warm and as soft as a carpet. He piled sod on the roof, and in time flowers and grass grew all over the top of his cabin. He boasted of owning the first "roof-garden" in Colorado.

After proving up on his homestead Wheeler left this section for the first time since coming to Colorado. He spent the years from 1895 to 1897 in Encampment, Wyoming, where he realized \$25,000 in the mines.

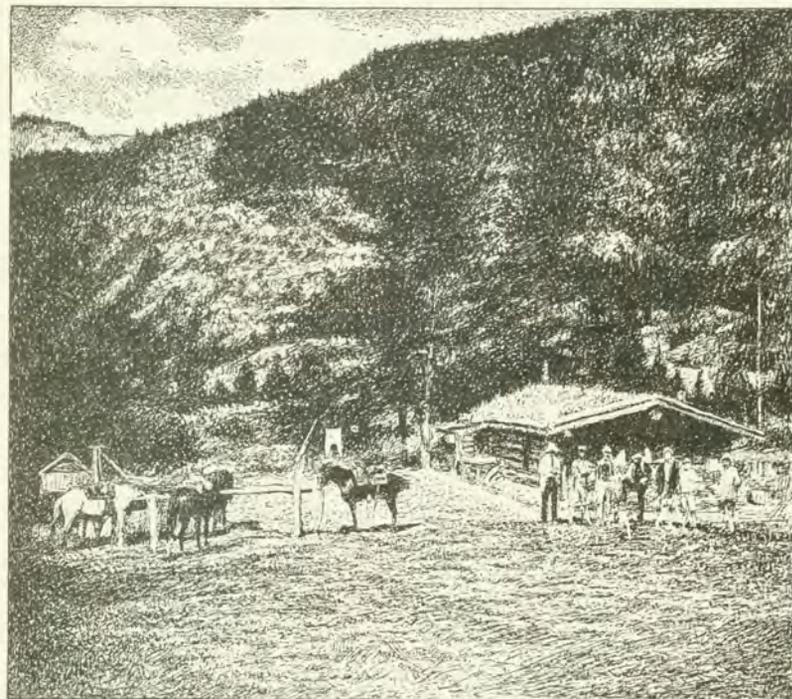
When America went to war with Spain, in 1898, Robert Wheeler joined Colonel J. L. Torry's Rough Riders. He had charge of the horses. Perhaps it was here that Squeaky Bob gained his magnificent command of profanity—he was a past-master in the art of swearing. It was not offensive, the way Bob used it, but seemed merely a part of his conversation. To ask to write Bob's life story was to court disaster for, more often than not, the interviewer was so impressed by Squeaky's colorful and forceful English, that he himself came away "cussing like a trooper."

Wheeler served for seven months with the Rough Riders, being stationed for almost the entire period at Jacksonville, Fla. When they were finally transferred, their train ran into another troop train at Tubnebo, Miss., killing ten soldiers and injuring thirty others. Two carloads of horses were killed and many were injured so badly that they had to be shot. Squeaky, who was riding in a car with the horses, jumped just before the collision. The other four men in his car and all the horses were killed. The outfit was returned to Jacksonville, where Colonel Torry was placed in the hospital to recover from the train wreck. The Rough Riders did not wish to go on without their leader. Here Squeaky became very excited. "Just let me show you," he said, "how the poor man gets the *best* of everything in this life. One of the troopers got his back broken in the wreck and had to settle with the railroad for \$300, while Colonel Torry, who had no bones broken but was badly shaken up, settled with the company for \$85,000. While on duty at Jacksonville, I had to keep the Negroes off the grass. I was mustered out of the service with malaria and have spent better than \$2,000 of my own money trying to cure it. Ten years after the war I was granted \$10 a month compensation. You've heard the saying 'nothing too good for the poor?' Well, that's what they get—NOTHING."

In 1900 Wheeler went back to his homestead in Phantom Valley. He ran a few head of cattle, trapped and did some prospecting. There were lots of beaver dams on the nearby creeks. Beaver pelts brought \$25 when in prime condition. Squeaky sunk a lot of prospect holes on the hills near his cabin. He could never quite give up the idea that gold was there. He was always finding "color" but never the big strike he hoped for.

Squeaky Bob was immaculate about his house keeping. He would have given even Dame Van Winkle a run for her money. If one entered his cabin with muddy feet he was immediately

ordered outside to clean them. Bob never dressed a chicken without scraping and scrubbing it inside and out. Carrie Leimer Vote wrote of a visit to his cabin in 1909: "The interior was as white as soap and water could make it, the ceilings and walls covered with white canvas, the cupboards and table with white oil cloth—the dishes fairly shone. And to think that some suffragist was walking the streets looking for a square meal, and this man was still at large! Our host dished up a meal that would make an



"SQUEAKY BOB'S" CAMP WHEELER
From a drawing by Herndon Davis

ordinary woman green with envy. While we ate he talked about his mines, and his voice grew higher and higher as he talked about his wonderful properties on the opposite hill."³

For thirty years Squeaky batched in the Colorado mountains. In 1908 he started a summer resort, just as a joke. For two years he gave all meals away free, then the joke sort of went stale; people kept coming and Bob was forced to charge for his services. Shep Husted, an old guide who worked out of Grand Lake to Estes Park, wanted to stop over night at Bob's place with his

³The Trail, Vol. 2, No. 5, pp. 15-16.

parties. He talked Bob into the resort idea. Wheeler started with four tents which he built up two feet from the ground and furnished with a cot and a chair. He soon found out that many people from the east had never slept in a tent and enjoyed the experience a great deal. By the end of the first season he was forced to add twenty more tents. Bob prepared all the meals and served them at any time of the day or night. Many times Shep Husted happened in with a large party at 2 o'clock in the morning, after a moonlight ride from Estes Park. Squeaky now went into the resort business in earnest. He got out a circular describing his place as "Camp Wheeler, Squeaky Bob's Place on the Colorado River, Hotel de Hardscrabble, where nature is still unspoiled." One paragraph read thus: "This is the natural and only stopping place between Horse Shoe Inn in Estes Park and Grand Lake. The landlord, Squeaky Bob Wheeler, aims to be host, cook and companion to his tired guests who often sit in his kitchen-dining room and watch him prepare the meals, whetting their appetites and cracking jokes at the same time. Here one may actually eat wild strawberry shortcake and trout just pulled from the stream."

Squeaky charged \$5 and \$6 per day. He and Shep Husted worked together and soon were making good money in spite of the shortness of the season. Many well known persons stopped at the "Hotel de Hardscrabble." Teddy Roosevelt came there to shoot a mountain sheep. Charles Evans Hughes, Otis Skinner and his daughter, Steven T. Mather, Judge Porter, Albert T. Fall, Edward Simmons, Thomas Moffat, Hanington Brothers and many a titled Englishman visited the resort. "I remember well," reminisced Bob, "a Lord Whitbread from the House of Parliament and a Lord John D. Cobbold from London who stayed for 38 days to hunt. They paid \$15 a day and furnished all their own food and whiskey for the party. These noble Englishmen were odd about their hunting, they would never shoot a doe or a cow elk, but would shoot a bull elk just for the teeth. Each fall many wealthy Englishmen came for the hunting season. What they wanted was the head to take back to England as a trophy. One of the largest elk heads in existence is now in London and was taken on one of our hunting trips. Its antlers measured from base of horn to tip $59\frac{3}{4}$ inches with a diameter at the base of 8 inches. It was a perfect head with eight points on each antler, and was about a seven-year-old elk. The Englishmen wanted only the heads, so the natives in the district would follow up the hunting party and secure the fresh meat for their own use. These Englishmen were good people, with plenty of money."

The guests had fun and Bob had his own—at their expense. A young lady from the East wanted so much to catch a trout that Bob fixed her up an outfit and took her where she could scarcely help getting one. When she caught a six-inch fish she came running to show it proudly to Squeaky, but a game warden happened up at this inopportune moment and told her he would have to measure it, and, if it were not of the legal seven-inch size, back it must go into the stream. Bob told the warden to mind his own business, then explained to the puzzled young lady that the man was a maniac but harmless, and she could just go right ahead and catch all the fish she wanted. Some of the men in the party, thinking to have some fun, told the warden it was a wonder Squeaky Bob didn't kill him then and there; that he had already killed four men in Wyoming and wouldn't hesitate to make it five. That night Bob was "tipped off" and told the warden that if he so much as made one false move, he would be carried out of the cabin, dead. The poor fellow left in the middle of the night in fear of his life. There was an old cave up on the mountain side which could be seen from the cabin. Bob used to tell the tourists that he had lived there for three years before he dared come out as he was wanted for killing some men in Wyoming.

After being a batchelor for fifty years Bob Wheeler fell a victim to cupid, and married his housekeeper. The honeymoon was spent in the cabin and for a long time they did not see anyone from the outside world. Squeaky's wife ran a trap line and did very well, taking many a marten, fox and bobcat. She sold one silver fox pelt for \$50. Bob measured the snow for the Government that winter. There was 53 feet before spring. During one storm five feet fell in 36 hours. It was a long time before anyone could get out, even on snowshoes. Many cattle and much wild game died. Most of that winter snow lay four feet on the level.

In 1926 Robert Wheeler was forced to sell out, due to leakage of the heart. He had started from scratch, made good money for 32 years, then sold for \$24,000. Camp Wheeler changed hands three times after he left the park. The first party changed the name to "Phantom Valley Resort" and spent \$45,000 the first year. His failure Squeaky attributed to the throwing out of \$65 worth of good thick china and replacing it with \$400 worth of eggshell stuff. Even the old stove that was in perfect working order was thrown in the dumps and replaced with a new fangled \$200 job. Then he bought up a bunch of wild Indian ponies. By the end of the second year he had tied up \$70,000. He sold for \$50,000 to Milt Stadler who was killed in an auto accident near the ranch a year later. Irwin Beatty then took over the place and made it into a dude ranch.

Squeaky Bob's wife died in 1933. He found life in Denver lonely and longed to go back to the mountains he loved but his heart condition made that impossible. He died in Denver in 1946.

Squeaky used to say sadly, "I'm in the winter of my life now, and, like the sheep, I had to come down from the high country."⁴

⁴Material obtained in interviews by Mr. and Mrs. James Rose Harvey just prior to Bob Wheeler's death.

Beginnings of Education in Larimer County

H. M. DUNNING*

“Let our children grow up in ignorance? Never!”

That statement, uttered by many a pioneer, especially the pioneer mother, epitomizes the attitude of those who pushed out, away from organized society, into the then unknown spaces in these United States.

It also explains why, in 1864, before any public school districts had been organized in Larimer County, Mrs. Albina L. Washburn, wife of John E. Washburn, the first probate judge in this county, taught a small private school in a log cabin.

Her salary was \$10 per month. She had 10 pupils: Theodore A. Chubbuck, Clarence L. Chubbuck, Frank G. Bartholf, Kitty Bartholf, Byron Bartholf, John Bartholf, Willie Bartholf, George Luce, Lawrence Luce and Winona Washburn. The term was three months.

In 1865 a private school was organized at La Porte.

A room in the Pioneer Cabin was utilized for the first school in Fort Collins. This building was owned by “Auntie” Stone and was operated as a hotel. It was at that time located on Jefferson Street. Among the guests was Mrs. William P. Keays and her son, William P., Jr. Mrs. Keays started teaching her son. This soon became known, and it was not long until the parents of other children asked to have their children included in the “class.” This was in the summer of 1866. About that time a Mr. Stratton persuaded Mrs. Keays to become his wife. In the fall of that year a room in one of the buildings which had been used for officers’ quarters was fitted up as a school room and Mrs. Stratton was employed to teach a six-months term of school. School District No. 5, the logical result of this pioneer school, was organized in 1870.

One day while school was in session Mrs. Stratton happened to look up and discovered Chief Friday of the Arapahoes and several

*Mr. Dunning, a business man of Loveland, has long been interested in local history. He early began the collection of historical relics and mementoes and started the Pioneer Museum at Loveland.—Ed.

of his braves peering into the one window of her school room. The Indians were smiling; they seemed to be greatly amused at the spectacle of one woman teaching so many children. The children were considerably frightened, and Mrs. Stratton admitted she was a little nervous because of the visitors. The Indians, on their part, were perfectly peaceful, and when their curiosity had been satisfied, they slipped away as quietly as they came.

Only recently (1940) the original records of School District No. 1 in Larimer County have been discovered. They are now in possession of the writer at Loveland, donated by Mr. and Mrs. A. V. Benson. The first entry in the secretary’s record is the authorization for the district:

Big Thompson, Colo., Jan. 4th, 1869.

Messrs Judson P. Warner and Ed. D. Clark:

You are hereby authorized to post notice in your district (No. One) for the purpose of an organization, the Western Boundary line having been extended to the Snowy Range. You will proceed to organize according to law and make your report to me. Respt.

James M. Smith, Jr.
County Supt. Schools Lar. Co. Col.

North and south the organizers apparently could take in as much territory as they liked, but they were limited on the east and west. The eastern boundary of the district was the eastern line of Larimer County, but they had to stop at the Snowy Range on the west. In this vast territory the secretary’s minutes list 16 pupils.

No. of Children in School District No. One, County of Larimer, Territory of Col., between the ages of five and twenty-one years.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Andrew Sullivan | 9. George Asbury |
| 2. Josephine Sullivan | 10. Albert Asbury |
| 3. Safrona Sullivan | 11. Louella Asbury |
| 4. Katie Clark | 12. S. J. Blackhurst |
| 5. Lilly Clark | 13. Della Blackhurst |
| 6. Little John Sise | 14. Montana Kilbourne |
| 7. Lena Modena | 15. Wm. Rist |
| 8. Hannah Warner | 16. Chas. Rist |

Lu Brandt, Sec.

Does anyone know about Little John Sise? What has become of him? Who was he? Perhaps a book could be written about each pupil. Many are the changes that have taken place since 1869. Nearly all must have gone to their reward. Little Lena Modena passed on when she was only sixteen and lies buried west of Loveland in an ill-kept, crumbling graveyard.

Messrs. Warner and Clark acted promptly on the order from the County Superintendent. They called a meeting of those interested. Twelve persons responded, and the meeting was held at old Namaqua, on the Big Thompson about three miles west of present Loveland. Here are the minutes from the old book kept by the then secretary, Lucas Brandt:

Organization of School District No. 1.

School District No. 1, County of Larimer, Territory of Colorado.

Jan. 16, 1869.

At a meeting held in aforesaid District on the evening of the 16th, Jan., 1869, for the purpose of electing directors for aforesaid District.

J. P. Warner was chosen President of said meeting and Lucas Brandt as Sec.

By a vote taken by Ballot the following were elected as board of directors for aforesaid District. President, Judson P. Warner, Secretary, Lucas Brandt, Treasurer, Edwin D. Clark.

Names of voters present: Joseph Glendennen, Jud P. Warner, Wm. Oviatt, Edwin D. Clark, Clinton D. Graham, Lorenzo Snyder, Lucas Brandt, Jeff Kilbourne.

Adjourned to meet Jan. 30, 1869.

Lucas Brandt, Sec.

And so this board met on the day specified:

School District No. 1, Co. Larimer, Ter. of Col., Jan 30, 1869.

1. Met pursuant to order. By a vote cast by the voters of said district for the purpose of building a school house in aforesaid district. The vote was lost eight to one.

2. There was then a vote taken for the purpose of levying a tax of One Hundred and Twenty-five Dollars for the purpose of defraying the expenses of said district. Carried.

3. Also a vote was taken fixing the compensation of the Treasurer at 15c per annum and the secretary at five dollars per day for all actual time spent in doing business for aforesaid district. Adjourned to meet first Monday in May, 1869.

The board met May 3, 1869, and the same board was again elected to office. The next important meeting was held May 2, 1870, and a committee appointed to report on the cost of building a school house. The committee consisted of J. P. Warner, E. D. Clark, Jeff Kilbourne.

At the regular meeting of the board held September 5, 1870, a vote was taken on the kind of a school house to be built, log or frame, and log carried.

At this same meeting it was voted to build the school house on the south side of the creek (Big Thompson) on the southwest corner of Mariano Modena's land. There were ten voters present at this meeting.

Things seemed to drag along through the last months of 1870 without a school house being built. In 1871 a new president was elected, George Rist, in the place of Mr. Warner. At this same meeting the notes of the secretary tell about a suit having been filed against the District by District No. 8, just organized, for their share of money from the county. It seems that District No. 1 having been the first one with an organization had received all the money from the county. When No. 8 was organized they wanted their share dating back to the date the No. 1 district was organized in January, 1869.

The minutes indicate that the board had told No. 8 to jump in the lake. Then there is a document dated July 8, 1871, signed by John E. Washburn, David Notman, Jr., and John Sullivan, who were appointed as an arbitration committee to settle the matter.



EDUCATION PIONEERS IN LARIMER COUNTY

Left to right: Arah Sprague, Abner Sprague, Ella Osborn Scott, Winona Washburn Taylor.

The document says that this suit was for money called the teachers fund for the years 1869 to 1870 and amounted to \$157.27. Besides this each district had to pay the committee of arbitration the sum of \$9.00. Then on top of this the Treasurer of District No. 1 received from District No. 1 the sum of \$6.50 for cost of arbitration and witness fees. This was paid to Ed. Clark, treasurer, by Order No. 7 on October 3, 1871. According to the secretary's book this same treasurer, Ed. D. Clark, received \$490.00 for building the school house. This order is numbered 2 and dated January 9, 1871. Order No. 3 stated that Mr. Clark received \$4.00 for painting seats and desks. This order is dated January 9, 1871, also. In 1872 he received \$27.00 for new furniture.

The first teacher at Namaqua was Arah Sprague and, according to the voucher or order dated September 30, 1871, she received the sum of \$200.00 for teaching school from June 5 to September 22, 1871.

She must have been the first school teacher at Namaqua, for there is no earlier record of there having been a teacher or even any school at this location. The school house was built in the years 1870-71. The only other teachers besides Arah Sprague were Mr.

Frank Baker and Miss E. Hanby. Mr. Baker taught through June, 1872, for which he received the sum of \$50 and through July and August of the same year for which he received \$100. Then in June, 1873, he received \$40 for one month. Miss Hanby taught through September, October, and November, 1874, for which she received \$120.00.

Hunting Antelope with Dogs

A. R. Ross*

I came to Colorado with my parents in 1871 when it was a territory and a frontier country in every sense of the word. I took Horace Greeley's advice and grew up with the country. We were members of the St. Louis Western Colony which settled the town of Evans which was the county seat of Weld at that time. My father, W. D. Ross, after being discharged from the Army, joined this group which was composed of many Civil War veterans. The Homestead Law had just been passed, and father immediately filed on a quarter section of land in the "Big Bend" district a few miles south of Evans, then an open cattle range—the Big Bend referring to the bend of the Platte River west of Evans.

I was a lad just entering teen age at the time. There were five of us in the family and we all moved out on the claim in the spring of 1872 and were the pioneer settlers on homesteads in that section. Our nearest neighbors were at Ft. St. Vrain some seven miles west on the Platte River.

I was appalled at the vastness of the new country and thrilled by the adventures it presented. We were able to see objects at so great a distance in comparison to my native State of Illinois. Game was plentiful, especially antelope. No license was required to hunt any kind of game and no limit to the number you were allowed to kill.

Antelope traveled in droves and in the winter months came down to the settlements to feed at the settlers' straw stacks. I had designs on them when I first saw them and had an idea that they could be caught by dogs, even if they were considered the fastest animals on foot in America; and if such a sport could be developed, it would be thrilling.

I began looking for dogs that I thought would be suitable for such hunting. I secured two greyhounds that looked good to me and was anxious to try out their speed behind a bunch of antelope.

*Mr. Ross, of Fort Collins, was ninety years old on May 30, 1947. He has contributed articles to this magazine previously.—Ed.

I had been taking extra care of my horse and had been feeding the dogs regularly in my preparation for a chase.

Finally "H-day" came when the short grass was covered with a deep fall of snow and the antelope began to drift down to the settlements. In looking over the snow-covered prairie, I decided they would be around our ranch by noon, but before that time they were in the fields. I called the dogs and they came bounding toward me. They looked ready and fit for the run, and as I rode out they followed close behind the horse. Time and time again I ordered them back in order to get closer to the antelope before they started to run. When the dogs sighted them, I gave a sharp command, "Go get them." They started quickly showing some speed but did not close in on the antelope as fast as I had expected. I ran my horse much too fast in order to encourage them, and we went for miles before we caught one. By the time we had gotten three we were all exhausted. The dogs lay flat on the ground and began eating snow, and my horse was breathing very hard as he stood with sweat dripping off his sides to the ground. The antelope were glad to stop and had only gone a short distance away and turned and stood there curiously watching us. Their lolling tongues clearly told of the energy they had used to keep away from the dogs. They were exhausted and with very little more effort, and with a fresh horse and dogs, I could have driven the remaining ones of the bunch to the ranch and put them in the corral.

At this point, other hunters who were attracted by the barking of my dogs rode up with fresh horses and shepherd dogs and took up the chase of the helpless animals which looked cruel and unsportsmanlike to me.

I was left on the snow-covered prairie with three antelope to transfer to the home ranch with one tired horse to do it. My dogs should have been hauled home after such a run. I took the back trail to gather up the antelope. I carried one across my saddle in front of me and tied two to my faithful horse's tail. They gave me no trouble for they slipped over the snow easily.

Our hunt was a success in a way, but it was a record of endurance instead of speed, and the kind of hunting one could not call a high type of sport. I still hoped to find a dog fast enough to catch an antelope within one-half to three-quarters of a mile. I had decided on the way home that I would not go out hunting again under the same conditions.

The following day one of the dogs died because he had become overheated on the strenuous run and I was compelled to give up hunting for a while at least.

Some time later a neighbor, who had heard of my losing the hunting dog, offered me a pup about three months old. He told

me he had been selling them for a good price but this was the last of the litter, and he would cost me nothing. He was a cross between a hound and a shepherd dog. I thanked him kindly, picked up the tiny ball of flesh and fur and carried him away in my arms wondering if this little mite would some day be able to catch an antelope.

I watched his development day by day and as the months passed had some hope for a spectacular antelope hunt some time in the future. By the time he was one year old, he had developed into a wonderful looking dog, not as tall and slim as a hound but heavily muscled on all four legs with shorter nose and coupling. He carried himself proudly alert and was quick to know my wishes. He showed some affection for everyone he met and was fond of children.

Another winter had come and once more antelope were drifting down into the settlements. It was hunting season again. I told my folks I was taking the pup out for a run, and they thought it unwise at his age, but I promised I would keep him from running too far. I rode away in high spirits to see my fuzzy pup take his first run. When we got fairly close to a bunch of antelope, I got off my horse, called the dog to me and pointed out the bunch of antelope as I held his head between my knees. He quickly sighted the animals and was eager to go. "Now, Tige," I said, "I want one of them, go get it!" and made a motion with my hand. He jumped from between my knees like a shot from a gun and by the time I had mounted he had them on the run. I rode fast to be near, if he caught one, to see how he performed. I was near enough to see him make a spring and catch one high up on the hock and set back. The antelope landed flat on its side and the dog jumped across its body and caught it by the throat. The antelope never got on its feet again for he cut its throat as well as I could have done it myself. He didn't need any help. He whined and started after the bunch. I called him to me, patted him on the head, and cried, "Glory be, you are the dog I've been looking for. Where did you learn to do that trick." He looked up at me and then at the retreating band of antelope anxious for the go ahead sign to catch another. If he had been able to talk, he would have told me it was no trick but was his nature and that, perhaps, he also was a descendant of a stag hound that caught and destroyed their catch as well. Tige caught the first antelope he ever saw and proved to me that he needed no extra training, and caused my fondest hopes and dreams of a spectacular hunt to be realized. His work was done quickly and silently. He never barked as a fox hound would, but saved that energy to increase his speed. My fuzzy pup had demonstrated that a dog can

catch and kill an antelope without his master's help, thus also saving him the disagreeable sight of looking in the eyes of the timid and terrified animal. I looked down at the fallen antelope at my feet and then at my faithful dog as if I were in a dream. All of this had happened so quickly I could not realize it was true. In less than 30 minutes from the time Tige started to run, I came up to where he stood beside the dead antelope with its throat cut and ready to be loaded on my horse without any help from me. As I stood in this daze, my dog, who had noticed something strange about me, roused me from my dream by raising on his hind legs and placing his paws on my chest. He licked my face and hands showing that he understood my surprise and thrill. If you are the proud owner of a dog, no move of yours escapes his watchful eye. You are his world. He seemed to be as happy as I about the catch as he trotted along beside the horse on our way home, looking up now and then to see that the antelope was riding safely in front of me in the saddle.

My folks were certainly surprised when I rode up to the ranch with an antelope, no sweat on my horse, and the dog as fresh as when he left. As time went on Tige was allowed to catch more antelope until he had gotten as many as nine on one run. He was always ready to catch more and his method was always the same, he threw them and neatly cut their throats. After each catch he looked back at the hunter for further orders. A wave of the hand and he would be off after another.

People from nearby towns came to borrow Tige, who was willing to go with the other hunters and catch and kill as many as they wanted and be brought back showing little fatigue.

No one ever came to the Ross Ranch in the winter months and went home empty handed if he liked antelope for we always kept a supply of them hanging hog-dressed in the yard between the cottonwood trees as a "help-yourself" offering to the neighbors.

Coming home early one morning after being out at a New Year's party, I noticed a bunch of antelope in front of the house. I had been out all night and we had more meat than we needed so I was not interested in a chase just then, and was hoping my brother, Jim, with whom I bunked would not see them and want to take a run. Jim was getting up to do the chores as I dropped into bed. He soon came running back and told me about the antelope. "Yes," I said, "I saw them. We don't want them." He replied, "I'm going to take the dog and you follow up with the mules and the sled." He was off without waiting for me to answer. I raised up in bed, looked out of the window and saw the dog catch the first antelope, throw it, cut its throat, and look back at Jim who waved his hand toward the bunch which was

the go ahead sign. Jim kept him going until I thought he must intend to catch them all. Tige was always ahead and caught and killed antelope as long as the signal was given him. When we came up to the dog, we found him standing over the last antelope looking after the retreating bunch anxious to catch another.

We loaded the last one killed on the sled first and followed the trail back through the snow for the others. We found each one as the dog had left it, no sign of a struggle, dead where he had thrown it. Our sled load of antelope numbered nine and the dog had done it all in a chase of about a mile and a half.

During his entire life, Tige insisted on being with me when I rode the range. Nothing and no one could detain him for he always broke away and followed me. That very faithfulness and devotion to me was the cause of his untimely death, but that is another story and a sad one on which I do not care to dwell.

“A man may shake you by the hand
And wish you to the devil,
But when a good dog wags his tail,
You are sure he is on the level.”
