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With the Ute Peace Delegation of 1863, Across the Plains and at Conejos

FINIS E. DOWNING*

My father, Nathan Hall Downing, obtained a good education from Memphis College, at Memphis, Missouri, and became a Cumberland Presbyterian minister. While visiting his uncle, Rice Downing, near Booneville, Missouri, and while conducting a revival, he met my mother, who was Eliza Jane Head. Her father was a friend and associate of the great Daniel Boone and settled in Howard County, Missouri, in the days of Indian wars and builded Fort Head, just across the river from Booneville. My mother, Eliza Jane Head, was born there and was the first white child born in Howard County, Missouri. Her mother's maiden name was Heard and she was from an aristocratic family, who strongly opposed her marriage to my father, because he was a poor preacher. My father and mother married without her family's consent and she was disinherited by her family.

In 1842 my father and mother came from Missouri and settled here in Virginia, Illinois. I was born here August 24, 1846. My father was a wonderful and powerful preacher. He was minister in charge when the first Cumberland Presbyterian Church was builded here, and the main founder and builder of Union College, a Cumberland Presbyterian School, established here in Virginia in 1853. Before my father died he moved to a farm one and one-half miles south of Virginia, Illinois. I was six years old when he died and mother was left with us children in poor financial condition. Her health was poor, but she was a brave, loving mother and never faltered in her devotion to her family.

[Then follows some account of the part taken in the Civil War by his older brother and his cousins.] The brother died April 10,

*Mr. Downing was born in Virginia, Illinois, August 24, 1846. He became a merchant, newspaper man and lawyer. For over twenty years he published the *Virginia Inquirer*. He served in the Illinois legislature in the early '90s and in Congress in the late '90s.

The experiences recounted here occurred when Mr. Downing was but sixteen years old. He wrote this story when he was eighty-seven, but his trip across the plains and his brief months in Colorado had left such a deep impression upon him that he was able to describe them with fidelity.

This article was submitted by Mrs. Frederick H. Bullen of Pueblo, who procured it from Mrs. C. W. Crews of the same city. Mr. Downing was an uncle of Mrs. Crews.—Ed.

1863, and the body was brought home. Just as the metallic coffin was being opened, the stage coach stopped in front of our home and Uncle Lafayette Head (mother's only brother) and his secretary, W. J. Godfrey, got out and made themselves known. Mother had not seen her brother since he was seventeen years old, when he ran away from home because his folks objected to his marrying a girl still younger than he, the objection being by both families that they were too young. He had enlisted in the United States Army to fight the Mexican War and he had become a Major in the United States Army and at the close of that war was commanding officer at Santa Fe., New Mexico. After he left the army he settled there and married a wealthy Spanish widow with one child and he finally settled at Conejos, Colorado. He became first Lieutenant Governor of Colorado and in 1863 was U. S. Government Agent for the Ute Indians and had been in Washington, D. C., with thirteen Indian chiefs, negotiating a treaty with the Indians.

Upon his return trip he had gotten off the train at Jacksonville, Illinois, and came to see mother. His coming marked another epoch in our lives. Mother's health had made her a nervous wreck and Uncle Lafayette, as we knew him, was a warm-hearted real man and he determined that he would take mother and me and sister Lucy home with him and he did so.

About May 14, 1863, we went by Wabash Railroad to St. Joseph, Missouri, then a starting point for western immigration. I was at that time sixteen years old, a tall, slim country boy. By my appearance I must have conveyed the idea that I was inclined to consumption. It was whispered among friends who knew of my father's death from lung trouble, that I was likely to go the same way. In disposition I was along the same lines I am said to be now, headstrong, and about as determined to have my own way, and as some of father's preacher friends said, "Hell-bent," for my conduct did not show that I was religiously inclined. But I adored and loved my mother and she was about the only one who had any control over me. Uncle Lafayette Head seemed to read my disposition fairly well and humored my every whim, so in a short time I was fitted out in western style of those war days. I wore high cavalry boots, the legs came up above my knees and a flap tied above the knees and with my other clothes to match and a broadbrim hat and a U. S. Government belt, containing cartridge box and two navy six shooters and a jewel-handled bowie knife, you can imagine what a "swath I cut."

Uncle Lafayette being in command of the outfit and since I was his nephew, it gave me prestige and privileges galore, and I was a happy-go-lucky boy. Our outfit was composed of three companies of First Colorado Cavalry, with a Major Downing of New

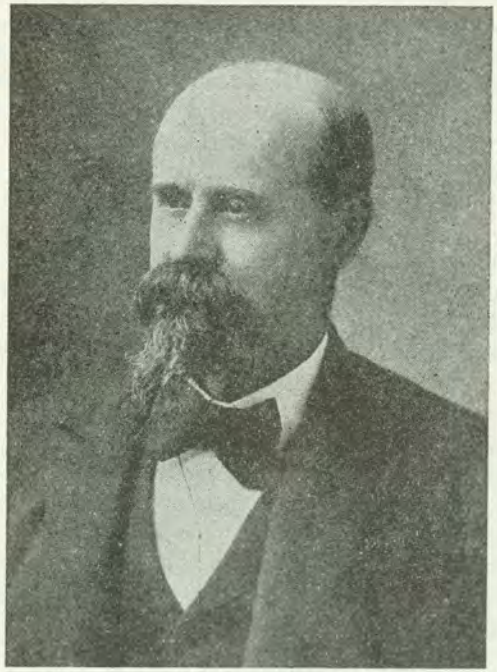
York in military command and Captain Bonesteel and Captain Sanborn in command of two companies and a first lieutenant, whose name I am not sure of, in command of the other companies and about two hundred civilians, made the number of our party about five hundred. The Civil War was in full swing and Missouri was a hot-bed of Rebel guerrilla warfare, and the whole country was practically under martial law and news of raids and small battles was common.

Then the thirteen Ute Indian chiefs who had been taken to Washington, D. C., for treaty negotiations had to be constantly guarded, as they were at war with all the prairie tribes known as Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Arapahoe and other tribes and danger seemed to be just around the corner everywhere. I was trusted with the pass-words and signs and being an early riser, I was Johnnie on the spot at seeing and getting places. Among the sights was a big Mississippi steamboat loaded with a tribe of Indians, from some of the southern states, which the U. S. Government was taking to the Indian Territory in an effort to civilize them. I had never been on a big boat, and the sight of this one thrilled me and I determined to look it over, and I had to do it in a hurry, for their time was an hour and a half and I had no time to seek a permit to go on board.

I had seen the boat land and saw the boat captain and mates take a cab for going up town. I knew the soldier sentinel who guarded the gangway, so I approached him, offered him a fine cigar I had gotten in some way, and he said, "Say boy, my orders are very strict not to let anyone on this boat without a pass, but I tell you what you do. There are several people coming here soon and you drop in among them and I won't see you and then you can hurry through seeing the sights and get off as soon as you can. They'll court martial me if they find you on without a pass."

I was right in the crowd when the time came and made a quick trip over the boat. There were Indians aplenty, some strutting around in feathers, and on one deck there were a lot lying around with blankets and appeared to be sick. I took it all in and enjoyed it, but in about ten days the caravan pulled stakes and we were on our way to cross the plains. I drove the lead team of the van, which was a fine team of American horses which Uncle Lafayette was taking back for his carriage team and it was a great team. The cavalry soldiers rode single file on each side of the vehicles, making a "V" shape at front and behind. That was to guard against surprise attacks from all sides against the Indian chiefs and the rich stores of provisions carried for food, as well as a large amount of money, for in those days all carried their fortune with them.

At Washington, D. C., Uncle Lafayette had been supplied with sufficient money for all expenses, etc., and at the time he and his secretary visited our home they both looked humpbacked by reason of having thousands of dollars in greenbacks, in the original sheet form, strapped around their backs. When the caravan started, mother was put in charge of the largest amount of the money, paying it out on orders from Uncle Lafayette. The



FINIS E. DOWNING
(while in Congress)

caravan as it moved along the highway with all the precision of military movements, was a picture that has never faded from my memory. My vehicle was the flag bearer and I was called the color bearer. Usually a soldier or an Indian chief sat beside me. The Indian chiefs were in separate vehicles but they liked to get up in front and ride with me, and they took turn-about. Two of them could talk a little English and they used sign language, which I soon learned, and by it, it is astonishing how well you can understand.

These Ute Indian chiefs were wonderful fellows, quick to learn and understand and they were grateful and kind to those they reposed confidence in, but as sullen and hard as flint when

they were suspicious or felt that someone was wronging them. I learned a lot from them and it may be their rugged friendship more than once saved my life, for those were the days when desperadoes were on the rampage, and in and near Conejos where Uncle's home was, there were between 50 and 60 persons killed from July to November, although it was constantly guarded by from 500 to 1,000 soldiers. I was roving around fishing and hunting and although others were killed from ambush near me, I was never harmed.

But, let us go back to our trip across the plains. On the second day after we left St. Joseph, Missouri, at noon, I was taken violently ill. My first bad spell occurred at a spring where we were watering the horses, and I got dizzy and fell in the spring branch. I was helped out by a soldier and taken to camp. The doctor examined me and said, "This is serious," and asked where I had been to catch the small-pox. I then first told of my visit to the steamboat and the sick looking Indians. "Yes," the doctor said, "that's where you got it and it's likely the worst form of small-pox and the whole caravan is liable to take it from you. So, I was quarantined and all were very much alarmed about it. Mother was wild about me and when they talked of leaving me in the hospital until I recovered, if I ever did, and taking the stagecoach until I overtook the caravan, or to Denver, mother declared she would not leave me, and there we were.

Uncle Lafayette said, "Wait until morning and by then the doctor can tell, for that steamboat captain had an old friend who lunched with him and said that some of his Indians had the measles, but said nothing about small-pox." So I did not die that night, though I came near it, and the next morning the Doctor said it was not small-pox but big red measles, so I was placed in the ambulance with mother and everyone that could minister to me and I proved a husky patient. I was out on time with an appetite that only convalescent sick can develop and say, things did taste so good. The Indians brought me antelope chops, which they said were good for those recovering from measles. The buffalo hunters brought buffalo humps, the choicest of the meat, and the Irish female cook that Uncle had requisitioned from New York made the biscuits and gravy, etc., and I want to tell you I was soon about the heartiest buck in the caravan, and how I enjoyed it. Never again was I called spindling or consumptive, for I was strong and up and coming from that time on. Today as I look back over my long life I attribute that Colorado trip, with all its western trials, as the health builder which has caused me to live and enjoy the good health I have. Bless the Lord, for He has

caused me to know the truth of that 23rd Psalm, which I love so much.

It was in the month of June that our caravan arrived near Julesburg. We had heard, by special scout messenger, that the Prairie Indians were gathering near Julesburg, determined that they would have what was called a pow-wow between them and the thirteen Ute Indian chiefs we had with us. The news sent a thrill of wild west Indian excitement through the veteran portion of our caravan and there were a lot of them with us. In fact the First Colorado Cavalry was noted for its soldier Indian fighters. Many of them had several notches on their guns, indicating the number of Indian scalps they had taken in battles with Indians. They had tasted blood, as it were, and the silent thought of a battle likely to come on by this meeting was in their minds.

My Uncle Lafayette was up to date in all kinds of Indian wars and keenly felt the danger of this meeting of Indians. He knew that only a few months previous to this Washington, D. C., trip with these Ute chiefs, the Utes had made a raid upon these Prairie Indians and had licked them badly. They had captured a lot of them for servants and killed others by the wholesale. It was thought that the Prairie Indians would try to capture and hold these Ute chiefs until the prisoners were delivered. Anyway the situation was serious and the old timers felt it strongly. Everybody was worked up to a high pitch, for a fight almost surely meant a massacre for our caravan. Julesburg was so situated that any attempt to go around it by another road was sure to be fatal. Our main hope was that these Indians would be slow to start a fight with the United States. So on we went for Julesburg. The three companies of Cavalry formed two abreast in close formation on each side of the vehicles before and behind. The Ute Indian chiefs were stripped of every sort of arms to prevent them from an attempt to fight and bring on the conflict. Every soldier and civilian was armed to the teeth and they tightened their belts for whatever might happen. I had a double barrelled shotgun, loaded with buck-shot and two navy revolvers of large Colt kind, used by cavalry, and two men, each with arms, one behind and one by my side. Mine was the foremost or leading vehicle. Someone suggested that an old and experienced man should be put in my place, but that suggestion was waived aside by my Uncle and Major Downing, who was in command, by saying, "He will obey orders and is as dead shot as anybody." That thrilled me to the bone.

The key soldier in front was a former German soldier, six feet eight inches tall. He was slim, but weighed about 225 pounds, an expert and an instructor in the use of saber and guns. He

carried a saber of the largest size, together with other arms, and from his training, knew nothing that could stop him from obeying commands. We were next to him. So we approached and our first sight of Julesburg was from a hill top, about one-half mile away. Such a sight but few have ever seen. There were Indians by the thousands, thick as bees in a hive, estimated then at 10,000. (Sister Lucy, in talking of it afterwards, laughingly said I counted them twice.) Anyway there were enough to annihilate our caravan, and into that vortex of bloodthirsty Indians our caravan went. For the first 200 yards our guards were able to slowly force their way through the bold, jeering and taunting Indians, who seemed anxious for a fight. We reached a point where the principal Indian chief in command of the Prairie Indians was, and when we did not stop at his command to halt, he sprang forward and grasped the ring of the bridle bit of the key soldier's horse and stopped him. The key soldier had orders to cut his way through if necessary, and as quick as lightning he started to swing his saber, but the order to halt from Major Downing stopped its descent. My Uncle Lafayette appeared, springing to the side of the Indian chief, and began to talk in a language that the chief understood and he let go of the key horse and just about that time something happened. I never knew just exactly what it was, but some said that Uncle Lafe threw a fresh bear skin under his horses and the smell of that skin sent the Indians panic-stricken to the horses. Maybe it was that, but I have ever felt that it was God's answer to my mother's prayer that saved us. The horses became unmanageable and plunged forward and the Indians separated sufficiently to let us through and the whole caravan followed. The move evidently surprised the Prairie Indians and caused confusion among them. Some of them tried to follow and overtake us, but the cavalry deployed and kept the way clear and for twelve miles we went as fast as possible to a horse-shoe bend in the Platte River, where, with the river on three sides of us, we corralled the cavalrymen and were ready for a real fight.

The Prairie Indians came within about a mile of us, and stopped and camped there, as our guard line extended that far back. That evening, under the night cover, a scout was dispatched for reinforcements. All that night our camp expected a night attack by the Prairie Indians and we laid with our arms ready for whatever happened.

They whooped and hollered their mourning chants for their dead the Utes had killed, and I guess they would have annihilated all of us if it had not been for the horseshoe bend in the Platte River which made us hold the vantage ground. We were all mighty glad when daylight came, as there had been no sleeping

done by our crowd, and about 3 A. M. we saw the dust rising from the rushing reenforcements, about 150 strong, and the Indians knew what it meant and began scattering.

We hustled out and traveled about 20 miles to another horseshoe bend in the Platte River, where we had a quiet night's rest, but our additional army escort did not leave us until we camped within a few miles of Denver.

At that camp the Ute war chief, Shavanah, gave me the sign that he wanted some fresh antelope meat and he slipped out of camp with his bow and arrows and I with the revolvers and shotgun. He had spotted some antelope about a mile from camp and we made a detour and got where the wind blew toward us, so that they could not wind us. He crawled on all fours until he got a good shot and wounded one of the antelope. We kept following it until the first thing we knew, we were about four and one-half miles from camp. We were missed at camp and a searching squad was sent out to look for us, for we were in a hostile Indian country and nothing would have suited them better than taking a "pot-shot" at the Ute war chief and maybe at me. Anyway here came the rescue squad with Captain Sanborn in command, and after we had gotten the proper "bawling out," the war chief made signs to borrow the Captain's horse to run down the wounded antelope so that he could shoot it with his bow and arrow.

The Captain very reluctantly consented to the arrangement, as I insisted we needed the antelope meat. The horse was stripped of all but its bridle and the chief leaped upon it with his bow and arrows. The horse was a beautiful buckskin color and noted for his fast running. It was quite a sight to see the Indian on that horse running at full speed until he was near the antelope and then, at top speed, he shot an arrow clear through the vitals of the antelope and into the ground on the other side of it. The antelope dropped and in a short time we were back at camp, getting a lot of scolding, but a hug from mother and a wink from Uncle Lafayette. We had made a bad break in discipline but it was worth it, and it all remains as a bright spot in my memory.

We stopped at Camp Weld near Denver for about ten days. Denver was in its infancy at that time and a wild and wooly west prevailed in the very atmosphere. Gambling houses and saloons were thick and ran wide open. One day I was with a squad of soldiers, out shooting prairie dogs, about one mile and one-half out of town, where Colfax Avenue now is, and we came upon a young Mr. Clark, a civil engineer, who was making a survey. We all thought he was joking when he told us he was platting an addition to Denver. Lieut. Chase asked him who was fool enough

to lay out an addition away out there. He was told it was for his uncle, who was Postmaster of Denver at that time. The soldiers all laughed and told them they understood that his uncle did not mean anything serious about the city addition. He had just had it done to keep young Clark from thinking that he was sponging his board. This incident indicates how badly mistaken the ideas of the public were as to the giant growth of Denver. The prairie dog addition, platted by Clark, soon became a center of population.

After remaining at Camp Weld for about ten days we went on to Manitou and Colorado City and there we stopped four or five days. There were no buildings at Manitou then and the springs were open and they bubbled up from a hole in the rocks about five feet deep and two feet across. The bottom was full of Indian relics placed there as an offering from Indians to their Deity for the wonderful curative qualities of the water.

Our next camp was at Pueblo. At that time there were only two or three frame shacks. One was the hotel, built against the rocks, so that the second story had a landing on top of the rock. At Pueblo we had to ford the Arkansas River and if you happened to get there just after a rain up in the mountains, you had to wait a few hours for it to run down. We got there and forded the river and camped in the bottom across the river. They had a ramshackle foot bridge across the river and there was a small trading post there. Whiskey could be obtained in trade or for cash. Some of our fellows got drunk and nearly tore up the town.

We crossed the mountains over the Sangre de Cristo pass and camped near the summit. As we were in the Ute Indian territory and out of danger from the Prairie Indians, our Indian chief was permitted to go hunting. I went with the head chief and he brought in a fine black-tailed deer. We got some mountain pheasants and I enjoyed them very much. Fort Garland, in the San Luis Valley, was our next camp. Here the families of the chiefs met them and Oh, such a greeting. Uncle Lafayette's wife came to meet him and everything was lovely. The "Goose hung high." We had wild timber ducks and geese, venison, bear, elk, quail, mountain trout to eat. Do you wonder that I loved that country?

Uncle's wife was a full-blooded Spanish woman, large and portly and used to having her own way. She was very kind to me but as to mother, I sensed trouble from the start. I knew my mother would not obey orders from anyone, and it proved that I was right, for friction soon developed between them.

I had everything that I wanted. I hunted, fished and had the time of my life. I made a trip back to Denver with Uncle's secre-

tary, M. J. Godfrey, in charge. They had ten big government wagons with three yoke of oxen to each wagon, driven by a Mexican. It was some fun but lots of work. I was the Gentleman and we got through nicely. Some of the Mexicans got sick and I was chief doctor and nurse. I got along fine as I enforced orders with a revolver and usually had something good to eat. The prescriptions were mostly for wine, whiskey and water-melons, all easy to take and effective.

We had to wait in Denver several days for the Indians' goods that were promised under the Washington treaty. When we got all loaded up and ready for the home trail, one of those ox teams hitched to a big government wagon, loaded to the guards, gave us a problem to solve. There was a new drugstore, a frame on a block foundation, just opened for business on the corner. As the ox team swung into the main street, the oxen not being city broke, got scared at something and ran the wagon against the drug store and down it went, off the blocks, and oh, such a crash of bottles and glass you have never heard. Out came the wild-eyed proprietors and we nearly had to shoot them to keep them from licking us. The U. S. Government was to pay the damages and we soon got matters quieted down and started out for home. That trip was an eye-opener for me in several ways. As we went to Denver, we were caught right at the top of the mountains in one of the worst electrical, thunder and rain storms I have ever experienced. It was about five o'clock in the evening when it began and we struck camp stakes immediately. We got up the tent, turned the oxen loose in a canon and by then the storm was going full blast. Talk about your thunder and lightning! The crashes shook the mountain top and the lightning was almost a continual beam of light. It ran around the wagon tires, up and down gun barrels and O my God it was terrible.

The Mexicans were wild with fright. They screamed and prayed and crossed themselves and I was nearly scared to death, but we passed safely through it all. About 10 o'clock that night it stopped and the moon and stars never shown brighter or looked so good to me. I had always been afraid of storms and lightning and it was about the only thing my mother was afraid of. It used to be that when she saw a storm coming she would bar the doors and put us children in a feather bed and often prayed beside the bed. I was scared silly at a storm, but that mountain storm experience cured me of it all. Since then nothing in the way of thunder and lightning has caused me to be afraid. In fact, if it is anything like normal, I like to see the lightning play and hear the thunder roar, and what a relief it has been to me not to feel the terror that I had in my boyhood.

As we came back with heavily loaded wagons, it was necessary, in the mountains and foothills, to double up teams to pull the wagons up. Sometimes we had twenty-five yoke of oxen hitched to one load. The manner of starting them was to turn the head oxen down the hill after they were hitched up and as they got into line, apply the whip, and yell and up the mountain we went with the heavy load. But we got caught in a mountain snow storm and as we were trying to get a load of barrel sugar up the hill, one of the Mexican drivers on the lower side broke his whip, and as the snow kept the driver on the opposite side from seeing the trouble, he kept on lashing them on his side. This caused the head team to run down the hill and the wagon was upset on the mountain side, and the barrels of sugar rolled down the mountain side, struck rock and bursted the staves and sugar flew high in the air, a total loss.

This accident caused us to spend the night out of doors in a snow storm. We started a fire and I wrapped in buffalo robes and blankets and went to sleep too near the fire. When I woke up my robes and blankets were ruined, together with one of my pants legs, by fire. I have always very much regretted the loss of the robe and blanket, as the robe was a present to me by the head Ute chief and was the largest and best I have ever seen, and the blanket was a present to me from the German soldier, the key man of the Julesburg Indian experience. He said it was a memento for my nerve and dare-devil driving through that Indian inferno, which aided much to save our hides.

Now I must tell you something about the distribution to the Ute Indians of the goods we had hauled from Denver. All of the Indians of the Ute tribe assembled at Conejos, Uncle's home, to receive their share. The sight of that throng of Indians reminded me of the Julesburg affair, for there were, as I remember, over five thousand of them. They sat, or stood, in rows around the goods and each received his allotment. Hon. George Nicolay, President Lincoln's secretary, bossed the distribution. One regiment of cavalry guarded against any trouble that might arise and during all the time we were at Conejos there were never less than 500 soldiers to preserve peace. It was a town of 'dobe houses. Uncle's was the largest and best, built like a fort around a square plat of 200 feet, with solid walls outside, windows and doors all inside the square. A look-out was two stories up. Mother and sister were the only white women there. There were about three hundred Mexicans, 500 soldiers and some Jew merchant traders, for whom I clerked. Mother gained in health, but was displeased with the loose morals of the Mexicans and the break came between her and Uncle's wife, upon Mother's aiding the escape of a cap-

tive Navaho Indian girl, who was held in punitive slavery during the day working hours and locked up at night. She was owned by my Aunt, but worked under tyrannical Mexican bosses and was often beaten severely.

Mother hated the system and the cries of the poor girl when beaten with rawhide whip until she was bleeding and bruised was more than Mother could stand. She planned a prison delivery and with her own hand turned the key and provided the horse that carried the Indian girl back to her people. The horse was mysteriously returned in a few days, with a note of thanks crudely written, tied to the mane of the horse. This opened the row good and plenty and mother determined to return to Illinois. All necessary arrangements for the trip were made by my Uncle Lafe. I was very much opposed to coming back, as I liked the country and was much attached to my dear old Uncle Lafe, who had arranged for my education at a Santa Fe college. But I was for Mother against everything and her pleas always won with me. On the 12th of November, 1863, we started home in a sort of carriage bus to Denver. Here we had the option of taking the Wells-Fargo coach, or make private transportation arrangements. After getting to Denver, it was decided that the trip by stage coach would be too rough for mother, so a large freight wagon was fitted up as a room. A foot of sheep skins were placed in the bottom and six inches of sheep skins lined the sides, ends and top. When it was completed with a small stove, it was very comfortable. Six fine mules were hitched to it.

The boss of the freight company was in charge as driver and conductor. A fine saddle mule was led by the side of the wheel team, all saddled and ready for the boss to ride, when necessary to look after a long train of freighters. I rode beside the boss and drove the team when he was otherwise engaged. We all got along nicely, for the boss was a fine man and a veteran plainsman and his management of the train was good. We trotted along and made good time until we got within seventeen miles of Fort Kearny, Nebraska. There a real western blizzard sent the mercury below zero and such a whirlwind of snow I have never experienced before or since. It was blinding and fierce and bitter cold. The road was covered with snow and the only guide posts we had were the Western Union telegraph poles, about 200 feet apart, and right there I learned to love a mule. The boss provided us with a 200-foot rope, made from hair lariat. It was tied together and passed through the ring in the top of the mules' bridles. One end was tied to my ankle and the other was tied to the boss' ankle and he would find the way from one telegraph pole to another. The whole train was roped together, so that when the boss pulled

the rope, tied to my ankle, I would start and go to the pole where the boss was and there wait until he got to the next pole, etc. The mules soon got to know when the rope was pulled three times, it meant go, and they moved forward without urge. One pull of the rope meant that he had missed the pole and would have to come back and start over. Two pulls meant that he had gotten mixed a little, and three pulls to come on.

That evening, about seven P. M., we got to Dobbytown, quite a village with saloons and stores of the frontier type, as near Fort Kearny as the law permitted, and it was a tough place. We were there two days, and when the first stage coach came through, we again started out, and on the 24th day of December, 1863, landed at Uncle David R. Downing's, safe and sound and well. We were given a welcome of real worth, for which my heart has ever since been filled with gratitude and love.

Early History of San Juan County

RAY H. COOPER*

In 1870 Dempsey Reese, Miles T. Johnson, Adnah French and Thomas Blair outfitted in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and came to San Juan County. They were the first lode prospectors, the Baker parties of 1860-61 having devoted all their efforts to search for placer gold. There are no records to show that they made any locations during 1871, but the next year they returned with the addition of William Mulholland and Francis M. Snowden.

What is now known as Arastra Gulch was the center of the activities. It was originally called French Gulch, after Abner and Adnah French of the original party. In 1871 a cabin was built at the mouth of the gulch and was occupied by Miles T. Johnson, who kept a book for recording claims.

This book is now a part of the permanent records of this county and although soiled and worn is quite legible. It was originally taken to Conejos in the San Luis Valley and there transcribed and became a part of Conejos County records. Later it was transferred to Howardsville and again transcribed and became a part of the permanent records of what was then La Plata County, with Howardsville as the county seat. J. H. Cook was selected as deputy recorder, serving as such in conjunction with Johnson.

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*Mr. Cooper went to Silverton in 1896 and almost immediately he and his father began gathering historical material upon the region. His history of San Juan County was published serially in the *Silverton Standard and the Miner*, March to May, 1945. He lives in Silverton today.—Ed.

No one wintered in San Juan County in 1870, 1871, or 1872. In the spring each year when the miners returned, they elected some one to serve in the capacity of recorder, with remuneration of one dollar for each claim recorded. Each fall the book was taken to Conejos and copied into the records of that county. Most of the prospectors wintered in Del Norte and Saguache during the winter of 1871. Del Norte at that time was known as Loma and was on the opposite side of the river from the present town of Del Norte.

LITTLE GIANT GOLD LODE

I, the undersigned hereby in accordance with laws of Congress and in conformity to the Local Laws of the Territory of Colorado and the mining rules established by the miners of this the Los Animas District locate on this the Little Gold Lode 400 feet by 200 by discovery and 200 by preemption running 400 feet North West from this monument or from the center of this Gulch or Creek together with all dips, spurs and angles pertaining thereto.

Recorded July 24, 1871.

(Signed) MILES T. JOHNSON.

Miles T. Johnson,
Dist. Recorder.

The foregoing is an exact and true copy of the original location of the first ground of any description in the present confines of San Juan County, and strange to say, the said lode produced gold ore in such quantities as to warrant the same being packed to Pueblo on burros and leave a nice profit to its owner. Samples of the ore showed from 400 to 900 ounces of gold per ton. There were about 40 or 50 prospectors in the county in 1871 and many locations were made, some 17 extensions being made on this vein. Part of the ground originally claimed is now owned by the Silver Lake Mines. Early stories tell that $65,000 was taken while sinking a 60-foot shaft on the property.

Whether any locations were recorded directly at Conejos in 1870 our county records do not show, but at least the first deed given to any property was made before any known records show the location of the property sold.

On April 26, 1871, for and in consideration of the sum of $500, Miles T. Johnson sold to Wm. A. Pile by quit claim deed an undivided one-half interest in and to the Little Giant Lode, although the location of said lode was not recorded until July 24, 1871.

Among those who claimed and located various extensions of the Little Giant Lode during the year 1871 were George W. Howard, J. H. Cook, D. Reese, Thomas Blair, Wm. Mulholland, A. French, Weston Fuller, James Brady, Joshua S. Fuller, Henry Lefertz, Geo. U. Ingersoll, R. J. McNutt, J. C. Dunn, Henry Haupt, Ed L. Wilkinson and A. W. Richardson. Of the aforesaid, several

spent the remainder of their lives here and became quite noted locally for later interesting events, some of which here follow.

George Howard was the original locator of the Sunnyside Mine, R. J. McNutt the original locator of the Washington, and Howard finally combined their interests, each taking a half interest in the two claims. They also combined their finances, whereupon it was found that Howard had a ten-dollar bill and McNutt was broke. Howard, in a spirit of generosity, tore the bill in two pieces, giving one to McNutt with the remark, "Now we are even."

Reese, Blair and Mulholland were original owners of part of the town of Silverton, and lived here over forty years. Reese and Mulholland finally died here. The A. French mentioned in the list of Little Giant locators was the same Adnah French, who was one of the four founders of St. Charles (now Denver) in 1858.

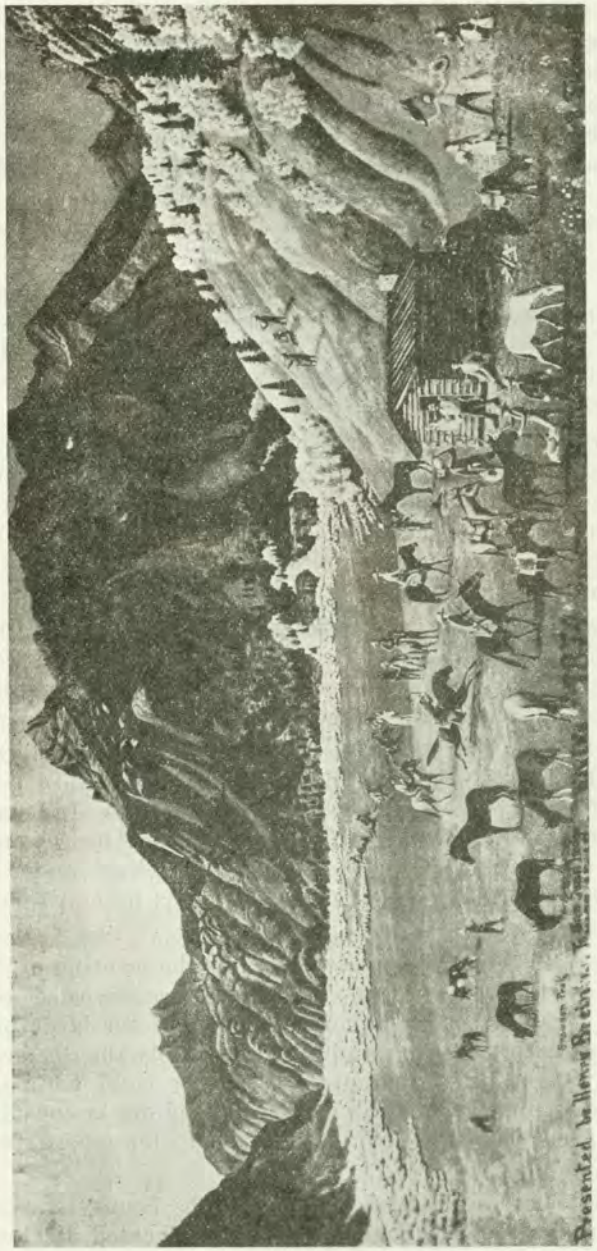
The first milling done in the county was by means of an arrastra constructed in the gulch of that name and about one-half mile up the gulch from Animas River. The power, of course, was the old faithful mule. Traces of this arrastra still remain (1939) near the creek and almost directly below the Tom Blair first cabin in the county.

Las Animas Mining District was created by a vote of the miners June 15, 1871, and Miles T. Johnson was elected as District Recorder. Eureka District was created in a like manner on August 16, 1871, with James Beaton as its District Recorder.

Columbus W. Burris was elected in 1870 as the first District Judge of the Fourth Judicial District, of which San Juan was a portion. At that time there were but four State Judicial Districts in Colorado. He was succeeded in 1870 by Thomas M. Bowen. No records can be found of any proceedings under Judge Burris, although it is known that he held court here at some time during his term of office.

The year 1873 was the banner year for the locating of mining claims. More than three thousand claims were recorded and the population grew by several hundred. Many of the large producers were located in that year and in 1872, notably the Shenandoah, Sunnyside, Silver Lake, and portions of the Gold King Group. Some of the Shenandoah claims have produced ore in considerable quantities each year since 1875—truly a wonder record for continuous production.

The first mercantile establishment in the county was a combined saloon and general merchandise store located at Howardsville and operated by Henry Gill and G. S. Flagler. This was in 1874 and the postoffice at Howardsville was opened that same fall



BAKER'S PARK (SILVERTON) IN 1874
Snowden Cabin, Sultan Mountain in background. Painting by Emil Fischer in 1875. Presented to the Masonic Lodge at Silverton by Henry Breining.

with W. H. Nichols as postmaster. Mrs. Nichols, Mrs. W. E. Earl, Mrs. John F. (Amanda) Cotton, and Mrs. H. F. Tower were the first women in the county. Mr. Tower erected and operated the first saw mill in the county (location unknown) and his wife was the first white woman to live here. Mrs. Ben Harwood, mother of the present living Mrs. Merrill Doud (Barbara Doud) also came here a few weeks after the above named ladies. Mrs. Doud is the oldest living pioneer of San Juan County—coming here in 1874, a child of two or three years of age, and her husband was the next in age of residence here. Merrill came in 1877 and the two of them are responsible for much of the valuable information contained in this history.

In 1874, La Plata County (of which San Juan was then a part and contained the larger percentage of the population) held its first election. The officers elected were John L. Ufford, Clerk; B. F. Lovett, Treasurer; S. E. Jones, County Judge; J. W. Wallace, Sheriff; J. M. Hanks, Supt. of Schools; Peter Johnson, Assessor; William Munroe, Surveyor; Thomas Pollock, Coroner; Thomas M. Bowen, District Judge; R. J. Carley, T. M. Trippe and Alex Fleming, Commissioners.

The county then embraced the territory which now comprises the counties of La Plata, San Juan, Ouray, part of Dolores and San Miguel, with the county seat at Howardsville. The town was named after Lieutenant George Howard, one of the leaders of the Baker party of 1861. Mr. Howard returned to this section among the first prospectors in '71 or '72, and built the first cabin at Howardsville. The cabin is still standing.

The town of Silverton was incorporated in 1874 and the plat of the original townsite was filed in the office of the county clerk and recorder on September 15th of that year. The second map or plat of a townsite was that of Parrot City and was filed October 7, 1874. The town was located in the La Plata mountains and was a mining camp which existed but a few years. On May 14, 1875, the plat of La Plata City was filed. This "city" was located at the junction of the Animas River and Cinnamon Gulch. Plats of the townships of Eureka, Animas Forks and Le Moyne City were filed here on June 17, 1881, June 21, 1882, and July 18, 1883, respectively. Le Moyne was on the base of Boulder Mountain and extended about four blocks each way from Boulder Creek and at one time boasted of some five or six dwellings, which were built about 500 or 600 feet above where the present road crosses the creek.

In the spring of 1875, Mrs. W. H. Nichols, wife of the postmaster of Howardsville, gave birth to a boy, the first child born

in the county. June 5, 1875, a Mrs. George Webb and her husband were coming here to make their home and when just below timber line on this side of Stony Pass, Mrs. Webb was taken ill and a daughter, the first girl in the county, was born. A shelter of canvas and spruce boughs was hastily erected on the mountain side and became the habitation of the two for several days before they were able to proceed to Silverton.

On December 5, 1875, there was born to Mr. and Mrs. Ben Howard a son, Frank. He was the first white child born in Silverton and lived here during his entire lifetime. The father was quite a noted character in the early life of the county. He was,

THE FIRST COURTHOUSE IN SAN JUAN COUNTY, AT HOWARDSVILLE
(The only courthouse in the western one-third of the state at time of its erection, in 1875. Photograph by C. E. Rathbun.)

without doubt, the strongest and most untiring man at the time of his arrival here, and it is a well authenticated fact that he, for several winters, packed the mail on snowshoes from the Watson cabins at the foot of Grassy Hill to Howardsville and Silverton, at the same time carrying from 50 to 80 pounds of beef on his back to the Highland Mary Mine.

Greene & Co.—after whom Greene Street was named—established the first store in Silverton in 1874. The following year they opened the first smelter in the county, just west of where the cemetery road begins to ascend the hill. A goodly portion of slag is still to be found where the plant formerly stood. This was the first successful water-jacket smelter in Colorado. In 1881 the

machinery was moved to Durango and became the nucleus of the smelter which operated at that point for many years. The machinery was packed on burros from Pueblo, via La Veta Pass, Fort Garland, Del Norte and Cunningham Gulch and was an undertaking of considerable proportion in those days.

In the year 1875 the increase in population was quite considerable and dances in the Snowden cabin were a frequent affair. John F. Cotton, with his violin, and Amanda Cotton, his wife, with her melodeon, constituted the first orchestra. When dances were held elsewhere than at Col. Snowden's place, the melodeon was loaded on a wagon, sled, horse, burro, mule or wheelbarrow and taken to the place of the festivities.

The first school was held on the lower floor of the house now occupied by John C. Foreman (known for many years as the Taft home, on the east side of Reese Street between 14th and 15th). At this time Mrs. Merrill Doud and parents lived on the upper floor of the building. William Munroe, the first county surveyor, also held down the job as the first teacher. No record can be found as to who succeeded him. The next known teachers were James Dyson and his wife, Alice M. Dyson. Later a log school building was built in the block where the present school now stands. This was replaced two or three years later by a two-story, four-room frame building on the same ground and which after many years gave way to the present substantial brick edifice now in use.

A barely passable road from Watson's cabin at Grassy Hill to Howardsville and Silverton, via Stony Pass, was completed in 1875. The grade from the cabins to timberline on this side of the pass was fairly good, but just below timber line was a short steep pitch which often defied brakes. Freighters would cut a fair size spruce tree and tie it on behind their wagon as a hold-back over this pitch. When trees were no longer available, Squire (W. D.) Watson selected a solid stump at the top of the incline and lowered wagons by means of a snubbing rope. The price was $2.50 for about 200 feet, which made it a very profitable enterprise. The summer travel was from five to twenty wagons daily. The freight rate at this time from Del Norte and until the entrance of the railroad into Silverton was $30.00 per ton, bulky items more in proportion to size. From 1874 to 1879, Watson maintained a road house and stopping place for man and beast at the foot of Grassy Hill and did a thriving business, being filled to overflowing nearly every night except during the winter months. Hay was $1.50 per feed.

It was no unusual sight to see from 100 to 150 pack animals turned out for grazing on the slopes of the hills. During summer,

sleeping quarters for the human element were usually all taken by sundown of each day. For several years that was the end of the mail route in winter, except such mail and supplies as were packed over the hill by men on skis. About this time Howardsville was likewise a busy place, boasting of no less than four saloons and the first brewery in the county, operated by Charlie Fisher, who later built and operated the brewery at the lower end of Silverton.

Francis Marion Snowden in 1874 erected the first cabin within what became the present boundaries of Silverton. This cabin was on the lots now occupied by the Miners Union Hospital. However, Thomas Blair had previously built two cabins in what is known as Baker's Park. The facts are that Blair built the first three cabins in the county—the first one in Arastra Gulch about a half-mile from Animas River, the second one just above the present Silverton-Eureka road and about seventy-five feet easterly of the boundaries of the cemetery, and the third one on the ranch taken up and recorded as the Blair Ranch, a portion of which included what is known as Bertramville. It was on this portion of the ranch that the cabin was built, there being a fair-sized spring there at that time.

When the population of southwestern Colorado had grown to such an extent that a court house was deemed a necessity, Howardsville was the center of population and therefore the logical site for the same. Accordingly, a small log building, about sixteen by twenty feet, was erected—and still stands—on the west bank of Cunningham Creek just above where the present bridge spans the stream. This pretentious structure served the entire western slope of Colorado from the northern to the southern boundary and from San Luis Valley to the western line of the state. This vast expanse, including the San Luis Valley, was presided over by Judge Moses Hallett, the first federal judge. The same territory, omitting the San Luis Valley, constituted the Third Judicial District of the state and was under the jurisdiction of Thos. M. Bowden, judge, who had been elected to serve same in 1874. There are no records that show which of the above mentioned judges held the first term of court in the building.

The story is told that Judge Hallett noticed the same faces frequently appeared in the jury box. Finally he asked the sheriff why he so often selected the same men on the jury panel. "The benches are so rough and splintery, Judge, I have to choose only those men who wear leather seats in their trousers," said the sheriff. "Thereby," remarked Judge Hallett, "introducing a qualification for jury service unknown either to the statute or common law."

Augustine Gallet Langford, 1834-1885

GEORGE LANGFORD*

My father, Augustine Gallet Langford, was born 1834 in Westmoreland, a town near Utica, Oneida County, New York. He was the 12th of 13 children of George Langford and Chloe Sweeting. Both of his grandfathers took part in the American Revolutionary War.

In about 1857, Augustine and his older brother, Nathaniel, went to St. Paul, Minnesota, to seek their fortunes in real estate, but that happened to be in a state of collapse when they got there. Their father was cashier of the Oneida State Bank in Utica and Nathaniel had worked in the bank, thereby acquiring some experience in that. Before 1861, he had gone farther west and was traveling about as a national bank examiner.

While in St. Paul, Augustine became acquainted with Col. Daniel Alex Robertson and family. One of the children, Elizabeth Robertson, finally became Mrs. A. G. Langford in 1871. St. Paul as a venture in business was not a success, and so Augustine decided to try his fortune farther west. He went to St. Joseph, Missouri, in January, 1861, and crossed the plains to Denver, Colorado. The letters he wrote from there to his parents, brothers and sisters told much of what was in his mind. The gold rush attracted him, but having little or no capital, he gave up all thought of actual mining and concentrated upon the idea of supplying the needs of others. Apparently he knew little about merchandizing, but had some familiarity with iron. From the very first he was in association with Joseph Marshall, whom he had met in St. Paul. Joseph's brother, William Marshall, married Augustine's sister, Abigail Langford. Augustine and Joseph Marshall started a foundry to make machine parts for equipment used in the gold mines at Central. They soon moved to Central and Augustine managed the foundry and machine shop there. They used all the scrap iron they could get, but it was not enough. Further supplies of scrap and pig iron had to be transported across the plains from St. Joseph, Missouri. This had to be done by wagon; and it was in that period, before a railroad was built and when iron was so difficult to secure, that Joseph Marshall attempted to make it at the place that bears his name. In May, 1933, my friend, Charles H. Hanington, and I went there and examined the little that was left of the furnace. It was a stack made of limestone located near a small stream or ditch which furnished water to turn the wooden

*Mr. Langford now lives at Joliet, Illinois. This story of his father was brought to us by Charles H. Hanington, President of the Colorado Museum of Natural History.—Ed.

water wheel which drove the air bellows. The only iron available was small nodules scattered about on the hillside, containing oxide of iron. For charcoal fuel, some but not many neighboring trees were available. The old casting floor was in somebody's back yard under several feet of dirt. We dug down and found two "pigs," bars of cast iron. The old cannon in the basement of the State Museum, Denver, was cast from this iron. There was an old man at Marshall whom Charles Hanington and I called on. He had worked in the coal mine at Marshall when a boy, and his father was foreman of it. My father, Augustine Langford, was manager of that mine after he married in 1871, and had left Central to live in Denver. I dimly recognized that mine. My father had taken me to see it in 1882. I had passed my sixth birthday and would soon be starting my education at the Broadway School in Denver. This school was not far from our home on 22 South 14th St.

In the same year, my father and mother took me to Central. I have vague recollections of a very rough trip over the mountains in a buckboard wagon. I did not see Central again until 1933, 51 years later, but I remembered some things there. I was only 9½ years old when my father Augustine died very suddenly, December 22, 1885. My mother took us three boys back to her original home in St. Paul, Minn., and I did not see Denver again for 48 years. In all that time there still remained the strong attachment formed between the Langfords and Haningtons at Central before I was born, May 26, 1876, in Denver, and I, the last Langford survivor, still correspond frequently with Charles Hanington and keep informed on his brothers, Harry and Robert.

In May, 1934, my brother Nathaniel and I went to Utica, New York, our first visit to our father's old home. We were always curious to know just why our father favored iron and iron-making as a business. His old letters implied familiarity with the subject. At Westmoreland, near Utica, we found that Augustine's father, George, had been interested in an iron-making establishment there known as the Hecla Furnace. His wife's father, Nathaniel Sweeting, and his own father, George Langford, Sr., had with others built that furnace in about 1801, the first iron-making venture west of the Hudson River. My brother and I found the site near Westmoreland. I went over it very carefully. The Hecla Furnace and the Marshall Furnace near Denver were so much alike that they might both have been built from the same blue-prints. For iron ore, the Hecla Furnace men had to depend upon little lumps of bog iron gathered up wherever it could be found. Iron-making was indeed a laborious process for those who pioneered it. (Means for transport was what ended such undertakings. Until then, iron simply had to be made somehow by those who had to make it or

do without it.) About 100 yards from the old Hecla Furnace ruins we came upon a very small family cemetery, where four large flat headstones were lined up in a row. We read the inscriptions. The graves were those of my father Augustine G. Langford's four grandparents:

George Langford, Abigail Elliott Langford, Nathaniel Sweeting, and Mary Terrell Sweeting.

The cemetery looked unkempt and forgotten. The two men were old American Revolutionary War soldiers, so we notified the D. A. R. in Utica. They placed markers on the graves and put the place in better order.

Dr. W. A. E. deBeque and His Pioneering at the Townsite of De Beque

Mrs. W. A. E. deBeque II*

The town of De Beque, Colorado, was named for its first settler, Dr. W. A. E. deBeque.

An entry in his diary under date of November 15, 1888, reads: "Today we moved into our new home in the town of De Beque—the first family in town and the only one at this date, as well as being the first family settled in this valley between Hog Back and Parachute."

A year or two later there was some local objection to the name and an effort was made to change it to Collbran. A clipping from a Grand Junction newspaper at that time says,

"The *News* notices in the last issue of the *De Beque Era* an announcement on the part of the Board of Trustees that it will, at its next meeting, take action on the proposition to change the name of the town to Collbran. The *News,* having at heart the material good and best interests of our young sister city up the river, sincerely hopes the Board will conclude to dispose of the proposition by indefinitely postponing it. The agitation of the subject has thus far served to bring nothing but ridicule upon the town and make the promoters of the proposed change objects of serious and deprecatory comment by the press of the State. In a recent issue of our contemporary, the *Star* of this city, we observe a communication from a citizen of De Beque, who in glowing terms eulogizes the hardy pioneer who blazed the trails into that section of the country and made it possible for tender-feet to gather in and around that quarter section, which as a town, now bears his name. The eternal

*Mrs. deBeque, daughter-in-law of the pioneering doctor, now lives in Carbondale, Colorado.—Ed.

PIONEERS OF ROAN CREEK
Top row, left to right: F. P. Cannon, G. F. Newton, Thomas King, Alfons Myers, G. P. O. Kimball, and Dr. W. A. E. deBeque. Seated: L. T. Stewart, Robert Eaton, H. M. Van Cleave, J. N. Carr, and C. H. Conwell.

fitness of things demands that the town should retain the name given it by the founders. We doubt very much if Mr. Collbran, under the circumstances, would feel in any degree flattered to be a second-hand father even to a first class town."

The contest was taken to Court, however, and the case decided in favor of the Board of Trustees. This fight over the name for a town in pioneer days was a common occurrence, due perhaps to the fact that it was the only "issue" a town had to fight about. There was similarity too in the method used to settle the issue. Those in favor of retaining the name simply asked for a post office to be established in another location in the newly chosen name. That settled the issue in this case. Collbran is still a town 20 miles from De Beque, and De Beque still bears the name of its first citizen.

Dr. deBeque as he recorded it, "was born at high noon, July 18, 1841, in the old deBeque home called the "Dowery," ten miles below Woodstock, in the province of New Brunswick, Canada." He died at De Beque September 10, 1930. He was the eldest of four brothers and eight sisters born to Enoch Baird deBeque and Mary Moore Porter deBeque. Little seems to be known in the family or recorded of where Dr. deBeque was educated. Some of it may have been acquired. He had a very keen, alert mind, a lifelong habit of reading and re-reading only the best, and was never too old to seek further knowledge. He could speak French and Spanish, and many of his diaries, particularly those written in old Mexico, were in Spanish. He was a graduate of three medical colleges, the last one being Denver University in April, 1882. He writes of having a grade on examinations of 93, the second highest in the class. The exercises, he writes, "took place at the M. E. Church on the corner of Lawrence and 14th Streets."

Dr. deBeque was a Civil War veteran. He was a Quartermaster Sergeant of Co. A, 2nd Maine Cavalry. He was wounded in a skirmish with Confederate troops in a little battle called Yellow Bayou in Western Louisiana in 1864. He writes, "I laid alone in the pine wood from 3 P. M. to 9. A. M. the next day, when I was found by a detachment of Vermont Cavalry and taken to Simsport, where I was put on a hospital boat for New Orleans." The bullet was never removed and he carried it in his knee all his life.

Dr. deBeque's grandfather was George deBeque, who at the age of 19 went to France and fought with Napoleon. He was wounded and received the medal of the Legion of Honor for a special act of great bravery. Soon after the battle of Wagram, he left France and returned to Sugar Island, New Brunswick, where he was married and lived the rest of his life.

Dr. deBeque's great grandfather was John Ludivic deBeque, who was Captain of a company of British soldiers at Ft. Howe, St.

John's, New Brunswick. It is said that cannon were fired at the Fort honoring the birth of his son, George, who was the first child born at the Fort.

No military record happens to be known of Enoch Baird deBeque, but one or more of every other generation have been in military service. In World War I Dr. deBeque's son, Wallace A. E. II was Captain of Co. A, 315th Machine Gun Battalion, A. E. F. and his grandson, Louis Dumont Beerbower, and his nephew, George Robert deBeque, were also officers in military service.

A peculiar fact in relation to the military service in his family is that the same relationship prevailed in both World War I and World War II. His son Wallace and his grandson Dumont were in World War I, and in World War II his younger son, Armand, is now stationed in Germany and his grandson, Wallace A. E. III is a Lt. j. g. in submarine service in the Navy.

After the Civil War, Dr. deBeque was married to Annie Whitwell Dumont, from Haverhill, Maine, in 1886. They had one child, a daughter, Flora Louise, who is now living in Washington, D. C. Flora's mother died when she was a very little girl and she went to live with her Aunt.

Never a strong man but often very sick with many and varied illnesses, Dr. deBeque seemed at all times to be greatly affected by the weather. If the sun was warm and the day was fair there were entries in his diaries like this: "A very beautiful day, one of those perfect days which seem to be one of the peculiar gifts of the Rocky Mountains. The air is so clear that one feels sometimes that he can extend his arms and touch the highest mountain."

In Denver on the first day of the new year 1882, this entry was interesting: "This has been the most extraordinary New Year's Day. It has been too warm for comfort on the streets. Windows up, doors open like a day in mid-June. The ladies made good use of their fans." Or this: "A rainy day, a dull, slow steady rain with a dark and dismal sky. It reminds me of the home of Lady Deadlock in one of Dickens' works."

Again, in 1881 in Fairplay, where he was practicing medicine, he writes, "Wind blowing great guns. This mild Italian climate (?) is more than I can endure"; or another day, "The thermometer registered between 40 and 50 below zero at 7 o'clock"; and a day or two later, "Snow three feet on the level."

The severe climate, the night trips through blizzards often on horseback or in a buggy were too great a strain on his health. He left Fairplay and went to Grand Junction. He described Grand Junction at that time as "a straggled out town of boards, adobe and brick. Its future may be great but its present is not attractive."

Later, irritated by the weather, he wrote, "the wind and dust combined make this Eden-like valley a veritable Hell on earth. It requires sand to endure this infernal dust. Adobe mud is preferable to adobe dust."

His health still poor, he was obliged to sell his drug store and give up his practice in Grand Junction. His friends, Henry Rhone and William Carpenter, urged him to go up Grand river and locate a ranch, go into the cattle business, do lots of riding and be out of doors, and try to build up his health.

On December 23, 1883, in Denver he was married to Marie Therese Bonholzer, a native of Bavaria and a widow. Her family name was Mayer. In April of the following year his real pioneer adventures began. He started out with a party of friends and a pack outfit to explore the country, searching for a suitable ranch for stock. The site he chose was about 3½ miles south of the present town of De Beque. He writes: "We went over to the North side of the river and located my ranch by laying foundation of the house and driving a claim stake. I will call the ranch "Ravensbeque." Several trips were made from Grand Junction to Ravensbeque before he went there to live. Of one he writes, "Started at 6:30 A. M. with two ponies and one mule packed. Got mule in river and nearly drowned him." And another time, "Went up the gulch to explore for a road," and "started this A. M. at 8 o'clock for Grand Junction via my new route over the hills. Made ten miles easy enough. Next five miles somewhat difficult. About 4 P. M. came onto the bluffs north of Grand Junction and saw the river. Attempted to go down gulch but was scared back by a cinnamon bear. Had two horses with me."

In July, 1884, he and his wife with two ponies and two pack mules and one riding mule left Grand Junction for the ranch at Ravensbeque. They camped out in the open or at settler's cabins on this three-day trip. He writes, "We had a hard trip today in the burning sun. Marie nearly played out and I the same." And on the third day, "A march of 12 miles brought us, thank Heaven, to the place known as Ravensbeque."

Here they pitched a tent, planted a garden, dug a well, and began to carve a home out of the wilderness. As so often happens, our hardest adventures linger as our most treasured memories; so it was with this early life at Ravensbeque. All of his life Dr. deBeque told of it again and again.

These lines taken at random from his diaries written at that time give a vivid picture of what his life was in 1884:

"Our garden (except the corn which the mule ate up) looks very well, considering the late date of planting."

"Marie and I picked a lot of chaparell berries and made some sauce, it was very good."

"In the evening put some beans to bake in the ground, a la St. John river."

"Saw a rattle snake today and killed it. Also saw a mountain lion about 300 yards away, but he ran from me, which saved me the trouble of running from him, as I was wholly unarmed."

"Ralph Ostrom came out with some venison, which comes very apropos as we were out of meat."

"Marie and I saw a puma come down over the cliff of rocks near the corral and cross to the mesa back of the well."

"Had a fearful adventure with the black mare, Nita. She bucked with me suddenly while I was driving a heifer, threw me and ran away. McWilliams caught her and I tried her again. She bucked me again but I stayed there till she threw herself."

"Found some cottonwood trees—cut them and dragged them to the river, where I made a 'catamoran.' Navigated it down the river to Ravensbeque."

"I took Marie across the river on a catamoran. It was quite a venture for a lady, but she sat still and I navigated in fine style."

"Up at five o'clock, milked the cows and rode 12 miles to Tom King's. Returned with 200 pounds of vegetables packed on a mule."

On October 14th he writes of riding home from Grand Junction through a hard rain and "I brought my guitar with me and had a hard time keeping it dry."

"Marie and I went across the river on my 'cat' and made a visit to Mr. Dixon and spent half an hour at Fred Hinton's. In the evening I studied French."

With winter closing in, work was pushed on a log cabin. Some of the effort that went into it is described in these entries of November, 1884. "We ferried our load across the river and Frank drove the team and empty wagon to the ford at Roan Creek. Finally I have succeeded in getting some windows and lumber to help in finishing our proposed cottage, which will be of a humble character."

Next day. "Frank hauled the house logs with the mule, while Lunt and I sawed and split the house covering. Some of the roof timbers for the cabin were floated down the river and caught at Ravensbeque."

"Dec. 16. Worked on chimney for the house."

"Dec. 21. Flooring brought across on raft."

"Dec. 24. Worked all afternoon putting dirt on roof."

Christmas Day, 1884: "In the afternoon we all, Lunt, Frank, Marie and I went over the river to Mr. S. S. Dixon's to dine. In addition to our crowd there were present Adam May, Mr. Fredricks, Frank Keyes and Ralph Ostrom. Fred Hilton came in the evening. We had a fine dinner, and later music by Ostrom and myself on our guitars. Later in the evening we had supper. We remained there all night."

"Dec. 29. Laid floor in new home."

"Dec. 30. Worked most of the day on a new bedstead. Here ends the year of 1884. It has been a remarkable year in many ways. It is the first in which I have not been inside a railway car. I have made a commencement on my ranch, my little cottage is complete and my stock looking well. I have on hand 8 cows, 3 heifers and 2 bull calves. My health has improved."

"Jan. 2. Worked most of the day fixing stove and cutting wood. Read old plays in the evening."

"Jan. 6. Went hunting."

During these years Dr. deBeque continued his medical practice in order to help his neighbors, there being no other doctor in the country. He writes: "Young Mr. Maxfield came for me to go see his mother. I started at 6 A. M. for Rifle Creek to see her and arrived at 4:45 P. M. Crossing Roan Creek I had an awful time. It was a wild torrent. Had to swim my horse. We both came near to going into eternity via the Grand river. Mrs. Maxwell better. I returned home."

"Bernie our St. Bernard dog got caught on a big fish hook. I gave her chloroform in order to take it out of her upper lip. Used about 1 ounce. Came under it very easily but in coming out she was insane, ran right into the river, not knowing what it was. I got her out with some difficulty. In half an hour she was all right."

In September diphtheria spread over the community and he was visiting patients night and day for a week or more.

Now and then there were visits with neighbors, and in the free and easy manner of the times, strangers often stopped for a meal or a night's rest. "Mr. Vose of Bangor, Maine, came here with Mr. Davidson. They had dinner. Mr. Vose asked Marie if she could speak French and when she replied in that language he could go no further. He was sold."

"Marie and I went up Roan Creek and took dinner with Messieurs Gibson, Stewart and Eaton. Gibson was cook and distinguished himself producing a plum pudding for dessert that would have done credit to *un chef de cuisine*."

"Set out two fine cottonwood trees in front of my house. Marie brought home a round cactus."

"Planted little cedar tree. Mr. Frazzier gave me 11 plum trees which I packed to my ranch and set out."

"The Balm of Giliad trees in front of our house are putting forth their new leaves."

"Planted potatoes and sun flower seed."

After Dr. deBeque was located in this section, he was joined by his brother, Colonel Robert N. deBeque and his family, who settled on an adjoining ranch. One adventure they had together was described thus: "The Col. and I started for Grand Junction on a catamoran. We had many narrow escapes going through the canon and finally abandoned the raft a mile and a half below Plateau Creek."

In June of 1886 the Colonel's wife, Hattie, died after a short illness at the age of 35, leaving three small children, Louis, Dollie and Robert. She was buried on the mesa above Ravensbeque and her grave with a stone marker can yet be seen from a certain point on the highway to Grand Junction. When she was dying she begged Dr. deBeque to take and care for her youngest child, Robert. This he did, faithfully and conscientiously, until Robbie was grown. Years later in Des Moines when his own son was then motherless, his efforts to be both a mother and father to two boys had its grimmer moments probably, as he writes,

"This P. M. Robbie amused himself by taking a fine silk cushion from a chair and kicking it around the room for a foot ball, and while thus engaged he kicked a hole in the carpet. I am entirely through trying to do anything with him."

In March of 1886 Dr. deBeque entered into partnership with Darwin P. Kingsley in the cattle business. They had many adventures together before Mr. Kingsley left Colorado and went East, where fame and fortune came to him as President of the New York Life Insurance Co.

Gradually this little wilderness became more than a solitary settler's cabin. In March, 1884, the Grand River Toll Road Co. was organized by E. D. Bonton, Edwin Price, H. R. Rhone, Wm. P. Harboltts, D. P. Kingsley, J. W. Bouldin and W. A. E. deBeque. Construction on a road which was to link Grand Junction and Glenwood Springs was commenced. He writes, "Bouldin, Rhone and I left Toll Road camp at 7 A. M. and explored a route for a road through the canon. We arrived at Ravensbeque at 3 P. M."

More and more visitors began stopping at Ravensbeque. Such entries as these appear in the diaries: "Dan Swinehardt was here to dinner on his way to Aspen."

"Mr. Collin, C. B. and Q. survey engineer, called in the morning."

"Geo. A. Gibson was here to dinner."

"Mr. Allen of Parachute stopped with us all night."

"Mr. Williams going to Rifle Creek called."

"Mr. Gill on his way from Glenwood stopped all night."

About this time Flora deBeque came West to live with her father. She writes,

"About 1885 Papa sent for me. Mr. and Mrs. D. P. Kingsley met me in Grand Junction and early next morning we drove in a buck board up to the end of the Toll road which Mr. Rhone was building. The camp was about where Palisade is now. Papa and Marie met us and we had dinner with the men in camp. Then we rode donkies up to Ravensbeque over a tortuous trail, reaching there at dusk. There was a tiny lean-to built next to the one big room for me. It had a dirt floor, one small window with white cotton tacked over instead of glass. The first night I ran screaming out of doors and into their room, frightened by what I thought was Indian war whoops, but later discovered to be coyotes. When I first went to Ravensbeque the settlers were just recovering from the Meeker Massacre. The Indians brought their victims down Roan Creek and crossed the river opposite where the town of De Beque is now located. A girl's slipper was found by George Kennon of Wallace Creek and Ralph Ostrom.

"A couple of times during that first summer of mine there, Papa rode home in haste, telling Marie and me to pack a few things and get ready to flee at a moment's notice, as rumors were being passed along the route of the first raid that the Indians were again on the war path and headed for our section. (Say, this sounds like something on the radio! Did it really happen to me? It has been years since I have even given it a thought. I feel surprised myself.)" And to happen to Flora, always so lovely and so cultured, it seems strange indeed.

With a young and attractive girl in this story, it is not at all surprising that romance also enters the record. In September, 1886, a Denver and Rio Grande R. R. surveying party came, and in the party was a young engineer named William Beerbower. Several years later he and Flora were married. Their two sons were Louis Dumont, who is living in New York now, and Randolph, who died when he was about sixteen.

From a lone settler's cabin in an undeveloped territory the picture began to change to fit the needs of more and more settlers. First came the need for a post office. On June 29, 1885, Mrs. Marie deBeque was appointed postmistress at Ravensbeque. This entry appears: "Mr. Waller, the first mail carrier, put in an appearance with the U. S. Mail, the first regular service up the Grand

river. Frank Keyes came down for his mail which was the first mail delivered from this P. O."

Trails gave way to roads. "Dec. 5, 1885. This is an important day in the history of Grand river. The first team over the Toll Road reached Ravensbeque at noon. Barney Kennedy drove a double team through the canon."

And the road was followed by the railroad. "The D. and R. G. surveyed through the ranch at Ravensbeque 100 yards below my house. The survey party took altitude here with their instruments and made it 4886 Ft." At this time both the D. and R. G. and the Colorado Midland were building parallel railroads and there was a race to see which road got there first.

Entries mentioned in the diary of 1890 read,

"May 30. First locomotive whistle heard at De Beque on D. and R. G. construction train."

"June 2. The Colorado Midland was the first train into town."

And real estate development followed the railroad. Flora again takes up the record. She writes, "We lived there at Ravensbeque for a couple of years and when the Toll Road was finished several promoters, among whom were George Arthur Rice of Denver, a Senator from Glenwood Springs and others came to see us. We had then built a larger detached room and kitchen. The stage started running to Glenwood Springs and they decided to buy a large tract of ground at the junction of Roan Creek and the Grand River, where they laid out a town site and started selling lots. Of course Papa bought a number of lots and aided them in many ways. The town was named De Beque in honor of its first settler—my father."

Dr. deBeque was married three times. His third wife was Marie Louise de la Villitte, a native of France, whom he met in Mexico City. Their children were Armand de la Villitte deBeque and Roland Leon deBeque. He often spoke of first one and later on another of his descendants as "the last of the Mohicans." Death has taken many of the "tribe" but the surviving "Mohicans" at present are:

Mrs. Flora deBeque Hart, Washington, D. C., and her son, Dumont.

George Robert deBeque and his wife, Mary, of Chico, California.

Armand deBeque and his wife, Ruby, and their little daughter, Marianne, who live in the family home at De Beque.

Mrs. W. A. E. deBeque II and her son, Wallace III, and her daughter, Marie Angeline, who live in Carbondale.

Outlaws Visit My Ranch on the Plains

R. E. ARNETT*

One day in the early 1880s I was out digging postholes on my ranch near Sterling. I looked up and saw smoke coming out of my dugout stove pipe. I thought my brother had come down from Sterling. When I went in to get dinner, here was everything prepared and ready to put on the table. A fine looking stranger stood before me and greeted me with the words, "I thought I would come in and stay a few days, if it's all right with you."

"I will be glad to have you do so," I replied. "I don't see a man very often out here." I was not alarmed, for in those days it was customary for cowboys to make themselves at home anywhere. Doors were left unlocked, purposely, for them to enter and help themselves. There was always grub and horse feed to which they were welcome, according to the customs of the day.

That night he told me the following story: "I am headed for Canada. I have been bootlegging to the Indians in Indian Territory, and Uncle Sam is on my trail.

"I was out to a dance one night, and I had a pair of boots on that hurt my feet, and I had gone out on the porch to take them off, when my girl slipped out to tell me that the sheriff and posse were there looking for me. I got into my boots as quickly as I could and made a hasty retreat, but the sheriff got me the next day; took my six-guns off, but overlooked a little four-barrel derringer ("pill box," as we used to call them).

"The sheriff had me handcuffed and on a horse, which he was leading with a rope around his neck, and as he was taking me through a country where I had lots of friends, he apparently was keeping a sharp lookout ahead for fear some of my friends would try to take me away. My horse did not walk so fast as the sheriff's, so he would get behind, then he would trot up, even with the sheriff's. I managed to work the "pill box" out of my shirt pocket, got it ready, and when my horse got even with the sheriff's, I stuck the gun down the ear of the sheriff's horse and pulled it off. The horse fell, pinning the sheriff's leg under him. I jerked the rope away from the sheriff, and finally found my way to some of my friends. They filed the handcuffs off, gave me a fresh horse and away I went.

"I was chased by the posse for three days and nights. I swam a river with my horse, and thought I had gotten safely away from them. There was good grass and good shade, and I lay down with

*In our issue of November, 1943, Mr. Arnett gave an account of his early ranching in northeastern Colorado. Since writing this story he passed away at his home in Boulder.—Ed.

lariat fastened to my wrist, and was just dozing off, when the horse gave a snort. I looked up and there was the posse just on the other side of the river. I have been going ever since.

"I left 400 head of nice Durham cattle, and 500 acres of the finest land that ever laid out of doors," he continued; "I suppose Uncle Sam will take that."

He also told me he had belonged to the Texas Rangers at one time. "One day," he said, "I was out with the Texas Rangers hunting Bass, the notorious outlaw. We went in different directions every morning. I stopped one day at a spring to eat my lunch.

"I heard a horse coming down the trail apparently on three legs, from the peculiar sound of his hoofs. When he appeared in sight, a man was leading him, and sure enough he was going on three legs. The man had his guns leveled on me and greeted me with these words, 'I believe you are one of those damned rangers looking for me. If I was sure, I would kill you. I am Charlie Bass.' I convinced him I was only looking for antelope.

" 'That looks like a good lunch to me,' said the outlaw. 'I haven't had anything to eat lately, so I'll help you eat it.' I assured him he was welcome to it. While he ate he talked about what he would do if ever he met one of those 'damned rangers.' When he got ready to leave, he said, 'That is a good looking horse you have, and he is shod. I have a good horse, but he is tender footed. When he gets a chance to rest his feet they will grow out and you will have a *real horse.*'

"That night when I came in leading the lame horse, the captain asked, 'Where did you get that old cripple?' 'Oh, I traded with Charlie Bass today,' I replied.

" 'Why didn't you arrest him?' he asked.

" 'I didn't like the looks of his guns he kept pointed at me,' I answered. The horse I got proved to be a wonder. I had him turned out in the lot one day. The butcher went out to shoot a beef, overshot the beef and killed my horse, so I quit the rangers and went to Indian territory."

He stayed with me at my dugout about ten days. One morning he said, "Well, I think I'll be moving on toward Canada now. And thanks for the comfortable time you have showed me. I have had a real rest, and will never forget you. So long." I was almost sorry to see him go, for he was good company and a very pleasing person.

Not long afterward another stranger made his appearance at my door. He was known as "Tobacco Jake." The name is self-suggestive, but to make it more clear I will say that he was dubbed that nickname because he was continually chewing tobacco and the

juice would trickle out of the corners of his mouth almost constantly. He was a "bad hombre."

He had come up on one of those big cattle drives from Texas. Sometimes these cattlemen would be several months on the drive. When they got to their destination, which would be Dodge City or Ogalala, the boys would start to celebrate. Believe me, it was a good idea to stay in the house at night at such times. On one instance I knew of three men dead in the streets of Ogalala, shot during the night.

Tobacco Jake decided to stay in Eastern Colorado and I got very well acquainted with him, as he used to make my dugout his stopping place when hunting stock for the company he was working for. One night he came into my place about 2:30 a. m. I said, "Jake, what have you been doing?"

"Oh," he replied, "I was just giving them Southerners a little touch of high life down at Sterling." (Sterling was first laid out by people from the South.)

Jake was heading for Cheyenne. He had previously been in two or three gun battles before he came to Sterling, and was pretty well shot up. He was lame from a shot in the hip, and from another one in the spine.

When Fort Morgan Was Really a Fort

A. R. Ross*

Fort Morgan was established by the Government in 1867 to quarter troops to protect the stage route between the Missouri River and Denver. At that time every stage coach carried a guard of an army officer and two or three enlisted men.

The Union Pacific Railroad was completed to North Platte, Nebraska, and rails were being laid to Julesburg, Colorado. Telegraph wires were already strung to Denver.

A company of 122 men, under the command of General K. E. True and Captain William Powell, was conveyed by supply or work trains to Julesburg. Thence they marched five days to Fort Morgan. The fort occupied an area equal to a city block. The buildings were of sod reinforced with logs. A beautiful flag on a pole graced the center. Between the buildings forming the exterior sides of the fort a heavy stockade of logs was erected. Outside the stockade a deep ditch was dug. A cannon was placed at the northeast corner, another at the southwest corner, and a third cannon was located

*Mr. Ross lives in Fort Collins today.—Ed.

near the flag pole. Water for the fort was hauled from the Platte River, a mile distant, in a wooden tank drawn by eight white mules.

Fort Morgan was never attacked by the Indians. However, wagon trains passing over the trail suffered Indian raids. In one instance the only person to escape was a sixteen-year-old boy driving a wagonload of flour to Denver. The boy, barricaded behind sacks of flour, successfully repelled the attack until aid reached him.

The fort was abandoned May 18, 1868, the year after its establishment. The Union Pacific, by this time completed to Cheyenne, Wyoming, rendered the stage route to Denver unnecessary. The buildings and movable materials at the fort were sold at auction. The soldiers evacuated with due ceremonies; they formed in line, presented arms, the cannons were fired in salute, the flag was lowered, and the company departed to Fort Laramie, Wyoming.

A granite marker with bronze inscription marks the spot in Fort Morgan where a real fort once stood during a brief period of pioneer history.