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History of the Tabor Opera House at Leadville

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It was the evening of November 20, 1879. Crowds which all day had formed in groups along Harrison Avenue to discuss the two vigilante hangings of the morning,¹ now turned to lighter amusement and hurried toward the most talked-of building in Leadville, the new Tabor Opera House.

For weeks the newspapers had been full of the wonders of this "largest opera house west of the Mississippi," the second real opera house in Colorado, the Central City Opera House having been opened in 1878.

The crowds gathered by carriage and on foot. The latest fashions in leg-o'-mutton sleeves rubbed against the roughest of mining togs as the throng pushed down the main thoroughfare of the boom town, itself less than two years old, although it had now a population of some 15,000.

The 800 people who were fortunate enough to command tickets for the opening performance shoved through the crowd of curious and opened the swinging doors to find themselves in a hall "broad enough to admit a regiment."² Passing up a flight of stairs they came into the largest amusement hall in Leadville, and "the only one where decent people would not be afraid to go." Excited ushers soon led the first nighters of the parquet and dress circles to their seats, "Anderson's patent opera chairs elegantly upholstered in plush, the same as those used in Wallack's, Daly's, and the Madison Square of New York."³

Once seated, the crowds looked curiously around at the carpeted aisles, frescoed ceilings and the stage curtain, a view of the Royal Gorge which nudging neighbors whispered had cost \$1,000. Behind that curtain, equipping the 55 by 35 foot stage, were eight drop curtains,⁴ ready to lend the proper background for any scene the entertainment might demand. On this stage, making the proph-

*Miss Degitz wrote her Master's Thesis at Western State College, Gunnison, Colorado, upon the history of the Tabor Opera House. This article is a digest of that thesis.—Ed.

¹*Daily Democrat* (Leadville), Nov. 21, 1879. Hereafter this newspaper is cited as D. D.

²*Leadville Daily Chronicle*, Nov. 18, 1879. Hereafter cited as L. D. C.

³*Ibid.*, Nov. 18, 1879.

⁴L. D. C., Nov. 18, 1879, and the *Carbonate Weekly Chronicle*, Jan. 3, 1880, hereafter cited as C. W. C.

ecy true, appeared in the next decade most of the great and semi-great of the American and European stage. The "blended beauty of the whole was brought out by brightly burning lights from 72 gas jets,"⁵ the first attempt at such lighting in Leadville.

Eyes were constantly turned toward the Tabor box, where the walrus-mustached silver king, then Lieutenant Governor of Colorado, sat beaming on a scene made possible by his benevolence. Beside him sat Augusta Tabor, stiff, formal, and a little disapproving of the glitter and array. Tabor had sensed a real need for cleaner amusement in this fast-growing boom town where chance was the goddess of the masses. Thus he had, at a cost of \$40,000, built the first legitimate theater in Leadville, making it the "most perfect place of amusement between St. Louis or Chicago, and San Francisco."⁶

Certainly the Tabor programs greatly surpassed the amusement furnished by the Grand Central, according to the open letter, "Leadville Licentiousness," published by the "Tenderfoot" in a local paper. Here, according to the letter, the balcony seats were more expensive than the ground floor because, leading from the balcony were wine rooms where thirsty guests were served and entertained by the chorus girls and barmaids, while the feeble performance of the stage was often drowned out by the popping of corks.⁷

The play of the opening night, *Serious Family* by Barnett, was pleasingly presented by the Langrishe Troupe led by Jack Langrishe himself, "Colorado's favorite comedian who gives a chaste and superior class of amusement."⁸ In choosing Langrishe to direct for the first thirteen weeks of performances in the opera house, Tabor had selected a man well able to cater to the tastes of a boom town. The Langrishe players had come by wagon to Denver as early as 1859, from which location they had played at all the camps within a radius of many miles—places as far distant as Georgia Flats, Montgomery and Buckskin Joe.⁹

Supported by Miss Phosa McAllister, herself a favorite of the early days, Langrishe gave Leadville a variety of programs ranging from the farce of the opening performance, through the melodrama of Boucicault's *Streets of New York*, *London Assurance*, and the *Octoroon*, to the deep tragedy of *Othello*.

Stock companies were on the wane in the East, being replaced by the star system, which specialized in one play and one actor. But in Leadville, with the railroad still a hundred miles from the town and the only connection with the outside world by stage lines,

⁵L. D. C., Nov. 18, 1879.

⁶*Ibid.*, Nov. 18, 1879.

⁷D. D., Sept. 8, 1880.

⁸C. W. C., Jan. 3, 1880.

⁹D. D., Dec. 31, 1879.

a permanent resident company was the only sure means of continuous amusement.

The theater was not exclusively for amusement, however, but was a meeting place for all large gatherings. Honorable Charles E. Thomsen addressed a crowded opera house January 6, 1880, concerning famine-ridden Ireland. Money was raised for the cause by the benefit show, *Trodden Down*.¹⁰ This same month the ladies of Leadville sponsored a relief performance, the proceeds of which went toward maintaining the many stranded people in Leadville—even then a slightly waning boom town.¹¹

Twice changes were made in the "model plant." A rear win-



THE TABOR OPERA HOUSE OF LEADVILLE.

dow was cut to aid ventilation, and the auditorium floor was rebuilt as an inclined plane.¹²

J. S. Langrishe left Leadville the middle of March, 1880, to accept a position in the newly-planned Tabor Grand of Denver, the third theater which, with the Tabor Opera House of Leadville and the Central City Opera House, did so much to maintain a cultural standard in the new country.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, Jan. 6-11, 1880.

¹¹*Ibid.*, Jan. 29, 30, 1880.

¹²L. D. C., May 21, 1880.

The stock company, reorganized as the Knowles Troupe, continued entertaining at the Tabor until the middle of the summer of 1880. By this time the completed railroad offered a constant link with the outside world, thus bringing the traveling stars on booking circuits.

Even before the railroad was finished Leadville was entertained by a famous group, the Haverly Church Choir, in *Pinafore*.¹³ This same company, changing to the newly popular black-face vaudeville, revisited Leadville many times as the Haverly Mastodon Minstrels.¹⁴ Black-face vaudeville must have been popular, because the pioneer troupe was soon followed by the other famous minstrels of the day, Primrose, Dockstader, and Callender.

In June of 1880, Leadville was jolted sharply by its first major strike. Mine owners met behind the closed doors of the opera house to decide on a course of action. Here the troops, called to protect property, were quartered. Trouble was settled by June 17, and the entertainment at the theater continued with the play, *Enoch Arden*.¹⁵

July of 1880 was a time of busy preparation for the reception of General Ulysses S. Grant, official guest of the completed railroad. On July 22 the "whistle of the iron horse" was heard; this started off a tremendous celebration. After the parade and official welcome, General and Mrs. Grant as guests in the Tabor box, saw a "credit-able performance of *Our Boarding House*, the humor of which greatly refreshed the distinguished visitor." At a benefit for the Richie Light Guard, a police organization, both General Grant and Governor J. L. Routt were present to enjoy the play, *Ours*.¹⁶

The star system had revolutionized theatrical production by creating booking routes through which a successful play from Wallack's, Daly's, the Madison Square or Union Square Theaters of New York toured the province the second year. Over these booking circuits Leadville, as a regular stop, saw the best performers of the New York stage.

Great was the excitement and satisfaction among the cosmopolitan population of the 10,000-foot mining camp upon learning that the much-talked-of social play, *The Banker's Daughter*, by the daring social-reformer, Bronson Howard, would be played in Leadville by the original New York cast.¹⁷

Leadville was fortunate to have the brilliant Broadway star, Mrs. D. P. Bower, well known for her work opposite Booth in Macbeth, come in *Lady Audley's Secret*.¹⁸ The play had made a sensational hit at the Winter Gardens before being taken on tour.

The Tabor audience had shouted and wept at the presentation of d'Ennery's *Two Orphans* by the stock company under Lang-

¹³D. D., July 9, 1880.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, July 9, 1880.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, June 14-17, 1880.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, July 22-27, 1880.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, June 8, 1880.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, Aug. 31, 1880.

rishe. Words could hardly express their satisfaction upon seeing this favorite melodrama played by the creator of the character of the blind Louise, Effie Ellsler.¹⁹ In her later visits Miss Ellsler had the best of support from the town.

Hardly second to Miss Ellsler in popularity was Kate Claxton of Steele Mackay's Hazel Kirke fame,²⁰ and Lotta Crabtree, song and dance specialist of the Pacific Coast, who appeared in her character creation of *Little Nell*.²¹

Music lovers expectantly awaited the coming of the Emma Abbott Opera Company, which reached Leadville after completing an engagement at the Tabor Grand in Denver. Nothing but praise could be said of their four performances. The men of the company were honored by being taken through the Little Pittsburg mine by H. A. W. Tabor himself.²²

Light comedy caused the theater to ring as a crowded house watched Stuart Robson and William H. Crane, the best known comedy team of Broadway, caper through *Sharps and Flats*, *Our Bachelors*, and *A Comedy of Errors*.²³

Masterly presentations of Shakespeare were given by the eminent in that field. Lawrence Barrett, long the associate of Booth, came to Leadville in 1883 in two performances, the first night as Lanciotto of *Francesca da Rimini*,²⁴ a part that he had made famous, and the second night in Julius Caesar. He was assisted by another well known figure, Louis James.

That same summer the great German actress, Janauschek, played in Leadville.²⁵ She was closely followed by Henry Ward Beecher who lectured upon the *Right of the Common People*, and *Moral Uses of Luxury and Beauty*.²⁶ Such lectures were received with little favor by the critical audience who saw but slight difference between the views of Beecher and Ingersoll.

In 1886 Leadville again was entertained by a new foreign star, the Polish actress, Modjeska, who gave *Mary Stuart*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*.²⁷

By 1887 two names, William Gillette and Edward Harrigan, were being mentioned freely in the East. Gillette brought the fore-runner of the modern detective play, *Held by the Enemy*,²⁸ to Leadville, in which play he created his own character of the strong, silent, resourceful hero.

Edward Harrigan was the first to sympathize amusingly with the immigrant types—the Irish, Dutch, the Swedish, and Negro.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, April 18, 1881.

²⁰*Ibid.*, July 27, 1881.

²¹L. D. C., May 7, 1883.

²²*Ibid.*, Sept. 18-27, 1882.

²³*Ibid.*, May 7-9, 1883.

²⁴*Ibid.*, June 19-20, 1883.

²⁵*Ibid.*, Aug. 13-15, 1883.

²⁶*Ibid.*, Sept. 14, 15, 1883.

²⁷D. D., Aug. 23-25, 1886.

²⁸L. D. C., Aug. 8-10, 1887.

His program of *Old Lavender* and *Cordelia's Aspirations* was often repeated at the Tabor.

But no actor stirred Leadville as did the famous Irish aesthete, Oscar Wilde. Velvet knee breeches, a long address in a monotone, and Wilde's susceptibility to high altitude, all received seathing publicity in an article carrying the following headlines:

"OSCAR DEAR"²⁹

Wilde wrestles with Art Decorative in the Mountain Wilderness
He Falls an Unwilling Victim to Light Air upon His Arrival
The Wonderful Aesthetic Demonstration Postponed on Account of
the Weather

The Much-talked of Disciple of Aesthetics Comes and Goes with
Little Fuss

A Whole Crowd of Curiosity Seekers at the Tabor Last Night

In spite of the optimism expressed in the New Year's edition of the *Daily Herald*, 1882, in which the theater was called the leading amusement center of the city, housing good audiences and companies, the seasons were being slowly cut shorter, and performances of the well-known companies on the "Silver Circuit" were gradually limited to a one night stop at Leadville's Tabor Opera House.

This theater, created by Tabor, followed its originator's career closely. Seeing its best days in 1880-1882, it slowly sank in renown, along with the prices of silver and the fortune of Tabor, until Leadville was hardly surprised to read on March 21, 1893, that the Tabor Opera House had been bought from the original owner by Judge A. S. Weston for \$22,000. The deed was signed by the Tabor Amusement Company, H. A. W. Tabor, president; E. D. Tabor (probably "Baby Doe"), secretary.³⁰

Judge Weston, a typical man of the West, had come to the Leadville region in 1860, attracted by the mining activity, and stayed as miner, rancher, and lawyer until his death in 1897.³¹

Now called the Weston, the old opera house changed little under the new management. The noted actors of the time—Ellsler, Coghlan, Harrigan, Warde, Sousa's Band—still made the Weston for one night. And between better performances, minstrel shows and second-rate troupes appeared at more and more frequent intervals.

The hard times of the '90s is not better expressed than by the note advertising the *Wolves of Wall Street*. "Amusements are not bountiful these days and our people sadly need diversion."³² But as in prosperous times, the old theater still maintained the position of first in Leadville's public life.

At Judge Weston's death, his wife, Mrs. L. B. Weston, took over the active management. The newspapers, supporting her

²⁹*Daily Herald* (Leadville), April 11, 1882, hereafter cited as D. H.

³⁰*Ibid.*, March 21, 1893.

³¹*Ibid.*, March 31, 1897.

³²D. D., Aug. 16, 1893.

loyally, boasted of her as being one of the three women managers of the country.³³

It was during Mrs. Weston's management that Leadville heard the best program of the decade, four days of grand opera by the Metropolitan Opera Company.³⁴ She also offered Maude Adams in the *Little Minister*, as well as Modjeska.³⁵ Kathryn Kidder and Louis James received the following review:

"In spite of a play three hundred years old and an altitude of two miles above sea level, and weather eight degrees below zero, the Weston Opera House was crowded last night to see James and Kidder present a strong *Midsummer Night's Dream*," said the *Herald Democrat* of January 11, 1901.

Again in 1901 financial troubles caused the original Tabor Opera House to change hands. Having been in litigation for some time, it was purchased by Dr. J. H. Heron who immediately resold it to the Leadville Elks Lodge. They planned to remodel it into adequate rooms for themselves and a first-class theater. Work was begun immediately following that booking season which had little of good entertainment except a one-night appearance of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.³⁶

After closing six months for repairs, the "first" theater in Leadville, renamed the Elks Opera House, again opened its doors to a large and enthusiastic crowd on December 11, 1902. The first performance was the musical comedy, *Floradora*. Again hurrying people pushed along a less-crowded and safer Harrison Avenue, swung open the same heavy doors to gaze curiously at the changes made in the building. The interior was completely remodeled. A new stage had been added to the back, roomier, more convenient, with the old stage space made into a larger auditorium. The old Tabor sign was replaced by the present Elks Opera House. Under the new stage were modern, convenient dressing rooms. Each was equipped with a full-length walnut-framed mirror. The star's dressing room had a couch.

Thus the Tabor Opera House—bought from Mrs. Weston for \$12,000, remodeled for \$25,000, renamed the Elks Opera House—continued in the place it had held for 22 years, and holds even today, the center of Leadville town life.³⁷

In its new grandeur, a revival of interest centered about the theater. Full programs were offered, not infrequently boasting such talent of the day as the favorites, Ellsler, Warde, James, Robson, Wainwright, Anna Held, Jane Corcoran, Dustin Farnum. But the days of the star system, too, had gone, and the Elks Opera

³³*Herald Democrat* (Leadville), Jan. 1, 1899, hereafter cited as H. D.

³⁴*Ibid.*, Sept. 18-22, 1899.

³⁵*Ibid.*, March 1, 1900, March 7, 1901.

³⁶H. D., Jan. 27, 1902.

³⁷H. D., Jan. 2, 1903.

House, in a few years, settled back to be remembered as it is today, a monument to the memory of H. A. W. Tabor, Colorado's greatest "Bonanza king."

No better picture of the old opera house's story can be given than that told in the following poem by Frank L. Vaughn, veteran newspaper man of Leadville, who wrote of a time through which he had lived and retold with loving vividness its past glory:

LEADVILLE'S OPERA HOUSE

When a fellow gets to pondering,
In the twilight hours of life,
With his mind just idly wandering
Through old scenes with memories rife;
Of strange happenings that teased him
In the days of long ago;
Of the many things that pleased him,
In the changing, passing show,
His mind will take the measure
Of the varied things he's seen,
And affords him greater pleasure
Than the pictures on the screen.
There's no use of moralizing,
Criticising or regret;
No use of emphasizing
Present differences—and yet—

I visited the Elk's Opera House—and saw a show—the other night,
It was good—for those who liked it—and it seemed to "go" all right,
But it failed to hold my interest, and the "talent" on the stage
Was different from the kind I saw in turning memory's page.
The surroundings must have got me for the stage looks dim and blurred,
And of the show before me I scarcely heard a word,
But a kaleidoscope of faces passed swift o'er memory's page
And I saw them as I'd seen them on that same old dusty stage.
One by one they passed before me, just in flashes from each show
That afforded us amusement in the days of long ago.
A trance seemed to enfold me—it was almost like a shock—
Again I saw McAllister and Roche in high class stock—
And few companies are gathered in jazzy modern show
That can equal their production of forty years ago.
There was humor, pathos, tragedy, music, dancing, scenic art;
Some stuff that made you want to fight, and some that touched
your heart;
And I've sat and watched the audience—they were rough ones in
those days—
They were western in their actions and quite western in their
ways—
Such as our modern sissies would sneer at and deride;
And though they wore guns on their belts, they all had hearts
inside.
And I've seen a bold bad gunman—one who was immune to fear—
A-coughing in his handkerchief to hide a furtive tear
O'er the woes of Uncle Tom and Little Eva—and maybe
It wasn't healthy country for the man who played Legree,
For one fellow took the thing too real, and it didn't look like fun
Till his partner grabbed him by the wrist and took away his gun.
Yes, things was quite exciting, and the folks a little rough,
But for all o' that they didn't draw the line on high-brow stuff.

Barrett, Booth, McCullough, Miln and Downing trod the stage,
And their genius found expression there when Shakespeare was
the rage.

Across the continent, "Mazeppa," with Katie Putnam in the role,
"Around the World in Eighty Days," Kiralfy's greatest dole;
Kate Claxton in "Two Orphans," and Abel killing Cain;
Milton Nobles in "The Phoenix"—say I wish they'd come again—
Lotta Crabtree moved her hearers with Dickens' "Little Nell,"
And piquant Maggie Mitchell who played anything right well;
Joe Emmett with his yodeling—his world-famous "Lullaby,"
That held his audience enthralled, then took them to the sky;
"Kit, the Arkansas Traveler," with Chanfrau as the star,
Was the kind of melodrama that reached way over par;
Joe Murphy in "The Kerry Gow" blended misery and mirth,
And moved his audience to tears with his "Handful of Earth";
And peerless Emma Abbott, who rendered "Home Sweet Home"
Till some of us wondered what the d—l made us roam.
The "Two Dromios," as given us by Robson and Crane
Those mirth monarchs who in comedy had reached the highest
plane;

Almost every phase and feature, every emotion, every part—
There was Emerson, and Manning, old-time kings of black-face
art—

Lew Dockstader, Jack Haverly, Primrose, West are in review,
While the footlights of my mind are showing pictures old and
true.

"Humpty Dumpty," "Evangeline," with the lone fisherman's antics
queer;

"The Parlor Match," "A Texas Steer," with its star, big Bill
Devere;

Bob Fitzsimmons and Jim Corbett here have faced the footlights
glow,

Showing the art of self-defense and—how to cop the dough.
I can hear the "Chimes of Normandy," "Mikado," "Pinafore,"
And my feet just get to stomping and I'm hollering for more.
Den Thompson's, "The Old Homestead," was a favorite, I'll say—
Make you see the apple blossoms and smell the new-mown hay;
Harrigan in "Lavender and Old Lace" played a quite artistic part
That doubled you up with laughter then gripped you by the heart.
Effie Ellsler, Coudock, Hopper in the gripping "Hazel Kirk,"
There was everything from slapstick to way up high-class work;
Melodrama that was d—m mellow and tragedy that hurt—
There was some that made you laugh and some made you tear
your shirt.

I have seen a shower of silver greet some favorite of the crowd;
Have felt the grand old building rock to encores long and loud,
Have watched a silent audience when anything went amiss,
But despite the wild and wooly times, I never heard a hiss.
Great orators and statesmen have voiced their pleadings here;
Ed Wolcott, Belford, Patterson—in language bold and clear—
Teller, Grant and Shafroth, Charley Thomas, also Waite;
Men whose names are glory carved in the history of the state;
Here Sam Nicholson, our own product, has laid his reasons down
With loyalty to mining and love for his home town.

This house has been the forum for Leadville's brains and brawn,
In it we've honored those who lived and mourned for dear ones
gone,

In it we've voiced our hopes and fears—our loves and our
dislikes—

Have howled our deathless patriotism, and even voted strikes,
It has echoed our endearments and we've watered it with tears,
And its battered walls are eloquent with the sentiment of years.

—FRANK E. VAUGHN.

The Thornburgh Battle With the Utes on Milk Creek

ELMER R. BURKEY*

During the first days of October, 1879, the people of Colorado and adjacent states were horrified by the news that Mr. N. C. Meeker, Agent of the White River Indian Agency in western Colorado, and several other Agency employees had been killed by the Ute Indians, and the women and children had been carried into captivity; also that the United States soldiers from Fort Steele, Wyoming, who were on their way to the White River Agency, had been ambushed by Indians and many had been killed and wounded. Although trouble with these Indians had been freely predicted during the previous months and great anxiety had prevailed in the Ute Indian country, the news of this tragedy came as a shock to the people of Colorado.

For several months previous to this occurrence the Colorado papers had carried many stories of outrages and depredations which the Ute Indians of western Colorado were alleged to have committed. Also much had been written and reported concerning the administration of the White River Agency by Agent Meeker, and much correspondence had taken place between Mr. Meeker and the War and the Interior Departments relative to his plans and troubles at the Agency.

This article is not concerned with the facts or supposed facts of Mr. Meeker's administration of the White River Agency, nor with the charges and counter-charges made by the various parties concerned in them. Those who are interested may find in the files of the War Department and the Government Miscellaneous Documents the complete and official reports of the investigating committees who inquired into the causes which led to the calling of the troops, the fight with these troops, and the massacre at the Agency.

The writer, after visiting the battleground and making a study of all available records, will attempt to present only the incidents immediately preceding the fight, the events of the battle, and the rescue of the beleaguered soldiers by General Merritt.

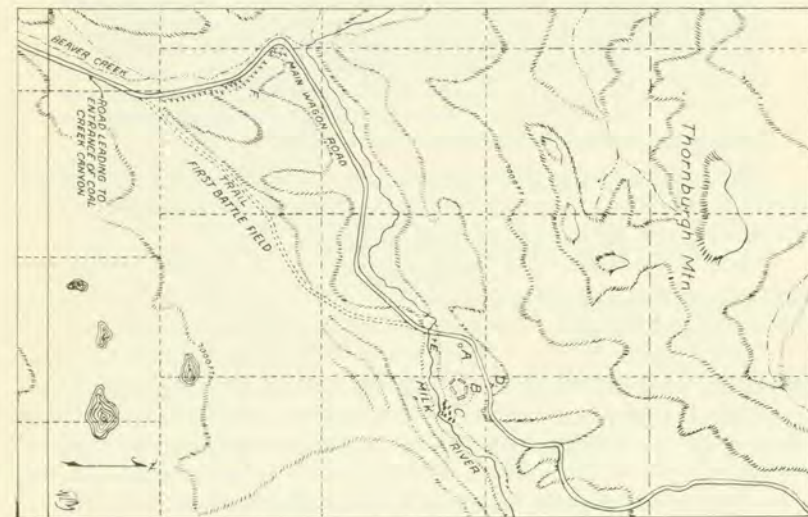
After several requests had been made by Mr. Meeker, officials of Colorado, and others, the War Department issued orders for a military expedition to proceed to the White River Agency for the purpose of establishing peaceable relations between the Utes and the white settlers in western Colorado, and to arrest, if necessary, those who were the instigators of trouble.

On September 16, 1879, General Crook, commanding the Department of the Platte, issued orders based on endorsements from

*Mr. Burkey, for more than a year employed as a Research Worker for the State Historical Society of Colorado, has not only studied the source materials on the Thornburgh Battle, but he visited the site of this famous engagement to interpret his findings on the ground.—Ed.

army headquarters, to Major T. T. Thornburgh, commander at Fort Steele, Wyoming, "to move with a sufficient number of troops to the White River Ute Agency, Colorado, under special instructions."¹

Although Mr. Meeker had asked for only one hundred men, Major Thornburgh organized an expedition consisting of companies D and F of the Fifth Cavalry, commanded by Captain J. S. Payne and Lieutenant B. D. Price, the entire fighting strength being about one hundred and eighty men. A supply train of twenty-five wagons, carrying rations for thirty days and forage for fifteen days, in charge of teamster McKinstry, accompanied the troops. Lieutenant S. A. Wolf, Fourth Infantry, was quartermaster and commissary, and Dr. R. B. Grimes the accompanying surgeon. Mr. Joe Rankin, stableman of Rawlins, who formerly



SKETCH OF THORNBURGH BATTLEFIELD AND VICINITY.

A, Thornburgh Battle Monument; B, Corral formed by the wagons; C, Dead animals, killed in the corral and dragged over the bank; D, Gordon's Wagon Train; E, Point where road crossed Milk River; F, Ambushed Indians awaiting the soldiers.

carried mail to the agency on horseback, acted as guide for the troops.

S. A. Cherry, Lieutenant in the Fifth Cavalry, who was stationed at Fort D. A. Russell, was ordered to join Major Thornburgh, and was by him appointed adjutant of the command.

Major Thornburgh's troops left Fort Steele, Wyoming, on the 21st of September, 1879, and camped the first night at Rawlins, Wyoming. Leaving Rawlins early on the 22nd the command fol-

¹Report of Secretary of War, in *Messages and Documents, War Dept., 1879-1880, Vol. I, p. 9.*

lowed the military road south and that afternoon reached Fortification Creek, where camp was made. Here Lieutenant Price and his company of infantry were left to establish a supply camp.

At this place Major Thornburgh wrote the following letter to Mr. Meeker:

Headquarters White River Expedition, Camp
on Fortification Creek, September 25, 1879.

Sir: In obedience to instructions from the General of the Army, I am enroute to your agency, and expect to arrive there on the 29th instant, for the purpose of affording you any assistance in my power in regulating your affairs, and to make arrests at your suggestion, and to hold as prisoners such of your Indians as you desire, until investigations are made by your department.

I have heard nothing definite from your agency for ten days and do not know what state of affairs exists, whether the Indians will leave at my approach or show hostilities. I send this letter by Mr. Lowry, one of my guides, and desire you to communicate with me as soon as possible, giving me all the information in your power, in order that I may know what course I am to pursue.

If practicable, meet me on the road at the earliest moment.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

T. T. THORNBURGH,

Major Fourth Infantry, Commanding Expedition.

Mr. Meeker, Indian Agent, White River Agency, Colo.²

The following day the command resumed its march, following Fortification Creek for eighteen miles, and at two o'clock in the afternoon went into camp at Yampa River.

Here they were met by a delegation of Indians from the Agency, consisting of Jack, an Indian chief, and about ten others. While the actions and demeanor of Jack and his companions were far from hostile, it was very plain to the soldiers that they had come for the purpose of counting the troops and picking up all available information about the expedition. Jack several times asked why the soldiers were going to the agency, and in spite of the assurances by the soldiers of their pacific intentions, he showed a decided distrust. He was very bitter in his denunciations of Agent Meeker.³

Major Thornburgh did his best to allay any fears the Indians might have as to the purpose of the expedition, and invited Jack to accompany him to the Agency. This Jack refused to do and left that night for the Agency.

Of this visit by the Indians Captain Payne writes as follows:

"They came to us, not 'as an army with banners,' nor by any intimation of their hostile intent, 'but with duplicity in their hearts whilst the countenances wore the signals of peace.' They visited our camp, professed friendship, and, having learned our force, departed, feeling no doubt assurance of an early massacre."⁴

²Ibid.

³Capt. J. S. Payne, "The Campaign Against the Utes," in *United Service*, Jan., 1880.

⁴Ibid.

Even Major Thornburgh was unaware of any hostile intent on the part of the Indians as is evidenced by the following telegram which he sent to his department commander from Yampa River:

"Have met some Ute chiefs here. They seem friendly and promise to go with me to agency. Say Utes don't understand why we have come. Have tried to explain satisfactorily. Do not anticipate trouble."⁵

The next day the troops advanced to William's Fork, where they camped for the night. Here they were met by Colorow, Henry, the interpreter, three other Indians, and Mr. Eskridge, an employee of the Agency, who brought the following letter from Mr. Meeker to Major Thornburgh:

White River Agency, Colo.

September 27, 1879.

Sir: Understanding that you are on the way hither with United States Troops, I send a messenger, Mr. Eskridge, and two Indians, Henry (interpreter) and John Ayersly, to inform you that the Indians are greatly excited, and wish you to stop at some convenient camping place, and then that you and five soldiers of your command come into the Agency, when a talk and a better understanding can be had.

This I agree to, but I do not propose to order your movements, but it seems for the best.

The Indians seem to consider the advance of the troops as a declaration of real war. In this I am laboring to undeceive them, and at the same time to convince them they cannot do whatever they please. The first object now is to allay apprehension.

Respectfully,

N. C. Meeker, Indian Agent.

To Major Thornburgh, or Commander United States Troops, between Bear and White River, Colo.⁶

After Major Thornburgh had conferred with his officers he wrote the following answer to Mr. Meeker and sent it by Henry, the interpreter, who later testified that he delivered the same to Mr. Meeker.⁷

Headquarters White River Expedition, Camp
on William's Fork, Sept. 27, 1879

Sir: Your letter of this date just received. I will move tomorrow with part of my command to Milk River, or some good location for camp, or possibly may leave my entire command at this point, and will come in as is desired with five men and a guide. Mr. Eskridge will remain to guide me to the agency.

I will reach your agency some time on the 29th instant.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

T. T. Thornburgh,

Major Fourth Infantry, Commanding Expedition

Mr. Meeker, United States Indian Agent, White River Agency⁸

The Indians were apprised of the contents of these letters

⁵Report of Secretary of Interior, in *Messages and Documents, Interior Dept.*, 1879-1880, Vol. I, p. 93.

⁶Report of Secretary of War, *op. cit.*

⁷Testimony of Henry James, in relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak, in *House Mis. Doc. 38, 46 Cong., 2 Sess.*, p. 204.

⁸Report of Secretary of War, *op. cit.*

which passed between Mr. Meeker and Major Thornburgh. Although only Henry, the interpreter, could speak the English language, he was told to tell the other Indians what was in those letters, which he purported to do.⁹

Major Thornburgh made it very clear to Henry, the interpreter, that the Indians had nothing to fear, and that he was not going in with the troops, but would stop before reaching the Agency, but no particular point was designated.¹⁰

Later, at the Congressional investigation, Henry testified "That the officer told him that the letters said he was to come on with five more men, but that the officer said he could not do that as his orders were to go on with all."¹¹

These Indians were not disposed to be very sociable at first, and Colorow was exceedingly surly, refusing to smoke because the soldiers could not oblige the "Colorado Big Chief" with anything better than a pipe, since "Jack" had helped himself to the last of the Havannas which the officers had with them.¹²

This camp at William's Fork was about thirty-five miles from the Agency. There was neither a sufficient quantity of grass nor timber to make a longer camp, and besides, "it was a very bad place to camp, surrounded by high bluffs, so that if the Indians had chosen to attack us there, the whole command would have been annihilated at once. That was one of Major Thornburgh's reasons for moving on,"¹³ the other being to get closer to the Agency.

On the following day, September 28th, the command marched about eleven miles, to a point where spring water and some grass were found. After making camp Major Thornburgh held a council with his officers and told them "that he had been thinking of this matter during the day and that he was satisfied that, under his orders, he had taken a little too much responsibility in consenting to keep his command so far from the Agency, and he asked our advice about it."¹⁴

Captain Payne expressed the opinion that it was best to continue the march the following day until Milk Creek was reached and to camp there or at some point near it, and that Major Thornburgh with five men should go on to the Agency, either that night or the next morning. Meanwhile "the command would go into camp just as under ordinary circumstances, pitch their tents, and go through all the forms of encampment for the night; then, as

⁹Testimony of Capt. J. S. Payne, in relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak in *Misc. Doc. 38, op. cit.*, p. 172.

¹⁰Testimony of Lieut. S. A. Cherry, in relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak, in *Misc. Doc. 38, p. 67.*

¹¹Testimony of Henry James, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

¹²J. S. Payne, "The Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

¹³Testimony of Lieut. Cherry, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

¹⁴Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

soon it became dark, I would take the cavalry column and carry it through the canon¹⁵ and place it near the agency; that, as the Indians would see him going on into the Agency, they would follow him as if they were on the lookout, supposing that he was carrying out his programme, and we could get through without trouble, and that then the command would be within supporting distance, and yet meet the requirement of the Indians, not to go to the agency."¹⁶

Another reason for going through the canon at night was because the guide had told the officers that "it was a very bad canon, with very steep and precipitous sides, so that the Indians could roll rocks down upon us and annihilate us."¹⁷

After some discussion it was decided to carry out this plan, and that the Major and his party would go on to the agency at night of the following day. A letter informing Mr. Meeker of the changed plans was written by Captain Payne and sent by Mr. Eskridge:

Headquarters White River Expedition, Camp
on Deer Creek, September 28, 1879

Sir: I have, after due deliberation, decided to modify my plans as communicated in my letter of the 27th instant in the following particulars:

I shall move with my entire command to some convenient camp near, and within striking distance of, your agency, reaching such point during the 29th. I shall then halt and encamp the troops and proceed to that agency with my guide and five soldiers, as communicated in my letter of the 27th instant.

Then and there I will be ready to have a conference with you and the Indians, so that an understanding may be arrived at and my course of action determined. I have carefully considered whether or not it would be advisable to have my command at a point as distant as that desired by the Indians who were in my camp last night and have reached the conclusion that under my orders, which require me to march this command to the agency, I am not at liberty to leave it at a point where it would not be available in case of trouble. You are authorized to say for me to the Indians that my course of conduct is entirely dependent on them. Our desire is to avoid trouble, and we have not come for war.

I requested you in my letter of the 26th to meet me on the road before I reached the agency, I renew my request that you do so, and further desire that you bring such chiefs as may wish to accompany you.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

T. T. Thornburgh,

Major Fourth Infantry, Commanding Expedition

Mr. Meeker, United States Agent, White River Agency, Colo.¹⁸

That Mr. Meeker received the above letter is shown by the fact that at 1 p. m. on September 29th, shortly before the massacre at the agency, he sent the following reply to Major Thornburgh.

¹⁵This canyon, known as Coal Creek Canyon, through which the road to Meeker ran, followed Coal Creek, a tributary of White River.

¹⁶Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

¹⁷Testimony of Lieut. Cherry, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

¹⁸Report of Secretary of War, *op. cit.*

United States Indian Service, White River
Agency, September 29, 1879—1 p. m.

Dear Sir: I expect to leave in the morning with Douglas and Serrick to meet you. Things are peaceable, and Douglas flies the United States flag. If you have trouble in getting through the cañon today let me know in what force. We have been on guard three nights and shall be tonight, not because we know that there is danger, but because there may be. I like your last programme. It is based on true military principles.

Most truly yours,

N. C. Meeker, Indian Agent¹⁹

This letter was never delivered to Major Thornburgh, because Mr. Eskridge, who left the agency with it, was later found dead a short distance from the agency, with the letter in his possession.

From some of the events which had transpired, Mr. Meeker must have been somewhat apprehensive, even though his last communication does not show it. Two days before the fight, the squaws and the children had been moved with their tepees from the agency to the head of the east branch of Pice-ance Creek, twelve miles south of the agency, where they made camp, which was known as Squaw Camp. Only four of the former ninety-four tepees were left at the agency, one of these belonging to Chief Douglas.²⁰

At dusk of this same day Mr. Meeker sent Ed Mansfield with an urgent message to Captain Dodge, who with his colored troops had been sent from Fort Garland to Middle Park to establish peace between the settlers and the Indians, asking for immediate aid.

When Charles Lowry, who carried messages from Captain Thornburgh, arrived at the agency a short time after Mansfield left, he found Meeker in a very nervous state. Later in the evening when a band of Utes came to the agency from Milk River and reported the approach of soldiers, the Indians held a council, and then all joined in a wild demonstration of war whoops, fierce yells, and dancing about Meeker's quarters. When Meeker attempted to quiet them he was jeered at by the Indians, and only after Lowry had intervened did they finally become quiet.²¹

Lowry returned to Thornburgh's camp on the night of the 28th, with a letter from Meeker which seems to have been lost later, and its contents remains unknown.²²

It is, however, known that he informed Major Thornburgh of the serious conditions existing at the agency, and expressed fear that the Indians would fight the troops.²³

At 6:30 a. m. on that fateful day, September 29th, the com-

mand began the march to Milk River, and at 9:30 reached the high ground overlooking the river. Captain Payne gives us a graphic picture of the scene before him:

Descending the hill, a fine landscape lay before us. A small stream running softly down a narrow valley; on the right hand, a mile off, a line of bluffs continuous and inaccessible, with broken ridges nearer the creek; on the left rounded knolls and what our English friends call "downs," furrowed with arroyos and running back to the high hills which form the advance guard of the White River Mountains. The air was soft and balmy as with the breath of the sweet south, and the bright sunshine shooting in broad flashes across the hilltops filled the valley as with liquid gold. Save in the long column which, dismounted, was winding its way down the hill, not a living creature was in sight. Earth and sky were fair to behold, and the pictured calm seemed the very symbol of peace.²⁴

Just before the troops reached the stream they passed on the hill a wagon train belonging to the Indian contractor, Mr. France, of Rawlins, in charge of Mr. John Gordon, which was hauling supplies to the Agency. "These train-people informed some of the soldiers that Indians had passed them before we reached them, coming from the direction which we were approaching, and told them to keep out of the way, that there was going to be a fight with the soldiers."²⁵

When Milk River was reached "fresh trails and indications of a large body of Indians"²⁶ were seen, among these being some newly started fires which were still burning.²⁷ The command was halted at the river and the horses watered, after which the march was resumed, Major Thornburgh having ordered that the troops should move about four miles beyond the river and make temporary camp at "the top of the ridge on this side of the canon."²⁸

One reason for not stopping at the river was that much of the grass there had been burned off by the Indians, and there was no running water in the river, but only in pools.²⁹

The troops followed the river for a thousand yards, crossed, and then, instead of following the road which led along Beaver ravine and into the canon, took a trail going over the hills to the left. This trail cut off the elbow made by the road, and saved a considerable distance. Troop E of the Third Cavalry, and F of the Fifth were in the lead under the immediate command of Major Thornburgh.

Troop D of the Fifth Cavalry remained with the wagons which had been halted several hundred yards north of the river crossing, and which were to follow more slowly.

At this point of the story there is some controversy. Mr. Joe

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰M. W. Rankin, *Reminiscences of Frontier Days*, p. 67. Mr. Rankin, who is a relative of Joe Rankin, the scout, reached the scene several days after the battle.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Testimony of Lieut. Cherry, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

²³Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

²⁴Capt. J. S. Payne, "The Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

²⁵Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

²⁶Testimony of Lieut. Cherry, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²⁷Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

²⁸Testimony of Lieut. Cherry, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 69.

Rankin, who accompanied the expedition as scout and guide, claimed that it was he who informed Major Thornburgh of the trail which led over the hill to the left of the road, and that he had strongly urged the Major to take this trail rather than the road which led into the canon, because he was fearful that the Indians would attack the command while in that place.

Newspaper dispatches, which were sent out from Rawlins, Wyoming, also carried this version of the affair, but they were based upon the story as told by Mr. Rankin himself, upon his arrival at Rawlins with the first news of the fight.³⁰

Authentic accounts of the battle as told by those who participated in it do not, however, substantiate his claims. Captain Payne, in an article written by him, denied Rankin's story. "A good deal of nonsense," he wrote, "has been written in the newspapers to the effect that the command pursued this route (the trail) by the advice of a guide, who, knowing that the Indians were lying in ambush in the canon, took us this way to avoid annihilation. Major Thornburgh turned off the road to shorten his march. Neither he nor I were apprehensive of trouble at this time."³¹ In further reference to this, Captain Payne, in his testimony before the Congressional Investigating Committee, said: "The old Indian trail crosses the road repeatedly. The road winds in and out among the mountains, and the trail makes a good many cut-offs, and the cavalry column would frequently take the trail while the wagons would follow the road."³²

Lieut. Cherry, who as adjutant of the command was familiar with all of Major Thornburgh's orders, in his testimony before the same committee, while speaking of the troops taking the trail, said: "It has been said that it was done by Mr. Rankin's orders, but it was not; it was a mere fortunate circumstance; he happened to take the trail instead of the road and it was providential that he did so."³³

The first intimation of trouble came from Lieut. Cherry, who had been placed in charge of an advance guard of several men and ordered to "keep half or three-quarters of a mile in advance of the command and keep on the lookout for Indians, as he expected that there might be trouble."³⁴

It has been claimed that Mr. Rankin, the guide, and Frank Secrist, a private soldier, were riding a quarter of a mile in advance of Thornburgh and were the first to see the Indians, and that they returned to Major Thornburgh, who halted the command and called a short conference, in which it is alleged that Rankin urged

Major Thornburgh to immediately open fire upon the Indians.³⁵ There is not, however, anything of an authentic nature to verify this statement, while there are several authorities who agree that Lieut. Cherry's party was the first to see the lurking Indians.³⁶ According to Mr. A. M. Startzell, a member of Company E, Third Cavalry, he, Mr. Rankin, and another soldier by the name of Wm. Lewis, were in Lieut. Cherry's advance party, and were therefore merely among those who first discovered the danger ahead.³⁷

The trail which Lieut. Cherry followed passed between ridges of successive heights. On the right there were two ridges lying between the trail and the road which ran through Beaver ravine, one ridge somewhat higher than the other.

When about half or three-quarters of a mile beyond Milk River, Lieut. Cherry and his party saw three Indians disappear from the nearest ridge lying on the right of the trail, and about 500 yards in advance of his party. His suspicions aroused, he divided his men, sending part of them to the left, while he with the remainder "went down on the right about two hundred yards and crossed a little stream and got up on the ridge that these three Indians had disappeared behind." He now discovered that the Indians were lying down in ambush on the top of the second ridge with their guns in readiness to fire.³⁸ He was now within 100 yards of the Indians who were drawn up in a line of battle which extended for at least 400 yards and which covered and commanded the road below, and was parallel with it. Every plan had thus been made to attack the troops when they entered the canon, but, instead, the troops "took them in the rear of their position instead of stringing ourselves out along their front as they expected and wished us to do."³⁹

Upon seeing the position of the Indians, Cherry waved his hat to Major Thornburgh and made "signals for the command to retrace its steps just as the leading company (F, Fifth Cavalry) was descending the ridge into the valley beyond."⁴⁰

Major Thornburgh at once realized that the signals meant the presence of Indians, and immediately ordered Company F deployed as skirmishers on the left flank, and Company E, Third Cavalry, to the right and on the crest of the ridge, the battle line at this time resembling the letter V, the point toward the Indians. Some Indians had by this time appeared in front, and both Captain Payne and Major Thornburgh now "made efforts to communicate

³⁰M. W. Rankin, *op. cit.*, p. 68; Thos. F. Dawson, *History of the Ute War*, p. 22.

³¹Testimony of Lieut. Cherry, *op. cit.*, p. 65; N. Robinson, "The Ute Massacre," in *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly*, Feb., 1880, p. 150.

³²A. M. Startzell, "Thornburgh Massacre at Meeker," MSS. in Colorado State Historical Society Files.

³³Testimony of Lieut. Cherry, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 69.

³⁵J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

³⁶Special Telegram, *Denver Daily News*, October 2, 1879. *History of Denver* (Baskin, 1880), p. 141. M. W. Rankin, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

³⁷J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

³⁸Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

³⁹Testimony of Lieut. Cherry, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

with the Indians by signalling," using handkerchiefs, the only available objects, "and several of the Indians answered these signals."⁴¹

Lieut. Cherry, who had meanwhile reported to Major Thornburgh, was sent with orders to Captains Payne and Lawson "to dismount and fight on foot, keeping the horses in the rear, and not to fire a shot until he gave the order."⁴²

Lieut. Cherry was then ordered to take fifteen men from Lawson's company, cross the ravine lower down on the right flank, and, if possible, to communicate with the Indians. When Cherry had gone a distance of about 400 or 500 yards from Lawson's company a body of about 15 or 20 Indians appeared from behind a ridge. Cherry moved out some 15 or 20 feet in advance of his men and waved his hat "in a friendly manner; not at all in an excited manner, and I was looking toward the Indians, not toward my men." Which action, Lieutenant Cherry thought, the Indians would and did understand as friendly. He was replied to by a shot which came from one of the Indians in this advanced group, and which was evidently meant for the Lieutenant as it wounded a man who was not over ten feet directly behind him. Cherry at once dismounted his men and sent word to Major Thornburgh that he had been fired upon and could hold his position until further orders, also that the Indians were riding around upon the flanks in an apparent endeavor to cut off the troops from the wagon train. In the investigations which were held after the battle and massacre, some Indians said that they did not know who fired the first shot,⁴³ while others claimed that the soldiers began the firing. Chief Jack claimed that he had come to talk with the soldiers, not to fight, and that the Indians had supposed that the troops would make camp on Milk River, and were surprised to see them coming on beyond that point.⁴⁴ This story does not, however, explain the established fact that the Indians were hidden in ambush along the expected line of march. Charles Adams, Special Indian Agent, evidently did not believe the story told by the Indian, for in a letter written to Secretary Carl Schurz, on October 25, 1879, he said that after making investigations, and having the Indian version of the affair, he was "satisfied that the attack on Thornburgh was premeditated."⁴⁵

Meanwhile a large force of Indians had gathered about 400 yards to the left of the troops, while those which were in front were approaching very cautiously, taking advantage of any obstructions in the ground to keep out of range.

Upon hearing the firing on the right of the line where Lieut. Cherry was, for the first shot had immediately been followed by others, Capt. Payne did not wait for any orders, but turned around and directed his men to open fire on the Indians, without waiting to investigate where the shot had come from or who had fired it, his reason being that his "knowledge of Indian affairs was such that I knew we had an Indian fight on our hands then and there."⁴⁶ The Indians returned the fire and soon two of Payne's men and several Indians were killed.

Major Thornburgh now realized that it would not be wise to try to hold his ground against a foe so superior in numbers and occupying much better positions. The number of soldiers at Thornburgh's immediate command was less than 150 men including the teamsters, while the number of Indians was estimated at between 300 and 400.⁴⁷ Orders were therefore issued to gradually fall back to the wagon train, which had reached a point about 800 yards north of the river crossing, and to concentrate all the forces there.

Lieut. Paddock, who with his company was guarding the wagons, received orders from Major Thornburgh to form a corral, and the Lieutenant with the aid of wagonmaster McKinstry and others, formed the wagons into a three-quarter elliptical-shaped circle on a flat near the north side of the stream and about 12 feet above its level. The tongues of the wagons were turned toward the inside of the circle, the open space of which bordered on the banks of the stream.⁴⁸

In ordering the retreat to the wagons Major Thornburgh gave orders that Captain Payne was to charge upon a large force of Indians which had passed around the left flank, beyond carbine range, and gathered upon a large knoll commanding the line of retreat, with the obvious intention of cutting off the troops from the wagons. He was directed to sweep the Indians back, "and then at once without attempting to hold the hill, to fall back upon the train and take measures for its protection."⁴⁹

Captain Lawson, whose company was deployed on the right flank, was ordered to hold his line and gradually withdraw to the wagons, while Lieut. Cherry was given the task of covering Lawson's retreat, "and keep the Indians from getting into the gullies and ravines until the other companies had fallen back," and then he was to fall back slowly.⁵⁰

Becoming short of ammunition, Lieut. Cherry asked for a volunteer to ride to the wagons, which were about a thousand yards away, for an additional supply. It was a hazardous errand,

⁴¹Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

⁴²Testimony of Lieut. Cherry, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁴³*Senate Ex. Doc.* 83, 46 Cong., 2d Sess.

⁴⁴Testimony of Chief Jack in relation to the Ute Indian Outbreak, in *Misc. Doc.* 38, p. 193.

⁴⁵*Senate Ex. Doc.* 31, 46 Cong., 2d Sess., p. 14.

⁴⁶Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸M. W. Rankin, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁴⁹J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

⁵⁰Testimony of Lieut. Cherry, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

as the Indians had by this time surrounded the entire expedition and were shooting at the soldiers and wagons from every direction. Sgt. Edward Grimes volunteered his services, and mounting his horse, already bleeding from two wounds in the neck, he heroically performed the task, and thereby made possible an orderly retreat by Lawson and Cherry. For this accomplishment, Grimes was later awarded a medal of Honor by the War Department.⁵¹

After giving his orders for the retreat, Major Thornburgh started on a gallop for the wagon corral, with the evident intention of making plans for the defense of his troops. He was shot after he had crossed the river and was within 500 yards of the corral.⁵²

Several conflicting stories have been written of this sad event. One writer says that Thornburgh was killed while leading a charge against some Indians who were between the troops and the wagons.⁵³

Another account says that O'Malley, the Major's orderly, who was within 50 yards of the Major when shot, saw an Indian hidden behind a sage brush do the shooting. O'Malley killed the Indian, but because of other near approaching Indians, he was unable to rescue the body of his commander.⁵⁴ Although the body remained within the enemy lines for several days, when recovered it "bore no signs of the customary mutilation," nor had he been scalped. "Within the cold fingers of one hand was a photograph of 'Colorado,' who had probably placed it there."⁵⁵

In regard to the photograph which was said to have been found on Major Thornburgh's body, Captain Payne, in his testimony gave the following facts which doubtless refer to the same incident.

I forgot to state one thing in regard to these pictures that have been spoken about. Lowery or Rankin, I forget which, the night before the fight, gave me the picture of an Indian, which I put in my trunk. My trunk was captured, with all my baggage, by the Indians, as was also Major Thornburgh's, Lieutenant Cherry's, and Lieutenant Wolf's. We had all of our property in a light wagon, which followed the column, and the driver had to cut his horses loose to save his life, and the wagon fell into the Indian's hands. When Major Thornburgh's body was recovered, this picture, or at least a picture which I am satisfied is the same, was found upon his body held down by a little stone which had been placed upon it to prevent the wind from blowing it away. I am satisfied, from the examination I made of it after it was recovered, that it is the same picture, and was left on Major Thornburgh's body under the impression that it was his property. (The witness exhibited the picture to the members of the committee.) When

⁵¹Theo. F. Rodenbough, *Uncle Sam's Medal of Honor*, p. 359. This brave feat has been ascribed to a Mr. Donovan, but careful search of the official records fails to substantiate the statement.

⁵²J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

⁵³Sidney Jocknick, *Early Days on the Western Slope of Colorado*, p. 186.

⁵⁴Theo. F. Rodenbough, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 356.

Ignacio's band were coming here the other day I went into the car and shook hands with them all, and I suddenly drew this picture out of my pocket and said "Sabe"? One of them said, "Yes, it is Toca, an Uncompahgre"; but a few minutes later they denied it. I went down to the Tremont House two or three days ago, and showed the picture to some of the Indians there, and one of them said it was Captain Billy. I don't know what tribe he belongs to.⁵⁶

Another story is that a stray shot apparently wounded Thornburgh and his horse, and that he was quickly surrounded by a band of Indians who dragged him from his horse and beat him severely.⁵⁷

Captain Payne, in his testimony before the Congressional Investigating Committee, stated that no one knew just when or how Major Thornburgh was killed, as he was apparently by himself, and that he was probably picked off by a sharpshooter at long range, "because I know there were no Indians close to the position where he was found. I went over the ground myself within five minutes of the time he was killed, either before or after."⁵⁸

The orders for retreat given by Major Thornburgh to his company officers were faithfully carried out. Capt. Payne, after driving the Indians from the knoll on the left, which opened the way for the return of the led horses, made his way to the wagon train and took steps for its defense. He thus describes his work there: "Upon reaching the train I found it parked on the right bank of Milk River, about two hundred yards from the water, the wagons forming the north side of a corral elliptical in shape, its long axis running east and west, and the south side exposed to a fierce fire from the Indians, who, massing in ravines along the river and upon commanding heights, were making a determined effort to capture and destroy the train before it could be placed in position for defense. The animals were crowded within the area indicated, and I at once directed some twenty or more of those wounded to be led out and shot, along the open space referred to, thus making a continuous line of defense, and affording cover for our sharpshooters."

"The wagons, now unloaded, and bundles of bedding, grain and flour sacks, and mess boxes were used for the construction of breast-works." During this busy time Lieut. Paddock and Capt. Payne both received wounds, Paddock's being very painful.⁵⁹

As soon as a semblance of order had been restored, Capt. Payne sent out a party of ten men under command of Sergeant Poppe to cover the retreat of Captain Lawson and Lieut. Cherry, who were on foot, the most of their lead horses having come into the corral.⁶⁰ After hard fighting to keep the Indians from cutting

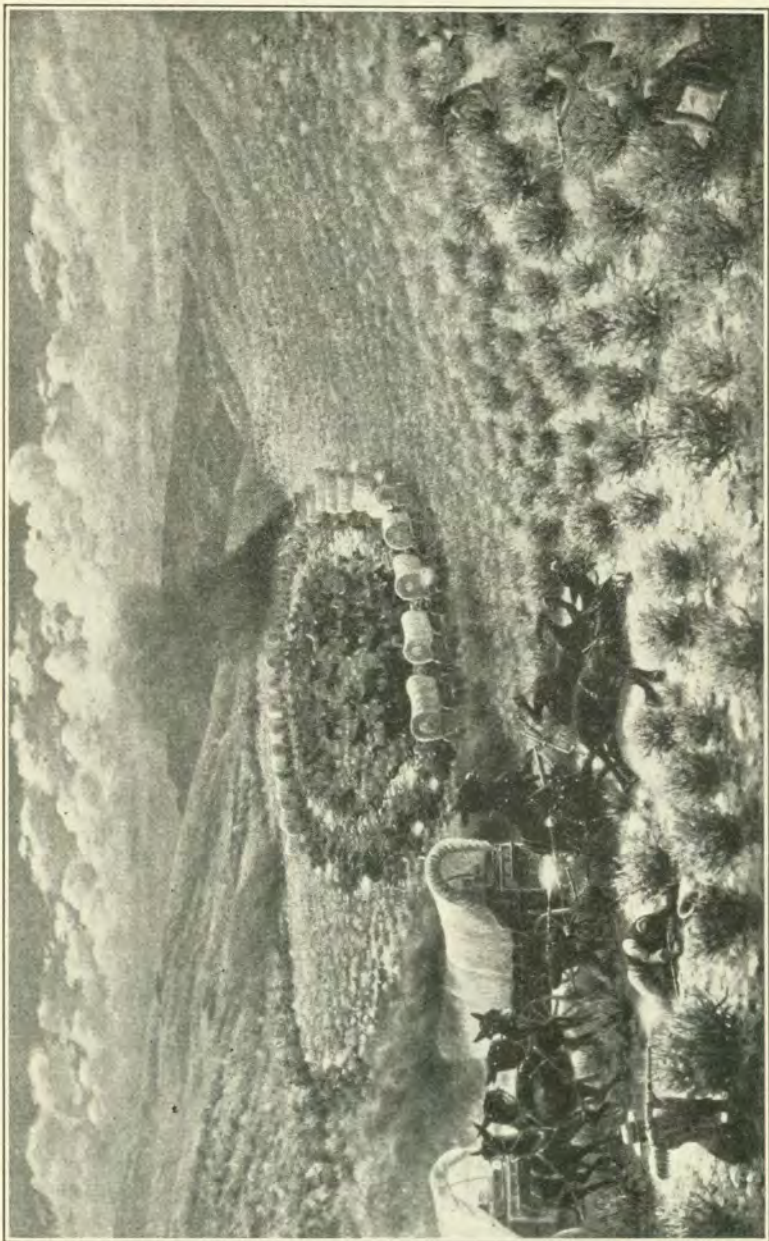
⁵⁶Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁵⁷M. W. Rankin, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁵⁸Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁵⁹J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

⁶⁰Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 175; Theo. F. Rodenbough, *op. cit.*, p. 362.



THE THORNBURGH BATTLE WITH THE UTES ON MILK CREEK.
Painting by Robert Lindneux, who made his sketch on the ground in September, 1935.

them off from the wagons, these troops had reached the banks of Milk River, which, with the cottonwoods, afforded some protection, and after routing the Indians from beneath the benches along the river, they made their way inside the enclosure without any fatal casualties, only Sergeant James Montgomery having been wounded. Donovan, who was with Lawson, brought the news of Major Thornburgh's death to Capt. Payne, who, as senior ranking officer, now took command.⁶¹

No sooner had the troops reached the corral than a new danger threatened. The Indians, determined in their efforts to drive the soldiers out onto the open, where death awaited, "took advantage of a high wind blowing towards the corral and set fire to the dry grass and sage brush down the river." At the same time it was observed that the Indian supply train which the troops had passed about a mile back on the road, was parked about 75 yards from the corral, and so situated as to command the approach to water. Fearing that the Indians might, under cover of the smoke, make a lodgment in the train, "and with the further purpose of burning the grass on the near side of the corral, so as to present as little surface as possible to the Indian fire when it should approach," Payne gave orders to Sergeant Poppe to get three or four men and set fire to the grass immediately about the corral. "Poppe said he would do it by himself, and springing over the breast-works before I could prevent him, he lighted a match, touched it to a wisp of grass, and going from place to place fired the sage brush, returning only after the duty had been thoroughly performed. Soon the grass and Gordon's train were in flames."⁶²

Meanwhile the fire from below was rapidly approaching the corral, "volumes of black smoke rolling before it, through which the angry, lurid tongues of flames shot high into the air, giving to the scene an aspect appalling and grand."⁶³ A change in the wind turned the fire somewhat away from the corral, and thereby saved the soldiers from almost certain death.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, some of the flames reached the exposed salient of the corral, setting fire to several of the wagons, and the greatest effort was required to extinguish the flames. "At this critical juncture the Indians made their most furious attack. Not one could be seen, but the incessant crack of their rifles dealt destruction to man and beast. In every ravine the red devils were lurking, and from every sage-bush came the messenger of death."⁶⁵

During this time the soldiers were ordered to fire into the

⁶¹M. W. Rankin, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁶²J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.* Theo. F. Rodenbough, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

⁶³J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

⁶⁴John Keith, in a letter written by him to Albert W. Johnson. MS. in the Colorado Historical Society files.

⁶⁵J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

smoke, and they thereby kept the Indians at a greater distance from the corral.⁶⁶ The men fought the fire with blouses, burlap sacks, and anything that they had, also by digging up dirt with their scabbard knives and spreading it on the flames. Private James Hickman, under fire of the Indians, pulled off a wagon sheet which had caught fire, and thus prevented the destruction of the wagons. For this brave act he was later awarded a medal by the War Department for bravery.⁶⁷

This great peril had, however, been averted at great loss. Wagonmaster McKinstry, Teamster Maguire, Sergeant Dolan, Privates McKee and Mooney had been killed, and less than a dozen men wounded, Capt. Payne receiving his second wound.

This fire burned over the entire east end of Danforth Hills, an area of about twenty square miles.

From the time of the fire, about 2:45 p. m., until night, the Indians maintained a furious fight. "They were armed with improved weapons, Winchester, Sharps and Remington rifles,"⁶⁸ and were firing from hills and ravines, which, in some places, were within 30 or 40 yards from the corral. The Indians had to rise and fire suddenly, firing at the corral rather than at individual persons. They, however, did a great amount of damage, having killed 12 men, wounded 43, and killed all but 4 horses.⁶⁹

At dark a large body of Indians charged down beyond Gordon's train, firing volley after volley, and coming up to within about 40 yards of the corral, but were easily repulsed and suffered the loss of several of their warriors. This was the last serious effort they made to dislodge the besieged either that day or afterwards.⁷⁰

When night came the prospects, though unpleasant, were not discouraging. The soldiers had thirty days' rations and were within 200 yards of water, and although over a dozen men including the commander had been killed and many wounded, there were about 90 brave men, unhurt and confident of their ability to hold out until help arrived.

During the night the dead animals were dragged down into the bed of the stream, a supply of water sufficient for 24 hours was obtained, and the wounded were cared for under direction of Surgeon R. M. Grimes, who was himself severely wounded. Liquor was obtained from the sutler stock, which helped to relieve suffering. Dead men were wrapped in canvas or blankets and covered with dirt from the trenches, which were dug around the circle near the wagons. These were 8 to 10 feet in length, 4 feet deep,

⁶⁶John Keith, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷M. W. Rankin, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁶⁸Testimony of Lieut. Cherry, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰Testimony of Capt. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

and 4 to 5 feet wide. In the center 3 large trenches were dug for the wounded.⁷¹

Near midnight a council was held in which it was decided to send out some couriers with dispatches to the military authorities. Joe Rankin, John Gordon, and Corporals Moquin and Murphy were selected as messengers.⁷² One writer names a Sergeant Grimes as one of those sent.⁷³

Rankin made a record-breaking ride to Rawlins, Wyoming, a distance of approximately 150 miles in 27½ hours, and gave the world the first news of the fight. Immediate steps were taken by the military authorities to send relief to Capt. Payne.⁷⁴

During the following days and nights the Indians kept up an almost incessant fire, killing nearly all the animals, but doing no other damage. On the night of Oct. 1st, the water party was fired on at short range, and one man was shot in the face.

At daylight, on Oct. 2nd, Captain Dodge and Lieut. Hughes, with Company D, 9th Cavalry, reached Payne's command. Captain Dodge, with this colored company, had, in July of this year, been ordered to do scout duty in Middle Park, and to prevent, if possible, "any collision between the Indians and settlers in that region."⁷⁵

Captain Dodge had occupied the time by following his instructions, making many excursions from his base in Middle Park. Upon the return to this base from one of these trips, in the latter part of September, he found orders awaiting him to return "to the White River Agency with the least practicable delay" to force the return of Indians to their reservation, and "to act in accord with Agent Meeker and under his directions."⁷⁶

The Captain left his supply camp on Grand River on Sept. 27th, and on the 30th camped on a small stream about 10 or 15 miles south of Steamboat Springs. The command had traveled about 10 miles on Oct. 1st, when a piece of paper was found on a sage brush by the side of the road on which was written: "Hurry up, the troops have been defeated at the agency," and signed, E. E. C. After reading this message Dodge pushed on with speed to Hayden, which he found deserted. There he met John Gordon, one of the couriers who had left Payne's improvised fort in search for help, and, learning from him the exact situation, he marched on with all possible speed, making camp on Yampa River at 4:30 in the afternoon.

After having supplied each soldier with 125 rounds of am-

⁷¹M. W. Rankin, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁷²*Ibid.*; J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*; Theo. F. Rodenbough, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

⁷³John Keith, *op. cit.*

⁷⁴M. W. Rankin, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁷⁵Senate Ex. Doc. 31, *op. cit.*, p. 106-108.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

munition and three days' rations, he ordered the wagons repacked and sent with a guard to Price's camp on Fortification Creek. Then guided by John Gordon and a Mr. Lithgow, he started for Milk Creek with only one pack mule and a force which consisted of two officers, 35 soldiers, and 4 citizens. Following the Marapos trail,⁷⁷ rather than the road, they reached the Milk River road about five miles from the intrenchments, and shortly afterward came upon the dead bodies of three men and a burned wagon train, and half an hour later arrived near the corral. They had not been molested by Indians, a fact that Dodge could only account for by supposing that the Indians imagined a much stronger force was coming in and they were unwilling to expose themselves.⁷⁸

A short halt was made within 500 yards of the trenches, shortly before daybreak, and Sandy Mellen and John Gordon advanced toward them. An Indian, lying in a ravine, "called out, as a warning, no doubt, to his copper-colored companions, 'Soldiers coming.' At first the men in the trenches thought this was a ruse to get them to expose themselves, but soon a shout from Gordon, whose voice was recognized, caused great rejoicing by the intrenched men, and the new-comers were greeted with glad hand."⁷⁹

Contrary to some reports, the best evidence shows that Dodge's men were not subjected to any great fire from the Indians while coming into the trenches, the reason being that most of the Indians had gone to their emergency camp one mile south for rest and a change of mounts, and that Dodge and his company had slipped into the trenches at a time least expected by them.⁸⁰

The arrival of the new troops brought cheer to the besieged, and assured them that their couriers had gone through with safety, and that soon they would be rescued from their perilous situation.

The shouts of the soldiers aroused the resting Indians, who now began sending a veritable rain of shots into the trenches. Capt. Dodge proposed to charge the Indians on the ridge, but was persuaded that it would only result in a useless loss of men.

The deadly firing of the Indians throughout the day and succeeding night resulted in the killing or wounding of nearly all the horses and mules, only five horses and two mules surviving the siege. The wounded animals were killed by the soldiers to relieve them of suffering.

It was not safe for a man to expose any part of his body above the trenches and only during the night could any venture outside the enclosure to get the needed water and to gather sage brush with which to make fire for boiling coffee.

⁷⁷M. W. Rankin, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁷⁸*Senate Ex. Doc. 31, op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁷⁹J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

⁸⁰M. W. Rankin, *op. cit.*, p. 73; Sidney Jocknick, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

The many surface obstructions, the banks of the river, and the large sage brush afforded splendid protection behind which the Indians could hide. "Not an Indian could be seen on whom to return the fire; only a puff of white smoke indicated from time to time where the bullet came from."⁸¹

The soldiers were not permitted to become bored because of monotony or inattention from the Indians. Signal fires at night, yells of the Indians holding their scalp dances, mingled with the howls of hundreds of coyotes, attracted by the dead animals, as well as the meant-to-be-humorous taunts of Indians lying in nearby ravines, furnished plenty of entertainment for those in the trenches, who vied with each other in expressing their feelings, often in original terms, concerning their red-skinned entertainers.⁸²

On the morning of the 5th of October, General Merritt arrived at Milk River with his relief command, after making a forced march which has become famous. Within four hours after marching orders had reached General Merritt at Fort Russell, on Oct. 1st, the relief troops with horses and equipment were on the cars and being carried by rail to Rawlins, Wyoming, a distance of 200 miles, from which point it was necessary to proceed by foot to the besieged soldiers. By daylight, Oct. 2nd, a force of about 200 cavalry and less than 150 infantry had collected at Rawlins, and at 11 o'clock the march of 170 miles was begun. "Without drawing rein, save for a needed rest at intervals to conserve strength for the whole of the work, the command pressed on with advance guard, and at times flankers, to prevent the possibility of ambuscade or surprise."⁸³ "As night came on the difficulties of marching were much increased by the darkness and rough roads," and from time to time halts were made while staff officers went to the rear to direct the column and see that it kept well closed.⁸⁴

Early on the morning of Oct. 5th, the guide having satisfied himself that the command was near the intrenchments, the bugler was ordered to sound the call known as "officers' call" in the cavalry, which had become a sign of recognition between friends, that there might be no collision, and friends be mistaken for foes.

No better description of the following moments can be given than that of Captain Payne, who wrote as follows: "Just as the first grey of the dawn appeared, our listening ears caught the sound of 'officers' call' breaking the silence of the morning and filling the valley with the sweetest music we had ever heard. Joyously the reply rang out from our corral, and the men rushing

⁸¹E. V. Sumner, "Besieged by the Utes," in *Century Magazine* (Oct., 1891) p. 837.

⁸²J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

⁸³Gen. Wesley Merritt, "Three Indian Campaigns," in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (April, 1890), p. 736.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

from the rifle-pits made the welkin ring with their glad cheers. Deliverance had come, and their fortitude and courage had met with reward.

"The scene beggared description. Brave men wept, and it was touching to see the gallant fellows hovering around to get a look at the general whose name had been on their lips for days, and who, as they heard from their comrades just arrived, had risen from a bed of sickness to make a march unparalleled in military annals."⁸⁵

⁸⁵J. S. Payne, "Campaign Against the Utes," *op. cit.*

An Evening With Tom Tobin

AGNES KING*

Not long after we came to the San Luis Valley my father heard that a miller was needed at the San Luis Valley Mill. And by the way, the mill at San Luis at the time was not the modern mill Mr. Parrish has there now but just a little outfit with water power and mill stones. As father had had some little experience running a flour mill he secured the position. After working for some time he came home to take mother, my two brothers and myself down to visit. Of course, we went with wagon and team, and it was a two-day trip.

To our great pleasure my father went to the Tom Tobin ranch to stay over night. The ranch was located southeast of Blanca, on the creek, but of course there was no Blanca at that date.

I can remember Mr. Tobin quite well, but as his pictured face is familiar to almost everyone, I will not try to describe him. He was very hospitable and welcomed us to his home.

As father was quite a frontiersman they had much in common. After supper they sat in front of the fireplace and talked until far into the night. We children sat at mother's feet and listened to their stories and I fear we shuddered when Mr. Tobin told my father about capturing the Espinoza outlaws and showed him how he rolled their heads out of a sack onto the floor at Fort Garland.

One story he told has remained vivid in my memory, doubtless on account of its absurdity, but Mr. Tobin said it was true. "I was, or thought I was, on very friendly terms with the Indians," he said, "and at one time I was going up to the north end of the valley. I thought I would stop at an Indian encampment on Little Spring Creek near the Sand Hills. I rode up to the camp and dismounted and spoke to the old chief (I forget his name). But instead of the usually friendly greeting he and his Indian braves

merely grunted. Not knowing what was the trouble, I told him I was very hungry and made signs to show my stomach was very empty.

"These Indians had never refused me something to eat, so after a few minutes he ordered a squaw to fix me bread. After he told her very sternly the second time, she sullenly proceeded to mix up some corn meal, and while doing so blew her nose vigorously right into the mixture. Then she went ahead and baked the corn-cakes.

"Of course by this time my hunger had entirely vanished. When the squaw tried to give me the cakes I refused to take them and told the chief I was not hungry. He said, 'You hungry, you eat.' I said 'No, I am not hungry now.' He jumped up and fairly thundered. 'You eat.' I saw it was a case of eat or lose my scalp so I started hastily to eat. If I quit eating he would look at me and say, 'Eat,' until the last crumb was eaten. I must say that never before or since have I found it so hard to swallow, but as there were about 60 or 75 young bucks looking at me besides the old chief, I ate the bread.

"As soon as I thought it safe I mounted and rode away. Later in the day I met some soldiers and they told me a white man had killed an Indian. That was the cause of my hostile treatment by the Indians. You may be sure I steered clear of this particular bunch of Indians after that."

My elder sister, Nettie Calkins, was hired to teach school in the district where Mr. Tobin lived and was to board with the Tobin family. The first morning of school, Mr. Tobin came into the schoolroom and talked to my sister awhile. On leaving he said, "Now, Miss Nettie, if any of these brats disobey or are mean, just let me know, and I will cut out their hearts." He had his hand on his hunting knife while he talked, I suppose to further impress the children, who were mostly Spanish-American.

I do not know whether Mr. Tobin made a practice of riding bareback all the time but I know he always rode his horse bareback around the ranch.

He was a brave character and served well in the era preceeding the modern generation. We may well honor his memory, for his qualities of bravery and hardiness.

*Mrs. King, of Blanca, Colorado, has taken a special interest in the local history of Colorado.—Ed.

Reminiscences of White Pine, Colorado

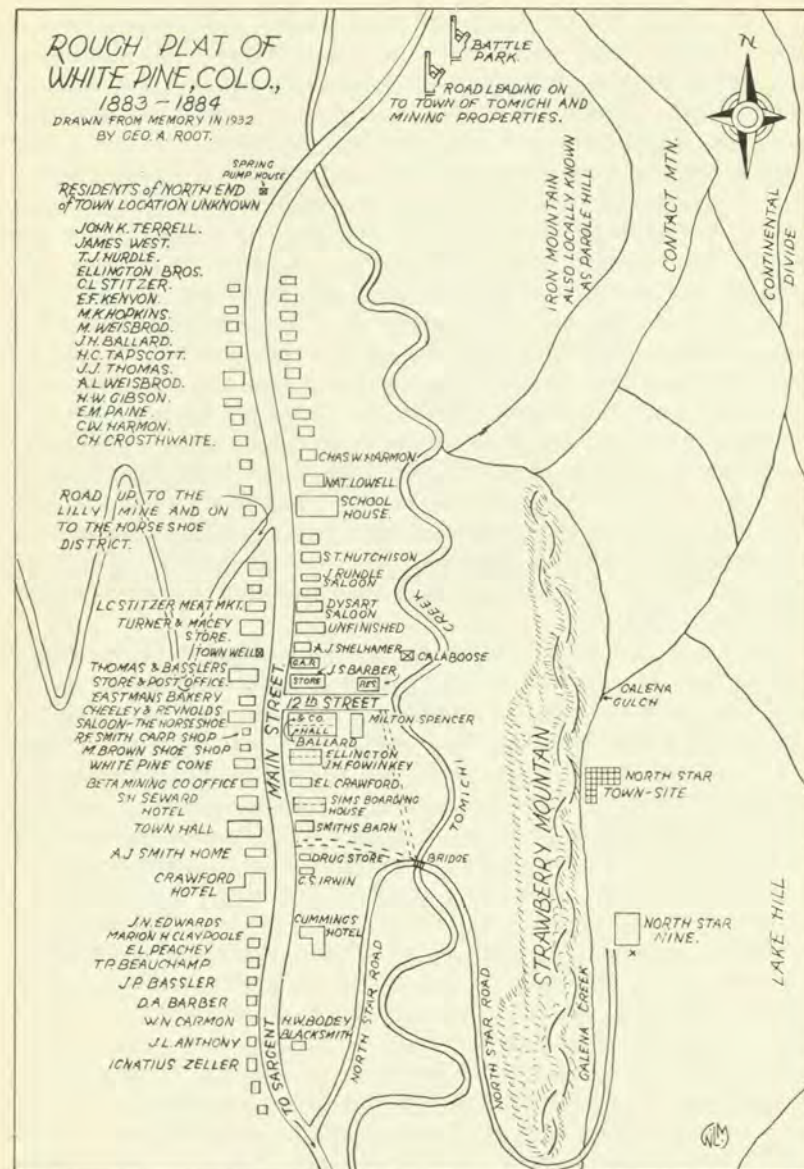
GEORGE A. ROOT*

On March 30, 1883, I left Gunnison, Colorado, for White Pine, to become the new "devil" on the *White Pine Cone*, soon to be issued. George S. Irwin, previously employed on the *Gunnison Review* and *Review-Press*, was to be the new publisher. We reached Sargents, at the foot of Marshall Pass, late in the afternoon and took the stage from there to our destination, where we arrived soon after dark. The stage stopped at the Crawford House to unload passengers as it entered camp, the post office being some distance north. Mr. Irwin and I alighted with the crowd, went inside and arranged for board and lodging, and ate a hearty supper. The wants of the innerman having been satisfied, we started out to take a hasty survey of our new surroundings.

The camp after nightfall always took on new life as the miners came straggling in from their day's work, and the hotels, stores, post office and saloons shared honors in providing diversion for the crowds. The "Horseshoe" Saloon appeared to be a favorite rallying place for the miners, it being nearest the hotels, and there they gathered to "slick their whistles," meet old acquaintances and have a game of "razzle-dazzle" or cribbage for the treats. Here also came the mining speculators, who milled around with the convivial crowds, keeping their ears open to learn anything to their advantage from any guest who had arrived at the talkative stage. Here we milled around till bedtime, picking up many stray bits of mining information and local gossip for use in the first issue of the new paper.

I was up bright and early the next morning, and as soon as breakfast was over, started out to have a look at the camp by daylight. I had pictured the camp as a compact mountain town, with a "Main" street, and one or two additional streets of residences. I was soon disillusioned. After a little inquiry I located the building which was to be the *Cone's* future home. It was a rough one-story log cabin, about 18x30 feet in size, on the west side of Main Street, and at that time the only building between the Crawford House and the Horseshoe Saloon to the north. J. H. Fowinkel, the camp's shoemaker, had a shop directly opposite, on the east side of Main. The *Cone* building at this time had but the four log walls and a good shingle roof. Enough soil had been excavated from the east slope of Granite Mountain to afford a level site for the building, and it so happened that the rear of the cabin was

*Mr. Root, of the Kansas State Historical Society, spent several of his early years on the Western Slope of Colorado. He contributed an article, "Gunnison in the Early 'Eighties," to the *Colorado Magazine* of November, 1932. The present story is an extract from rather extensive reminiscences which he has written and presented to the State Historical Society of Colorado.—ED.



PLAT OF WHITE PINE, COLORADO.

sheltered by about six feet of soil that sloped gradually towards the east. The walls of the building were not "chinked." There were neither doors nor windows provided for, and there was no sign of a floor. Apparently no preparations had been made for the reception of the new paper.

The outfit for the *Cone* had been loaded at Gunnison into a heavy freight wagon and started for camp before I left Gunnison, but owing to some unforeseen circumstances had not yet reached White Pine. This delay, however, was of no particular moment, since we had to wait until the building was ready. Within a few days a force of carpenters got busy, cut out for a window and a door in front and two windows on the south, and started laying a floor. As fast as the floor was laid, the printing material from the wagon was unloaded and taken inside. A large wood stove was then set up, and with a roaring fire going full blast all day long, we started sorting out the equipment. This was somewhat of a task, dodging carpenters and trying to work during the din of pounding hammers, as the floor was being laid and the cracks between the logs were being chinked in. This job having gotten to the state where the cracks could be daubed with mud, John Roth, more familiarly known as "Dutch John," got busy and finished the job. Fuel was plentiful at the start, and could be had at the rear of the lot, or for that matter, on adjoining lots, as we had no neighbor closer than a hundred feet on either side. The east slope of Granite Mountain at that time was literally criss-crossed with fallen timber.

A bunk had been built in the northwest corner of the room, and in this the boss and I slept, eating our meals at the hotel. A Washington handpress that had first printed the *Gunnison Review*, the second paper issued in the county, was next set up. A Star quarter medium job press was next shifted to place beside the rear south window, two type stands assembled, placed at advantageous points beside the other windows, and then started the task of filling them with the cases of assorted job and display types we had brought along. When we unpacked the well-filled cases of long primer, brevier, minion and nonpareil, we made a discovery not altogether pleasing to either of us. The "lower" cases of these in being gotten ready for shipping had been covered over with a liberal supply of flattened out newspapers, then the "cap" cases were placed on top and treated likewise, the two then being tightly bound with heavy cord such as used on bundles of newsprint. When these cases were unpacked it was discovered that in spite of the precautions taken, types from all of the overfilled cases were pretty well scattered about over the surface of each of those cases. On good roads this style of packing would have been sufficient, but mountain highways at this time of year were not at their best and it was nothing short of providential that things were not in a worse mess. The best part of two days were spent setting up the top layer of these cases and distributing the pi. Then started the work of setting type for the first number.

The *White Pine Cone* was a six column folio, all home print, strongly Republican in politics. The editor was a good localist as well as a forceful writer, and the *Cone* at once took its place as one of the liveliest papers in the county. Irwin was a past master in the art of peeling political epidermis from the backs of opposition party candidates, and was threatened with more lickings from those he had taken to task than any other scribe I can think of, and yet I recall none he actually got. Irwin ran the *Cone* up to the end of 1892, and afterwards ran a paper at Fulford for a short time. In 1893 he was employed on a Cripple Creek daily. During the Spanish-American War he accompanied a regiment of Colorado National Guard to the Philippines, and was editor of a soldier paper there for a time. After his return to the states he later removed to Mesa, Arizona, where he founded a daily paper. He became secretary of the Mesa Chamber of Commerce, and served as probate judge. He died at Mesa some time during the early 1900s.

White Pine in 1883-84 was to all intents and purposes a "one street" town. The city lay along the east slope of Granite Mountain, with the Tomichi Creek bordering on the east. The back yards of most of the lots on the west side of Main were from 50 to 75 feet higher than at the street level, while the rear of those on the east were from 10 to 40 feet lower than in front. The camp's chief thoroughfare was Main Street, there being but one other street in the camp, which the *Cone's* editor had jocosely dubbed "Twelfth Street." Main was close to three-quarters of a mile in length, not quite as crooked as a dog's hind leg, and at the time of my arrival was about as rough as the traditional "road to Jordan." Big, rough, granite boulders dotted the street here and there, and the stage and ore wagons drove to one side just far enough to avoid the worst ones. Some of these were nearly three or four feet above the street level. Some attempt had been made at grading before my time, but enough still remained to make vehicle riding something of a hazard. Buildings on the west side of Main were from two to four feet higher than the level of those on the opposite side, and business was pretty much centered in the south half of camp, this being a natural consequence as it was nearer to the most active of the large working mining properties. Twelfth Street, running at right angle to Main, was about half a block long, Milton Spencer had built a store on its south side, while John S. Barber had erected a neat log cottage on the opposite side. Later this thoroughfare came to be known also as "Spencer Avenue." This street about equally divided the business section—barring the camp's two hotels, which were still farther south.

At this time the town was booming, having a population any-

where from 250 to 300, with a floating population of about 100 more which milled around in the hills in the vicinity of the North Star, Galena Gulch and Lake Hill, on the east; Tomichi and Clover Mountain on the north; Granite Mountain and the Horseshoe District on the west; and Burro Mountain on the south.

Within two weeks after our arrival in camp, A. B. Cooper, Harry Lloyd, William A. Geho, John S. Barber, Ed. Shaw and Arthur Wavell gave a social hop, followed by a supper at Ballard's Hall, (almost directly across the street from the *Cone* office.) This was on the 13th of April, and I have always understood that it was gotten up in compliment to the camp's new paper and its force. The dance started about 8 in the evening and broke up about four



THE MAY-MAZEPPA MINE AT WHITE PINE IN 1890.

The men shown are as follows: 1, R. M. Moseley; 2 and 3, unknown; 4, Harry M. Shields; 5, Carl Peterson; 6, Emil Peterson; 7, John Peterson; 8, Jay E. Shields; 9, Dave Maurice; 10, Albert Howell (?); 11, John Freed; 12, Alfred Peterson; 13, William Hessian. (Data by George A. Root.)

the next morning. Nearly everyone in camp who danced was there—including the editor and myself. At this social function I met many of the big guns of camp, as well as the younger crowd of about my own age. There was a dearth of unmarried females of fifteen years or over in camp at this time, and those present were never permitted to miss a dance. I don't believe there were over half a dozen such, while the ratio of unattached males was about six or eight to one of the ladies. The orchestra on this occasion

was composed of first and second violins and a guitar, the latter instrument being played by Charles H. Crosthwaite.

A few weeks later another "hop" was given, and Crosthwaite also played on this occasion. I noticed that he was somewhat under the influence of liquor at this time but as he was able to play, I gave the matter no further thought. The next morning on arising, I discovered Crosthwaite in the office of the Crawford House, seated on a sofa near the stove. The morning was cold and snappy, and I took a position close to the stove to warm up. This part of the hotel was but a shell, and the bedrooms were almost like refrigerators. A number of the hotel patrons were in the habit of slipping on shirt and trousers, then going to the office to finish dressing beside the roaring fire landlord E. L. Crawford always had going. I had scarcely begun to thaw out when the door of a bedroom opening into the office, creaked on its hinges. A moment later a scantily attired guest emerged—coat, vest, tie and collar in one hand, and shoes, sox and garters in the other. Sauntering over to a chair beside the stove to finish his toilet, he was about to seat himself, when Crosthwaite roused up and spoke at once:

"Stranger, step right in to breakfast."

The stranger instead, placed his shoes and sox on the floor, then turning towards Crosthwaite spied him holding a dangerous looking six-shooter in his hands. He also noticed Crosthwaite's condition, and in a mild way thought to caution him about handling the gun.

"Pardon me, sir, but isn't that gun loaded? You should be more careful."

"You're damn right it is," answered Crosthwaite, still keeping the gun trained on the guest. "Step right in to breakfast."

The guest, I think, was a mining expert, who had visited camp in the interest of some of the parties in the suit between the Eureka and Carbonate King-Nest Egg. He needed no further "coaxing." About three steps took him to the dining room door; the knob turned quickly and he swung the door open far enough to step inside and quickly close it. Crosthwaite grinned as he stuck the gun back in his pocket. I followed inside the dining room, which was filled with miners at breakfast. They were about as badly astonished at seeing a barefooted, half-dressed gent enter as he was himself. The proprietor happened to be close by, and he was apprised of the happening. Going into the office, he found Crosthwaite again fondling the gun. Stirring up the fire and getting it going good, Crawford was wondering how he could get hold of the gun without rousing its owner's suspicions. About that time some dog barked at the rear of the hotel. Crawford approached Charley. "Say, loan me your gun quick, I want to kill that dog." Crosth-

waite handed the gun over and Crawford quickly disappeared. Going to the rear of the hotel he shot away every load, then returned to the office to hand the gun over to its owner, first having taken the precaution of removing the cylinder from the weapon before returning it, and cautioning the owner to keep it in his pocket. Crosthwaite, however, discovered the trick which had been played on him, and threatened to go home and get his Winchester and come back and "clean out the house." Crawford argued with him, and in a short time the warmth of the fire, together with the liquor he had imbibed, produced a drowsiness that Crosthwaite could not resist and he went to sleep. He was carried to a vacant room and slept off the effects of his spree. A few years later, while in a drunken state, he killed a miner in the vicinity of Ouray and was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Colorado penitentiary.
