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Currency, Coinage and Banking in Pioneer Colorado

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Most of the argonauts who joined the Pike's Peak gold rush in the spring of 1859 had little money. In fact, that is why they came to the mountains. With inadequte currency, much of the early trading in the region was conducted on a barter basis. Then as mining developed, gold dust came to be used in exchange. This was never a wholly satisfactory medium, being difficult to measure accurately. Also gold from the various districts was not of uniform purity, but ranged in value from $12 to $20 per ounce. Another factor militating against the use of gold dust as money was the possibility of fraud. Brass filings, spelter, and such substances could be mixed with gold dust or manufactured into "retort nuggets" and sometimes were thus passed off as gold.

Retorted gold usually contained an admixture of other metals. The purity of retort and of nugget gold was roughly determined by rubbing it on the smooth surface of an iron stone. A bright yellow trace indicated a high degree of purity, while darker shades indicated amalgamations with baser metals[1]. Placer gold was weighed on balances or scales. In the absence of these facilities a "pinch" (the amount of dust taken up by the thumb and one finger) passed as twenty-five cents.

In addition to receiving gold dust in payment for goods, certain pioneer merchants went further and became gold brokers, buying gold and paying for it with United States currency, or drafts on eastern banks.

It was not until the following year (1860) that banks as such began operation. Two establishments—Brown, Brother & Co. and Turner & Hobbs—vie for the honor of being the first bank in Colorado. Advertisements for both institutions first appeared in the weekly *Rocky Mountain News* of June 20, 1860. The Turner & Hobbs' advertisement is dated June 14th; that of Brown, Brother & Co. is undated. Notices in the "Local" column of the issue of the 20th call attention to the two new business establishments. Both companies carried advertisements in subsequent issues of the *News* and also in the *Rocky Mountain Herald.*

[1]Frank Hall, *History of Colorado,* III, 158.

Samuel R. and G. W. Brown and G. W. Wells had their bank next to the Apollo Hall on Larimer Street, between Fourteenth and Fifteenth. U. Turner and Joshua Hobbs opened their bank in Reed & Hiffner's brick building on Ferry (Eleventh) Street. George W. Kassler was their cashier. Turner and Hobbs are said to have had the financial backing of William H. Russell, founder of the famous Pony Express. It is probable that the financial difficulties that came upon Russell account for the dissolution of the Turner & Hobbs banking enterprise in 1861.

A third concern, "The Miners Bank," of Forrest Brothers & Co., opened for business in July, 1860. Their temprorary office was next door to Jones & Cartwright's store on Blake Street, Denver.[2]

In the meantime preparations had been made for opening what was to become the most famous institution of its kind in pioneer Colorado—Clark, Gruber & Co. The Clark brothers, Austin M. and Milton E., had joined with E. H. Gruber in 1858 to form a banking house in Leavenworth, Kansas.[3] Following the Pike's Peak gold rush, their bank received large shipments of gold from the Rocky Mountain region. Upon this, express charges amounted to 5 per cent of the value of the gold dust. A similar charge was sustained on shipments of coin returned to Denver. Elimination of these transportation charges by minting the gold in Denver should in itself be the basis for a good business, they thought. So they planned to establish a mint near the mines. During the winter of 1859-60, Milton E. Clark went to Boston and procured the dies and other machinery needed for minting coins. The other two partners came to Denver, bought lots and erected a two-story brick building to house their contemplated business.

On July 4, 1860, the pioneer Denver newspaper reports: "Clark, Gruber & Co.'s banking house and assay office is receiving the inside finish. Their engine is set up and in a few days they will begin the manufacture of the much prized 'American Eagles.'" On the 11th the editor of this newspaper states that the coinage machinery is all ready and that he has seen specimen coins struck in copper.[4]

On July 20, 1860, Editor William N. Byers received the following note: "We shall be pleased to have you visit our coining room and witness the process of stamping our first coin from Pike's Peak gold. Very respectfully, Clark, Gruber & Co."

Mr. Byers reports: "In compliance with which invitation we forthwith repaired to the elegant banking house of the above firm,

[2]*Rocky Mountain News*, July 18, 1860.
[3]J. C. Smiley, *History of Denver*, 810.
[4]*Rocky Mountain News*, July 4, 11, 1860.

on the corner of McGaa [Market] and F [G, Sixteenth] streets, and were admitted to their coining room in the basement, where we found preparations almost complete for the issue of Pike's Peak coin. A hundred 'blanks' had been prepared, weight and fineness tested and last manipulation gone through with, prior to their passage through the stamping press. The little engine that drives the machinery was fired up, belts adjusted, and between three and four o'clock the machinery was put in motion, and 'mint drops,' of the value of $10 each, began dropping into a tin pail with a most musical 'chink.' About a thousand dollars were turned out, at the rate of fifteen or twenty coins a minute, which was deemed satisfactory for the first experiment.

Upper: Obverse and Reverse of Clark, Gruber & Co. $10. Coin of 1860.
Lower: Obverse and Reverse of J. J. Conway & Co. $10. Coin of 1861.
(These reproductions are the exact size of the coins.)

"The coins—of which none but ten dollar pieces are yet coined—are seventeen grains heavier than the U. S. coin of the same denomination.

"On the face is a representation of *the* Peak, its base surrounded by a forest of timber, and 'Pike's Peak Gold' encircling the summit. Immediately under its base is the word 'Denver' and beneath it 'Ten D.' On the reverse is the American Eagle, encircled by the name of the firm, 'Clark, Gruber & Co.', and beneath it the date, '1860.'

"The coin has a little of the roughness peculiar to newness but is upon the whole, very creditable in appearance, and a vast improvement over 'dust' as a circulating medium."[5]

[5]*Ibid*, July 25, 1860.

The advertisements of Clark, Gruber & Co. began to appear in the *Rocky Mountain News* and in the *Rocky Mountain Herald* in August, 1860. The first advertisement, of August 8th, contains this statement: "The native gold is coined as it is found alloyed with silver. The weight will be greater, but the value the same as the United States coin of like denomination." In the *News* of August 28, 1860, we read:

"Our Mint.—Clark, Gruber & Co. melted and coined last week about $18,000 in $10, $5, and $2.50 pieces. As specimens of coinage these pieces are far superior to any of the private mint drops issued in San Francisco, and are nearly as perfect as the regular United States mint issues. The faces of the $5's and $2.50's are a good imitation of the government coinage—the head of the Goddess of Liberty, surrounded with thirteen stars, with the firm name of 'Clark & Co.' occupying the head tiara. The reverse of the coin is occupied, of course, with 'our noble bird' encircled by the words, 'Pike's Peak Gold, Denver, 2½D.' Altogether it is a creditable piece of work, and we hope to see hosts of it in circulation before the snow flies. The fineness of this coin is 828½, and the excess of weight over U. S. coin is 23 grains in a ten dollar piece."

The Clark, Gruber & Co. coins of 1860 were almost pure gold, containing very little alloy. In fact, they were so soft that they abraded rather rapidly and this induced the makers to use more alloy in the coinage of the following year. A comparison of the coins of 1860 with those of 1861 shows that the latter are not nearly so yellow in appearance as those of the first issue. Coins in denominations of $20, $10, $5 and $2.50 were minted in 1860.[6] The $20 and the $10 coins carried the representation of Pike's Peak on one side; the others were similar to the United States coins, with the Liberty head on one side and the eagle on the other. New dies were used in 1861, all the four denominations of this year being after the general pattern of those of the United States.[7]

In addition to the Clark, Gruber & Co. plant, two other Colorado establishments minted gold coins in 1861. The *Rocky Mountain News* of June 27, 1861, reports: "Parsons & Co., of Hamilton [South Park], are preparing to begin the coinage of gold at that

[6]Smiley, in his *History of Denver* (p. 811), says that only $20 and $10 pieces were coined in 1860, but this is proved incorrect by the existence of examples of all four coins as well as by the statement in the *Rocky Mountain News* of August 28, 1860.

[7]The *Catalogue of Coins, Tokens and Medals in the Numismatic Collection of the Mint of the United States at Philadelphia, Pa.* (1914) lists only the $20, $10 and $5 Clark and Gruber coins of 1860, and the $10 and $2.50 pieces of 1861. Mr. E. B. Morgan of Denver has all of the eight coins except the $20 of 1860, together with several duplicates, making no doubt the most nearly complete set in existence. Mr. Henry A. Dubbs of Denver owns one of the $20 pieces of 1860. The State Historical Society of Colorado possesses five of the eight coins minted by Clark, Gruber & Co.

place. The issue will be in quarter and half eagles of handsome and original design. We have seen facsimiles of the coins."

On Sept. 24 the *News* commented: "Gold coinage in Colorado Territory is getting to be quite a large business. Besides the extensive establishment of Clark, Gruber & Co. in this city, there is a mint in Georgia Gulch and another in Tarryall, besides a number of assayists in different mining towns, who refine gold and run it into bars."

Upper left: Obverse and Reverse of Clark, Gruber & Co. $5. Coin of 1860.
Upper right: Obverse and Reverse of John Parson & Co. $5. Coin of 1861.
Lower: Obverse and Reverse of the two Denver Assay Office Tokens.
(These reproductions are the exact size of the coins.)

The mint in Georgia Gulch was operated by J. J. Conway & Co. Frank Hall, in his *History of Colorado* (IV, 328), mentions only $5 coins as being minted by this company. However, the catalogue of coins in the United States Mint at Philadelphia lists $10, $5, and $2.50 coins. None of these coins are dated.

The mint in the Tarryall district of South Park was operated by John Parson [or Parsons] & Co. An image of a quartz stamp mill in relief was the distinctive feature on one side of the Parson coins. The catalogue of the Philadelphia mint lists the $5 and the $2.50 coins.[8] These are undated.

The $5 Parson & Co. coin had a weight of 128.3 grains; that of Conway & Co., 120.8 grains; and that of Clark, Gruber & Co. (1860), 138.8 grains.[9]

Mr. E. B. Morgan of Denver has two interesting and unique early Colorado coins. These are copper patterns of five dollar gold pieces intended for issuance by the "Denver City Assay

[8]The name "Oro" on the coins would indicate that when the dies were made it was expected that the mint would be established at the town of Oro in California Gulch, near present Leadville.

[9]Descriptions and weights of these coins are found in the Philadelphia mint catalogue cited above, on pages 116-117.

Office." Illustrations of these were run in *The Numismatist* of August, 1912, and the editor of that journal made the following comment: "Little information regarding the origin of these pieces is now obtainable, and details of the firm contemplating the striking of gold pieces with the stamp of Denver City Assay Office would be very welcome. We are indebted for these illustrations to Edward B. Morgan of Denver, President of the Colorado Historical Society. . . . There is still a third variety of the five dollar piece, with the same obverse as the two shown here, but with a different reverse. It is in the collection of the American Numismatic Society and shows on the reverse a crude design evidently meant for an eagle, and the inscription 'Kraat.' All the three pieces are struck in copper, and are excessively rare. It is not known if there are other specimens than those mentioned. There is also a twenty-dollar piece, in copper, bearing this stamp, which is regarded as unique. It is in the collection of Virgil M. Brand. Mention is also found of a ten-dollar piece in copper which likewise is supposed to be unique."

A movement was begun in Colorado in 1861 to have a branch United States mint established here. Delegate H. P. Bennet and others worked vigorously to achieve this end and were successful. The desired bill was enacted by Congress and was approved April 21, 1862. The plan was to have the government purchase and take over the Clark, Gruber and Co. plant. This was accomplished in April, 1863. But although the building was remodeled, the government did not continue coinage here. The "mint" remained little more than an assay office until 1906, when the present United States mint building in Denver was completed and put into operation.[10]

Despite the amount of coin put into circulation in 1860-61, uncoined gold continued in Colorado as the principal medium of exchange. In the spring of 1861 the price of gold became a much debated public question. An attempt was made to standardize prices. At a meeting of the merchants and business men of Central City and adjoining districts on April 29, 1861, the following resolutions were adopted:

"Whereas, Retorted gold, at sixteen dollars per ounce is almost exclusive currency of the mining region, and Whereas, it has been fully tested and ascertained by business men of all classes, who have shipped the common average quality of gold now current in this country to the United States Mint, that there is a very

[10]The original Clark, Gruber & Co. mint machinery was recovered from the rubbish by officials of the State Historical Society of Colorado in 1898 and is now on exhibition in the State Museum, Denver.

large and ruinous loss sustained—varying from ten to twenty per cent upon its rated value here; . . .

"Resolved, That we, the undersigned, business men and mill owners, do pledge our sacred honor that, from and after the 10th day of May next, we will pay out and receive gold dust at the following rates and no other: Clear Creek gold, $17 per ounce; Russell Gulch gold, $16; best average quality of retorted gold, $15; Common, badly retorted and dirty gold, $12."[11] To the resolutions were attached forty-eight signatures.

The report being sent to the Denver Chamber of Commerce was endorsed by that body. A public meeting held in Denver May 3, 1861, not only accepted the Central City schedule of prices but fixed prices for placer gold as follows: Fair Play Gulch, Swan River, Nigger Gulch, Kelley's Bar, French Gulch, Humbug Gulch, and Frying Pan Gulch, each $17 per ounce; Georgia Gulch, McNulty Gulch, and California Gulch, $16 per ounce; Platte River gold, $20 per ounce. The report was signed by 190 business men, who pledged their "sacred honor" to maintain the schedule.[12]

This movement, which amounted to a reduction in the price paid for certain gold, met vigorous opposition from the miners and mill owners. The business men gradually gave way and soon the old prices were current again. The attempted change did, however, have a salutary effect in inducing the cleaning up of dirty gold.[13]

Warren Hussey, from Des Moines, Iowa, started his banking enterprise at the corner of Blake and Fifteenth streets, Denver, in the spring of 1861.[14] He developed a thriving business in Denver and established a branch at Central City, placing J. A. Thatcher in charge there.[15]

Dr. O. D. Cass, who was practicing medicine at Denver in 1860, turned to banking the following year. He was joined by his brother, Joseph B. Cass. They advertised under the following captions: "Cass & Brother, Bankers and Dealers in Gold Dust, Coin and Exchange, Blake Street, Denver.[16]

The *Rocky Mountain News* in July, 1861, also carried this advertisement: "Edgar de Peyster, Gold Dirt Mines, Banker, and Dealer in Exchange, Gold and Bank Notes."

The Colorado Territorial legislature in its first session passed an Act (Nov. 7, 1861) to incorporate the "Bank of Colorado,"

[11]*Rocky Mountain News*, May 8, 1861.
[12]*Ibid.*
[13]*Ibid.*, May 22, 1861.
[14]See his advertisements in the *Rocky Mountain News*, May 7, 1861, and in the Denver *Republican* of May 25, 1861.
[15]J. C. Smiley, *History of Denver*, 815.
[16]*Rocky Mountain News*, July 24, 1861; *Miners Record* (Tarryall Mines), Aug. 10, 1861.

placing the subscription of stock under the superintendence of E. W. Cobb, P. P. Wilcox and E. C. Jacobs. But the establishment of this bank appears never to have passed the paper stage. However, "P. P. Wilcox & Co." are said to have engaged in the banking business in a small way soon after passage of the act. They are said to have issued about $3,000 worth of scrip in denominations of ten, twenty-five, and fifty cent pieces. It was printed on an ordinary press in Denver.[17]

This, however, was not the only scrip used during the pioneer period. The first issue was that of Clark, Gruber & Co. From the *Rocky Mountain News* of August 3, 1861, we quote: "We have seen a beautifully engraved bank note of the denomination of $5 gotten up for Clark, Gruber & Co. of this city, designed for circulation in this Territory. Ones, twos and threes are also to be issued.[18] They are redeemable in Clark, Gruber & Co's coin in this city. The bill we saw has on the lower right hand corner an admirable likeness of Governor Gilpin—which of itself ought to give currency to the issue."

The needs of business gave rise the following year to an issue of fractional paper currency. "Our people," says the *Rocky Mountain News* of Nov. 10, 1862, "suffer great inconvenience in their business transactions in consequence of the great scarcity of small change. To remedy this difficulty in a measure, C. A. Cook & Co.,[19] Bankers of this city, have gotten up very neatly lithographed notes of the denomination of ten, twenty, twenty-five and fifty cents, and one dollar, which they redeem in current funds, when presented in sums of five dollars. They will prove a great convenience to the business of our city, and the well known integrity and responsibility of this house will secure them a general circulation." Two of these rare and interesting "shin plasters" are extant and are reproduced on the opposite page. The originals are in possession of E. B. Morgan and are doubtless unique.[20]

At about this time considerable paper money came into circulation in Colorado. Under the heading "Wild Cat Currency," the Denver *Commonwealth* of Nov. 20, 1862, registered its complaint against the questionable paper brought in from Kansas and warned

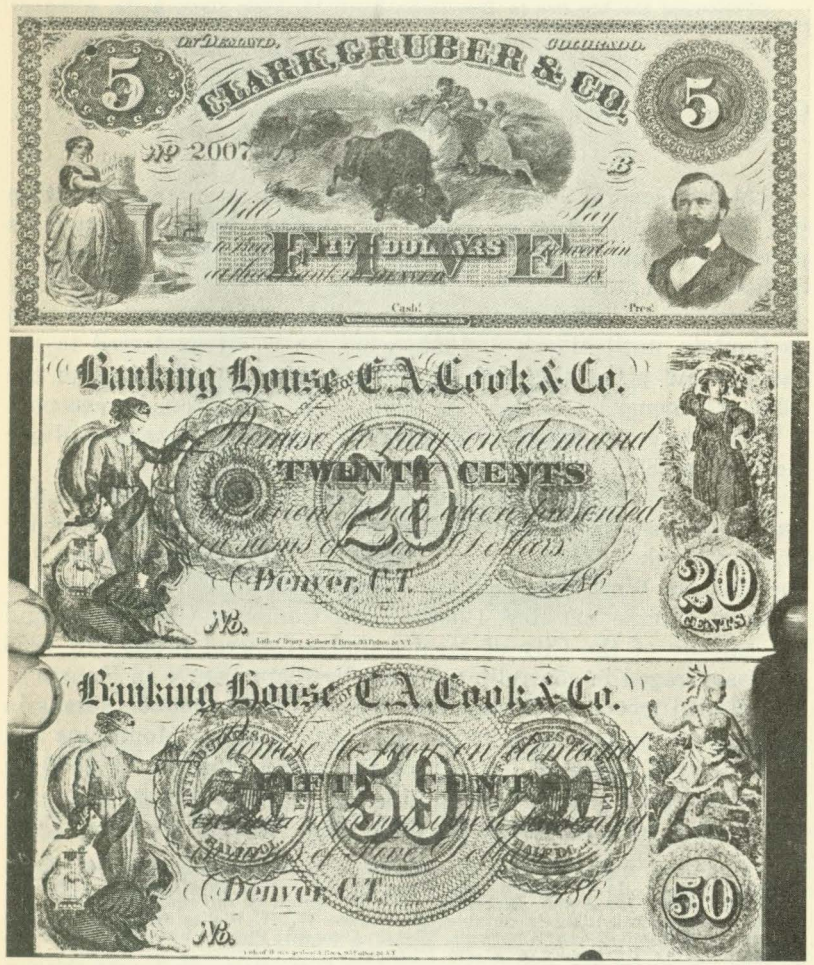
[17]J. C. Smiley, *History of Denver*, 817.

[18]It is doubtful if notes in these smaller denominations were ever issued.

[19]Mr. Cook had come to Colorado in 1859 and at first had engaged in the mercantile business.

[20]In 1909 Mr. Edgar H. Adams, expert numismatist of Brooklyn, New York, wrote Mr. Morgan regarding the twenty-cent piece: "So far as I can learn it is the only note of the Cook issue extant and I was much gratified to come into its possession at the Chambers sale held at Philadelphia a year or two ago. . . . It is certainly a very interesting piece of Colorado paper currency, but what it will bring I can not hazard a guess. There are a number of paper money collectors who will probably place a substantial value upon it, among whom is Mr. Granberg. He, like yourself, has a specimen of the five-dollar note of Clark, Gruber & Co." Mr. Morgan subsequently obtained the fifty-cent piece.

the people against its acceptance. "We ought to repudiate all currency issued in any other State or Territory but our own. We have a bullion currency, they have not." The *Rocky Mountain News* of Nov. 27th repeated the warning, but at the same time added: "We attach more value and safety to the issues of C. A. Cook & Co., of this city, than to any other of the small notes in circulation here, and for the simple reason that we all know the firm and have been familiar with its business for two or three years and are perfectly satisfied with its responsibility and integrity.



COLORADO SCRIP OF PIONEER DAYS

(The original of the Clark, Gruber & Co. note is 7⅛ inches long. The originals of the C. A. Cook & Co. 20-cent note and the 50-cent note measure 6 1/16 and 6 inches respectively.)

Another thing—Cook & Co. have only two thousand dollars, all told, of these small notes, and only introduce them for the convenience of themselves and the public."[21]

This scrip was all issued in disregard of a law enacted by the Colorado legislature Nov. 5, 1861, which forbade any person or corporation "without special leave from the Legislative Assembly," to emit any bills of credit, promissory note or similar paper "to be used as a general circulating medium, as or in lieu of money or other currency." The measure appears not to have been enforced.

[21]Following the big fire in Denver on April 19, 1863, Cook & Co. withdrew their scrip from circulation.

General Sedgwick and Recollections of Fort Sedgwick

GENERAL WILLIAM H. BISBEE.*

Major General John Sedgwick, United States Army, for whom old Fort Sedgwick, Colorado, was named, had an important career of public service. He was born at Cornwall, Connecticut, September 13, 1813. After graduating from West Point Military Academy in 1837, he served in the artillery as Lieutenant and then as Captain until March 8, 1855, when he was transferred to the cavalry and given the rank of Major. He had advanced to the rank of Colonel by 1861. The Civil War coming on, he accepted a Volunteer commission as Bridgadier General and became a Major General in 1862.

He saw serivce in Florida in 1837-38, participating in campaigns against the Seminole Indians. He assisted in the transfer of the Cherokee Indians to the region west of the Mississippi. In the Mexican War he is credited with Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, San Antonio, Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, Conteras, Cherubusco and the capture of the City of Mexico under General Scott. In 1855 he was engaged in controlling the border disturbances in Kansas.

He led troops on a campaign against the Cheyenne Indians in 1857, marching up the Arkansas River to the Rocky Mountains and then turning eastward by way of the South Platte. In 1860 he commanded an expedition against the Kiowa Indians. In the fall of that year he established Fort Wise[1] (later Fort Lyon, Colorado) and commanded the post during the ensuing winter. He was stationed there when the Civil War began.[2] Presently ordered East, he performed important military service for his country. As Commander of the Sixth Army Corps, serving in the Army of the Potomac, he took part in all its great battles, was wounded three times, meeting death in one of its final battles, at Spottsylvania, May 9, 1864.

He was proverbially modest, with strong common sense, slow in council, quick in action, strict in discipline and respected for his adherence to justice.

*Brig. Gen. Bisbee, U.S.A., Retired, kindly wrote the accompanying sketch at our request. It is indeed gratifying to have this brief article from an honored veteran who was an officer at Fort Sedgwick in the 1860s. For an account of General Bisbee's notable career, see W. H. Bisbee [grandson of the General], *Through Four American Wars*. General Bisbee lives at Brookline, Massachusetts, today.—Ed.

[1]He writes: "Such buildings are never seen in the East. No boards, shingles, or floorings or windows are used. Thick stone walls laid up in mud, eighteen feet wide and more than a mile long, with dirt roofs, are to be our habitation this winter. The doors will be beef hides, straightened on frames, windows the same, to be taken out for light when the weather will permit."—[Emily Sedgwick Welch], *A Biographical Sketch of John Sedgwick, Major-General*, 15-16.

GENERAL JOHN SEDGWICK
(From a photograph taken during the Civil War. Presented by General W. H. Bisbee.)

Responsive to your request of March 21st, I give you herewith such brief reminiscent facts and incidents pertaining to old Fort Sedgwick, Colorado, as memory supplies after a lapse of sixty-seven years. I enclose, for your Historical Society, a small photograph of General Sedgwick, made in Civil War days.

Fort Sedgwick was established during the Civil War period[3]

[2]See his letter written from Fort Wise, April 29, 1861, to Col. A. G. Boone, Indian Agent at Denver.—*Rocky Mountain News*, May 15, 1861. The data on the campaign of 1857 and Gen. Sedgwick's connection with Fort Wise are added by the Editor.

[3]Camp Rankin was established in August, 1864. On Nov. 21, 1865, the name of the post was changed to Fort Sedgwick, in honor of Gen. John Sedgwick. The fort was abandoned in 1871.—Ed.

to correct Indian disturbances between the tribes and white men then numerously populating the new mining district near Denver; also, incidentally, to forestall any deflection of our western area towards winning California for the cause of secession from the Union. Furthermore, the location was essentially the central point of a vast buffalo range from north to south, as weather conditions demanded, and where Utes, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Sioux and Pawnees might clash in search of meat and scalps. These were the principal nations roaming through the country at that time, as I had found them in a previous trip, in 1859.

In the spring of 1866, two battalions of my regiment, the 18th United States Infantry, then wintering at old Fort Kearney, Nebraska, formed what was known as the Powder River Expedition, to open a roadway and protect emigration to and from Fort Laramie and Bozeman, Montana, relieving volunteer troops under General P. E. Connor, who commanded in that northwest area.

Stationed at Fort Sedgwick were Volunteer Cavalry (7th Iowa or 11th Ohio, I believe) and probably some Infantry. I recall Dr. Latham as the Post Surgeon, and a nephew or near relative of Secretary of War Stanton as the Sutler (name forgotten) and that the contract price of cordwood was $105 per cord. Procuring a few horses from the disbanding Cavalry, we left Captain James P. W. Neill's company, of our regiment, to garrison the place and resumed our march to the northwest, via Fort Laramie.

In 1866, on Christmas Day, while en route from one of our newly made army posts, Fort Phil Kearney, I again visited Fort Sedgwick, where Captain Neill was still in command. It was situated about one mile south of the right bank of the South Platte River, opposite a ranch called Julesburg, which was equidistant on the north (or left) bank. The Union Pacific railroad at this date had been completed to a point one hundred miles east, near Fort McPherson, Nebraska.

In 1868, Major Edwin F. Townsend, 27th U. S. Infantry (2nd battalion of our old 186th), with two companies of the same regiment from Omaha, Captains William H. Bisbee and Edmund F. Thompson, took station at Fort Sedgwick, relieving other troops. The post was of the customary story-and-a-half and single story frame and log construction, arranged on four sides of a center parade ground, some acre or two in area. General Sherman, whose headquarters was in St. Louis, occasionally visited Fort Sedgwick on Indian business. Roman Nose and others in the Republican River country south were troublesome, where Sheridan was operating with limited forces, left over from reconstruction duties in the Southern States.

Many unrecorded atrocities, forgotten in history, were the prices paid in winning the West.

Mountain Men—George Nidever

Adventures of GEORGE NIDEVER on a Trip to the Rocky Mountains, 1830-32, as related by himself to E. F. MURRAY.*

My name is George Nidever. I was born in 1802, December 20, in Sullivan County, East Tennessee. My father, also named George, was a native of Pennsylvania. I do not remember the town. His father died while he was quite young. My father removed to Tennessee when about 20 years of age. Here he was married to Christina Punkhauser, a native of Virginia, but whose family had removed to Tennessee some years before. My father's business was farming, which he carried on while he lived. Before and after his marriage he took part as a volunteer, in the early indian wars with the Cherokees, Shawnees, and other hostile tribes. Besides myself, there were eight other children, three daughters and five sons. . . . [Next follows an account of his brothers and sisters. When George was five years old the family moved to a farm in North Carolina. Nine years later they migrated to Missouri and subsequently moved to Arkansas. Young George made a trip to Austin's Grant in Texas but decided not to settle there. From 1822 to 1828 he lived with his family in Arkansas.]

In 1828 Alexander Sinclair, a man living near Fort Smith, and I went up the Canadian fork of the Arkansas and began the building of a large raft of cedar logs, which we intended to float down to New Orleans and sell. We were engaged, with a few men we hired, nearly a year in making this raft. When everything was ready and we were about to start down the river the Cherokees to whom that section had been ceded, attempted to seize our raft, but taking advantage of a freshet we sailed down in the night beyond their reach, and escaped them. This availed us but little,

*The original Nidever manuscript is owned by the Bancroft Library, University of California, by whose kind permission a portion of it is here published. The State Historical Society of Colorado has a photostat copy of the first forty-four pages of the manuscript. The editorial notes are supplied by LeRoy R. Hafen.

Edward F. Murray was one of H. H. Bancroft's most competent assistants in gathering historical data for the monumental Bancroft collection of Western Americana. Murray interviewed Nidever at the latter's home in Santa Barbara, California, in 1878. Of him he wrote (in the Introduction to the manuscript): "The subject of this sketch although already over 76 yrs. of age, is still strong and active. He is about the medium height and inclined to be stout. He stoops the least bit but it may be from habit rather than old age. His sight and hearing are still keen and his nerves remarkably steady for one so old. He lives with his youngest daughter and wife, about a mile from town, on a piece of land containing several acres. It is under cultivation and he keeps it free from squirrels by shooting them with a Colts revolver. If a chicken is wanted for dinner he prefers shooting its head off with his rifle to using a shot gun, . . . He is quite unassuming and never brags of his feats of skill, and almost everything of this nature relating to him I first learned from others, obtaining a recital of them from him only by dint of questioning. His truthfulness and integrity are beyond question, so that great weight should be given to all he says."

however, for at the mouth of the fork, the raft ran aground, was broken up, and we abandoned it.

This misfortune decided both Sinclair and myself to take to hunting and trapping, so in May of 1830 we joined a party of trappers and hunters that was forming just above Fort Smith. A man by the name of Bean, commonly called Colonel, a native of Tennessee, I think, or at least a former resident of that state, although he had been living for some time in Arkansas, was at its head. He was an elderly man and by occupation a gunsmith. He had never had any experience in hunting and trapping, like that which was before us and, in fact, of our whole party of 48 men, but three had fought indians and none had ever trapped.

In those days the beaver were, it was supposed, plenty in the streams of the Rocky Mountains and the trapping of them, although attended with great risks, owing to the indians, was largely engaged in by the frontier settlers. Colonel Bean was the first to propose the forming of a hunting and trapping expedition, and he had no trouble in raising from among the families in the vicinity our party of 48.

All of our men could handle the rifle and like myself had been brought up to the hunting of small game, although I had already, as some three others, become a good deer and buffalo hunter. Before I was 9 years old, I began to use firearms and being very fond of hunting and shooting at a target I soon became an excellent shot. . . .

Sinclair, my partner in the building of the raft, was a very good shot and buffalo hunter, having been raised on the Western Frontier. He had also done considerable indian fighting. He could not travel much on foot, owing to the loss of the toes and part of the left foot, in what manner I do not recollect. He was then about 40 years of age. A younger brother of about 30 also formed one of our party; he was no hunter and but a very ordinary shot.

While in the mountains I was as a general rule detailed to supply the party with fresh meat and as game abounded throughout our whole journey to the mountains, I was always successful.

Each man was to equip himself and hunt for himself, except that we were to keep together in moving about, for mutual protection, and as it afterward happened, several men or messes, of six men each, would form a company, dividing equally the skins.

The equipment of each man was a rifle and six traps. Besides this most of the men had a pistol, knife, and a small hatchet that could be conveniently carried in the belt. We had the best of ammunition. For convenience in cooking, etc., we were divided into messes of six men each, one of each mess usually volunteering

to do the cooking, preferring it to hunting and he of course received his share of pelts. My equipment was the same as that of the others excepting my pistol which I had ordered made. It was the same bore as my rifle and it would kill a buffalo at 40 yards.

Our intention was, when we set out, to be gone about a year or 18 months. We left the vicinity of Fort Smith in May, 1830, and followed up the north fork of the Canadian and the Arkansas rivers until we struck the Rocky Mountains, and from there across into New Mexico. We had procured a map and with its aid we made our way with little trouble.

When we started we had each two pack animals and some of us three, so that we traveled slowly, and besides frequent freshets kept us back. About the first of July we reached the Cross timbers about two hundred miles from Fort Smith.

But just here I may as well give you the names of those of our company that I can remember. First came Colonel Bean, our Captain, whom we had elected rather because he had always borne a good name among us and was very much esteemed, than from any superior skill or knowledge he possessed in affairs relating to the control and management of such an expedition. Besides being older than most of us. He was accompanied by a son, a young man about 24 years of age. Two men by the name of Green, although not related; Basey, a large powerful man; he would probably weigh at least 240 pounds; Carmichael, who was afterwards treacherously killed by a Mexican here in California during one of the revolutions; Bowen; Saunders, an old man; Allen, who I think is still living in Los Angeles County; Baldwin, one of our best shots; Williams; Frazier, who also came to California; Weaver, who also came to California; Graham,[1] of whom I shall have more to say hereafter; Tom Hammonds; Anderson; Hace who left us in New Mexico in 1831 between June and September; Mark, my brother; Price, and Potter. These are all whose names I can recollect at present, but in the course of my story will no doubt be able to recall those of some of the others.

From the Cross Timbers we continued our course towards the mountains, making very slow marches. About the latter part of August or first of September, having marched some 200 to 250 miles since leaving the Cross Timbers, [they had a little brush with Comanches]. . . . .

At this juncture ten of our party left us, declaring their intention to go back to Arkansas, as they feared to go into the indian country with Bean as captain. I have never heard what became of them.

[1]This is the Isaac Graham who became rather prominent in California in the 1830s and was leader of the "Graham Affair" of 1840. See H. H. Bancroft, *History of California*, IV, 1-41.

In the hopes of avoiding the indians we decided a day or two after to leave the North Fork and go over to the Arkansas. Our course had been chiefly along the north bank of the North Fork. The country we had come through was very fine, the land rich, well timbered, especially near the river, and game in abundance. We traveled very leisurely making on an average from 15 to 20 miles a day, striking camp about 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning usually, and pitching camp again all the way from 3 to 5 in the afternoon. During the early part of our journey we were frequently delayed by swollen streams and occasionally by the illness of some of the men, which would make it necessary to halt a day or two.

As had been decided we went over to the Arkansas river and having reached it crossed to its northern side.[2] This river we intended to follow until we should reach the mountains. A day or two later, in the early part of the afternoon we came upon several Pawnee warriors, who came out from the timber to meet our party and others joined us as we marched along until they numbered all told about 80. About half of them were mounted. They were a war party as they had no women with them; a few had rifles but the majority had only bows and arrows. They were fine looking indians, about the medium height but well made and active. Their dress was the customary buckskin leggings and the breech clout; a few had shirts. Upon first seeing us they made signs of friendship, but although we considered them friendly indians we did not place much confidence in their good will. Our leader however was very generous with them making them presents of blankets, tobacco and even knives and powder which the most of our party very much disapproved of.

It must have been about 2 o'clock in the afternoon when we met the Pawnees, and soon after we went into camp. They went into camp also about 60 yards from us, in the same body of timber. The next morning we moved on and left them, and the next afternoon camped about the usual hour.

Having to do most of the hunting I usually started out as soon as we got into camp, and generally took my brother Mark with me, while he lived. Sometimes others accompanied me, as a rule either Isaac Graham, or my old companion Alex Sinclair. This afternoon I started out with Graham to get buffalo, if possible.

[2]They probably reached the Arkansas at the Big Timbers, a famous wooded stretch extending from the vicinity of present Lamar to the mouth of Caddoa Creek. A well known Indian trail running northeast from the Canadian River reached the Arkansas near the present site of Prowers, Colorado. (See the map accompanying G. B. Grinnell's *Bent's Old Fort and Its Builders.*) The party may have followed this trail. The timber mentioned several times by Nidever and the distance from the mountains given later in the manuscript, indicate the location at Big Timbers.

We went fully four miles from camp, before we saw anything; then we saw the objects of our search at a distance. We were on foot so had little trouble in approaching them, but before we got within range I saw an indian's head peeping out of a hollow, and I at once saw that we had been drawn into a trap. I at once told Graham and we took to our heels immediately, with a party of 80 Arapahoes close behind. Two of them only were mounted, but the rest of them were good runners and our chances of saving our scalp was very small. We were out in the open country, the nearest timbers being that of the river belt, fully a mile and half away and a pack of fleet-footed redskins close upon us. We saw at once that our only hope was to reach the timber where perhaps we might be able to defend ourselves.

Graham was a good runner, the best in fact in our party, and had he wished could soon have left me in the rear, but it was not his character to desert a comrade in danger, so we kept together straining every nerve to reach the shelter of the woods. The indians on horseback of course gained on us at once, and we were obliged to turn alternately and by aiming at them check them for a moment. Under any other circumstances it would have been amusing to see the horsemen make their horses jump quickly from side to side, at the same time throwing their own bodies this way then that to prevent our taking aim at them, when we raised our rifles, but we only realized that each stoppage was enabling those on foot, who were steadily pressing forward, to gain ground. The chase had been kept up nearly a mile, I should judge, when our pursuers were so close upon us that we had determined to fire at them. Graham although naturally a brave men was not a little frightened, and was almost exhausted by our long run so that in his fright he did not see the foremost indians throw down their guns, when he turned to fire, but I fortunately did and thus prevented his shooting, as good fortune would have it. Had he shot, he would undoubtedly have killed one and perhaps more, for he would have fought to the last, but, however many we might have killed, numbers would have overpowered us, and I would not be here to tell about it nor Graham have become famous as leader of the riflemen of California.

As soon as the indians came up to us they took hold of us and shook us roughly and finally made us sit down on the ground while they seated themselves in a circle around us. They lit their pipe and passed it around, holding council for some time, no doubt about what should be done with us. By signs we tried to make them understand that we had slept with 80 whites the night before not far from them, hoping this might induce them to spare our lives. It had the desired effect for they soon got up and made motions

that we too should get up and lead them to our camp. We needed no second bidding but took the direction of camp with our captors. We soon reached our party to our great relief and the Arapahoes camped near us. Our men had not suspected anything when they saw us coming in with the indians, supposing that they were friendly to us. That night we doubled our guard and took every precaution to prevent a surprise. The night before we had done the same to guard against surprise from our Pawnee friends and there was good cause for it, for they were prowling around our camp all night and only the fact that we were on the alert and prepared, prevented them from attacking us.

The Arapahoes had gone into camp at about the same distance from us as the Pawnees the night previous. I was on guard until 12 o'clock at night and several times had seen indians prowling about that did not appear to me to be Arapahoe indians and upon being relieved by Price I told him, and cautioned him to keep a good lookout. It was not long before he saw an indian approaching his post, whereupon he called out, "Who's there?" His answer was the snap of a gun lock and the flash of a flint. The indian's gun did not go off, but Price's did and we heard afterwards that an indian was killed. At Price's shot, a yell arose on all sides of us and those who were on guard knew that the Pawnees were on us, as the Arapahoe camp had been perfectly quiet. Alex Sinclair, who was also on guard called out "help, boys." We were all on our feet in an instant and our arms, which we always kept at our sides, ready for use. The indians fired a discharge of arrows and a few shots among us, but did no further damage than to wound a few horses. We replied to their shots but as the night was dark we could not shoot with any certainty, for we could aim only when we saw the flash of their guns. We thought the Arapahoes also fired a few shots among us, but it was not positively known. We had a small cannon with us and having loaded it with 60 bullets we discharged it in the direction of our enemies, and succeeded in silencing their fire. We passed the rest of the night waiting for their return, but morning came and they had disappeared, and our friends, the Arapahoes, left us at an early hour. As a result of the night attack we found that we had lost 7 horses stolen, and as many more wounded. With the beginning of the firing our brave Colonel Bean had been lost sight of as also a man by the name of Williams. They became frightened and hid themselves. From that time Colonel Bean was totally disregarded and hardly treated civilly so that soon after when we got into New Mexico he went to San Fernando (Taos) and finally returned to Arkansas with the first train of the regular traders that went back. Alex Sinclair was

by tacit agreement looked up to as our leader and continued in command until he was killed.[3] He was a good leader although perhaps a trifle easy.

The Arapahoes were all good looking indians, somewhat larger than the Pawnees and armed and dressed about the same.

The country we had come through abounded in buffalo and wild horses. The former roamed in immense herds. I have never seen so many cattle in my life as I saw buffalo in that country. Wild horses were frequently captured by shooting them through the neck just above the spine, usually called creasing. This knocked them down, when the hunter would catch them before they could regain their feet. The wound heals soon and with a little training the horse soon becomes manageable.

Our meat was principally buffalo, although we occasionally killed deer and bear. In the Cross Timber, on the North Fork, there was abundance of turkeys and of wild honey.

The next morning after the Pawnees attacked us we left our camp soon after the Arapahoes did theirs. Two days travel brought us to the indian village of our captors, where we remained over night. This village contained about 200 or 250 warriors and perhaps as many women and children. We passed a sleepless night and were rejoiced to leave our red friends behind the next morning at an early hour. From this point we had but 100 [or 150, not clear] miles to go to reach the mountains. This we accomplished in about a week. Arrived at the foot of the mountains we found plenty of feed and our party went into camp.[4] Six of us were sent forward to examine this country before us and to search for a passable trail; as also feed for our animals.

Here we saw for the first time the blacktail deer. There were large numbers of them, so that we had no trouble in killing a considerable quantity for their meat which we hung up to await the arrival of the main party. We slept one night in the mountains and the following morning started back to camp. On the way, however, Dr. Craig, one of our party, gave out so that Price and I were obliged to remain with him while the other three went to bring our party up. Before night they had returned with the rest of our company and we went into camp near where we had hung up the deer meat. Here, too, the feed was quite plenty and it was decided to remain for a few days to allow the animals to recruit.

[3]Alex Sinclair was killed at the Battle of Pierre's Hole in July, 1832. Preceding his death he was leader of the remnant of the band of trappers from Arkansas.

[4]It is worthy of note that Nidever, in coming up the Arkansas, makes no mention of Bent's Fort. It has usually been stated that the fort was built 1828-32, but no contemporary record has yet come to light to definitely establish the date of its founding. While failure of Nidever to mention the fort does not prove definitely that the fort was not in existence in 1830, it is strong circumstantial evidence to that effect.

From this place another advance party of six was sent out, to cross the mountains and proceed as far as the head waters of the Arkansas.

My brother Mark, a man by name of Crist, Graham, Basey, Dye and I were of the party. We arrived at our journey's end without any adventure and camped in a beautiful valley, in which the buffalo abounded, and feed was plenty. We immediatey set to work to kill buffalo and soon had the satisfaction of seeing a large quantity, hung up, out of the reach of the wolves and coyotes, ready for the coming of those behind.

As soon as this was done two of our party, Mark and Crist, went back to camp to report, while we, who remained, removed our camp from the edge of the valley, where we had hung the buffalo meat, about two miles away, and up the mountain side. From this point we had a full view of the valley below, while our camp was hidden from those who might pass through the valley. From a small rise near our camp we could at all times see our buffalo meat. This change of camp was made to guard against surprise from the indians. In an indian country one cannot take too many precautions, and I owe my life many times over to my habitual vigilance and caution, in all my movements while in the mountains. Of the many trappers I have known that were killed in the mountains by indians, a very large proportion of them were careless and imprudent in their habits. When out with a small force I invariably ate supper and remained until dark in one place, and as soon as night came on moved away some distance to sleep.

We had been in our new camp but a few days when having gone out on the rise to look towards our meat, I saw a war party of Arapahoes, of perhaps 80 or more, engaged in taking it down. This decided us to leave that dangerous neighborhood with all possible haste and make our way back to the rest of our party. About half way back we met our companions at a former camp of the war party of Arapahoes I had discovered seizing our buffalo meat. They had arrived there but a few hours before and the first objects that met their sight were the dead bodies of Mark, my brother, and Crist. They were scalped, and stabbed in several places. From our party we learned that our two dead comrades had arrived safely at the camp, informed them where we were and started back to find us. We were never able to find out the manner in which they were killed, but from some Mexicans to whom the Arapahoes sold their guns afterwards we gleaned the following facts. The party that chased and captured Graham and me understood from the signs we made that there were 80 more white men back in the direction we pointed. The fear of being punished by these 80 white men, should they kill us, no doubt induced them to spare

our lives. When they reached our camp, however, and found only 36 men, they at once concluded that the rest were coming up, and sent some of their best runners back to find them. These runners did not return until our party was already in the mountains. They reported having seen no more white men, whereupon a war party was immediately sent out to overtake and attack us. They fell in with my brother and Crist, who, probably recognizing them as the same that had camped with us before and through whose village we passed, and unsuspicious, traveled along with them, until an opportunity offered and the indians killed them. Of the precise circumstances immediately connected with their death the Mexicans knew nothing, other than that my brother had killed three of the indians before they killed him.

Crist was a quiet, inoffensive man but little versed in mountain life and with no skill in the use of arms. My brother on the contrary was one of the best men we had in our company, active, strong, hardy, brave, and a good shot. He was missed and mourned by all.

This sad event led us to turn our course towards New Mexico, considering this section too dangerous for our trapping operations.

During our journey from Fort Smith [to] the head of the Arkansas we found a few beaver, and at this time had collected about 40 or 50 skins.

As the country through which we must pass before reaching the settlements in New Mexico was almost destitute of grass for our animals, already somewhat reduced, we concluded to hide some of our traps, and having found a deep water hole threw in about 60 or 70.

After entering New Mexico and just before we reached Arroyo Seco, a small Mexican town and our point of destination, we met the first signs of civilization, in a herd of tame cattle which we saw quietly grazing off to the right of our line of march. Soon after we met a band of sheep driven by a young Mexican on horseback.

When we struck the head of the band they parted allowing us to ride in among them, and without showing any fear at our presence. Not so with their herder, whose attention being diverted did not discover our presence until we were quite close to him, and then with a startled glance saw only that a party of horsemen were upon him, his fright preventing him from distinguishing us. He uttered a yell and put off for the neighboring mountains as fast as his horse could carry him. He took us for a war party of Arapahoes, as these indians made frequent incursions into New Mexico in those times. The Arapahoes and Mexicans were deadly enemies and although they would trade freely with each other, woe betide

the poor Mexican who was caught by these savages, and the Mexicans spared no Arapahoes who might fall into their hands.

A few miles farther on we came to a shepherd's hut, its sole occupants an old man and a boy. The old man was the first to see us and he like the younger herder took us for Arapahoes. He gave us one look and turning ran at the top of his speed to a ravine near by. He was some distance from the hut and had no time to call to the boy. By this time we were close to the hut, when the boy, hearing us, came out, and recognized us as white men advanced towards us and held out his hand, showing great pleasure at seeing us. The old man had by this time reached the opposite side of the ravine where he stopped to look back and seeing the boy among us, and realizing that we could not be indians he came back almost as fast as he had run away. He ran up to us, caught hold of our hands, and could hardly contain himself with joy. He proceeded to kill a sheep for us and brought us out milk and corn cakes, which we ate with the greatest of relish.

Arroyo Seco was about 50 miles distant and we arrived there three days later. Here as at the shepherd's hut, we were received very hospitably, in fact, everywhere in New Mexico, we always met with the same treatment. This seemed to be a great wheat country, and flour was in consequence quite cheap. Upon our arrival at Arroyo Seco they brought us a cart load of bread. There were quite a number of flour mills, also in and around Arroyo Seco.

About 12 miles from Arroyo Seco was situated the town of San Fernando [Taos], quite a large place. The fur traders who come out annually from St. Louis, had permanent trading posts established here. We went to San Fernando very often, but made our headquarters at Arroyo Seco. Having arrived here our party separated, but 14 or 15 of the original company remaining together.

Those who left us here, as far as I can remember were—Colonel Bean, who by this time was looked upon by all the company as the most insignificant among us. We had made a great mistake in choosing him for our leader, but the high estimation in which he was held by all, and his rank of Colonel of Militia, led us to suppose him the best man. His brothers were well known to my family, my father having been with them in the early indian wars. They owned the salt works on the Arkansas and were men of very good standing.

William Bean also left us here with his father. He was a quiet, sensible young man, with none of his father's cowardice and was very much liked by all. They both returned to Arkansas with the first annual trading train that left San Fernando. Dr. Craig went into Sonora. About 8 or 10 joined Ewing Young's party at San

Fernando and came to California by the lower route via Fort Yuma. Among these were Austin, a wild young fellow; Weaver, Hace; Wilkinson; the two Greens, Anderson, and Basey. The names of the others I do not remember. Anderson was killed by one of the Greens, not far from Los Angeles, and just after they had entered California. While with us Anderson, who was a large man had imposed to a great extent upon Green, who was a small man, by continually throwing his traps into the river and setting his own in Green's beaver signs. Green had warned him that if he continued to treat him in that manner that he would certainly kill him. To this threat, however, Anderson paid no heed, nor to the repeated warnings of others of the company, that Green would carry his threat into execution.

He continued to ill treat him until Green put an end to him. Near the place where he killed Anderson, he had set his traps for beaver, when Anderson, having come across them, threw them into the water, as he had repeatedly done before, and set his own traps in their place. Shortly after Green visited his traps and finding Anderson's, returned quietly to camp, walked up to him and shot through the heart. Captain Young gave Green up to the authorities at Los Angeles, but nothing was done with him I believe and he was allowed to leave the country. Dr. Craig is now living in San Francisco and came to see me about 7 or 8 years ago, stopping at my house for several days.

Among those of our party who were left, were the two Sinclairs; Graham; Price; Pollum, a Virginian; Nale; and myself; the other names I do not remember.

At San Fernando Rowland and Workman (of the La Puena Ranch, Los Angeles County) were living; they had already been there I think, nearly 15 years. Rowland had a flour mill in the town. He was married to a Mexican woman and then had 3 or 4 children. I was well acquainted with the family having often visited their house while I was in San Fernando. With Workman I had less acquaintance. I was told that he, too, was married to a Mexican woman, but I never visited his house. They afterwards removed to California and settled in Los Angeles County.[5] Workman had a store in San Fernando. He sold clothing, provisions, etc. We did most of our trading with him. Besides these foreigners there were the two brothers Kincaid, and an old man by the name of Chambers living in San Fernando.

Our party had arrived at Arroyo Seco early in March of '31. A few weeks later, Graham, Sinclair (Alex), and I decided to make an attempt to get the traps we had left on the Arkansas. Having

[5]The Workman-Rowland party of twenty-five emigrants, moved to California in 1841.—Bancroft, *op. cit.*, 276-78.

secured the services of three Mexicans with their mules, and procured fresh animals for ourselves we lost no time in starting on our trip. A few days brought us within a short distance of our traps, but we found the snow still too deep on the mountain that lay between us and the river. At the same time an event occurred that caused us to retrace our steps with all possible haste. This was the presence in the vicinity of a large party of Arapahoes. We discovered them on a neighboring hill early one morning while we were in camp. Fortunately, they did not see us, and as soon as possible we packed up and made our way back to New Mexico traveling day and night until we were well out of the indian country. The Mexicans who accompanied us, were very much frightened when they saw the indians and needed no urging to keep up with us on our retreat. We were somewhat disappointed in our failure to get the traps as they were very dear at San Fernando.

Having sold the few skins we brought with us on our first arrival, we laid in a few supplies and in March ('31) our whole party now reduced to 14 or 15 men, set out for the Platte. On the North Fork we found a valley with beaver and here we remained until we trapped them out. On July 4 of '31, we arrived at Arroyo Seco again with about two packs of skins of 60 each. These we sold in San Fernando, at $4 per pound, or an average of $10 per skin. In those days although there was a heavy duty on all beaver skins brought into New Mexico, no one ever thought of paying them and as in our case they would be smuggled into town in the night.

We fitted ourselves out a second time and in September, 1831, again started for the head waters of the Arkansas. Our party had been increased by the addition of 3 or 4 Mexicans who had been hired by different members of our company.

From Arroyo Seco to the Arkansas we kept company with a band of troopers composed of French and Mexicans; about a dozen in all. On our way we saw a few Crow indians, and had several horses stolen by them. We also saw numbers of the Snake indians who were then very friendly [to] the pale faces.

Just before we reached the Arkansas, our camp was alarmed one night by the appearance in our midst of a young indian woman of the Snake tribe. An old Mexican who was sleepng near me was awakened in the night by some one passing near him, and reaching out his hand caught hold of her and held her fast, calling out at the same time—"I got one woman." We were all on our feet in an instant and with our arms in our hands ready to meet the expected attack, but no more indians appeared. We gave the poor woman plenty to eat and the next day she left us for her village not far away. We were able to learn that she had made her escape from the Kiowas, who had taken her prisoner and had found the buffalo road which ran through our camp and followed it until she was caught in our midst. She had passed our guard without being seen.

We reached the headwaters of the Arkansas in October without any further adventure. A few days more brought us to the Platte.

At this point the Mexican and French trappers left us, going south down the Platte, while we crossed over to the Green river. Here we went into winter quarters in November. We had found a few beaver between the Arkansas and Green rivers and had nearly a hundred when we went into our quarters for the winter. Buffalo we had found very scarce, but among the timber on the mountains an abundance of elk. The place we had selected for our winter quarters was a large deep valley on the Green river about 10 miles wide and 20 in length, and opening into a valley on the north and into another on the south. In this valley snow seldom fell and even then never remained. There was usually feed for animals all the year around for when the grass grew scarce, or failed, the bark of the sweet cottonwood tree of which there were immense quantities supplied its place. This valley was a favorite wintering place both of the whites and indians. There was always buffalo in this valley so that we seldom wanted for meat.[6]

We remained here three months during which time we were confined to our valley by deep snows that everywhere surrounded it. We had nothing to occupy ourselves with, except the hunting of game for our supply of meat. About March of '32, we started out of the valley and followed the river towards its head, with the intention of trapping that season on the head waters of the Columbia. We trapped as we went along up the Green river, until May, when we learned that the place we intended going was already being trapped by other companies, whereupon we decided not to go there. The party now disagreed as to where we should go, and finally separated, some going in one direction and some another, although the majority went together towards the Platte. At this place we met a trader by the name of O'Felon, an Irishman, who with a half dozen mules had brought liquor and a few articles such as blankets, etc., to trade with the trappers. He was accompanied by a trapper by the name of Harris, and had 6 or 7 Mexicans to attend to his mules and packs. He was bound for Pierre's Hole, a deep valley situated between the Lewis and Henry Forks, and the appointed rendezvous of the trappers and traders for that

[6]This undoubtedly was Brown's Hole, in the extreme northwest corner of present Colorado. At some time during the 1830s, a trading post, Fort Davy Crockett, was established here.

year. This would take place in July, so I determined to accompany O'Felon.

We arrived at Pierre's Hole just before the 4th of July.[7] . . .

[7]The remainder of the Nidever journal does not concern the Colorado region. We have carried the story to page 44 of the manuscript; the complete document comprises 165 pages. Pages 44-62 are published with editorial notes by Dr. W. H. Ellison in *New Spain and the Anglo-American West. Historical Contributions Presented to Herbert Eugene Bolton* (1932), II, 21-45. (This tells of the Battle of Pierre's Hole and of the journey of the Walker party to California in 1833.) Nidever became a hunter, guide, miner, farmer, etc. He killed 200 grizzly bears in California (Bancroft, *op. cit.*, 753). He served under Fremont and Stockton in California during the Mexican War. He piloted the U. S. Survey of the Santa Barbara Islands and rescued the "Woman of the Island of San Nicolas," who had lived alone on the island for 18 years. He died in California in 1883.

Victor, Colorado—"The City of Mines"[1]

S. E. Poet.*

The Pike's Peak rush of 1859 had long since passed. The great Leadville with its silver kings was showing signs of decline. Bob Womack, the cowboy prospector, was digging prospect holes near the Bennett and Meyers ranch some twenty miles southwest of Pike's Peak. After a diligent search of about ten years, luck came to this prospector in 1891. Elated with success he rode to Colorado Springs and announced his discovery. Thus was begun the rush to the Mt. Pisgah region, where some seven years before disappointed prospectors had left in disgust. Within a very short time thousands of prospectors, adventurers and tenderfeet rushed to the scene of discovery. Gold was to be found at the grass roots; gold in nuggets; but better still, gold in ores that would assay as high as $100.00 a pound.

Collections of tents, shacks and cabins dotted the surrounding hills; the various groups taking such names as Grassy, Goldfield, Fremont, Altman and Hull's Camp. Victor, so named after the large producer, the Victor mine, and partly because of the expectancy of supremacy as far as being near the larger producing mines were concerned, had an interesting early history. The name of Victor first appeared on a sign just west of the site of the present town, beside the new road built from Lawrence. The name was selected by Mr. or Mrs. Harry Woods.

[1]Data on Victor have been gathered from the following sources: Fred Hills, *The Official Manual of the Cripple Creek District* (1900); J. E. Hanley, *Seeing Cripple Creek; Teller County Banner* (Special Supplment of Dec. 22, 1905); *Gold Fields of Cripple Creek* (pamphlet of the Woods Investment Co.); and a letter of Sept., 1932, from Frank Woods concerning the origin of the name of Victor. Many individuals in Victor have given oral information concerning the early history of the town. I am especially indebted to Tony Reiger, Hiram Williams, L. S. Cox, William Lehr, E. M. Ovren, Billy Bowman, Sam Klopfenstein and H. H. Rosser. I am especially grateful for the assistance of H. L. Turner and David H. Baird, who read this article, added bits of information and checked the material gathered.

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Before the discovery of gold the territory in and around the present town of Victor was used for grazing. The cattle of Woodrow Higgins ranged the nearby hills. The little village of Lawrence began near the Lawrence ranch just south of the present site of Victor. Lawrence had the postoffice and felt that she should control the town that seemed destined to grow near the new mines. Stratton, the owner of the great Independence mine, did not want the new town to be more important than Strattonia. The Mount Rose Mining, Milling and Land Company, of which McKinney was superintendent, sought to get the right to a townsite under a placer patent. Various individuals interested in the site for the town contended that the company could not hold the land by means of a placer claim due to the fact that the claim did not contain the free gold for placering or the facilities for carrying on the project. To hold the claim the first building to be erected on the site of the town was the Placer House constructed by Hiram Williams in 1892. It was located just north of Lawrence on the street that was to be known later as South Fifth Street. The Mount Rosa Company finally received the title to the location by means of a number of lode claims, being unable to obtain the right by a placer claim.

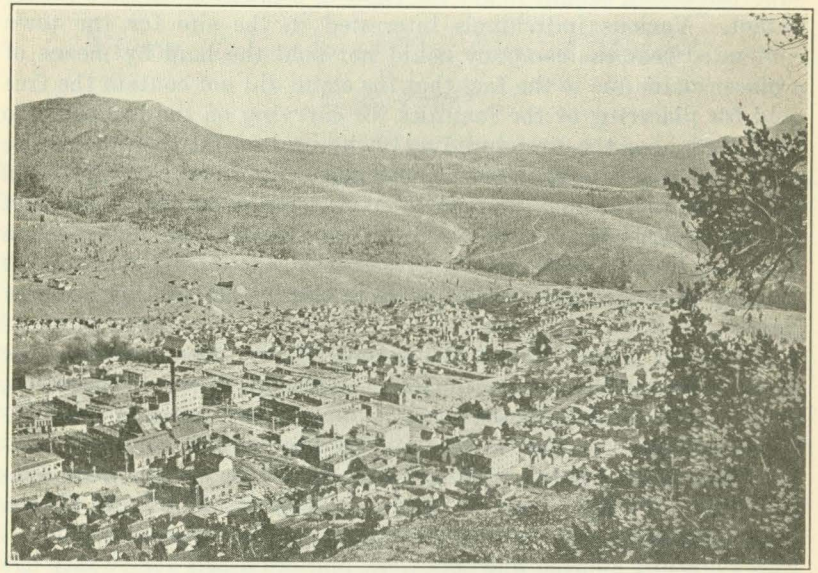
Warren Woods, Frank Woods and Harry Woods came to the silver camps of Colorado in 1893. Through their organization, known as the Woods Investment Company, they gained partial interest and soon complete control of the Mount Rosa holdings. Under their direction the first building in Victor proper was completed in 1893 by Hiram Williams, builder of the Placer House. Other buildings were soon completed and the town boomed. Streets were carefully platted and lots were placed on sale for twenty-five dollars apiece. If one did not have the cash he was asked to sign a paper as a future citizen of the town. By means of these signatures the right to have a postoffice was secured.

The buildings were of frame or log and built on a rolling south slope. Trees dotted the location. The shivering aspen were cut for fire wood and the pines for buildings. The lumber for the first house was purchased from the Eure Lumber Company located in Lawrence. Soon, however, J. B. Cunningham, mayor of Victor in 1905 and owner of the Opera House, Armory Hall, and the postoffice, accepted the offer of two free lots if he would establish a lumber yard and a saw mill, and furnish lumber and other construction materials. Wilder also furnished a great deal of lumber for early Victor. Before long the Woods Investment Company built their own yard; it was known as the L. D. Arthur Lumber

Company, having been managed by L. D. Arthur. This yard was located about one-fourth mile north of Victor.

Rent was high, even lodging for the night was difficult to find. Saloons were open day and night, many sleeping in their chairs or on the floor. One aspiring capitalist leased a lot and put up a large tent and furnished it with cots. One dollar was charged for the bed and often the cot was used two or three times within twenty-four hours as the men came off the different shifts.

The bustling little town needed a jail. A log cabin was constructed on East Victor Avenue. Three inmates, none of them too sober and yet sensible enough to plan, decided to make their es-



VICTOR, "CITY OF MINES"

cape. They set the jail afire. One was fortunate enough to escape and tell the story; the others were burned to death.

When the Woods Company was excavating for the Victor Hotel near the center of the town, a wandering assayer took some samples of the dirt, assayed it and found it rich in gold. Thus in 1896 the rich Gold Coin mine was located; the mine that was worked under the town itself; the mine that yielded within the next five years a sum of $5,500,000. This sum of money gave an impetus to the Woods Company and a period of rapid development resulted.

Transportation into Victor before 1894 was by foot, stage or horseback. The earliest road into Victor was from Florissant, a point on the Midland Terminal Railroad. Victor was early con-

nected with Colorado Springs by a stage that was hauled over a direct route just south of Pike's Peak. A toll road extended southward down Wilson Creek through Marigold to Canon City. This route took the name of the "shelf road" because of the fact that for some miles the road angled around the side of a mountain. A network of roads connected Victor with the mines and other settlements in the region.

As soon as the business interests seemed to warrant the expenditure, David H. Moffat built a railroad from Florence to Victor and Cripple Creek. This road was a narrow gauge line; it reached Victor in 1894. This road, termed the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad, was connected with Canon City by a spur line from Ora Junction. This road paid for its construction and had a surplus by the close of the first year in business. Later in a competitive venture this road ran as many as seventy-two interurban trains between Cripple Creek and Victor daily. Shortly after the construction of the first railroad, the Midland Terminal built a spur line from Divide to Victor and Cripple Creek. In April, 1901, the Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek District Railroad was built as a direct connection with Colorado Springs. This road was controlled and partially owned by the mine owners of the district, the Woods Company being a heavy investor. The new road reduced the freight rates on ore materially and reduced passenger rates as much as one-third. The three roads represented 235 miles of road with a capital investment of about $10,000,000, excluding rolling stock and maintenance.

Victor was connected with the other towns and the larger mines by means of two electric lines known as the High and the Low Lines. Spacious cars were run over the Low Line every thirty minutes and over the High Line at hourly intervals. Two telephone systems were available; a private line connected the various Woods interests and this in turn was joined with the Bell system. The Postal Telegraph and the Western Union gave adequate communication with cities outside the district. Two newspapers, the *Teller County Banner* and the *Victor Record* supplied local and outside news. John White was the last editor of the *Record*.

The census of 1900 credited Victor with a population of 4,986. To supply this population numerous business establishments were necessary. Many of these were housed in fine brick buildings. A fire in September, 1899, destroyed many of the original frame and log buildings that had made up the bulk of the business houses. The fire started on Portland Avenue and extended about three blocks to the Midland depot. In an easterly and westerly direction it extended from First Street to Fifth Street. Practically all the business section of the town burned. After considerable grading

and leveling the buildings were rebuilt of brick. Part of the bricks that were used, came from Dutchtown, a small village just south of Victor. Some of the larger structures built were the Gold Coin Shaft House, the Gold Coin Block, the Gold Coin Club[2], the Stebbins Block, the Talow building, the Rankin building, the City Hall, the Armory Hall[3] and the Opera House.

The leading grocers were the Victor Grocery Company, Trask and Anderson, the Gardner Mercantile Company, of which C. E. Simonton was manager; P. H. Gallegher, the Economy Market, conducted by Dave Flanagan and Edward Olson; John Ketelsen; and J. A. Beckman, manager the Star Grocery and Market.

The larger dry goods stores were the B. Striker store on North Third Street; the J. L. Woods store; the Shillings Dry Goods Company; the Eagle Store, conducted by B. Leter; the Reed Dry Goods Company; and the store of E. E. Gould. Gavin Baird owned a fine tailor shop, located just north of Victor Avenue on Third Street. Two other tailor shops were owned by Emil Ericson and J. A. Burns, respectively. The Millinery Shop of Mrs. Mary Bowman and the Massage Parlors of Belle Forman, supplied women's needs. William Bowman, the pioneer barber, maintained a five-chair barber shop.

Hardware, furniture and household supplies might be had at their respective shops, such as: the Victor Hardware Company, managed by Mr. Donnelly; the Morrell Hardware; the Tomkins Hardware and Supply Company; the Teller County Mining Supply Company of the Woods Company; the S. A. Hackley Furniture store; the Watts Big Furniture Store, and the Victor Furniture Company, managed by N. A. Bourk. Coal and wood were supplied by the Gold Belt Mercantile Company, managed by M. G. McLean; or the Cripple Creek Coal and Transfer Company located on Diamond Avenue. Mr. E. L. Lawrence owned and operated a store that furnished a variety of paints and wallpapers. The Ovren Stationery and Book Store[4] supplied books and writing ma-

[2]The Club was organized in 1899. The building was just ready for use when it was destroyed by the Victor fire. It was rebuilt at the cost of $50,000 and was formally opened March 5, 1900. All the employees of the corporations controlled by the Woods Investment Company were eligible for membership. The main attractions were a gymnasium, clubroom, billiard and pool room, and a bowling alley. A military band of twenty-five pieces was an additional feature. About 1906 the building was remodeled and termed the Red Cross Hospital; Dr. C. E. Elliott was in charge. The hospital was later called the District Hospital. Dr. Elliott served the community well as a doctor and also was mayor of Victor for several years. He died from an attack of pneumonia in 1926.

[3]The Armory Hall was purchased by the Elk's Lodge in 1913, their home in the Rankin building having burned. The hall was remodeled under the direction of McBride. Bonds were floated to make the purchase and the remodeling possible.

[4]Mr. Ovren is still in business in Victor. He started in 1900. He is a pioneer in Colorado having been in business in Leadville in the late seventies After leaving Leadville in 1884 he went to Aspen, Colorado, and came to Victor from Aspen. Several early business men are still in Victor, among whom are H. H. Rosser, Billy Bowman, S. A. Hackley, J. Laughlin, William Fraiser and Dave Flanagan. Ed. Olson, partner of Dave Flanagan, died in Jan., 1933.

terials and also offered a fine selection of wallpaper and provided skilled paperhangers.

Numerous shops and stores of a more miscellaneous type were adequate for the needs of the people. M. A. Ptacek, George Fargher, and D. D. Pennington owned cigar stores. A stationery store was operated by John F. Meyers. Mr. H. H. Rosser[5] operated a variety store. Mr. A. F. Snyder owned a jewelry store. The leading assayers of the town were Gisin and Watt. Drugs were furnished at Schoen's Pharmacy. The Victor Novelty Works was managed by J. Laughlin, an expert mechanic and locksmith. A greenhouse at the elevation of nearly 10,000 feet might have been a curiosity; nevertheless, one was located at 102 South Third Street and was owned by D. R. Quillim.

C. D. Hall, F. W. Ryder, P. J. Weipper and James McAvoy were agents for various forms of insurance. Doctors MacKenzie, Campbell, Latimer and George were prominent physicians. There was the Victor Undertaking Company and one operated by J. L. Wood.

Two banks were located in the town of Victor, the City Bank[6] and the Bank of Victor. Restaurants, hotels and rooming houses were abundant; the Delmonico hotel and the Antlers cafe were among the largest in the town. A splendid opera house was built in 1900. Lodges were numerous and several large lodge homes were constructed. Amusement in the form of dances was common. Some of the lodge buildings, the Gold Coin Club, and the Miners Union Hall had large and excellent dance floors. Billiards and pool were played in the parlors of Caley and Cowell, or T. D. Foster. For those that would have other forms of amusement gambling and drink were to be found at the numerous saloons. The two largest places were the Monarch Saloon and the Fortune Club. More sordid amusement was to be found at the resorts on Portland Avenue and after the fire at those on First Street.

The town had many Protestant churches. A fine Catholic church was built to house the large non-Protestant membership. Several schools were built. The Lincoln and Washington buildings housed the grade schools. Before the fire the high school used the Garfield building that was located on the corner of Fifth Street and Spicer Avenue. A modern high school was built on East Victor

[5]Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Rosser kept store in the High Line depot in the Gold Coin Block and later in the Low Line station. During the labor strike their store was located in the north side of the Miners Hall. Later he moved to his present location on North Fourth Street.

[6]The First National Bank was opened for business in Victor Oct. 15, 1900. The home of the institution was the building known as the Bank Block. This bank failed in 1905 and was replaced by the City Bank. The depositors of the bank did not lose by its failure. The City Bank was later taken over by the Citizens Bank, this in turn quit business.

Avenue in 1899; the old high school building was then used as an elementary school.

Light and power were supplied by the Pikes Peak Power Company, controlled by the Woods Investment Company. Besides furnishing the lights for Victor and the neighboring villages, the company supplied all the Woods properties. The power project was designed by Mershon and the construction was directed by R. M. Jones. A dam was built on Beaver Creek seven miles east of Victor. At the time of its completion it was the largest steel-faced granite-filled dam built. Five miles below the dam a power house was constructed. The project was completed in 1901.

Water was supplied to the town by means of two reservoirs located near the foot of Pikes Peak. The water was piped several miles to storage tanks north of the town on Battle Mountain. Mains were dug and a water and sewerage system was completed.

Victor early took the name the "City of Mines," because of the nearness of many of the large producing mines. The Gold Coin (called the Granite after 1905), the great mine of the Woods Investment Company, was mining under the town itself. Indeed, some of the stopes of the mine came so close to the surface that the thunder of the blasts and the jarring of the earth became apparent and dangerous; the work had to be discontinued. Under the First National Bank, which was controlled by the Woods Company, ore was being mined—the gold from which would finally reach the vaults of the bank. The Gold Coin had one of the finest plants in the region, being constructed of steel, brick and stone. It added credit to the town and the whole camp. The ore from the mine was sent through the Columbine Tunnel under Squaw Mountain to the Economic Mill.[7] It is estimated that the Gold Coin mine has yielded about $10,000,000 in gold ore.

Just north of Victor on Battle Mountain, Winfield Scott Stratton[8] located the Independence mine—so named because it was staked on the Fourth of July in 1891. From 1891 until it was sold to the English concern in April, 1899, the mine produced $4,000,000. Stratton sold the mine for $10,000,000 cash, believed to be the largest cash transaction in gold mines to that time in the West.

On the crest of the hill above the Independence the Portland Mine was located by Harnan, Burns and Doyle. Claim jumping

[7]The Economic Mill was placed in operation Jan. 26, 1900. It was located in Arequa Gulch, one mile west of Victor. It was owned by the Woods Investment Company and was the largest operating in the district. It had one of the largest laboratories in the State, turning out 10,000 assays monthly. The mill was used for about five years.

[8]W. S. Stratton was one of the prominent men in Victor. Some say that he would have liked to have called the town Strattonia. After selling the Independence mine to the London Exploration Company his interests were farther from Victor. He built office buildings near his major holdings, the Logan and the American Eagles, and called the location Winfield. A village just north of the Independence mine was called Strattonia.

was common in 1892 and the owners of this mine first secretly carried on horseback and later hauled by wagon the high grade ore to Colorado Springs. The truth will out and when the richness of the ore became known there were lawsuits in abundance; as many as thirty suits and countersuits were pending at one time. By 1900 the trouble ceased and the mine continued to produce its millions.

Several smaller but very rich mines were located in or at the edge of the town. The Strong mine, just west of the Independence mine, had a very romantic history, having been blown up at the time of the miners' strike for shorter hours in 1894. This mine is credited with paying a monthly dividend of $25,000 and with being one of the richest mines. It is said to have yielded $22,000,000 from a seven-acre claim. The Ajax and the Dillon have produced many millions.

The zenith of production for the district was reached in 1901 and 1902; the mines produced about $2,000,000 in gold ore a month. The rosy dawn of the camp became clouded with a labor strike and the production of the district never again reached its record of 1901. Victor as a center of mining activities became a center of the strike disorder. Against the wishes of the majority of the Western Federation of Miners, Moyer and Haywood, leaders of the Federation, called a sympathetic strike August 10, 1903.. The strike was called because of differences at the mill in Colorado Springs. The miners of the camp were strongly unionized and the mines had to close down. Space will not permit a discussion of the strike here.

The strike ended unionized labor in the region about Victor. Though perhaps not closely related, the district did not return to the production of the pre-strike days. Difficulties arose within the Woods Investment Company, the founders and the loyal supporters of Victor. They had invested too heavily in such projects as the Pikes Peak Power Company and the Short Line. The Woods Company failed; Warren, Harry and Frank Woods[9] had been worth millions, now they were bankrupt.

As mining towns go, Victor was a prosperous village until the World War. However, before the war the production of the mines was ever decreasing. Capital was more difficult to find for investment. The mines had to be worked at ever increasing depths and greater outlays of money were necessary. The war, with the consequent increase in prices for mining supplies, caused a rapid de-

[9]The Woods left camp about 1910. Warren Woods, the father, died some years ago. H. E. Woods died in 1929. Frank Woods, termed by the *Denver Post*, the "Midas of Cripple Creek," died in October, 1932. After leaving Victor, Frank Woods became interested in oil. Failing to make enough from the oil project he recently attempted to find the mother lode of the gold in California. While engaged in this last great prospect he died while still hoping to found more towns and discover more wealth.

crease in mining activities. The production of $2,000,000 a month had changed to about as much a year. Business houses closed their doors and the proprietors sought other places for business. People left the region in great numbers. Freight into and out of the district lessened. The Colrado Springs and the Cripple Creek District Railroad (the Short Line) and the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad were discontinued and the tracks taken up. Their roadbeds were made into auto highways. The auto and the decline in transportation needs within the district caused the wrecking of the electric lines.

Victor of today with its population of 1,291 is but a shadow of what used to be a town of 5,000 inhabitants. Hope, courage and industry lie deep in the consciousness of those that remain. Many tourists visit the town each year; they wonder at the mines, dumps and various prospecting projects. They are told of the vast wealth that has been taken from the mines and of the untold fortunes yet to be discovered. From time to time the "old timers" return to look over the prospect and try their luck again. Victor lives in the memories of many that do not return; they remember the "good old days" and dream of glittering gold.