



Edward Wanshear Wynkoop in 1861.

The Controversial Career of Edward W. Wynkoop

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On an autumn day in 1858 lanky Edward Wanshear Wynkoop disembarked from a sidewheel steamer in busy Leavenworth, Kansas Territory. Born on 19 June 1836 in Philadelphia, he had spent the first twenty years of his life in Pennsylvania, where his family was engaged in smelting iron. His grandfather, Henry Wynkoop, had been a member of the Continental Congress, and his great-great-grandfather had come from Utrecht, Holland, to settle in the New Netherlands in 1640. However, prominent lineage meant little to the restless youth. He proceeded from Leavenworth to Lecompton, the territorial capitol of Kansas, to become a clerk for his brother-in-law William Brindle, receiver of the United States Land Office in Lecompton. In Kansas the Pennsylvanian began a manifold western career filled with controversy at every stage. His character, a combination of reckless stubbornness and stern moralism, generated conflict wherever he went. Nowhere was this more true than in Colorado, where Wynkoop rose to prominence and made friendships and enmities that lasted for a lifetime.¹

Brindle, Wynkoop's patron in Kansas, was a fiery advocate of the divine truth of Presbyterianism and the divine right of slavery. Wynkoop shunned involvement in the sectional controversy then burning in Kansas, but from Brindle he learned about the virtues of the Democratic party and the intricacies of the real estate business, and he mastered the Colt revolver. He soon acquired political connections in Kansas, including the friendship of Governor James W. Denver, a fellow Pennsylvanian.²

In the fall of 1858 reports of gold on the upper South Platte River

¹ Edward W. Wynkoop, "Unfinished Colorado History," 1876, p. 1, Documentary Resources Department, Colorado Historical Society, Denver; Frank M. Wynkoop, "Intimate Notes Relative to the Career of Colonel Edward Wynkoop," Edward W. Wynkoop Collection, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe; Joseph M. Beatty, Jr., ed., "The Letters of Judge Henry Wynkoop, Representative from Pennsylvania to the First Congress of the United States," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 38 (1914): 39.

² Albert R. Greene, "United States Land-Offices in Kansas," *Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society* 8 (1903-1904): 4-6; Wynkoop, "Unfinished Colorado History," pp. 1-5.

posed a problem for Governor Denver. The gold fields lay in formerly unpopulated Arapahoe County, Kansas Territory, the boundaries of which extended to the Continental Divide. Denver quickly appointed a slate of county officials that included Wynkoop as sheriff. Inasmuch as he possessed a sturdy, six-foot-three-inch frame and a steady shooting eye, Wynkoop seemed well qualified to police rowdy mining camps. Also prominent among the county appointees was William H. Larimer, still another Pennsylvanian, who was to be county treasurer.

Wynkoop and the rest of the county officials planned to found a city in the gold fields as their county seat. In September 1858 they embarked from Topeka for the mines by the Arkansas River route. Pausing only for cheers and libations at the first sight of the Spanish Peaks, they traveled quickly to Pueblo. Larimer, who had started later, overtook Wynkoop's party there. United, they traveled north, arriving at the South Platte River on 16 November. Although earlier arrivals already had founded the town of Saint Charles on the best available site, all the founders had left for the East except for a mountain man named William McGaa. With threats and whiskey the newcomers persuaded McGaa to join them and a group of Nebraskans in founding the city of Denver on the same spot. After selecting a name for the city, Wynkoop immediately became the object of two disputes: rival speculators accused him and his friends of stealing the site for Denver, while Nebraskans and Republicans denied the jurisdiction of the Kansan sheriff.³

On 3 December Wynkoop and a friend, Albert B. Steinberger, left Denver to act as agents of the Denver Company in eastern Kansas. The temperature dropped to twenty degrees below zero, and Wynkoop froze his feet; nevertheless, the two survived a journey along the frozen South Platte River to Omaha, Nebraska Territory. Wynkoop then went to Lecompton, but despite his lobbying, the legislature chose to issue a charter to the Saint Charles Company rather than to the Denver Company. Wynkoop imposed himself as a partner in the Saint Charles Company, however, and since the legislature of Kansas never established meaningful authority over the gold fields, the Denver Company kept control of their town site by simple occupation.⁴

While in eastern Kansas and Nebraska, Wynkoop told eager crowds exaggerated tales of golden wealth to be found along the South Platte River. These stories returned to haunt him when in April 1859 he again

started west from Lecompton, this time leading a wagon train of emigrants who had paid \$100 each for passage to the mines. Along the way he met thousands of disillusioned miners who were returning because they had found no paying mines. Wynkoop was threatened with hanging by emigrants who said he had deceived them. Fortunately, by the time he reached Denver, new strikes in the mountains had restored confidence in the mines.⁵

For two years thereafter Wynkoop attempted to act as sheriff of Arapahoe County, despite the existence of a rival provisional government under the name of Jefferson Territory. When on 9 October 1859 William Park McClure and Richard E. Whitsitt prepared to fight a duel on the banks of Cherry Creek, Wynkoop called on assembled spectators to help prevent bloodshed, for McClure was his close friend. The crowd ignored the sheriff's appeal, whereupon Whitsitt seriously wounded McClure.⁶

Wynkoop found it even more difficult to exert authority after the town fathers of Denver formed an independent city government in the late 1860s. On 12 March 1861 he intervened in a fight in the Saint Charles Saloon between Mark "Buckskin" Widgestein and Thomas Evans, a gambler. As Evans wounded Widgestein with a knife, Wynkoop struck the gambler on the head with his revolver. The scuffle spilled into the street; Widgestein seized a pistol, Wynkoop leaped aside, and Widgestein fired, killing a Black bystander. City Marshal James R. Shaffer arrived to arrest the fighters as Wynkoop stood by.⁷

Wynkoop more readily assumed jurisdiction in cases that extended beyond the city limits of Denver. In late November of 1860 a rumor was circulated that Thomas Evans had abducted Mademoiselle Haydee, a popular actress. Wynkoop pursued them and brought them back, but to his embarrassment, the woman revealed that she and Evans had been married.⁸

More sobering duties stemmed from the case of an Irishman named Patrick Waters. Waters was riding along the South Platte River in a wagon with Thomas Freeman, a rancher, when suddenly he emptied a shotgun into Freeman's head, took the money from his pockets, and fled eastward on horseback. W.T. Shortridge, a deputy of Wynkoop,

³ Wynkoop, "Unfinished Colorado History," p. 15; LeRoy R. Hafen, ed., *Colorado Gold Rush: Contemporary Letters and Reports, 1858-1859*, Southwest Historical Series, no. 10 (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1941), pp. 271-72.

⁴ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 27 October 1859; Unidentified clippings, Scrapbook, Edward W. Wynkoop Collection. This scrapbook in the Museum of New Mexico contains more than three hundred pages of clippings dealing with Wynkoop's life and related events. The clippings are pasted on blank shares of stock in the Denver Town Company. Some clippings are from early Colorado newspapers of which files have not survived.

⁷ Clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

⁸ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 28 November 1860; Melvin Schobertin, *From Candles to Footlights: A Biography of the Pike's Peak Theatre, 1859-1876* (Denver: Old West Publishing Co., 1941), pp. 38-39.

³ Wynkoop, "Unfinished Colorado History," pp. 5-10; Edward E. Wynkoop, "Edward Wanshear Wynkoop," *Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society* 13 (1913-1914): 71-72; William H.H. Larimer, *Reminiscences of General William Larimer and of his Son William H.H. Larimer, Two of the Founders of Denver City*, comp. Herman S. Davis (Lancaster, Pa.: New Era Printing Co., 1918), pp. 77-102; Calvin W. Gower, "Kansas Territory and the Pike's Peak Gold Rush: Governing the Gold Region," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 1966): 290-97; William McGaa, "A Statement Regarding the Formation of the St. Charles and Denver Town Companies," *The Colorado Magazine* 22, no. 3 (May 1945): 125-29.

⁴ Wynkoop, "Unfinished Colorado History," pp. 10-14; *Omaha Times*, 6 January 1859; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 18 April 1860.

brought the killer back from eastern Nebraska. The Masonic Lodge brothers of Freeman demanded revenge of Waters, a Catholic. A dozen men led by Charles Harrison, another Mason and the proprietor of the Criterion Saloon, conducted Waters to the scene of the crime and put a rope around his neck. Wynkoop would not allow a lynching, but they did extract a confession. Following a people's trial, Wynkoop and a few deputies hung the offender from a gallows in front of the Criterion Saloon.⁹

On one occasion Wynkoop openly defied the city government. His friend McClure, by then recovered from his duel with Whitsitt, was arrested by a city deputy on 2 November 1860 for threatening the life of O.J. Goldrick. McClure refused to post bond to ensure good behavior and stalked out of the municipal court, only to be arrested again and placed under heavy guard in a room above a store. At 3:00 A.M. a deputy heard a knock on the door and opened it. In rushed twenty men led by Wynkoop, and as they stormed up the stairs, city deputies dove from the windows. The intruders carried McClure to sanctuary in the Criterion Saloon. Wynkoop insisted that as county sheriff, he merely had assumed the custody of the prisoner, but he later arranged for McClure to post bond.¹⁰

Unable to defeat the city government, Wynkoop resolved to join it. On 5 April 1861 he ran for sheriff on the Workingman's Independent Ticket. During the election day his unruly supporters stuffed the ballot boxes. In a second election the next day, friends of Wynkoop filled the streets, displaying banners, beating drums, and intimidating opponents. Although Wynkoop repudiated the "palpable outrages" of the day before, Shaffer won the election.¹¹

Wynkoop was also involved in other public controversies. Early in 1860 two companies of militia were organized. Joining both, Wynkoop was a first lieutenant of the Denver Cavalry and a second lieutenant of the Jefferson Rangers. The Jefferson Rangers went into action on 30 January after a group of men known as the Bummers, suspected of robbing a farmer's wagon of a cargo of turkeys, took to the streets and terrorized citizens. Wynkoop led the rangers to the scene to restore order, ending the Turkey War.¹²

Personal as well as public conflicts swirled around Wynkoop. On 7 March 1860 he served as second for Lucian W. Bliss, acting governor of Jefferson Territory, who mortally wounded Dr. J.S. Stone with a shotgun in a duel.¹³ Wynkoop himself nearly became a duelist in De-

ember 1860 following a dispute with his friend McClure, then postmaster of Denver. Wynkoop entered the post office and requested his mail, but McClure refused to release it because Wynkoop had not paid the rent on his postbox. Wynkoop promptly wrote out a challenge, and McClure reluctantly accepted. The terms specified were rifles at sixty paces, and the duel was to occur ten days later on Stout Street. Target practice occupied Wynkoop's time for the next few days, and at sixty paces he became deadly accurate. A lady friend of McClure reportedly said, "Mackey, you're a dead duck if you face that Kansas Jayhawker!" Both antagonists came to Stout Street at the appointed time, as an expectant crowd gathered. On reaching the field of honor, McClure had second thoughts and apologized to Wynkoop. The two left together, friends again.¹⁴

The most controversial incident in which Wynkoop was involved was the killing of James Hill by Charles Harrison on 2 December 1860. That afternoon Wynkoop had broken up a vicious brawl between two Texans and barely had prevented Harrison from shooting one of them. Earlier, Wynkoop had quarreled with Hill, and Hill had been boasting that he was going to whip the sheriff. Hill was drunk when he entered the Criterion Saloon and began to taunt Wynkoop, who called him a liar. Both men drew pistols and waved them about, whereupon Harrison interrupted and led Hill away to the bar. To prevent bloodshed, the bartender tried to take Hill outside but was unsuccessful. Harrison drew his pistol and fired four shots, filling the room with smoke and mortally wounding Hill. Brought to trial before a people's court, Harrison pleaded that the killing was justifiable homicide. After hearing Wynkoop and other witnesses, the jury was unable to reach a verdict.¹⁵

Even cultural initiatives produced disputes. In early 1861 Wynkoop was elected president of the Denver Amateur Dramatic Association, which staged five productions for the benefit of the poor. Wynkoop starred in several dramas. His most acclaimed role was the lead in *The Drunkard*, in which his portrayal of the *delerium tremens* brought cheers and curtain calls. No doubt the crowd's enthusiasm derived partially from the common knowledge that Wynkoop was no more averse to taking a drink off the stage than on it. After making considerable donations to the poor, the association became insolvent and was the recipient of unfounded allegations of misappropriation of funds by its officials.¹⁶

Wynkoop's acting experience was sweetened by an acquaintance with Louise Wakely, a professional actress. She had numerous admirers, but none could match Wynkoop's dashing bearing. On 21 August

⁹ Clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*; J.E. Wharton, *History of the City of Denver, From Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (Denver: Byers and Dailey, 1866), pp. 47, 51.

¹³ Clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; *Denver Inter-ocean* 5, no. 9 (11 March 1862): 136.

¹⁵ Clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

¹⁶ Clippings and playbills, Wynkoop Scrapbook.



Louise Wakely,
a successful
actress, chose to
marry Wynkoop
from among her
many suitors.

1861 they were married and their family grew to include eight children, two of them born in Colorado. Louise Wynkoop, a woman of dauntless spirit, accompanied her husband to a series of outposts on the frontier.¹⁷ Wynkoop was twenty-five-years-old at the time of his marriage. He already had shown capacity for leadership but also a lack of sound judgment. He was popular, but he kept poor company. During the next few years his character matured under the pressure of responsibility.

As the Civil War began, Wynkoop was an early recruit in the First Colorado Volunteer Infantry Regiment, receiving a commission as a second lieutenant on 31 March 1861. Soon afterward he was made captain of Company A. As the regiment grew, it went into quarters at Camp Weld, two miles from Denver. Wynkoop founded the Camp Weld Dramatic Association, which staged several productions in the spring of 1862.¹⁸

The young captain also participated in regimental politics. A Confederate army under Brigadier General Henry Hopkins Sibley was pushing into New Mexico, capturing Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Wynkoop and most of the other officers in the First Colorado believed that

¹⁷ Frank M. Wynkoop, "Commemoration, Mrs. Edward W. Wynkoop," Wynkoop Collection; Edward W. Wynkoop, Pension, Veteran's Records, General Services Administration, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁸ Edward W. Wynkoop, Military, Veteran's Records, General Services Administration, National Archives; *Denver Weekly Republican and Rock's Minutian Herald*, 13 February 1862; Clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

their colonel, John P. Slough, was delaying their assignment to New Mexico. On 5 February 1862 Wynkoop drafted a petition from the officers to Slough asking to be sent to New Mexico. "We consider that we have the right," he wrote, "to demand this of you." On 22 February the regiment marched for New Mexico.¹⁹

Traveling rapidly, the regiment reached Fort Union, New Mexico, in fourteen days. The volunteers then pushed on to the eastern entrance of Glorietta Pass, the gateway to Santa Fe. Slough sent Major John M. Chivington ahead with 480 picked men in an attempt to surprise the Confederates. On 26 March they met the enemy's advance under Colonel Richard Scurry at Apache Canyon. Wynkoop led a detachment of 120 men to the left canyon wall and flanked the Confederate battery. His men brought accurate fire on the artillerymen, forcing them to retreat twice. As a mounted company charged the battery, Wynkoop's men descended from the heights to capture numerous prisoners.²⁰

Two days later, while Slough and most of his troops engaged the Confederate army at Pigeon Ranch, Chivington and 430 men struck across country and gained the Confederates' rear. They found the enemy's supply train of eighty wagons guarded by only 200 men and a field piece. While Chivington and most of his troops destroyed the train, Wynkoop, with thirty marksmen, successfully picked off the enemy artillerymen and captured the cannon. Chivington's tactical success gave the victory to the Coloradoans, as the Confederates began a retreat southward out of New Mexico. The First Colorado and Wynkoop took part in another minor engagement, the Battle of Peralta, during this retreat.²¹

The success of the volunteers was tinged with bitterness. Slough resigned as colonel because of threats on his life by his men. Chivington was promoted to colonel, Wynkoop to major. Wynkoop remained on detached service in New Mexico until the fall of 1862. During his stay there he became friends with the staunch Unionist from Taos, Christopher "Kit" Carson. Louise Wynkoop endeared herself to wounded soldiers by frequent visits to the hospitals.²²

Wynkoop found a hero's welcome when he returned to Camp Weld, where he remained until the summer of 1863. His fellow officers gathered one night at the Planters House Hotel in Denver to present him

¹⁹ Clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

²⁰ U.S., Department of War, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series no. 1. 55 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1902). 9:530-32; Ovando J. Hollister, *Boldly They Rode: A History of the First Colorado Regiment of Volunteers* (1863; reprint ed.: Lakewood, Colo.: Golden Press, 1949), pp. 45-67.

²¹ *War of the Rebellion*, 9:532-45; Hollister, *Boldly They Rode*, pp. 68-97.

²² Arthur A. Wright, "Colonel John P. Slough and the New Mexico Campaign, 1862," *The Colorado Magazine* 39, no. 2 (April 1962): 100-104; Edward W. Wynkoop, Military, Veteran's Records; Wynkoop, "Unfinished Colorado History," pp. 20-23.

with a sword. On another occasion citizens visited Camp Weld to give him a fine strawberry roan horse. Touched, Wynkoop pledged that if he should die in battle, "he desired no better epitaph than 'He was a Coloradoan.'" ²³

Wynkoop also began to realize the importance of politics and gradually converted to the Republican party. He supported the organization of the Union party in Colorado. Unable to attend its convention on 20 February 1863, he sent a rousing address signed by himself and other Democratic officers. He denounced all Democrats who did not support the war, warning, "The man who talks peace, while one Traitor lives, is himself a Traitor." ²⁴

In late June 1863 Wynkoop again left Denver. With five companies of the First Colorado, by this time converted to cavalry, he traveled west on the Overland Mail Route to campaign against the Ute. The troops rode north and west to Fort Halleck and established a camp perhaps eighty miles southwest of there. Chivington joined Wynkoop in camp on 27 July and ordered Wynkoop to choose 150 men to search out the Ute. Unfortunately, his guide was a well-known mountaineer named Jack Jones, who proved to be no help at all. The striking force crossed North Park and rode to the southwest. From there on Wynkoop was lost, but he continued traveling south and west until rations ran out, never overtaking the Ute. The soldiers returned to Denver after a tortuous and fruitless trek, but Brigham Young of Utah appreciated Wynkoop's efforts enough to send him a basket of fruit. ²⁵

Wynkoop performed routine duties at Camp Weld until he was sent to take command at Fort Lyon, arriving there on 8 May 1864. When another Union party convention prepared to meet in July, Wynkoop assembled his five companies of the First Colorado at Fort Lyon to elect a delegate. Wynkoop presided over the soldiers' meeting, and although a motion to send a representative was contested hotly, his will prevailed and the motion passed. ²⁶

Controversy over Indian affairs soon eclipsed conflict over politics. Thefts of stock by Indians in the South Platte and Arkansas river valleys prompted attacks by the First Colorado on villages of Cheyenne and Arapaho. The Indians in turn made murderous raids on outlying ranches and stations. At Fort Lyon, Wynkoop had orders from Chivington to kill all Indians on sight. On 7 August he took eighty of his men in pursuit of the Kiowa who had attacked a wagon train and nearby homes. After two days in the saddle, the soldiers returned discouraged to Fort Lyon.

²³ Clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*; *War of the Rebellion*, 22, pt. 2:368-71; F. M. Wynkoop, "Intimate Notes," p. 2.

²⁶ *War of the Rebellion*, 34, pt. 3:531-32; Edward W. Wynkoop, Military, Veteran's Records, Clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

Wynkoop pleaded with Chivington for reinforcements to wage a major campaign.

Wynkoop was angered further a few days later when two soldiers were killed outside of the fort and a sergeant was pursued until he was within sight of the post. The major sent three separate detachments of troops after the Indians, and finally he left the fort with cavalry and a battery. After they had gone only a few miles a thunderstorm arose; the soldiers were lost until they found Sand Creek. Returning to the fort, a frustrated Wynkoop wrote to Chivington that "at all events, it is my intention to kill all Indians I may come across until I receive orders to the contrary from headquarters." ²⁷

On 3 September 1864 an event occurred that began to change Wynkoop's opinions about Indians. A party of soldiers brought three Cheyenne to Fort Lyon to see Wynkoop, who angrily reminded the troops that his orders were to kill all Indians seen. Wynkoop then read the letters given him by One-eye, the spokesman—missives written on behalf of Chief Black Kettle and the other Cheyenne and Arapaho by a half-breed in their camp. The letters requested a council of peace and offered to release their seven white captives. Amazed at the Indians' courage in approaching the soldiers, Wynkoop agreed to go to the Cheyenne and Arapaho camp on the Smoky Hill River. Other officers at the post considered this foolhardy, but Wynkoop left the fort with 130 cavalrymen, taking the Indian emissaries as hostages. Four days of travel brought the soldiers to the Cheyenne camp, where they were met by over six hundred mounted warriors. A tense confrontation was relieved when Wynkoop sent One-eye to tell the warriors that he had come to talk. After conferring with the chiefs, Wynkoop took his men into a nearby camp. ²⁸

Late the next morning some sixty Indians entered the soldiers' camp for a council. Wynkoop called on them to turn over any prisoners they held but told them that he did not have the authority to make peace with them. The exchange then became heated, as spokesmen for the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers accused Wynkoop of negotiating in bad faith. An excited speech by One-eye and a reasoned address by Black Kettle quieted the firebrands. Wynkoop led his men into a defensible camp twelve miles away, while the Indians decided whether to accompany him to Denver for a council with Chivington and John Evans, the territorial governor.

During the meeting numerous warriors had come into the soldiers' camp and poked about curiously, nearly provoking a fight with the nervous troops. After Wynkoop had established the new camp, a group

²⁷ *War of the Rebellion*, 34, pt. 4:151-41, pt. 2:735-41, pt. 1:231-32, 237-40.

²⁸ *War of the Rebellion*, 41, pt. 3:242-43; Wynkoop, "Unfinished Colorado History," pp. 28-31.

of soldiers, fearing treachery, demanded that they return to Fort Lyon. Wynkoop allayed their fears with an account of the council meeting. The next morning all mutiny dissolved, for a party delivered a white captive, seventeen-year-old Laura Roper. A day later Wynkoop rode out to meet Black Kettle, who brought three white children, two boys and a girl. This gesture completed Wynkoop's change of attitude toward the Indians, as in tears he rode off with the little girl in his arms.²⁹

The soldiers and a delegation of seven chiefs rode back to Fort Lyon. Wynkoop then accompanied the chiefs to Denver, where they received a chilly reception. In a meeting at Camp Weld, Evans and Chivington refused to offer terms to the Indians, telling them that their only recourse was to surrender to Wynkoop at Fort Lyon.³⁰ Wynkoop returned to his post, the chiefs to their people, but soon the Arapaho encamped peaceably near Fort Lyon, visiting the post in small numbers and receiving rations. Reports reached Major General Samuel Curtis, commanding the Department of Kansas, that Wynkoop was allowing the Indians dangerous privileges. On 2 November 1864 Major Scott Anthony of the First Colorado arrived at Fort Lyon and relieved Wynkoop of command. Several days later Black Kettle brought the Cheyenne to the fort. In a council with Wynkoop present, Anthony told them to give up their arms and camp on Sand Creek, twenty-five miles north, along with the Arapaho. Wynkoop left Fort Lyon on 26 November to report to the headquarters of the District of the Upper Arkansas at Fort Riley, Kansas. With him he carried a letter from citizens of the Arkansas River valley thanking him for pacifying the Indians and an affidavit from all the officers at Fort Lyon, including Anthony, stating their approval of his course with the Indians.³¹

Thus, it came as a shock to Wynkoop, en route eastward, to learn that two days after his departure, Chivington had attacked the Indians on Sand Creek. Wynkoop displayed his old temper in a fit of rage when he heard that Chivington had led troops from the Third Colorado Hundred-day Regiment and the First Colorado in killing perhaps two hundred Indians, violating the pledges of safety by Wynkoop and Anthony. Later, in a testy interview with General Curtis, Wynkoop defended his policies, and as the facts of the engagement at Sand Creek sifted eastward, he appeared vindicated. He was ordered back to Fort Lyon to investigate the affair. Arriving on 14 January 1865, he set to his

task with energy. His report labeled Chivington an "inhuman monster" and announced that all efforts for peace had been spoiled.³²

This was only the first of a series of investigations, in each of which Wynkoop's actions were approved and praised. Nevertheless, Chivington and his friends waged a concerted campaign to discredit Wynkoop. A report of the congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War harshly condemned Chivington and Evans, as did the report of the joint special committee on Indian affairs, generally known as the Doolittle Committee. Three congressmen of this committee visited Colorado and were led by Wynkoop on a grisly tour of the battlefield at Sand Creek. In his deposition for them, the major accused Chivington and Evans of prolonging hostilities with the Indians for commercial and political gain.³³

The most thorough inquiry was a military investigation presided over by Samuel F. Tappan, lieutenant colonel of the First Colorado. The first witness before the investigative commission, Captain Silas Soule, had accompanied Wynkoop to the village on the Smoky Hill and had refused Chivington's orders to attack at Sand Creek. For his testimony against Chivington, Soule was shot and killed in an ambush in Denver. While attending Soule's funeral, Wynkoop fell from his spirited horse and suffered painful back injuries.³⁴

Wynkoop testified before Tappan's commission from 20 to 24 March 1865. Chivington was allowed great liberties in cross-examining his antagonist. Chivington fired rapid and intimidating questions, which Wynkoop fended off with curt replies. Witnesses called by Chivington then tried to show that Wynkoop was a drunk, that he had endangered his command on the Smoky Hill, and that he had disobeyed orders by leaving Fort Lyon. Chivington's allies carried the fight into the press with libelous letters.³⁵

Wynkoop became the most hated man in Colorado Territory, for most residents endorsed Chivington's actions, but his fearless testimony won the respect of military officers and federal officials who repudiated Chivington's brutality. Wynkoop and other Colorado Volunteers who re-enlisted made up the Veteran Battalion of Colorado Cavalry, of which he was appointed commander. On 17 June 1865 he also was made chief of cavalry for the District of the Upper Arkansas.³⁶

²⁹ *War of the Rebellion*, vol. 41, pt. 1, pp. 960-62; S. Exec. Doc. 26, p. 92.

³⁰ U.S., Congress, Senate, Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians*, 38th Cong., 2d sess., 1865, S. Rept. 142, 4, pt. 3: 108; U.S., Congress, Senate, Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, *Condition of the Indian Tribes*, 39th Cong., 2d sess., 1865, S. Rept. 156, pp. 26-98.

³¹ F. M. Wynkoop, "Immate Notes," pp. 2-3; S. Exec. Doc. 26, pp. 8-29.

³² S. Exec. Doc. 26, pp. 83-103.

³³ Edward W. Wynkoop, *Military, Veteran's Records: Special Orders 162*, Department of the Missouri, 17 June 1865, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

²⁹ Wynkoop, "Unfinished Colorado History," pp. 31-35; U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Indian Affairs, *Sand Creek Massacre*, 39th Cong., 2d sess., 4 February 1867, S. Exec. Doc. 26, pp. 16-19, 29-34, 84-89, 96-102 (hereinafter cited as S. Exec. Doc. 26).

³⁰ Wynkoop, "Unfinished Colorado History," p. 37; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 29 September 1864; S. Exec. Doc. 26, pp. 9, 11, 18-19, 39-45, 86.

³¹ *War of the Rebellion*, vol. 41, pt. 1, pp. 982-84, 959-60; S. Exec. Doc. 26, pp. 86-87, 92-95.

In the fall Wynkoop left Fort Lyon to command the cavalry escort for a commission sent to counsel with the Indians of the southern plains. The commissioners, including Kit Carson, met with the tribes from 12 to 24 October on the Little Arkansas River in southern Kansas. Wynkoop expected the Cheyenne and Arapaho to blame him for the attack at Sand Creek, but instead they greeted him with joy and respect, requesting the "Tall Chief" be appointed their agent. The commissioners and the tribes concluded a treaty in which the Indians agreed to reside south of the Arkansas River and keep off the main routes of travel.³⁷

Not all of the Cheyenne were present, however, and the only person deemed capable of securing the signatures of the recalcitrant ones was Wynkoop. In December, although still in the army, he reported in Washington, D.C., to the secretary of the interior for assignment on detached service. Then he returned to Kansas, traveling to Fort Larned by ambulance for horseback riding was painful to him since his fall at Soule's funeral. From Fort Larned he traveled to Bluff Creek, twenty-five miles south of Fort Dodge, where the Dog Soldiers of the Cheyenne were encamped. With him were a detachment of cavalry and a train of goods as well as his brother George. He distributed gifts on 28 February 1866 and held a council the next day, although threatened with death by the son of Porcupine Bear, a warrior killed at Sand Creek. All of the men present agreed to the treaty after Wynkoop explained it, except Young Porcupine Bear, who sat silent when it was his turn to sign. Suddenly, he leaped to his feet, as Wynkoop clutched at his pistol—but he had risen only to sign the paper. Inside Wynkoop's tent lay his brother with a rifle trained on Young Porcupine Bear's heart. A second conference on Wood Creek on 4 April brought other elements of the belligerent Cheyenne to terms.³⁸

Wynkoop then traveled to Washington, D.C., only to be sent back to Kansas once more. This time he was to explain to the Cheyenne that the annuities promised them in the Treaty of the Little Arkansas were late because of delays in congressional appropriations. Wynkoop accomplished his mission at a council at Fort Ellsworth, Kansas, on 11 August.³⁹

Having resigned his commission in July, Wynkoop returned to



Edward Wynkoop and his interpreter, John S. Smith, were sketched by Theodore R. Davis, artist and correspondent for Harper's Weekly, during General Winfield Scott Hancock's expedition in Kansas in 1867. The sketch appeared in Harper's Weekly on 11 May 1867.

Washington, D.C., and posted bond to become the regular agent to the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Plains Apache. Once back in Kansas he cooperated with two more special agents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs sent to gain the tribes' acceptance of amendments to the treaty. Their earlier efforts had failed, but with Wynkoop present in a council at Fort Zarah on 13 and 14 November, they obtained the necessary signatures. Wynkoop established his agency at Fort Larned in order to be close to the tribes. He traveled constantly from there, delivering annuities and visiting, reporting that they were perfectly peaceful.⁴⁰

Wynkoop, therefore, anticipated no trouble when in March 1867 Major General Winfield Scott Hancock informed him that he intended to conduct a military expedition along the Arkansas River. Hancock

³⁷ Wynkoop, "Unfinished Colorado History," pp. 46-48; U.S., Congress, House, Commissioners of Council with Arapahoes and Cheyennes, *Treaties with Arapahoes, Cheyennes, & c.*, 39th Cong., 1st sess., H. Exec. Doc. 1, pp. 699-720.

³⁸ Wynkoop, "Unfinished Colorado History," pp. 48-50; Wynkoop to John Pope, 2 March 1866, Wynkoop to Pope, 5 April 1866, Letters Received, Office of Indian Affairs, Upper Arkansas Agency, Microfilm Series 234, Roll 879, General Services Administration, National Archives; G.A. Gordon to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Kansas, 5 March 1866, Wynkoop to D.N. Cooley, 8 April 1866, 39th Cong., 2d sess., 1866, H. Exec. Doc. 1, pp. 277-78.

³⁹ Jason Harlan to Cooley, 25 July 1866, Wynkoop to Cooley, 11 August 1866, Letters Received, Office of Indian Affairs, Upper Arkansas Agency, Cooley to Wynkoop, 25 July 1866, Wynkoop to Cooley, 14 August 1866, 39th Cong., 2d sess., H. Exec. Doc. 1, pp. 278-79.

⁴⁰ Wynkoop to Cooley, 27 October 1866, W.R. Irwin to Lewis Bogy, 3 November 1866, Charles Bogy and W.R. Irwin to Lewis Bogy, 12 November 1866, Wynkoop to Thomas Murphy, 2 December 1866, Letters Received, Office of Indian Affairs, Upper Arkansas Agency.

pledged that he was not seeking war and that he would cooperate with Indian agents. The course that Hancock followed, however, could not have been better calculated to initiate hostilities. His fourteen hundred troopers marched from Fort Riley to Fort Larned, while Wynkoop summoned Cheyenne leaders to talk with Hancock there. The general insisted on holding the interview at night, contrary to the Indians' custom, on 12 April. Then he decided to march his command to the Indians' village twenty-five miles west on Pawnee Fork, despite Wynkoop's warnings that this would frighten them, especially those who remembered the attack at Sand Creek. As Hancock's men approached the village, the women and children fled, while the warriors drew up in line of battle before the soldiers. Wynkoop rode forward to parley and arranged for Hancock to talk with the men of the tribe, including the audacious Roman Nose. Those Indians who were sent after the fleeing women and children were unable to stop them. While the soldiers camped near the village, the warriors left to join their families. Several days later Hancock learned from Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer, whom he had sent after them, that tribesmen had raided stations in the Smoky Hill valley. Hancock then burned the abandoned village in retaliation.⁴¹

For months after the incident, Wynkoop and Hancock engaged in a battle of correspondence with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Department of War, and the national press. Wynkoop charged that Hancock had provoked a new conflict by needlessly frightening the tribes and wantonly burning their village. In the village had been found a girl who had been raped and who later died; Wynkoop said the girl was an Indian and that she had been raped by soldiers, but Hancock asserted she was white and had been outraged by the Indians. The dispute heaped fuel on the fight already burning between the Department of the Interior and the Department of War for control of Indian affairs.⁴²

The Indians whom Wynkoop had worked so hard to pacify scattered across Kansas and Nebraska, raiding settlements. Wynkoop hoped for a new solution to the hostilities in October 1867 when another commission came to Kansas to investigate the causes of conflict and negotiate a treaty of peace. Meeting with the Indians of the southern plains at Medicine Lodge Creek in southern Kansas, the commissioners heard testimony verifying Wynkoop's account of how hostilities had commenced and confirming that the raped girl in the village had been an Indian. The commission went on to negotiate new treaties with the

⁴¹ Winfield S. Hancock to Wynkoop, 30 October 1866, Wynkoop Collection; for a full account of Hancock's expedition, see Timothy A. Zwnik, "The Hancock-Custer Expedition of 1867" (M.A. thesis, Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1974).

⁴² Wynkoop to N. G. Taylor, 15 April 1867; Wynkoop to Taylor, 18 April 1867; Wynkoop to Taylor, 21 April 1867, Letters Received, Office of Indian Affairs, Upper Arkansas Agency; Wynkoop to Murphy, 14 September 1867, 40th Cong., 2d sess., 1867, H. Exec. Doc. 1, pp. 310-14; *New York Times*, 30 May, 2 September 1867; *New York Herald*, 2 September 1867.



General Hancock held a council with the Cheyenne at Fort Larned on 12 April 1867 at night, contrary to Wynkoop's wishes and the Cheyenne's custom. After Hancock learned that the Cheyenne had attacked stations in the Smoky Hill valley, he ordered their village on Pawnee Fork burned in retaliation.



tribes. Although the Indians of his agency signed the treaty, it became clear that Wynkoop had lost the confidence of the more belligerent elements of the Cheyenne. At one point he had to leave the conference because of threats on his life by Roman Nose.⁴³

Despite the new treaty, the Cheyenne raided extensively during the next year. Wynkoop's superiors therefore ordered him to gather all of the peaceful tribes at Fort Cobb, Indian Territory, while soldiers chastized the hostiles. When Wynkoop learned that four columns of troops were to be campaigning in the area of Fort Cobb and that some of them would be militia rather than regular troops, he feared another massacre similar to Sand Creek. He refused to be a party to gathering the tribes together in a place where they might be slaughtered. He resigned as agent on 29 November 1868 and went to Pennsylvania. Unknown to him, Custer already had confirmed his apprehensions by attacking the village of Black Kettle on the Washita River.⁴⁴

One month later Wynkoop addressed a special meeting of the United States Indian Commission, a humanitarian organization, at the Cooper Institute in New York. He repeated his old charges against Chivington and Hancock and explained the circumstances of his resignation. In 1869 the Indian Commission supported Wynkoop in an unsuccessful bid for appointment as commissioner of Indian Affairs. Back in Pennsylvania again, Wynkoop operated an iron foundry with his brother, John, until their business failed in the Panic of 1873. He then applied for the agency to the Navajo but was refused, despite the endorsement of the Indian Commission.⁴⁵

Wynkoop then joined the gold rush to the Black Hills. By way of Denver and Cheyenne, Wyoming, he traveled to Custer, Dakota Territory, in March 1876. His party skirmished with the Sioux and traveled over the battlefield on the Rosebud River where the Sioux recently had defeated the army of Brigadier General George Crook. The citizens of Custer were frightened by the Indians, so Wynkoop organized a company of volunteers called the Black Hills Rangers, of which he was elected captain. The second officer was Captain Jack Crawford, a dandy known as the Poet Scout of the Plains. After a few brushes with the Sioux, Wynkoop departed for better diggings at Deadwood. For uncertain reasons, he soon returned to Pennsylvania, where he delivered a

glowing report about prospects in the mines. He never went back, and for the next few years, he held a series of jobs.⁴⁶

In 1882 Wynkoop re-entered public service. Senator Henry M. Teller of Colorado had been appointed secretary of the interior, and he obtained for Wynkoop an appointment as a special timber agent for the United States Land Office in Denver, responsible for the prevention of illegal cutting of timber on government lands. The Wynkoops moved to Denver, but only for a short time. In 1883 he was appointed to the same position in Santa Fe, New Mexico Territory, a position he held until 1886 when he was removed after the Democrats captured the presidency. By this time he was investing his money in mining stocks, chronicling his adventures in magazine articles, and devoting his time to veterans' organizations.⁴⁷

Wynkoop was elected commander of the Carleton Post of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1883. On 22 February 1884 he was elected commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, Department of New Mexico, at the first annual encampment of the department. The greatest accomplishment of his year in office was the erection of a marble memorial to Kit Carson in Santa Fe on Memorial Day, 1885, along with a tablet on his grave in Taos.⁴⁸

The return of the Republicans to power in 1889 brought Wynkoop an appointment as adjutant general of the New Mexican territorial militia. Taking office on 2 December 1889, he served only until 1 April 1890. During this time his chief task was the suppression of bands of night riding fence cutters.⁴⁹

Wynkoop left this post to accept an appointment as warden of the territorial penitentiary, a position he long had sought. There he effected great improvements, constructing a hospital and sewers and planting a large garden. Louise Wynkoop was a competent matron for the institution.

In 1891 Wynkoop faced the final two battles of his life—and lost both of them. The first was political. Wynkoop ran afoul of the wheels of patronage by protesting the interference of the territorial prison board in hiring and firing employees at the penitentiary. Within a year the board removed him as warden, although admitting the removal was for no malfeasance.⁵⁰

The second was physical. Wynkoop no longer was the sturdy youth who had crossed the plains to Pikes Peak and brawled in the saloons of Denver. His luxuriant hair had thinned considerably; his trim waist had

⁴³ For a full account of the Medicine Lodge council, see Douglas C. Jones, *The Treaty of Medicine Lodge: The Story of the Great Treaty Council as Told by Eyewitnesses* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), see also U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Indian Affairs, *Report of the Indian Peace Commissioners*, 40th Cong., 2d sess., 1868, H. Exec. Doc. 97, pp. 1-23.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, 19 December 1868.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 24 December 1868; "Address of Edward W. Wynkoop at the Cooper Institute" and clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook; F.M. Wynkoop, "Intimate Notes," pp. 4-5; Peter Cooper to Ulysses S. Grant, 19 March 1869, Martin to Wynkoop, 8 May 1875, Wynkoop Collection.

⁴⁶ Clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 13 April 1882.

⁴⁸ Clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

⁴⁹ Commission and clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

⁵⁰ Clippings, Wynkoop Scrapbook.

expanded measurably. He became critically ill with Bright's disease, an ailment of the kidneys that stemmed from his fall at Soule's funeral twenty-five years earlier. Wynkoop died on 11 September 1891 at the age of fifty-five. After his death, his family moved to Denver. Ironically, when Louise Wynkoop had difficulty obtaining her widow's pension, it was John Chivington who expedited her claim with a letter to the United States Pension Agency.⁵¹

Moralism and mobility characterized the controversial career of Edward Wynkoop. The impetuous sense of honor he displayed as a youth matured into incorruptibility and independence. Wynkoop refused to compromise or to hide his opinions about public affairs, especially in regard to the Cheyenne and the Arapaho. He never hesitated to defy public opinion or powerful opponents in performance of what he believed was his duty. Seldom tactful, he was quick to condemn those who he thought were guilty of wrongdoing. This stubbornness caused him to move frequently, for in no place could he live peaceably for long. Wherever he went he encountered friends, enemies, and problems from his years in Colorado, the place that he always considered his home.

Wynkoop's career in the West seemed to touch every major event that arose during his times—the slavery issue in Kansas, the gold rush to Pikes Peak, the quelling of the rebellion, the conquest of the Plains tribes, the gold rush to the Black Hills, and the flowering of western politics. All these phenomena were horizontal threads that stretched tautly across Colorado and the West. People like Wynkoop were filaments that wove crosswise into the threads, illustrating the continuity among them.

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⁵¹ Ibid.: Edward W. Wynkoop, Pension, Veteran's Records.

The Ladies of French Street in Breckenridge

BY ELIZABETH M. SAFANDA AND MOLLY L. MEAD

In the late spring of 1972 a varied group of Colorado citizens gathered in the modest cemetery on the outskirts of Breckenridge around a large boulder embellished with a bronze plaque, which marked the grave of Helen Rich. They came from Denver, Colorado Springs, and the far corners of Summit County to participate in a memorial service for this noted journalist, novelist, and beloved friend who had died the previous winter. Among the mourners paying respect to the memory of Helen Rich were a Denver historian, a professor and editor of a poetry journal, a poet, the minister who was a relative newcomer to the region but who had befriended her in her later years, and many Summit County “natives” who had rubbed elbows with her for thirty years. The Reverend Mark Fiester asked each participant to share a personal memory of Helen, and while the poetry editor spoke easily and eloquently of his friend and colleague, many of those gathered were tongue-tied, at a loss to isolate one memory from many rich and colorful ones. A long, emotion-filled silence fell over the group. The awkward mood was broken when an ex-miner of Summit County spoke warmly of the lively poker parties that she had hosted so often in her bungalow on French Street.¹ In a few simple and hearty sentences, the miner touched on the core of Helen’s life. While she had traveled from Wisconsin to Paris to California and finally to Colorado Springs as a journalist, and while her novels had enjoyed a nationwide audience and much critical acclaim, the key to her inspiration lay in the deep ties she maintained, over a thirty-year period, with the citizens of Summit County, with the miners and laborers and waitresses and social workers who thrived at ten thousand feet.

All those years Helen Rich shared a modest—at one time quite primitive—cabin on the edge of Breckenridge with another writer, Belle Turnbull, who died in November 1970 at the age of eighty-eight—one

¹ Belle Turnbull to Hugh McGovern, 6 January 1952, Belle Turnbull Collection, Western History Department, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado (DPLW).

year before Helen. Belle Turnbull is renowned primarily for her intense poetry, for her prose poem *Goldboat*, and for her novel *The Far Side of the Hill*. These two women, whose rugged, somewhat reclusive life styles directly shaped their work, documented the texture and the direction of ordinary lives in small Colorado mining communities in the first one-half of this century. Their notable achievement was to demythologize and deromanticize this period of history, to strip away the veneer of glamour that distorted so many tales of life in the Wild West. Though the novels and poems of Helen and Belle are now out of print, serious students of both regional history and women's history should reexamine their work, for it is far more authentic and enduring than the superficial and highly romantic tales that proliferated after the original gold rush. While prostitutes, poker games, and alcoholic binges are woven into their novels, they are placed in their proper perspective and do not overshadow the larger and smaller concerns of the people of the Colorado mining communities.

Colorado, particularly the Colorado of the rarefied air, rugged peaks, and clear, cool streams, became extremely important in the lives of these two women. Born in Sauk Center, Minnesota, in 1894, Helen felt at an early age a deep need to escape from her family and her hometown. Her father, Edson C. Rich, a prominent dentist, was a member of the very strict Pilgrim Brethren sect and insisted on a rigid religious upbringing for his children.² Like Belle and another dear Summit County friend Susan Emery Badger, she was not willing to be constricted by the small-town life style, which encouraged her only to be a schoolteacher. "The minute I completed an education designed to make a teacher of me, I became a reporter and have been writing off and on ever since."³ She severed her ties with her past, except with her sister, and after a stint as a reporter in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, she freelanced in Paris and California, finally settling in Colorado Springs.⁴

Belle was born in 1882, and her family migrated from upstate New York to Colorado in 1890. Belle recalled that in 1890 "the streets of Colorado Springs were paved with pink gravel. The whole family was instantly smitten with western country, happily exchanging trillium for mariposa lilies, maples for cottonwoods, valleys for gulches. Steering a buckboard, we made for the Rampart Range on every possible occasion." Belle's love affair with the West had begun, for to her the West was a continual adventure. When she "was shipped East to acquire



After completing high school in 1904, Belle Turnbull "was shipped East to acquire culture," but she vowed to return to the more adventurous West. Here she posed in her senior prom gown.

culture at Vassar College," she felt that she had entered "a less vigorous land."⁵

Helen Rich and Belle Turnbull met in Colorado Springs in the 1930s, when Belle was the chairman of the high school English Department and Helen was a reporter and former society editor for the *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*. Helen had ceased being the society editor when she realized that she hated parties, and instead she became a top feature writer, covering the courthouse beat and focusing on crime stories from the sheriff's office.⁶ Both women had supported themselves for years by teaching and reporting and both were eager to concentrate their literary energies more fully on writing poetry and novels without the daily interference of grading papers and meeting deadlines.⁷

For a number of years the women had spent extended summer vacations in Frisco, in the heart of mountainous Summit County, where they thrived in a rented cabin on the paradoxically tranquil and stimulating atmosphere. In the 1930s Frisco had only twenty-five residents year round, expanding to sixty or eighty in the summer, and it provided an immediate respite from the increasingly refined and socially demanding

² Suzanne Pedersen, "Helen Rich," *Summit County Historical Society Centennial-Bicentennial Quill*, 1976, p. 32.

³ Rich to Simon and Schuster, n.d., Helen Rich Collection, DPLW.

⁴ Rich to Raffelock, 7 December 1951, Rich Collection.

⁵ Turnbull Collection, n.d.

⁶ Ellen O'Connor, "Go to Hills and Saw Wood," *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*, 27 June 1947; Mary Fillins to Turnbull, December 1933, Turnbull Collection.

⁷ Rowena Hampshire to Turnbull, 25 October 1936, Turnbull Collection.

life of Colorado Springs. Belle and Helen found that the combination of rarefied air and colorful citizens was invigorating both to their personal and their literary lives, and they decided to “retire” at the earliest possible date to this remote mountain village. As she made her annual late-summer trek over the Continental Divide and back to civilization in Colorado Springs, Belle came to the realization that “she felt stifled below timberline,” and this intensified her determination to settle permanently in Summit County.⁸ In 1947, about ten years after their move, Helen wrote to her editor from Breckenridge that “I live here because I had always wanted to live in the high mountains, and because there is no great hurry about anything here.”⁹ Like Belle, she had found that the physical tranquillity of the Ten Mile Range and its surrounding valleys was the ideal atmosphere in which to pursue her literary work. In a sense her whole life had been building up to this final, prolonged stay miles above the more pressure-filled urban hubs.

It would be a mistake to assert that Helen and Belle wanted to escape Colorado Springs society; escape is too harsh, too negative a term. Rather, their move was an active choice based on their personal needs, considering their age, their health, and their career ambitions. While some artists create more readily when submerged in an active social whirl, these two women found their work demanded greater distance from the socially stimulating cities on the plains. Their work literally needed air to breathe, and they found that air above the Continental Divide.¹⁰

The two writers moved to Summit County permanently in 1938, when the county, like much of the nation, was suffering from a severe economic slump. The population of Breckenridge, where they finally settled after renting a cottage in Frisco for two years, had dipped to three hundred after cresting at five thousand at the turn of the century. A hard-rock mining camp, Breckenridge had prospered as the mines did, and when the last of the monstrous gold dredges was closed down in 1942, those whose fortunes depended solely on the mining yield drifted out of the county. Only the “hardcore” remained, a handful of prospectors, small merchants, and a smattering of families whose roots stretched back to the nineteenth century. Helen and Belle became part of that group—not precisely natives but residents whose devotion to the county depended not exclusively on the unstable status of the mines or on the local economy but more on their ability to write and to live as they chose.

The two women valued Breckenridge, not for its quaintness or



From the kitchen window of their primitive log cabin on French Street, Helen and Belle could see the awesome Ten Mile Range. The mountains were a constant source of inspiration to them.



charm, which have never been its trademarks, but for the simple, unhurried rhythms of life there and for the awesome physical beauty that was only marginally tarnished by the vast mining operations. During the depression, so eloquently documented by Belle in *Goldboat* and by Helen in *The Willow Bender*, the giant, robot-like dredges ravaged the countryside, rooting up the Blue River, which wound through the center of Breckenridge, spewing huge piles of rock along the banks. These piles still remain, a silent but impressive testimonial to the waste material of human ambition.

The relentless, greedy dredges could not mar the beauty of the horizon, and Helen and Belle found a little cabin on French Street that offered mountain views above timberline from every window. The kitchen window framed the Ten Mile Range to the west, a constant source of inspiration to Belle who later named a book of verse in honor of the awesome mountains. Their fairly primitive log cabin, once

⁸ Emily Hurlbert, “Belle Turnbull,” *Summit County Historical Centennial-Bicentennial Quilt*, 1976, p. 34.

⁹ Rich to Simon and Schuster, n.d., Rich Collection.

¹⁰ Carroll Coleman to Turnbull, 12 March 1951, Turnbull Collection.

known as the old fox pens, lacked indoor plumbing, electricity, or a telephone, "amenities" that the two women deemed unnecessary.¹¹ Although they made a number of improvements over the years that transformed the cabin into a cozy, warm refuge, they always made their wildflower garden a higher priority than modern appliances. Not until the 1960s did they relent and install a telephone, and then it was designated for emergencies only; they hid it behind a curtain in the living room and gave their number to no one. After they had worked so carefully to create a peaceful domestic atmosphere conducive to their literary labors, they were not about to have it shattered by this link to the outside world.

The two authors carefully avoided romanticizing the rugged aspects of their Breckenridge existence: they found their physical labors invigorating, especially as a counterpoint to hours spent hunched over the typewriter, but they also realized that to the average Summit County resident there was nothing romantic or idyllic about laying in a supply of logs and kindling for the long winters. In describing her formal training in the classics and medieval history to an editor some years later, Belle remarked that Vassar did not "prepare me for life in Breckenridge, to deal with frozen water pipes, or how to break trail through a 14-inch fall

After the woodpile, Helen was ready for her typewriter.



of snow with webs (snowshoes), or how to get rid of packrats, or how long to hang a haunch of venison, or how to cut up a jag of firewood for a Franklin Stove."¹² Both women probably acquired these survival skills through trial and error and through close observation of the ways of their Breckenridge neighbors. They seemed to take great pleasure in wielding a saw and an axe, and Helen, especially, found chopping firewood to be therapeutic as well as necessary. "The beauty of the thing about living where I do is that I've got a woodpile when I come home from a day's work with nerves all frayed out. I go to work on the woodpile, saw wood, then split it into kindling if necessary; then I'm ready to go to work on the typewriter."¹³

According to their literary friends who made treks up over the passes to spend a day in the cabin on French Street, Helen and Belle had a special talent for warming a fairly primitive habitat with a few cherished possessions and customs. They retained remnants of their family traditions and values, embodied in the silver tea set and vast shelves of books, which testified to roots in New York and Minnesota as well as to France and Colorado Springs. Thomas Hornsby Ferril, a renowned Colorado poet and Denver newspaper editor, extolled the virtues of their special brew of London tea, fresh bread from the old kitchen range, liebsfraumilch in cut-glass goblets, and especially the conversation, "wry, sparkling, sophisticated, earthy."¹⁴ Ferril was quite specific about the sort of conversation that filled the French Street cabin on these occasions. "The talk might range through Minsky's burlesque and Emerson to the statuesque bearing of Breckenridge's top whore on horseback, leading the 4th-of-July parade."¹⁵ Both Helen and Belle had a salty, earthy, sense of humor that endeared them to their Breckenridge neighbors as well as to the literati who sampled Helen's boilermakers on a winter afternoon.¹⁶

At times their living room, which was the scene of many an intense but friendly poker game, was transformed into a literary salon. May Sarton had corresponded with Belle for some time, warmly praising her poetry, and on one trip west in the 1960s she was escorted up to Breckenridge by Alex Warner, editor of the *Colorado Quarterly*, and his wife Marie, a novelist. Sarton also took immediately to Helen, who

¹¹ Pedersen, *Summit County*, p. 32.

¹² Hurlbert, *Summit County*, pp. 33-34; William to Turnbull, 9 January 1957; undated letter, Turnbull Collection.

¹³ *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*, 27 June 1947.

¹⁴ Thomas Hornsby Ferril, "Ideas and Comment," *Denver Rocky Mountain Herald*, 23 January 1971; Myrtle Allen to Turnbull and Rich, 15 October 1958, Claire Gilstrap to Turnbull, 4 November 1958, Turnbull Collection.

¹⁵ Ferril, *Denver Rocky Mountain Herald*, 23 January 1971.

¹⁶ A potent drink composed of whiskey with a beer chaser, this was a favorite beverage among Helen Rich and her Summit County friends.



Many entertaining evenings were spent discussing literature, playing poker, and drinking whiskey in their cozy cabin,

as a rule was more gregarious than Belle, and the three formed a fast friendship.

While the two women tended to be reclusive, they by no means maintained a clique or a closed circle. They never limited their friendships to those who shared their cultural heritage or literary aspirations. For many years Helen worked as chief assistant to Susan Badger in the county welfare office and in this capacity dealt with the entire gamut of Summit County citizens. Many a long workday would end over the poker table in their cabin, Helen, Susan, and Belle pitting their luck against the county commissioners, merchants, and occasionally some former miners. The three friends were strong-willed women who met men on equal terms; thus, they felt quite comfortable exchanging bawdy jokes with the men and drinking their share of whiskey, straight. Men did not deal with them as soft, delicate women or as "flower of the prairie" types.¹⁷

This attitude was probably due, in part, to their no-nonsense approach to working and living in Summit County and, in part, to personality and appearance. Although petite and handsome, Belle always wore blue jeans, and Helen, too, preferred mannish attire. Suzanne Pedersen of Breckenridge recalls that Helen often chose men's shirts and slacks, a French beret (or occasionally a coon-skin cap), and slung over her shoulder a *Saturday Evening Post* delivery bag, bulging with books, manuscripts, and groceries.¹⁸ This get-up was meant to be

¹⁷ Interview with Alex and Marie Warner, Boulder, Colorado, 2 April 1977.

¹⁸ Pedersen, *Summit County*, p. 33.



and many adventurous days were spent exploring the deserted mines, fishing the mountain streams, and cultivating friendships in Breckenridge.

practical rather than affected or eccentric, and it made sense, for she spent hours tramping around the county with former prospectors who helped her explore the intricate workings of the now deserted mines. Helen gradually acquired a thorough understanding of mining technology, which made her two novels more authentic; they both left reams of notes on mining practice, focusing on the operation of the gold dredges, which indicate their intense curiosity and passion for detail.¹⁹

Helen's principal guide in these rambles was Curly Mackie, their neighbor on French Street and an ex-miner who drove them all over the county in his jeep. He was intimately acquainted with every road and trail in the county and generously shared his knowledge of mines and local geography. Curly supposedly could not talk without swearing and was unable to read or write, so Belle helped him with his correspondence.²⁰

Undoubtedly, they fully realized that characters like Curly provided a wealth of source material for their literary endeavors. But they certainly did not cultivate friendships with eccentrics like Curly solely to obtain data for their books; rather it was a balanced, reciprocal relationship in which they provided friendship and assistance, while residents like Curly provided fascinating companionship as well as an opportunity to observe at firsthand the roots of Summit County life and culture. The fruits of these friendships are apparent in the rich characters of Helen's

¹⁹ Rich to Mrs. Jack Foster, n.d., Rich Collection; these notes are currently housed in the Helen Rich and Belle Turnbull manuscript collections, DPLW.

²⁰ Interview with Louisa Ward Arps, historian, Denver, 25 March 1977.

novels, in the carefully developed, three-dimensional portraits of Toby, Cal, and Pandey. Belle based a number of her poems in *The Tenmile Range* on Summit County "characters," some of whom were easily identifiable to the residents, while others, like Mrs. Ike, appear to be composites.²¹

Alex Warner suggests, not at all in a critical tone, that the women experienced much personal satisfaction from living in an area where people like Curly were so colorful, so "different," often so eccentric. Certainly, many Summit County residents lived outside, and without awareness of, the fairly rigid social hierarchy operative in cities like Colorado Springs. These colorful people provided the central core of experience that inspired Helen to publish two novels and Belle to turn out intense, eloquent poems and her novel *The Far Side of the Hill*. Referring to this volume, Belle wrote to her editors that her motivation "has been many years of close observation of an element of our folk-fringe, the hard-rock mining folk: their attitudes and background, their speech and cadences. And my life between mountain and plain has furnished ample opportunity to understand the contrast between their dwellers."²²

In *The Far Side of the Hill* Belle highlights the vitality—compounded of humor, lust, determination, and simplicity—of the Jesser family and compares their rugged, uncluttered life style with that of Hala, the sophisticated, cosmopolitan outsider who is infatuated with their daughter. Of course, the Jessers come out favorably in this comparison; they are part of the folk-fringe, a mining family with roots stretching back to the earliest settlements in Topas (Breckenridge), and they intend to fight mightily against the likes of Hala and other tourists or outsiders who challenge their allegiance to the mountains and the earth.²³

Belle is especially successful in delineating the interdependence between the residents of Topas and their physical habitat. The Jessers thrive on the rarefied air; the sparkling atmosphere clarifies their attitudes and values and reaffirms their commitment to their village and the adjacent mines.²⁴ When Ike and Delia Jesser descend to Grand Junction for a funeral, and when their daughter Dee Ann later accompanies Hala to Denver and Colorado Springs, they are overwhelmed by

²¹ Rich to Leiper, Simon and Schuster, 6 September 1946, Rich Collection; Coleman to Turnbull, 3 October 1958, Turnbull Collection. In defense of a character in her writing, Rich wrote, "I agree that the character of Silverheels may not strike the approval of some at the present time. But I do not want her to be a stock character. There were some pretty remarkable whores in those days" (Rich to Mavis McIntosh, 27 May 1961, Rich Collection).

²² Letter, n.d.; Samuel H. Post to Reader, 4 September 1953, Turnbull Collection.

²³ Joanna Jolly to Turnbull, 30 September 1953, Turnbull Collection.

²⁴ "Topas people refer to open country as Outside, and they go to such places grudgingly and come back from them with all possible speed" (Belle Turnbull, *The Far Side of the Hill* [New York: Crown Publishers, 1953], p. 2).



Sitting in front of the fireplace in her beloved cabin, Belle had this photo taken for a book jacket.

the heat, the humidity, the stifling atmosphere. Dee Ann gradually realizes she will suffocate on the plains, without access to the trout, trees, smells, even the massive snows of the Ten Mile Range. After a vain effort to persuade Dee Ann of the glamour of city life, Hala complains that "the image of your mountains has never left your eyes."²⁵

Belle, too, suffered from a similar sense of suffocation when she made periodic visits to cities on the plains. This phenomenon is almost mountain-sickness in reverse; some visitors to the Continental Divide may experience dizziness, palpitations, and inertia, while native mountain dwellers suffer from corresponding symptoms when they are taken out of their element, though this may be more a psychological than a physical phenomenon.

Particularly in the compact, dense poems gathered in *The Tenmile Range*, Belle explores and records the unique effects of weather and the natural elements of the mountain country. She affirms in verse form the assertion that this land and its weather are extreme. In "Weather Con-

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

ditions," she testifies to the willful, unpredictable, almost eerie quality of the wind, the sudden snows, the atmosphere itself.

Never along that range is ease:
The rose of the winds goes wheeling over,
When there is peace and little woe
Dust devils rise and blow
Sucking the air from the river valley.
Water and blood will boil too early,
Atoms cry for their release.²⁶

Belle's evocative talents were acclaimed in her lifetime by Harriet Monroe and May Sarton, among others. Her short but passionate verses, as well as her novels, accurately summarize the experience of living in a remote, rugged, poverty-stricken mining village like Topas, or Breckenridge. While much has been written on gold strikes and gun fights, on poker stakes and prostitutes, she brushes these topics aside and focuses on the delicate balance between woman and nature, between the miner and temperamental elements, and between human moods and supra-human environment.²⁷

Helen, too, is concerned with the way weather shapes human personalities and, indeed, human destinies, though her method is quite different. While Belle writes of "blood boiling too early," referring indirectly to the stirring of human passions, Helen deals directly and more anecdotally with cabin fever, with emotions literally pent up by relentless snows and the resultant, and predictable, explosions. In both *The Spring Begins* and *The Willow Bender* she documents the psychological stress on the residents of a town like Breckenridge caused by the late spring snowstorms that isolate the village from the rest of the world. The theme of powerful, capricious natural phenomena is developed primarily through dialogue, which, thanks to years of intense observation and participation on her part, is earthy, gutsy, and authentic. In *The Spring Begins*, on the eve of a spring blizzard, Cal, Pandy, and Toby discuss the sense of melancholia, loneliness, and vague anxiety that an approaching storm inspires. In all their talk over a prolonged game of pinochle there is the strong implication that such capricious weather is responsible for capricious human behavior. And when the storm is over, their fears are confirmed.²⁸

Helen's literary works reveal a preoccupation with the way the residents of the mountain country work and play and hunt and drink with



In her literary works, Helen confronts the emotional and the psychological effects of "cabin fever." Because she was a keen observer of human nature, her novels also reflect her preoccupation with the mountain residents and their interaction with the environment.

little regard for, or awareness of, societal norms, which are more rigidly institutionalized and respected in places like Colorado Springs. The entire first chapter of *The Spring Begins* is devoted to a discussion of local mores, which she argues are intimately connected to the physical geography of the region. "This condition of geography made the residents of Buckbush different. For instance, Buckbush was a part of the United States of America and the people knew that there were laws and customs which they were expected to heed. However, Buckbush had its own laws and customs which seemed more suitable. None of them was written down except a few ordinances that no one remembered or could find on the records if anyone happened to want to see one, which wasn't likely."²⁹ She supports this claim about the local mores by discussing how the residents hunted and fished outside of the allotted legal season, yet they were careful to bury the hides "to spare the feelings of the game warden, who tried to do his duty, and left the offal where the coyotes would clean it up."³⁰ She also discusses "laws" affecting outsiders who come to settle in Buckbush, and "laws" regulating marriage

²⁶ Turnbull, "Weather Conditions," *The Tennille Range* (Iowa City, Iowa: Prairie Press, 1957), p. 13.

²⁷ "Robert Lee Cook spoke on 'The Poet and the Peak.' He named you, Belle Turnbull, as one of the poets who write truly about the mountains. In contrast with many writers who are influenced by a *Western myth*" (Myrtle Allen to Turnbull and Rich, 15 October 1958, Turnbull Collection).

²⁸ "I am working on a novel which I hope may be as true Oklahoma as your writings are true to your high mountain country" (Myrtle Allen to Turnbull and Rich, 15 October 1958, Turnbull Collection).

²⁹ Helen Rich, *The Spring Begins* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947), p. 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

and cohabitation. The heroine of *The Spring Begins*, Angie Sweet, is determined to gain some measure of control over her life after the death of her first husband, but in asserting her independence she must confront these unwritten laws that govern Buckbush life.³¹

Countless rambles with Curly and his pals and long poker nights with Summit County officials enabled Helen to acquire a firm grasp of the local vernacular. According to Ferril, Belle and Helen "always called the whores 'hoors'; good whiskey was 'drinkin' whiskey' as distinguished from 'sellin' whiskey'; and if you were dead, you were 'graveyard dead.'" ³² This familiarity with Summit County jargon enlivens Helen's novels and makes them more valuable to regional historians who must turn to diaries, letters, and literature when the original sources are dead. Her tales preserve the spicy, simple, yet often eloquent language of the men and women who stayed on in Summit County after the richest mines expired.

As indicated earlier, both authors portray a number of determined women who seek a greater measure of control over their personal lives. The pages of *The Spring Begins*, for example, are brightened with flashes of Angie's honest anger and with her desperate attempts to preserve her independent status. Small gestures indicate her deep need to shape her environment, her daily routine. When her husband dies, she realizes with guilty relief and anticipation that she can put sheets on the bed, clear the tools and junk out of the entrance-room, and rearrange the furniture. Her domestic efforts have an underlying symbolic value: they testify to her ability to act, to move, to direct, to change, and ultimately to grow.

The female protagonists in the novels of the two authors become increasingly aware of their personal options as the plots unravel. Dee Ann Jesser strains against the emotional restraints imposed by her new husband, Jacob Hala, but grows to realize that she can leave him and abandon the marriage. Angie Sweet seems temporarily trapped by her first husband, and then by her infatuation for Pandy, a miner, but comes to see that she has other choices too. In *The Willow Bender*, Reenie Towner's alternatives are severely circumscribed by an imminent war, by her pregnancy, and by the relentless activity of the gold dredge; nevertheless, her ultimate commitment to Andy Towner is an active one, freely made, not absolutely dictated by her desperate circumstances.

All three women, like Helen and Belle, realize that these options are limited, and that while they may choose to be reclusive or gregarious,

impulsive or wary, they are still bound to the land, restrained by geographic factors, economic exigencies, and family roots. The deserted mines, the vast Ten Mile Range, the configuration of rivers and valleys, the rarefied air and sudden storms, and perhaps primarily, the ingrained patterns of Summit County life—all of these exert a significant influence on what the women choose to be. Helen and Belle accepted these limitations, worked and played within their confines, and created at least three novels of enduring merit in which the heroines make realistic rather than romantic choices. Ultimately, Angie, Dee Ann, and Reenie opt to remain in their native habitat rather than flee to unfamiliar territories in pursuit of vague dreams.

It is impossible to overemphasize how central the physical environment was to the life and the work of these two women. Carl Abbott, a contemporary Colorado historian, comments on the special presence of the landscape in the lives of Coloradoans. "Like an independent voice, it supports a set of attitudes that are not so much different from those of other Americans as they are exaggerated. Perhaps because the land itself is extreme—higher, drier, more rugged than elsewhere—Coloradoans in response have magnified the American experience in a way that shows more clearly our national strengths and our weaknesses."³³ Abbott's statement is eloquently illustrated by Helen. In answer to her editor's question "is a spring wild," she wrote that "heavens, yes. Our high springs rimmed with black grass and moss—so wild they burn your mouth. Wild and sweet. . . . I love the mountains almost extravagantly and nearly die of homesickness when I have to be away from them for any length of time (a real sickness it is) . . . with water, mountains, sun and a [fishing] rod, I enter paradise."³⁴

Both Belle and Helen, inspired no doubt by years of exposure to mining technology, adopted the methodology of this changing industry and applied it to their own craft. As Cal, Toby, and Pandy in *The Spring Begins* and Ike Jesser in *The Far Side of the Hill* worked the deserted claims alone, the authors, too, often worked in isolation, sifting the raw material around them for nuggets of human wisdom, for veins of strength and persistence, for glitters of a spirit of independence. They found a wealth of natural resources previously ignored by those who wanted to skim off the surface glamour, the overtones of adventure and violence, in their superficial attempts to romanticize and simplify the western mining experience. These two women have carefully, lovingly distilled the vast range of their observations and experiences into

³¹ Sherb to Rich, 26 June 1947, Rich Collection.

³² Ferril, *Denver Rocky Mountain Herald*, 23 January 1971.

³³ Carl Abbott, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1976), p. 266.

³⁴ Rich to Maria Leiper, 6 September, 11 November 1946, Rich Collection.

polished, glittering poems and into novels that crystallize Summit County life without shaking off the earth, sand, and rocks in which the more valuable minerals are imbedded. Thus, *The Far Side of the Hill* and *The Spring Begins* do not depict the purified essence of the miners who live in Topas and Buckbush, but rather their warts and scars, their flaws and failings, their simple humanity. Belle Turnbull and Helen Rich have served regional historians as well as students of literature by documenting with such precision the lives of the "ordinary" men and women of this mining country.

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Oscar L. Chapman and McCarthyism

BY CLAYTON R. KOPPES

In September 1950 a Republican senator attacked the loyalty of a westerner in Harry S. Truman's cabinet in what seemed to indicate an intensification of McCarthyism. Senator Andrew F. Schoeppel, a freshman from Kansas, charged that one of the surviving New Deal liberals in the administration, Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman, had a "personal alliance" with the Soviet cause. Truman and many liberals feared that Schoeppel's speech signaled the beginning of a Republican attack on the loyalty of all the members of the cabinet in the two months before the congressional elections. Through prompt and forceful action, however, Chapman and key western Democratic senators were able to deflect Schoeppel's attack.

By the fall of 1950 anticommunism had reached a virulent stage. For several years, especially after the debate over the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan in the spring of 1947, the administration had played on the public's fear of communism. Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin had inaugurated the phase that bore his name with his famous speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, in February 1950 in which he charged that the State Department was honeycombed with Communists. The outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950 had further heightened the fear of communism, abroad and at home. In September the Senate gave an overwhelming endorsement to the McCarran Act, which contained a sweeping array of anticommunist measures. McCarthyite attacks on government officials thus far had been limited generally to persons who were below cabinet rank or no longer with the government, such as Alger Hiss, and they had usually singled out persons who dealt with foreign affairs. Schoeppel's attack seemed to be part of a move to broaden the loyalty campaign by focusing on a cabinet member who concentrated on domestic affairs; the senator's speech appeared to rep-



Although born in Virginia in 1896, Oscar Littleton Chapman moved to Denver after World War I. Denver not only provided him with relief from his tuberculin condition, it also became a stepping stone to a career with the federal government during the years of the New Deal.

resent an attempt to bring additional antiliberal issues into the fall campaign.¹

Oscar Littleton Chapman was perhaps the most logical member of the cabinet for the new phase. Born in the piedmont country of Halifax, Virginia, in 1896, he moved to Denver, Colorado, after World War I where he found the physical climate beneficial for his tuberculosis and the political atmosphere more congenial to his budding progressivism. He became a probation officer for Judge Benjamin Lindsey, the crusading, controversial juvenile-court reformer. After finishing night law school, Chapman joined the law firm of liberal Edward Costigan, whose successful campaign for the United States Senate Chapman managed in 1932. Chapman was rewarded with the position of assistant

secretary of the interior in 1933 and quickly established a reputation as a skilled political operator and one of the more leftist New Dealers. Chapman epitomized some of the best qualities of the New Deal in the Interior Department: a balanced approach to the developmental and preservation strands of the conservation movement and compassionate support for minority groups, particularly Jews, Blacks, and Indians. Vice-President Henry A. Wallace considered him one of the best of the younger New Dealers, and Chapman was one of the chief promoters of Wallace's bid for renomination in 1944.²

When Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes left the cabinet in February 1946, Chapman advanced to undersecretary. His yeoman service during Truman's seemingly hopeless 1948 reelection campaign netted him the secretaryship in December 1949. Chapman had moderated much of his New Deal liberalism by 1950 so that in many respects the continuities between him and his successor in the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration, Douglas McKay, seemed more important than the dissimilarities. Nevertheless, in mid-1950 Chapman was enjoying some success with policies that discomfited many conservatives. The public power program, administered by the Bureau of Reclamation, was expanding; the secretary was desegregating the recreational facilities supervised by the department in the District of Columbia; and an Alaskan statehood bill had passed the House of Representatives. Chapman's seventeen consecutive years at the secretarial level, which surpassed any other secretarial officer then in the government, made the adopted Coloradoan seem the embodiment of the liberal tradition dating to the New Deal.³

Schoeppel was the antithesis of the New Dealer. An honorable mention all-American football player at the University of Nebraska, he had settled into a comfortable county seat law practice in Ness City in western Kansas and later in Wichita. His devotion to oil and gas and private utility interests had prompted Alf M. Landon, the 1936 Republican presidential nominee, to brand him an "errand boy for the big utilities." Elected by landslide majorities to the Kansas governorship in 1942 and 1944, Schoeppel moved to the Senate in 1948 when Arthur Capper retired. Schoeppel became a dependable member of the Republican right wing. A supporter of the Bricker Amendment, he was one of thirteen to oppose the confirmation of Charles E. Bohlen as ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1953 and one of twenty-two to vote against the censure of McCarthy in 1954.⁴

¹ Richard M. Fried, *Men against McCarthy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), has emphasized the deep-rooted nature of red accusations and their use as campaign issues designed to wrest political control from the Democrats (pp. 30-31). On anticommunism and McCarthyism see also Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970); Alan D. Harper, *The Politics of Loyalty: The White House and the Communist Issue, 1946-1952* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1969); Richard M. Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism: Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and Internal Security, 1946-1948* (New York: Knopf, 1971); Alonzo L. Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), ch. 17; Athan Theoharis, *Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971); and Robert Griffith and Athan G. Theoharis, eds., *The Specter: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974). A brief historical treatment of the Schoeppel-Chapman episode is in Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal*, p. 409.

² Clayton R. Koppes, "Oscar L. Chapman: A Liberal at the Interior Department, 1933-1953" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1974), ch. 1.

³ *Ibid.* chs. 4, 10; Claus-M. Naske, *An Interpretative History of Alaskan Statehood* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 95-102.

⁴ Kenneth S. Davis, "Will Eisenhower's State Repudiate His Party?" *New Republic* 121 (25 October 1954): 14-16; Elmo Richardson, *Dams, Parks & Politics: Resource Development and Preservation in the Truman-*

"The Kansas McCarthy" delivered his charges against Chapman and some of the secretary's colleagues on the floor of the Senate on 5 September 1950. Schoepfel claimed that he did not "at this time charge any of these officials with disloyalty, with treasonable acts, or with perjury." But the senator continued, "I merely ask that the facts which I present, which themselves raise the question, be fully explored and the officials and others involved be permitted to explain how these data, documents, and actions can be reconciled with complete loyalty to the United States." Schoepfel had three main concerns. The first was that Randolph Feltus, a New York public relations man, who had earlier been a registered lobbyist for the government of Poland to promote American trade, had been hired by the Alaska Statehood Committee to lobby in Congress. Schoepfel demanded to know why "this 3-year agent of the Kremlin" should "be employed to promote statehood for Alaska at a time when Alaska is the most sensitive security risk of the Nation in relation to Russia?" The senator also wanted to know whether Chapman had had any role in the hiring of Feltus. Second, Schoepfel charged the secretary and Reclamation Commissioner Michael Straus with "sabotaging" the economic recovery of Formosa and hence endangering American defense in the Far East by refusing to allow a reclamation engineer to go to Formosa.⁵

Third, the Kansan alleged that Chapman had been a member of various "subversive" organizations and that he had struck out portions of his oath of office as undersecretary pertaining to membership in such organizations. Schoepfel wanted to know if Chapman had signed the required affidavits of allegiance, and if so, "why did he find it neces-

sary or convenient, expedient, or by design, to strike out the affidavit of allegiance . . . on the oath of office?" If he signed the affidavit of nonaffiliation, "did he commit perjury and is [he] now a subject for grand jury investigation along with [William] Remington and Alger Hiss?" Was Chapman "forced . . . to choose between the alternatives of perjury or exposure?" Although Schoepfel had claimed merely to be asking questions, he also asserted that there was "a strong and close personal alliance between the Russian Soviet cause and the present Secretary of the Interior."⁶

Chapman's friends rose at once to his defense. Senator Joseph C. O'Mahoney of Wyoming interrupted Schoepfel's speech to present evidence in rebuttal. Senate Majority Leader Scott Lucas of Illinois defended the secretary. Senator Clinton P. Anderson of New Mexico, secretary of agriculture from 1945 to 1948, cast doubt on Schoepfel's knowledge of Alaska. Senator James Murray of Montana quoted a psychiatrist who believed that the United States was becoming "one grand transmogrified lunatic asylum." "Mr. President, I think the matter before the Senate this afternoon justifies that conclusion." Asked about Schoepfel's charges at a press conference, Truman confidently replied that Chapman would emerge fully vindicated. Senator O'Mahoney, chairman of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, at once called a meeting of the full committee to provide the answers Schoepfel claimed he wanted.⁷

At the committee hearing two days later, on 7 September 1950, Chapman abandoned his genial manner. Tears of anger welled up in his eyes and his voice quavered with emotion. "A man who spends 17 years in the Federal service obviously has not accumulated wealth to leave his family in security," he said. "All I have to leave them is my reputation, and by the grace of God, no man in this Senate or anywhere else is going to attack it without a prompt defense from me." He denounced the speech as "the big lie" and the "smear technique" that has become the "stock in trade of little men in high places," and challenged Schoepfel to repeat the charges where he would not have senatorial immunity. The motivation for the speech was political, he thought, a last-ditch effort to block Alaskan statehood. The secretary denied having anything to do with Feltus's appointment as the territory's lobbyist. The Formosa story was a "complete fabrication"; the department had gladly cooperated in sending the engineer to the island.⁸

Eisenhower Era (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1973), p. 36; *Current Biography*, 1952, pp. 512-13.

⁵ Schoepfel speech and ensuing colloquy, U.S., Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 81st Cong., 2d sess., 1950, 96, pp. 14393-14403, reprinted as U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *Investigation of Charges by Senator Andrew F. Schoepfel*, 81st Cong., 2d sess., 7-14 September 1950, pp. 1, 291-309 (hereinafter cited as *Investigation*). Straus had run afoul of some senators over loyalty the previous year. The House Un-American Activities Committee report indicated his wife had been associated with three organizations appearing on the attorney general's list of subversive groups, the League of Women Shoppers, the Washington League for Democratic Action, and the Southern Conference for Human Rights; but she had resigned from them before they made the attorney general's list. Michael Straus's most direct involvement apparently was playing the role of a lion-tamer in an amateur theatrical production of the shoppers league staged in 1940. The lion he tamed represented corporations harassing Leon Henderson's investigation and was portrayed by Carlton Skinner, whom Truman appointed governor of Guam, and Gardner Jackson, a former Agriculture Department official. Henderson, later Office of Price Administration head, and Justice William O. Douglas had also participated in the skit. The HUAC report raised "a major question of national . . . policy."⁷ Straus sardonically told Chapman, "Before we go any further, I think the public interest requires that it be determined whether or not it was the front half or the rear half of this lion (and I was neither half) which was disloyal." To some members of the Senate Appropriation Committee, however, Straus's lion-taming was no laughing matter. A special committee, composed of Pat McCarran of Nevada, Guy Cordon of Oregon, and Joseph O'Mahoney of Wyoming, met with Attorney General Tom Clark before pronouncing themselves satisfied with Straus's loyalty. Chapman and other Interior Department officials suspected, however, that Straus had come under fire mainly because the Bureau of Reclamation was supposed to limit water from its irrigation projects to 160 acres per individual landowner. (Koppes, "Oscar L. Chapman," pp. 109-17)

⁶ *Investigation*, pp. 297-300.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 300-309; *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1950* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965), p. 621.

⁸ *Investigation*, pp. 4-6, 35-36. Strictly speaking, Chapman was correct that he had nothing to do with Feltus's employment with the committee. In 1946, however, Chapman had recommended Feltus to Alaska Governor Ernest L. Gruening as a lobbyist for statehood, nothing came of it at that time (Chapman to Gruening, 17 October 1946, Box 20, Chapman Papers, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo.).

As for "subversive" affiliations, he denied ever having been a member of the American League against War and Fascism or sponsoring a meeting of the Washington Chapter of the Descendants of the American Revolution. He willingly acknowledged his participation in the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, which gave a dinner in honor of Justice Hugo Black in April 1945. This organization had incurred the wrath of the House Un-American Activities Committee, but it had never been cited as subversive by the attorney general; among its members it had numbered Harry S. Truman, Vice-President Alben Barkley, and Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson. Chapman acknowledged having been a sponsor of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, but he had withdrawn his name in November 1946, a year before the attorney general designated the group a communist-front organization. This council had also counted among its sponsors such "subversives" as Harold Ickes, Republican Senator Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts, Judge Learned Hand, and Arthur Capper, Schoepfel's predecessor in the Senate. Chapman had made all this information available to a congressional committee investigating a strike by government employees in 1948; if Schoepfel had merely sought information he could have consulted the printed transcript of that hearing. For that matter, a telephone call would have produced the information, according to Chapman.⁹

Why had portions of the oaths been crossed out? Chapman pointed out that, as was customary in the Interior Department, only the first sentence of the oath was read at the ceremonial swearing-in. The affidavits of loyalty and nonaffiliation were then taken privately. Senator Anderson noted that this practice was almost universal in the executive branch. Then, in a moment of comedy, Senator O'Mahoney called Leslie L. Biffle, secretary of the Senate, to the stand, who explained that this was the same practice used for senators. These affidavits had been in Chapman's personnel file, Interior Department officials testified, but Schoepfel's investigators had evidently overlooked them.¹⁰

Throughout Chapman's presentation Senator Schoepfel sat about twenty feet from him, puffing on his pipe and making occasional notations with a pencil as his charges evaporated before him. O'Mahoney asked if Schoepfel had any questions or wished to make a statement. "I appreciate the fact that the Secretary has been rather forthright about this," Schoepfel responded. "He has been a little harsh, but he is entitled to be that way. I am not going to be the one that is going to object to

⁹ *Investigation*, pp. 6-34. During the 1948 hearings it developed that Chapman's name apparently had been used as a sponsor of the American League against War and Fascism. Chapman testified then, however, that any such use had been without his consent or knowledge, which seemed to satisfy the inquisitor, Republican Congressman Claire Hoffman of Michigan (*Investigation*, pp. 313-14).

¹⁰ *Investigation*, pp. 7-15, 46-48.



Senator Taft, campaigning here, did not support Schoepfel.

it. The facts, let them fall where they may." He refused to retract his speech, however.¹¹

At an informal press conference following the session the senator said he thought some questions remained unanswered, but he declined to indicate which ones. When reporters asked whether he still believed the secretary had a "strong and close personal alliance" with the Soviet cause, Schoepfel gave a noncommittal answer. He thought some "discrepancies" in Chapman's personnel file should be cleared up, but when asked whether he was suggesting the file had been tampered with, he was again noncommittal. At one point he said he had never questioned Chapman's loyalty. Reporters disagreed, pointing to the loaded questions and the reference to the secretary's ties with Russia. Schoepfel then admitted his statement might have been "a little too strong." However, he was still unwilling to let the matter drop and suggested that the hearings resume in executive session after the election.¹²

After Chapman's appearance, Republicans had had enough of the maladroitness of Schoepfel. Senator Robert A. Taft, chairman of the Republican Senate Policy Committee, disavowed the speech. Some of Schoepfel's colleagues privately voiced the fear that the Kansas senator had diminished McCarthy's effectiveness. Guy Cordon, like other Republican members of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, had given Schoepfel the limpest support possible. Cordon tried to get the hearings stopped to avoid further bad publicity for the party. However, the Democrats persisted. E.L. Bartlett, the Alaskan delegate to the House of Representatives, satisfactorily explained hiring the public relations consultant. Randolph Feltus had little trouble explaining his efforts on behalf of Polish-American trade and noted that the Justice Department did

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

¹² "Remarks by Senator Schoepfel at Informal Press Conference . . .," 7 September 1950, Schoepfel to O'Mahoney, 9 September 1950, Box 64, Chapman Papers.

not find any impropriety in Americans representing Eastern European countries. Alaska Governor Ernest L. Gruening traveled from Juneau to the meeting and used the session as a forum to promote Alaskan statehood.¹³

The Democrats particularly relished the chance to interrogate Frank T. Bow, Schoeppel's legislative assistant, who had written the speech. Bow, a lawyer from Canton, Ohio, had first turned up the material on Chapman and his colleagues while serving as chief counsel of a subcommittee of the House Committee on Expenditures in the executive departments that had investigated the Department of the Interior during the Republican-controlled Eightieth Congress. Bow had held onto the information for two years, O'Mahoney noted; his airing it now suggested to the chairman that he was using it in the hope of bolstering his campaign for the House. Schoeppel's aide struggled hard to find a pattern among the splintered charges, and he even suggested that the ink on Chapman's affidavits be examined to determine if he had executed them when he said he had. However, under relentless questioning by Senator Murray, Bow was forced to modify his challenge to Chapman's loyalty, although he still wanted further investigation. O'Mahoney concluded the hearing with the statement that the Bow-Schoeppel speech represented "one of the most infamous libels against an honorable man ever uttered."¹⁴

The confrontation between Chapman and Schoeppel generated front-page coverage throughout the nation, and most observers thought the secretary was the clear winner. President Truman was "highly pleased" with Chapman's performance. "I suppose every Cabinet Office on the list will eventually be slandered in the same manner," Truman continued. "From what I gather they will probably be a little more careful in the future." One radio commentator said that "the only . . . red . . . exposed in yesterday's hearings" was on Schoeppel's face. Truman's and the liberals' support could have been expected, but many others joined in as well. The Colorado Department of the American Legion wired its support. Jack Kilpatrick, the conservative chief editorial writer of the *Richmond (Virginia) News-Leader* wrote the secretary, "I expect the *News-Leader* will be belaboring you again before long, for you and I are poles apart on a great many issues, but fair play demanded that we take your side in the wild-eyed accusations thrown in your direction." The secretary gratefully acknowledged the expressions of support. Indicative of his obvious and understandable anger, his first response to well-wishers referred to Schoeppel's charges as "outra-

¹³ *Investigation*, pp. 49-96, 266, 337, 340.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-266; Statement of Frank T. Bow before Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, 14 September 1950, Box 64, Chapman Papers. Whatever the effect of this brush with the committee, Bow won election to the House in November 1950 and served until 1973.



President Harry Truman was pleased with Chapman's performance. "I suppose every Cabinet Office on the list will eventually be slandered . . . They will probably be a little more careful in the future."

geous" or "atrocious" or "irresponsible." As the controversy cooled, the attack seemed only annoying or irritating, and Chapman came to believe that it had backfired.¹⁵

The main question about the episode was, said Doris Fleeson, "why did Senator Schoeppel buy such a pup?" No one believed the Kansan had thought up the attack on his own; the senator "knew no more about the facts in the case than a phonograph needle knows about the record it is playing," said Drew Pearson. The most likely suspects, Chapman and his friends believed, were the Alaska salmon industry or private utility firms. The salmon industry, which had attempted to raise \$150,000 in the summer of 1950 for a last stand against statehood, "also specializes in red herrings," surmised the *New York Post*. W.C. Arnold, the spokesman for the salmon canners, assured Chapman that he was "entirely and completely mistaken" if he thought the industry had been involved in the incident. (Bow had telegraphed Arnold for information a month before the speech, but Arnold told Republican Senator Hugh Butler of Nebraska, with whom he was usually candid, that he had not responded to the query.) The private utilities came under suspicion because Chapman was pressing his public power program. Schoeppel was an ideal carrier because Kansas had no federal power projects and hence would not be subject to reprisals. Others, including Truman, thought the speech had originated somewhere in the Republican high command. Schoeppel "was only being a parrot," said the president, "but I think he was a very shameful one at that."¹⁶

¹⁵ President Truman to Chapman, 8 September 1950, Kilpatrick to Chapman, 16 September 1950, Legion resolution, Box 65, "Baukage," Box 66, Chapman letters, September and October 1950, Box 8, Chapman Papers.

¹⁶ President Truman to Chapman, 8 September 1950, Box 65, Arnold to Chapman, 7 October 1950, Box 65, Fleeson, *Post*, and Pearson clippings, Box 66, Chapman Papers. According to Arnold, Bow's wire warned him that any telephone conversations on the subject would be monitored by the Soviet Union and the Department of the Interior (transcript of telephone conversation between Arnold and Butler, 14 September 1950, Box 221, Butler Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln).

After the Interior Committee hearings, Chapman had no more trouble over his loyalty. His defense seemed effective in helping spare other cabinet members from the same sort of personal villification during the raucous 1950 campaign. Three reasons appear to account for the rapid demise of the Chapman loyalty episode.

First was the manifest flimsiness of the charges. Chapman was able to refute them almost totally. Many of the accusations made by Joe McCarthy and others had little more substance than Schoeppel's, but they persisted with their charges and sometimes even inflated them as the original ones were disproved. Schoeppel, however, was badly embarrassed, modified his charges, and lapsed into silence. Hoist by his own petard, the senator hastily abandoned his election-autumn trial balloon.

Second, the charges, unlike McCarthy's, bore little relation to foreign policy. The Alaskan defense issue largely backfired, and the presence or absence of a reclamation engineer in Formosa scarcely constituted a major factor in containing the mainland Chinese. Although some might oppose Chapman's stand on public power or on retaining federal control of off-shore oil, as did Jack Kilpatrick, few conservatives could believe that allied the secretary with the Soviet cause.

Third, the senatorial system managed, in this instance, to curb the excesses of one of its members. Robert Griffith has aptly noted that McCarthyism thrived in part because of the senatorial system and that when the Senate finally defrocked McCarthy, it acted on narrow grounds.¹⁷ O'Mahoney's strategy of a direct confrontation with Schoeppel—so refreshing in a period when many senators devoted so much time to avoiding confrontation with McCarthyism—exploded the charges. But the encounter between Schoeppel and Chapman remained a notable example of the risks of recklessness and vituperativeness in highly partisan campaigns of an era.

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¹⁷ Griffith, *Politics of Fear*, p. 320.

Willa Clanton: A Remarkable Link with Colorado's Past

BY NELL BROWN PROPST

Willa Clanton, now living in Denver, was born near Buffalo, the original name for Merino, Colorado, in 1877, five years after the birth of the town and one year after Colorado became a state. Her life has exemplified over one hundred years of change in Colorado, stretching from homesteading to teaching in one-room schools to life in metropolitan Denver, where she has taught music in every part of the city.

Buffalo, the town to which the Clantons and their four children came in 1874, was a part of the "new country," passed through but unclaimed during the frantic westward rush of the 1860s. Sterling David (S.D.) and Belle Clanton traveled west with Belle's brother, Sid Propst, his new wife Missouri, and Missouri's brother, Will Powell.¹ Sid had investigated the town the previous fall and had convinced his family that this empty country was the land of milk and honey.

The young people took a train from Alabama to Omaha, Nebraska, and there they bought teams and wagons, arranging to have them driven to Julesburg, Colorado, where their train ride would end. It must have seemed romantic to travel the last sixty-five miles to Buffalo in the same style as the immigrants of the preceding decade. However, John Wesley Iliff's Riverside Ranche, near present-day Iliff, where they spent the first night, was not the charming spot that the name suggests.² The women preferred to sleep in the wagons rather than on the floor in lice-infested buffalo robes, and they quickly lost their appetites when the cook, preparing to slice the meat, first wiped the knife on the seat of his pants.

The next day the little wagon train came up the South Platte River valley and viewed the "charmingly landscaped" town of Buffalo. In-

¹ Details of the early days of Buffalo are based on interviews with Willa Clanton and with Lena Woolman Emery, who came to Buffalo in 1876 at the age of nine and lived to be ninety-seven-years-old; and on the following unpublished material: Sue Powell DeVeau (arrived 1875), "On the Last Frontier"; Will Powell, biographical material; Sidney R. Propst, autobiographical material and letters written from Buffalo, 1874-1876; Missouri Powell Propst, letters written from Buffalo 1874-1876.

² This headquarters for Iliff's cattle empire was probably built in 1865 as a telegraph station after other stations and ranches along the Overland Trail were destroyed or badly damaged in the Indian Wars.



This empty shell is all that remains of the first real school in the Merino area. The Southside School, built in 1888 on land donated by Jimmy Chambers, was located at South Platte, the oldest community in present-day Logan County.

deed, the ambitious promoters had laid out quite a city, one hundred sixty blocks, larger than Sterling would be.³ But there was not one tree, not even on the river. The two trees seen near present-day Crook were the only reminders of the forested South. People were also scarce. There were no more than two hundred fifty settlers along the river from Greeley to Julesburg.⁴

In 1874 when the Southerners arrived, there were only two other families in Buffalo, the Rasmus Nelson family, who were Danish, and the Johnny Doughty family. Jimmy Chambers and several other men lived across the river at the South Platte community, the oldest in Logan County. Early in 1872 these young fellows had persuaded Holon Godfrey, then living in Evans, to come down river and help them dig an irrigation ditch, first called the Fort Wicked, but later changed to the South Platte. Registered on 1 May 1872, it was the first irrigation ditch in what was to be Logan County. The men had also formed the first school district, Number 22.⁵

³ Joseph T. Evans, J. Alexander Pace, and Alward White of Denver decided to build the town of Buffalo in the winter of 1872-1873, according to Jimmy Chambers in Emma Burke Conklin, comp., *A Brief History of Logan County, Colorado, with Reminiscences by Pioneers*, compiled and arranged for Elbridge Gerry Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution (Denver: Welch-Haffner Printing Co., 1928), p. 146. The town was laid out in July 1873 (*Greeley Tribune*, 25 March 1874), and the first arrivals came in response to widespread publicity by the company promoter, Daniel J. Carmichael. The plat was officially recorded by Daniel J. Payne on 9 April 1874.

⁴ "Place Names in Colorado," *The Colorado Magazine* 19, no. 6 (November 1942):230.

⁵ A.H. King, "History of Irrigation in Logan County," included in Conklin, *History of Logan County, Colorado*, p. 205-6. The school district comprised "all that part of Township 6 North, Range 53 West, and Townships 5 and 6 North, Range 54 West, lying on the south side of the Platte River." Most of this district was later in Washington County (Weld County records quoted in Conklin, *History of Logan County, Colorado*, p. 227).

The first necessity for the Clantons was a house. Until it was completed, the family stayed with Thomas Carey who was described as an old Indian trader living in a large sod house near present-day Atwood. S.D. Clanton built a two-story, sod and frame house, using lumber from Bennett, Colorado, which he purchased for seven dollars per fifteen hundred feet. In the one, large downstairs room the family cooked, ate, and lived, and some members slept there as well. A wooden loft overhead provided a parlor and a bedroom. The rafters projected far out over the sod walls, and under the wide eaves at the rear of the house the children stacked the strange new fuel, buffalo chips. Willa Clanton remembers playing in the deep windows where her mother set her plants. The windows could be raised and lowered and each one had twelve small panes, giving the cottage a charm not always found on the prairie.

It was in this sod hut on 28 September 1877 that Willa was "borned by Mrs. Doughty." She was the first of five Clanton children born in Colorado. By the time of her birth all of her mother's family had arrived, and the little girl grew up surrounded by relatives.

During Willa's childhood, eastern Colorado was no longer predominantly Indian country. After the Battle of Summit Springs in 1869, fifteen miles southeast of Buffalo, the Cheyenne no longer roamed the Colorado plains in large numbers. However, there were some occasional incidents. Willa said that her mother was always frightened by the cries of the Indians as they made their way along the river. One day when she was alone, except for the little children, she heard a sound in the distance that made her stand very still, her hand out commanding the children to be quiet. The persistent calls came closer, and it was only when they sounded directly overhead that she collapsed on the floor with the children, laughing in relief. Her Indians were wild geese.

Occasionally, Belle would enter the house and find Indians quietly sitting on the floor. Their own lodges had always been open to whoever came along, so naturally they expected the same hospitality. Indeed, the whites did pick up the custom from them. The unpredictable plains weather made it necessary that doors be left unlocked for any traveler caught in a prairie storm.

When the Indians asked for food, Belle gave them flour or sugar. She was always anxious to send them on their way, particularly because they showed such interest in three-year-old Willa, and she would often hide the child in the loft. One day the visitors began to say "Papoosie," nudging each other, and Belle looked up to see Willa, her legs dangling over the edge of the loft and her face beaming at the company.

The settlers were also awed by the amount of game in the area. S.D. recalled that on the trip to Bennett for lumber he saw more antelope than he had supposed were in the world. Thousands of buffalo were seen

every day.⁶ Charlie, the only Clanton boy, remembered a buffalo hunt in which thirteen were killed, but the family soon grew weary of chewing the stripped meat, which they had learned to dry using a method similar to the one used by the Indians.

They ate well, however. S.D. Clanton was a natural farmer and was one of few in those early days who supported his family entirely by agriculture. Most men worked as cowboys for the Iliff Company, the JB (Brush) Ranch owned by a lieutenant governor of Colorado, Bruce Johnson's 22, or the later Pawnee Ranch, which stretched for six miles along the South Platte from Godfrey's Bluffs to what became Atwood, Colorado. Clanton raised cattle, hogs, chickens, and turkeys, and Belle and the girls stored sauerkraut, dried corn, and canned goods in the cellar. S.D. grew a new crop, alfalfa, and prize-winning potatoes.⁷ One summer day in 1880 as S.D. agonized over his crops baking in the noonday sun, he killed a snake and draped it over the fence saying that maybe it would bring rain. From then on little Willa was always wary of the power of snakes because during the afternoon a hailstorm, so prevalent in northeastern Colorado, swept over the farm, damaging crops, of course, and breaking most of the little window panes.

Willa's mother was a good cook and the jolly family attracted many visitors. Jimmy Chambers often came for dinner as did Billy Tetsell, the English preacher who took a claim five miles up the river. Willa grew up never knowing a chicken had any other parts except the neck and liver, because all of the good parts were fed to the company.

There was always whiskey in the house, but it was reserved for medicinal purposes. Living on the frontier, Belle had to be the doctor for her family, and after a few years she took over Mrs. Doughty's service of "borning" the neighbors' babies. The whiskey was dispensed for every ailment—a swallow or two for a woman in labor, a teaspoon for a child's cold, even a drop or so to a sick chicken.

Belle made all of the clothes for the children, even the lace trim on their fancy little dress-up outfits, which they wore to church services in the Nelson sod house and once or twice a year on shopping excursions to Greeley. These week-long trips were eagerly anticipated by the children, but they eventually became an ordeal to Belle. The family traveled pioneer style, in a wagon, driving each day until they were exhausted, then camping and cooking each night. Just before they entered Greeley, Belle always insisted on stopping the wagon. All the children had their



Willa (right) poses with four of her eight brothers and sisters in their dress-up clothes, which were worn only to church services and on shopping excursions.

faces washed and their dusty clothes of the trail exchanged for the fancy little dresses and suits. When the Clanton family drove into Horace Greeley's town, they sat proud and proper on the seats of the wagon. Just as soon as the wagon was loaded with flour, kerosene, calico, and other necessities, the family departed for the long trip home. Outside the town they stopped again, changed clothes, and the "Sunday best" was carefully packed away.

Times were hard and life was very unpredictable. The disastrous winter of 1880-1881 killed the optimism of the little community. The summer of 1880 had been very dry, and the cattle were in no shape for the first blizzard, which struck early and viciously in October. As so often happens after a drought, the snow did not melt and more accumulated. Soon the cattle could not reach any grass. Little Willa watched as the cows filed past the sod house. Sometimes when the wind eased a little, she could see the string of bawling cattle stretching far up the

⁶ H. N. Haynes, "George A. Hodgson's Reminiscences of Early Weld County," *The Colorado Magazine* 12, no. 2 (March 1935):76. N.C. Meeker, editor, *Greeley Tribune*, 11 January 1871, mentioned "at least 100,000 buffalo" on the Platte. W.J. Phillips, "Out on the Plains," *Denver Times*, 25 March 1874, said "thousands of buffalo" were seen on a trip below the American Rancho.

⁷ Major Jacob Downing, who fought the first engagement with the Indians on 2 May 1864 up Cedar Creek, is credited with introducing alfalfa into Colorado and perhaps the nation.



Built in 1883 by S. D. Clanton, the Sterling House wore the sign "HOTEL" in 1898.

valley. Toward the river the hungry, cold animals would march, and when the wind shifted, they came back. Before spring the prairie was literally covered with dead animals.

Many of the newcomers' herds were wiped out, and one by one the families began to leave. From 1882 to 1884 as many as 242 lots in Buffalo were sold for taxes, usually bringing only a total of two to four dollars for as many as thirty-two lots, or an entire block. One person would buy lots one year and give them up for sale the next, an indication of how tight money was.

Finally, the railroad came, and it saved the community. Anticipating its arrival in 1881, M.C. King and Richard Smith moved from "Old Sterling," a collection of soddies with a fence around them, to New Sterling, three miles away. They persuaded the Union Pacific Railroad to build a station there, and they opened the first store.

In 1883 S.D. gave up his land and moved into Sterling, building the first real hotel there, the Sterling House. The days of the wagon trips to Greeley were over. The railroad brought supplies and more stores were soon opened. The family lived in the upstairs of the hotel in grandeur, or so it seemed to the children.

While living in Sterling, Willa started school. She was a bright and mischievous child. Her first grade teacher, Naomi Campbell, tired of the child's antics, required that Willa hold onto her apron strings and follow her about the room. Far from keeping Willa out of trouble, the apron strings provoked even more fun. She untied them, and when the apron fell to the floor, the exasperated young teacher put the child in the traditional corner.

One of the saddest memories in Willa's childhood involved one of her little sisters. Jessie Irene, born in Sterling in 1884, was, according to Willa, a "beautiful little girl," but she became ill with diphtheria when



A confident rider since childhood, Willa continued to enjoy horseback riding, participating in a roundup when she was ninety.

she was about two years old, and the entire family was quarantined upstairs in the hotel. Dr. J. N. Hall, a young doctor from Boston, stayed with the child, but Belle and S.D. experienced what was common to many parents in those days, the loss of a much loved baby, and Willa remembered the sorrow of losing a sister.⁸

When Willa was twelve or fourteen years old, her father returned to farming. He built a four-room house with two bedrooms, a fairly luxurious home by the standards of that time. One of Willa's jobs was to ride her pony Gotch to an island in the South Platte River and bring home the milk cow. A confident rider, she used only a bridle. One day after finding the cow and her calf, she followed them, absent-mindedly looking for wild asparagus, one of the bounties of the South Platte. Suddenly, she saw a brilliant, purple cluster lily and leaned down to study it. Just at that moment, the calf jumped into the river, and Gotch, a good cow pony, leaped after it and was caught in quicksand and reared and plunged. Willa finally regained her balance, after a struggle.

On Sunday mornings church was held in the little frame school with the sermon given by a "half preacher," a term used to describe any of several men who had other pursuits but filled a pulpit on Sundays. The building rang with the voices of the "Amen" men. Willa especially loved to sing at church, and she often would say that she "would sing to the corn stalks if no other audience was available."

She returned to Sterling for high school, living with her Uncle Sid, who was president of the school board. Her principal was Frank Blair, the first principal of Logan County High School. She wrote an enthusiastic essay about Logan County for one of her classes. She stated

⁸ Dr. Hall later established the Mrs. J.N. Hall Foundation, which provides the funding for the historic markers in Colorado.



Willa, as a young woman, was described by a young man of the time as "a good looking gal."

that "the altitude is about 4000 feet which has been demonstrated the proper altitude for the development of the chest and lungs. Invalids often make great mistakes by going to Denver and other mountain towns instead of stopping near or at this county where they would probably recover."

Louise Merrill, one of her teachers, encouraged the young girl when she despaired of learning foreign languages, essential to her ambition of becoming an opera star. Willa had always played her mother's organ by ear and was a natural singer, but in high school she began to take piano lessons, and it was soon evident that music was her field.

However, Willa was destined to become a teacher instead of an opera singer, and she taught her first school before graduating. Having completed all her credits early, she went out to Cedar Creek where she had six pupils, three of them named Crane, "and they looked like cranes, too," she said, "all tall and gangly." Room, board, and transportation were provided. She lived with the Diffendarfer family, and the transportation consisted of a horse with the little Diffendarfer boy perched behind her. She returned to Sterling in the spring to graduate with her class and deliver an oration on "Cuba and Her Destinies."

The next year Willa had another school at Burdette up on the highlands to the southeast of the river. She lived with one of the Stockham families, probably the George Stockhams, and slept with the young

daughter in a bed that let down from the living room wall. This time she traveled to school in style—in a wagon driven by young Frank Stockham.

The children at Burdette had driven the previous teacher away, a favorite pastime, and very soon Willa received her first challenge. A large boy made a lewd remark to one of the girls. When Willa called him to the front of the room, he informed her that he minded his own business and that she had better do the same. The little teacher picked up her pointer and gave him several businesslike whacks with it, half expecting him to kill her. But he sat down. Feeling quite successful, Willa told the Stockhams that night, concluding that she expected no more trouble.

The next morning the boy's father appeared, and the terrified Willa saw that he was carrying a bundle of switches. She wondered if the man planned to punish her in front of the pupils. He marched straight up to the desk and announced, "Vell, I hear you vip my boy." Willa could only nod her head, staring at the man. He continued with "Here is a bundle of switches, and ven you need them, use them," and he turned and marched out of the room. Willa had no more trouble.

When her parents moved to a small fruit farm near Boulder, she enrolled in the University of Colorado, studying languages, harmony, and sanitary science for two years. Afterwards she taught in other states for a time. In Beatrice, Nebraska, the teachers' test was an odd one, featuring many questions about agriculture. Her days on the farm had prepared her well, and she was hired to teach the fifth grade, including music. In Oregon she taught only music for the first time. She also played the lead in a community production of *The Mikado*. It was a satisfying time and a personally happy one. She came home to Boulder in the summer, happily planning her future with the young man she had met, but her plans were shattered with the news of his sudden death.

Grateful for her career, Willa now devoted herself to it, taking some time off for study and for private voice and piano lessons. She studied music and conducting at the University of California at Berkeley and at Northwestern University, and during her summer vacations, she studied voice and piano with private teachers. John Kendel, superintendent of music for the Denver schools, recommended that she be hired, and Willa received her lifetime certificate in music.

Her first assignment was to Twenty-Fourth Street School, a tough one with twenty-seven different nationalities and races. Like the Burdette School in the country, this one was a challenge, and she worked with the pupils to introduce the joys of music, for she soon discovered that many knew nothing about it. Willa quickly achieved a reputation in Denver and a position as permanent assistant in music, being sent to



During an interview with the author, Willa remarked that she has always refused to go to a nursing home as long as she could take care of herself. "You know, I am disgusted for not having accomplished more these past . . . years."

schools most in need of her services. Eventually she taught public school music in almost every Denver school, from first grade through high school. During those years of teaching, Willa also performed dancing and singing numbers in many special programs. In one she was whimsically billed as "Willa the Wisp."

At 102-years-old in 1979, Willa Clanton is an inspiration to Coloradans who know her. Attributing her long life to her "rewarding years of teaching and associating with young people," she claims that "they helped me to keep a youthful outlook. It is magnificent to grow old if one keeps young." Erect, fashionably dressed, knowledgeable, Willa is more interested in the present than her early days in the Centennial State, but she concedes that the century that she and Colorado have shared was a great one. "I am afraid the next can never compare. When I ride up on the hills and look at the continual spreading of Denver, I worry and I ask myself, 'Where will all the water come from?'" Perhaps some of Colorado's problems looming so big may be solved by a thoughtful look at the past. Willa Clanton is a remarkable link with that past.

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The Active Force: Enos A. Mills and the National Park Movement

BY CARL ABBOTT

In the first week of January 1917, leaders of the successful movement to create a national park service for the United States met in the new National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution to congratulate themselves on the bill recently signed by President Woodrow Wilson and to generate support for a high appropriation for the new agency. From Tuesday through Saturday members of the American conservation elite followed one another to the podium. Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather, Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane, Senator Reed Smoot of Utah, J. Horace McFarland of the American Civic Association, Chief Forester Henry Graves, Gilbert Grosvenor of *National Geographic*, and dozens more discussed topics from "climbing Mount McKinley" to "teaching by picture" to "air routes to the national parks."

Prominent at the National Parks Conference was Enos A. Mills of Colorado, nature writer and self-appointed public servant. The program committee recognized his reputation as a specialist on the natural history of the West by asking him to deliver a talk on Sequoia National Park and to entertain the audience on the final afternoon with what Mather called his "inimitable bear stories." Mills also spoke as an important theorist on the conservation of scenery, discussing "national parks for all the people" on the opening day, chairing another session, and answering questions about the training of park guides. Other speakers referred to Mills as "the father of Rocky Mountain National Park" and ranked him with John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt as a public advocate of conservation. Mather's own introduction stated that "there has been no more consistent advocate of the national parks idea . . . than that apostle of parks, Mr. Enos Mills."¹



Enos A. Mills, acclaimed by many as "the father of Rocky Mountain National Park," pursued three careers simultaneously—author, innkeeper, and nature enthusiast.

¹ Stephen Mather et al., in *Proceedings of the National Parks Conference: Held in the Auditorium of the New National Museum, Washington, D.C., January 2-6, 1917* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), pp. 36, 111, 117, 120-21, 147.



Mills was an avid promoter of national parks.



Mills reciprocated Mather's admiration. In 1915 he had written for publication that Mather's "epoch-marking" appointment as assistant secretary for national parks in the Department of the Interior would bring "strong, sympathetic and constructive administration." In private he had stated that Mather was a level-headed man of high ideals. Mills also helped to sponsor a testimonial dinner for Mather after the Washington, D.C., conference.² Yet, in 1920 Mills used every available forum to attack Mather as the "non-resident King" of the national parks, a tyrant who used his control over park concessions to build a personal political machine. In turn, Mather and other park service administrators dismissed Mills as a foolish meddler who wished to dictate park policy.³

This change in the relationship between Mills and many of his peers from 1915 to 1920 was not an isolated event, for Mills was a hard man to like personally. His overlapping activities as a naturalist, businessman, and campaigner for national parks during the first decades of the twentieth century resulted in impressive accomplishments, but these accomplishments were also marred by conflicting aims and an aggressive self-importance. Mills aroused both respect and anger among his associates. In the opinion of J. Horace McFarland, "the indefatigable nature worker" was an "active force" and "a unique individual." However, James Grafton Rogers of the Colorado Mountain Club put it more bluntly, commenting that "in spite of his very real merits as an author, an inn-keeper, and an outdoor enthusiast, [he] has a genius [*sic*] for making enemies."⁴

As Rogers's description indicates, Mills had sufficient energy to pursue three careers simultaneously. Between 1904 and his death on 21 September 1922 he published scores of articles on the wonders of the Rocky Mountains. Readers of *Harper's*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, *McClure's*, *Country Life*, *Sunset*, and a dozen other magazines knew him as a sensitive observer of western forests, wildlife, and geology. During the same years he also published sixteen books on natural history and on the national parks. By the 1910s, reviewers welcomed his new volumes for their regularity and reliability—their easy style, their

² Enos A. Mills, "Warden of the Nation's Mountain Scenery," *Review of Reviews* 51 (April 1915): 428; Enos A. Mills to J. Horace McFarland, 9 April 1915, McFarland Papers, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, photocopies at Rocky Mountain National Park Headquarters, Estes Park, Colorado (hereinafter cited as McFarland Papers); Robert Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), p. 109.

³ Enos A. Mills, "Exploiting Our National Parks," *New Republic* 24 (10 November 1920): 272; Enos A. Mills, letter to *New York Times*, 30 January 1921; Mills to Reed Smoot, 23 April 1920, to Morris Sheppard, 28 April 1920, Mills Papers, Rocky Mountain National Park Headquarters; L.C. Way, Superintendent's Report for February 1920, Rocky Mountain National Park Headquarters; Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, p. 186.

⁴ McFarland to Richard Ballinger, 20 July 1910, McFarland Papers; James Grafton Rogers to Edmund Seymour, 18 December 1914, James Grafton Rogers Papers, Documentary Resources Department, Colorado Historical Society, Denver (hereinafter cited as Rogers Papers).

instructive contents, their ability to package scientific information within entertaining anecdotes.

Mills used his success as a writer of personal nature essays to define a clear public image of himself. The American public knew Mills as a self-taught scientist with a firsthand understanding of the ecology of the high country, and as a man who reported his own experiences with grizzlies and his own observations of pines and aspen. The Mills described in his essays was also a hero of timberline adventures, a man who had faced alone the perils of avalanche, storm, bitter cold, fierce winds, and snowblindness. The character that he helped to fashion was strong and sympathetic. Profiles and obituaries called him a man with a "sturdy fighting spirit," unselfishly devoted to "inculcating in others the same love of the wild that he found so fascinating" and to saving "for generations to come a portion of America's birthright."⁵

The home base for Mills was his Longs Peak Inn, located ten miles south of Estes Park. Born in Fort Scott, Kansas, on 22 April 1870, he moved to Colorado at the age of fourteen in search of improved health and supported himself by summer work at Estes Park hotels and winter jobs on ranches, with survey parties, or in the copper mines at Butte, Montana. In the 1890s he built a cabin at the foot of Longs Peak and became a skilled mountain guide. He capitalized on his familiarity with the Front Range by opening the inn in 1902. The emphasis was on healthy living (no heavy breakfasts to weigh down his guests at eight thousand feet) and the interpretation of nature by Mills or other specialists.⁶

Mills earned his living as a writer and a businessman, but it was his third career as an unpaid and self-appointed public servant that involved the greatest emotional commitment. It was also his public activities that most clearly revealed his character. Despite his willingness to invest his reputation as a nature writer in the advocacy of conservation and national parks, something in his personality forced him to destroy the personal and professional relationships that he had developed and that were necessary for effectiveness. He shunned compromise, alienated potential allies, and used up friends like typewriter ribbons, good for one project but discarded before the next. To the extent that it is possible to isolate his career as a lobbyist and political advocate from his activities as a naturalist, this essay examines the accomplishments and the failures of Enos A. Mills as a public figure.⁷

⁵ Arthur Chapman, "Enos A. Mills, Nature Guide," *Country Life* 38 (May 1920): 61-63; "Enos Mills' Last Work," *Country Life* 44 (June 1923): 104; Robert Duffus, unidentified obituary of Mills, in Aldo Leopold Papers, courtesy of Susan Flader, University of Missouri, Columbia.

⁶ A short summary of Mills's life can be found in Marshall Sprague, *Colorado: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1976), pp. 143-45.

⁷ Mills as a writer is briefly discussed in Carl Abbott, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1976), pp. 186-89.



Mills built his first homestead cabin in 1885. Later, he purchased Elder Lamb's home, which had been built in 1878 but later burned down. The cabin was rebuilt and in 1902 became the site of Longs Peak Inn.





Mills emphasized healthy living at his Longs Peak Inn. No heavy meals were served in the main dining room because they would weigh down the guests at the altitude of eight thousand feet.



Although Mills had previously helped to organize the Estes Park Improvement and Protective Association to boost local tourist business, he did not plunge into the exhausting life of public advocacy until he neared his forties. In 1909, the same year in which he published his first major book, he opened a campaign for the creation of Estes National Park. The first important progress came in Washington, D.C., in 1912, when a chain of communication from Mills to J. Horace McFarland of the American Civic Association and then to Secretaries of the Interior Richard Ballinger and Walter Fisher resulted in a favorable report on what was now called Rocky Mountain National Park by R.B. Marshall, the chief geographer of the United States Geological Survey.⁸ At the same time, Frederick Ross took over a supporting effort by the Denver Chamber of Commerce and James Grafton Rogers coordinated the support of the new Colorado Mountain Club. Building on the idea that Mills had worked to publicize, Rogers collated the views of Colorado businessmen and politicians and wrote the bill that was introduced in 1913 by Congressman Atterson Rucker of Aspen. The Denver supporters also obtained the necessary endorsements from former United States Senator Thomas Patterson, Colorado Governor Elias Ammons, Denver Mayor Henry Arnold, the Boulder and Larimer county commissions, and the Colorado General Assembly. As Rogers explained the process to Mills, "in order to unite all these various interests, we had to make a number of concessions in the way of mining rights, water rights, and so on, but I think that these are all details which can be overlooked in the general success of the project."⁹

Congress approved the Rocky Mountain National Park in January 1915, after Rogers had reworked the draft bill to incorporate further changes requested by the United States Forest Service. The division of labor among park supporters is apparent in the hearings held by the House Committee on Public Lands. While Mills eloquently described the vegetation, wildlife, and scenery of the high mountains and urged their preservation, a joint statement by the Denver Chamber of Commerce, the Real Estate Exchange, the Colorado Mountain Club, and the Boulder Commercial Association dealt with practical problems.¹⁰ Although the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* also recognized Ross in its commendatory editorial, attention focused on Mills because of his highly visible role as a propagandist. The *Denver Post* published a

⁸ Enos A. Mills, "The Proposed Estes National Park," *Sierra Club Bulletin* 7 (June 1910): 234-36; McFarland to Ballinger, 20 July 1910, to Mills, 7 October 1910, 28 November 1911, Thormdike Delano to McFarland, 10 December 1910, McFarland Papers.

⁹ Rogers to Mills, 6 February 1913, to Frederick Ross, 14 October 1913, Rogers Papers; Ross to McFarland, 4 February 1913, Rogers to Ross, 17 February 1913, McFarland Papers.

¹⁰ U.S., Congress, House, *Rocky Mountain National Park. Hearing before the Committee on Public Lands on S. 6309*, 63d Cong., 3d sess., 23 December 1914, pp. 16-18, 52-54; Rogers to Ross, 14 October 1913, Rogers Papers.

front-page editorial cartoon in which a figure representing Colorado shakes Mills's hand and says "Enos, I'm proud of you!" while talking mountains in the background add "Good boy, Enos!" and "I always knew you were all right, Enos!" On 4 September 1915 Mills chaired the formal dedication ceremonies as Stephen Mather, Governor George Carlson, and a variety of Colorado congressmen offered five-minute speeches.¹¹ The appellation "Father of Rocky Mountain National Park" so delighted Mills that he occasionally appended it to his by-line in local newspaper articles. In his own words, "the achievement of my life was securing the establishment of the Rocky Mountain National Park. . . . The seven-year campaign . . . was the most strenuous and growth-compelling occupation that I have ever followed."¹²

If the reading public saw a high-minded Mills in the Rocky Mountain Park campaign, closer associates saw a man who seemed unhappy without enemies. The scattering of Estes Park property owners who opposed the national park through the Front Range Settlers' League, for example, were neighbors or business rivals motivated by personal animosity toward Mills.¹³ Mills also interpreted the natural opposition of the Forest Service to the subtraction of territory from their jurisdiction as part of an iniquitous plot. He believed that the Forest Service was behind the Settlers' League and in 1911 complained bitterly to McFarland and to Henry Graves that the Forest Service was attempting to destroy his hotel business by allowing three hundred head of cattle to pasture on nongrazing land adjacent to his property. He had not the slightest doubt that "this vicious work was planned by the District Forester at Denver, by the Forest Supervisor, by the local Forest Rangers, and by the stockmen."¹⁴ More broadly, arguments over alternative styles of land management convinced Mills that the Forest Service was misallocating funds for undercover opposition to the national park idea and falsely spreading the impression that parks locked up valuable resources. He traced the conspiracy to the Denver Public Land Convention of 1907 and saw himself as one of the chief objects of the "insolence, arrogance and injustice" of this "blackmailing" organization.¹⁵

Not satisfied to quarrel only with his Front Range neighbors and the Forest Service, Mills also picked a fight with James Grafton Rogers, who was instrumental in drafting legislation and proposing compromises. The tone of his first letters to Rogers in 1911 and 1912 was



James Grafton Rogers, president of the Society from 1949 to 1959 and chairman of the board until his death in 1971, was instrumental in drafting the legislation that created the Rocky Mountain National Park.

correct and somewhat diffident, with Mills offering support to Rogers's efforts to establish a Colorado Mountain Club. The next year Mills took a stronger position in urging that there be no compromise with the Forest Service over the issue of grazing rights in the proposed park. By 1914 Mills accused Rogers of undermining the position of the mountain club and selling out the Rocky Mountain park. As Mills reported the situation to McFarland, Rogers was a "typical politician" who tried to make it seem that the mountain club favored the park but who in fact worked quietly with the Forest Service (and with fellow Yale alumnus Henry Graves) to derail the campaign. Because Mills also thought that Frederick Ross of the Denver Chamber of Commerce was a well-meaning dupe of the foresters, Mills found it necessary to prod the Denver interests into action with another publicity campaign.¹⁶ What seems to be measured but gracious acknowledgments by Rogers of Mills's role—"the motives prompting him are wholly those of the out-door enthusiast," "very real merits as . . . an out-door enthusiast"—were taken by Mills as slights and insults. Given his opinion of his co-workers, it is scarcely surprising that Mills found it reasonable to assume full credit as the creator of Rocky Mountain National Park.¹⁷

Efforts to mobilize support for the Colorado park also brought Mills

¹¹ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 19 January 1915; *Denver Post*, 20 January 1915; program for Rocky Mountain National Park dedication, miscellaneous documents, Rocky Mountain National Park Headquarters.

¹² Undated clipping from *Denver Post*, 1918; and undated autobiographical sketch, in Enos Mills Papers, Western History Department, Denver Public Library, Denver.

¹³ *Hearing before the Committee on Public Lands*, pp. 53-55; Rogers to Seymour, 18 December 1914, Mills to Colorado Geographical Board, 18 and 24 May 1915, Rogers Papers.

¹⁴ Mills to Henry Graves, 7 June 1911, to McFarland, 9 April 1911, 19 August 1911, McFarland Papers.

¹⁵ Mills to McFarland, 1, 19, and 20 February 1911, 19 August 1911, 17 March 1914, McFarland Papers.

¹⁶ Mills to Rogers, 24 July 1911, 24 April 1912, 29 September 1913, Rogers to Mills, 5 May 1914, Rogers Papers; Mills to Rogers, 3 May 1914, to McFarland, 31 December 1914, McFarland Papers.

¹⁷ *Hearing before the Committee on Public Lands*, p. 54; Rogers to Seymour, 18 December 1914, Rogers Papers; Mills to McFarland, 31 December 1914, 12 February 1915, McFarland Papers.

into contact with the larger movement to consolidate the several national parks under the direction of a single bureau. One of the central figures in this national effort was J. Horace McFarland, who helped to convert President William H. Taft and three successive secretaries of the Interior to the support of a single National Park Service.¹⁸ Building on the specific alliance over Rocky Mountain National Park, which dated from an Estes Park visit in 1910, McFarland quickly introduced Mills to the national crusade. Correspondence during 1911 shows Mills feeling his way into the eastern conservation establishment with advice from McFarland, who arranged speaking engagements and secured for Mills an invitation from Secretary Fisher to a conference in Washington, D.C. Although the change is not as marked as in letters to Rogers, the next three years also brought an alteration in the tone of the Mills-McFarland relationship. Where Mills clearly appreciated McFarland's advice and contacts in 1910 and 1911, he was quick to stress the importance of his own connections after 1912 and ignored pleas to moderate his attacks on the Forest Service.¹⁹

Mills's reluctance to accept second billing or to take advice did not immediately alienate him from other park advocates, for he had valuable contributions to make in the fight for a National Park Service. Occasionally during 1915 and 1916 he joined the Washington strategy sessions, which produced the Park Service bill and devised procedures for pushing it through Congress, but he was more at home planning propaganda than maneuvering in the political arena. His contacts with editors such as William Allen White and George H. Lorimer were particularly helpful in arranging useful publicity, including an important series in Lorimer's *Saturday Evening Post*.²⁰ At the 1917 conference Mather paid tribute to this contribution in remarks introducing Mills.

One of the most interesting lines of his work, one perhaps not appreciated as a whole, is his stirring up of the leading papers of the country to a realization and to a proper enthusiasm for the parks. He has gone about this in an absolutely unselfish way. He has seen the editors, and, after stirring their interest so that perhaps they would turn to him and say, "Well, let's have a series of articles from you," he would explain that he was not there to sell articles. He had no such ulterior purpose in view; it was simply to awaken the editorial mind to the editorial duty; with the result that perhaps by suggestion he was able to start these editors on the work of securing other writers to exploit the parks.²¹



Mills advocated the use of automobiles in the national parks and fought the policy of granting automobile franchises.

A few months after the 1917 conference, Mills confirmed his prominence by publishing *Your National Parks*, an ambitious volume recognized by reviewers as the standard introduction to the new park system. Yet, the high status that Mills enjoyed among the national park leadership lasted for less than three years. From 1919 to 1922 he took the development of national park policy as a personal affront and systematically alienated National Park Service administrators as he had previously alienated Coloradoans as diverse as Estes Park businessmen, Denver conservationists, and Forest Service administrators. His persistent inability to accept the need for compromises in working with other conservationists resulted in a self-imposed and a self-righteous isolation.

The break came over dealings with Mills's old enemy, the Forest Service. In 1917 he peppered an exasperated Secretary Lane with pointed advice about the dangers of timber cutting and grazing in the national parks (a measure suggested for the wartime emergency), about the need to promote access for automobiles, and about the incorporation of scenic areas adjacent to established parks.²² Mills also advocated an open fight to remove 100,000 acres around Mount Evans from the Forest Service and annex the region to Rocky Mountain National Park. When Horace Albright, Mather's assistant in the Park Service, refused a public stand in favor of quiet negotiations in 1918, Mills proclaimed him a "menace" to the cause of national parks who had sold out to the Forest Service to further his own career.²³

The following year Mather's decision to award a franchise for au-

¹⁸ J. Horace McFarland, in *Proceedings of the National Parks Conference*, p. 105; Donald Swain, *Wilderness Defender: Horace M. Albright and Conservation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 40; Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, pp. 51-53.

¹⁹ McFarland to Mills, 5 September, 10 November 1911, 30 April 1913, 28 December 1914, Mills to McFarland, 9 April, 31 August 1911, 24 September 1912, McFarland Papers.

²⁰ Mills to McFarland, 17 November 1911, McFarland to Mills, 8 April 1914, McFarland Papers; Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, p. 57; Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, p. 101.

²¹ Mather, in *Proceedings of the National Parks Conference*, p. 36.

²² Franklin K. Lane to Mills, 7 August 1917, to Mather, 26 January 1918, Office of the Secretary, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²³ Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, pp. 86-87, 94-95. The following summer Mills was at least willing to receive Albright at the Longs Peak Inn (see Way, Superintendent's Report for July 1919, Rocky Mountain National Park Headquarters).

tomobile transportation in Rocky Mountain National Park ignited Mills's frustration because it seemed to place access to the park under monopoly control. It made little difference that the concessionaire was Roe Emery, an established conservationist who provided a similar service at Glacier National Park. Nor did it matter that Rocky Mountain Park Superintendent L.C. Way and officials from Washington, D.C., attempted to explain to Colorado businessmen the need to protect a reliable firm from unfair competition. When a driver employed by the Longs Peak Inn was arrested within the park boundaries on 16 August 1919, Mills responded by seeking an injunction forbidding Way from limiting the operation of automobiles within the park.²⁴

Mills used his reputation as a writer to secure a hearing for his case. Over the next two years he stated his complaints in a flood of letters to congressmen and conservation groups, who in turn forwarded pointed inquiries to the Department of the Interior. He also published attacks on the transportation monopoly in the *New York Times* and the *New Republic* and obtained editorials in support of his position in newspapers from Boston, Massachusetts, to Des Moines, Iowa.²⁵ Within Colorado he stressed the contention that the franchise limitations constituted an illegal appropriation of the public roads by hungry bureaucrats. At times he confused the issue by implying that the regulation of automobile service for hire also limited individual use of private vehicles. For outsiders he attacked the arbitrary power of the park director, calling him a new political boss able to use concessions "to reward those who support the park policy; and to harass, discredit and even to financially ruin those who criticize it."²⁶

The Park Service reacted to the initial crisis in August 1919 by dispatching Mather to consult with local opinion-makers. "Held conferences in Denver and Estes Park," he wired to Lane on 8 September. "Majority heartily in favor of Emery Concession. State his dependable service far preferable to former desultory service. Mills did not attend Estes Park meeting although fully advised and car sent especially for him." In reply to Mills's continuing attacks, Park Service officials developed a standard argument: the Emery franchise was fully legal; it was needed; Mills was acting in isolation; he lacked the facts to support his accusations. Moreover, wrote the new Interior Secretary John Barton Payne early in 1921, he had "been credited with too much altruism and

²⁴ Way, Superintendent's Reports for May and August 1919, Rocky Mountain National Park Headquarters; Arno Cammerer to Lane, 3 August 1919, National Park Service, National Archives; Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, pp. 109, 135.

²⁵ Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, p. 186; Cammerer to Smoot, 4 May 1920, Mather to Way, 9 February 1920, Mills Papers, Rocky Mountain National Park Headquarters.

²⁶ Mills, "Exploiting Our National Parks," p. 272; *New York Times*, 30 January 1921; *Denver Field and Farm*, 22 May 1920, quoted in Lloyd K. Musselwhite, "Rocky Mountain National Park, 1915-1965: An Administrative History" (Ph.D. diss., University of Denver, 1969), p. 40.



Mills advocated better roads through the parks to bring people closer to the scenery, such as this view of Longs Peak that was photographed by William H. Jackson in 1873.

idealism in his park activities. . . . People either do not know or they overlook the fact that he is primarily a hotel keeper . . . Mills is acting not with high motives of patriotism . . . that his reputation as a writer on natural history subjects might lead one to attribute to him, but solely in the selfish interests of his own commercial enterprise."²⁷ Implicit in the response of park bureaucrats—Way, Albright, Mather, Arno Cammerer—was the assumption that Mills's obsession was a product of personal pique. As historian Donald Swain has interpreted their attitudes in his biography of Horace Albright, Mills seemed simply another of the "old-time park boosters, usually with vested interests" who interfered with the evolution of uniform and rational policies.²⁸

Mills believed that he was enunciating consistent principles. Specifically, he had long been an opponent of the concession system in national parks. At the 1917 conference, for example, he had firmly argued that making park guides concession employees would limit creative competition. He had also been a long-time enthusiast for the automobile as a means for promoting contact with the outdoors, repeatedly advocating better roads through mountains and parks to bring people closer to the scenery. Both in public and in private he had written about the "vast importance" of allowing automobiles free access to national parks. More generally, Mills held a deep antipathy toward large organizations as rapacious and domineering entities. By placing extra transactions between the tourist and the outdoors, the transportation franchise directly violated the goals to which Mills had dedicated his life and writing. At the same time, the Emery concession imposed a new layer

²⁷ John Barton Payne, letter in *New York Times*, 13 February 1921; Mather to Lane, 8 August 1919, Payne to Frank Kellogg, 22 March 1920, to Mrs. Francis E. Whitley, 8 January 1921, National Park Service, National Archives.

²⁸ Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, p. 95.

of control over *his* Rockies, over the landscape that had been open to his exploration for thirty-five years.²⁹

Unfortunately for Enos Mills, his publicity campaign confirmed his enemies while recruiting few friends. In Estes Park his only allies were Clement Yore of the Big Thompson Hotel and F.O. Stanley of the Stanley Hotel. Both could be accused of the same self-interest as Mills, while Stanley was also thought to be jealous that Emery's firm used White automobiles rather than Stanley Steamers. In the spring of 1921 a "Taxpayers Ticket" backed by Yore and Mills attracted few votes in an election for mayor and city council in which the National Park Service policy was the primary issue. Soon to follow was a debate before the Denver Civic and Commercial Club on 27 May in which Mills discredited himself before leading businessmen with wild charges easily refuted by Way and by Fred Chamberlain, a former head of the Denver tourist bureau. Although a court case to decide whether the state or the federal government owned roads within the park dragged on until the mid-twenties, the appointment of Roger Toll as the new park superintendent later in the same year effectively quieted the controversy before Mills's death in 1922.³⁰

Despite his importance in the 1910s, Mills is now all but forgotten. Tourists on Colorado Route 7 south of Estes Park speed past the turnoff to his old cabin. Copies of his best-selling books molder in attics or fill the libraries of summer resorts. While historians interested in the origins of the national park system, the development of Colorado, or American attitudes toward nature have given him passing attention, their eyes have been focused on other men and other issues. Certainly part of the reason for neglect is his personality, which assured that he would have no followers except his wife and few friends to defend his accomplishments. The self-imposed isolation, which closed in on Mills in his last years, also cut him off from the development of new ideas and policies after World War I and reduced his interest to historians tracing the long-term evolution of the conservation movement and of ideas about wilderness.

The foregoing analysis has tried to suggest that Mills was, in fact, a man whose colossal stubbornness grew out of deep convictions. Starting from the general principle that Americans should be brought into greater contact with the outdoors, he deduced a set of specific policies for accomplishing his goal. With a vision as narrow as it was intense, he was

²⁹ Enos A. Mills, in *Proceedings of the National Parks Conference*, pp. 270-71; Mills, "Exploiting Our National Parks," p. 272; *Denver Republican*, 9 April 1905; Mills to McFarland, 24 April 1912, McFarland Papers; Lane to Mather, 26 January 1918, National Park Service, National Archives.

³⁰ Way, Superintendent's Reports for February and May 1920, March and May 1921, Rocky Mountain National Park Headquarters; *Denver Post*, 28 May 1921; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 28 May 1921. The eventual resolution of the conflict is described in Musselman, "Rocky Mountain National Park," pp. 74-86, and Merlin K. Potts, "Rocky Mountain National Park," *The Colorado Magazine* 42 (Summer 1965): 220.



The Stanley Hotel (above) and the Lewiston Hotel (below), located in Estes Park, are examples of the grand hotels that were available to the national park tourists in the 1920s.



unable to recognize that alternative policies might also work to implement the same general principles. He assumed that anyone who questioned his particular views about nature-guiding, roads and automobiles in national parks, the character of the Forest Service, or the expansion of Rocky Mountain National Park was opposed to the broader values of the outdoors. In the world of Enos Mills, anyone who was not an active supporter was a potential enemy, compromise with rival interests was betrayal, and bureaucratic organization was an impediment to the quick achievement of self-evident goals.

The inability of Mills to work with other conservationists may have stemmed from the basic insecurity of a self-made man. Self-educated as a naturalist and self-taught as a writer, he held his ideas fiercely and unreasonably because he feared to submit them to critical analysis. He also approached personal relationships with the aggressiveness that often masks self-doubt. Even in his later years, when his public reputation was at its height, he continued to promote himself by mailing copies of his books to distinguished Americans and congratulating younger authors on the promise of their work (enclosing an autographed picture with his note).³¹ The escalating demand for recognition from established colleagues seen in his relations with Rogers and McFarland extended even to his correspondence with John Muir, a man whom Mills idolized as the formative influence on his life. Where Mills in 1903 requested a photograph of Muir and thanked the older man for encouragement, eleven years later there was a subtle change in tone, with Mills describing his own lobbying efforts in satisfied terms and instructing Muir on the value of the Californian's own work.³²

The converse of insecurity for Enos Mills was an excessive self-reliance and intolerance of conflicting views. In part, he may have been trapped by self-definition, writing and talking about himself so extensively that he took the resulting image at face value. The applause for his role in the designation of Rocky Mountain National Park and his late marriage in 1918 to an adoring disciple certainly helped to shade the lines of an accurate self-portrait. Judging by the evidence, he overstated (or allowed journalists to overstate) the intimacy of his relations with Muir, Roosevelt, and John Burroughs.³³ His books and articles,

moreover, depicted a hero-naturalist who understood the ways of the wilderness and saved himself time and again by his own wits. A man as knowledgeable and imposing as the figure he described might truly deserve a special regard from colleagues and from the new conservation bureaucracy. Indeed, his prickly sense of importance would probably have prodded Mills to break with the National Park Service over another issue even had the transportation franchise been settled to his satisfaction.

The greatest accomplishments of Enos Mills came when he was alone. He was a patient and sensitive observer whose understanding of the Colorado wilderness deepened throughout his life, and he had the ability to interpret his knowledge in clear and forthright prose that still conveys his sense of delight. At the same time, the long years of solitary living and self-reliance that made him an effective nature writer may also have limited his emotional maturity. When he faced the need to deal with other people as equals or to work with organizations, personal doubts interacted with adamant reliance on his own expertise. The result was bluster, which destroyed his effectiveness and thereby confirmed his worst suspicions about his associates. In his career as a public advocate he was a tragic figure, a man who had achieved much as a writer and as a spokesman for Colorado but also a man who undermined the broader influence on the conservation policy, which he so greatly desired.

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³¹ Mills to Samuel F. Dutton, 22 October 1919, Mills Papers, Denver Public Library; Mills to Hal G. Everts, 8 September 1920, Manuscript Collections, University of Oregon Library, Eugene; Mills to Walter P. Eaton, 14 April 1921, Manuscript Department, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

³² Mills to John Muir, 13 and 29 January 1903, 24 November 1914, Pacific Center for Western Studies, University of the Pacific, Stockton, Calif.

³³ Although several profiles described how Theodore Roosevelt had persuaded (or even implored) Mills to take up the task of lecturing on forestry from 1906 to 1908, the only correspondence in the Roosevelt papers at the Library of Congress is a formal acknowledgement of the receipt of one of Mills's books (Theodore Roosevelt to Enos A. Mills, 5 July 1917). Similarly, Mills described John Burroughs as a personal friend at the time of Burroughs's death (*New York Times*, 30 March 1921), but there is no other evidence of a close relationship. For what seems to be an exaggerated treatment of the Mills-Muir relationship, see Frank S. Harrison, "A Father of National Parks," *The Kit-Kat* (6 July 1917): 98, in Mills Papers, Denver Public Library.