

## Seventy-five Years of Rodeo in Colorado

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### I. A PIONEERING PASTIME

In the incredibly rich tapestry woven around the American cowboy, one colorful aspect of his life is muted by other more brilliant phases. His chroniclers record tales of fiction and truth about him, his sturdy, capable horse, his hard and lonely life, his gay songs and melancholy ballads, his boisterous humor, his constant faithfulness and his rowdy, disastrous appearance in town. The facts of all these phases have been told and retold; each time embellished with more glamor and color until the old-time range cowboy is removed from the realm of reality and becomes essentially a man of the past.

The one bright but neglected strand which runs through the variegated fabric and which, through the years, gains in vitality and brilliance is that great cowboy sport known today as Rodeo. The contests of modern rodeo are far removed from a depiction of the actual range work of the cowboy; however, disregarding concessions made to entertainment techniques, they are not so far removed from the early pastime and sport of the man, as practiced and enjoyed by him in his regular work.

Very little is recorded of these early typical cowboy sports, and the thread is difficult to follow. Now, sufficient evidence has been found and a clearly defined pattern appears which is typical throughout the cowboy's domain. Early exhibitions of cowboy's skill were simultaneous in the West. The cowboys depended upon their daily activities to provide what little sport and relaxation they had; this was carried on within the individual outfits, and eventually certain men proved themselves superior in riding and roping, who, in turn, were pitted against the best men of rival outfits. Out of these simple competitions grew the beginning of modern rodeo, the cowboy tournaments of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Eastern Colorado, at first, lay on the edge of the cattleman's range and later was directly in the path of the herds being driven to the northern feeding grounds. It is only natural that many aspects of the life of the cowboy were of interest to the pioneers and were treated in the newspapers, but his sport was rarely mentioned. Unfortunately, the early chroniclers were not often in a position to witness this activity, or perhaps did not consider it worthy of note. Not until the late 1880's, when the range cattle

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<sup>1</sup>Westermeyer, Clifford P., *Man, Beast, Dust: The Story of Rodeo* (cited hereafter as Westermeyer, *Man, Beast, Dust, etc.*), (Denver, 1947), pp. 30-31.

industry made way for the ranch cattle industry, does the cowboy sport attract the attention of newspaper reporters, and then it is simply recorded as the passing sport of the rapidly disappearing cowboy.

Few records remain of the early inter-camp or rival outfit cowboy competitions. These contests usually took place on the trails far from the towns and cities whose newspapers might have recorded the incidents. If and when they did take place at the edge of a cow town, too many more important events than the bronco busting or roping skills of the cowboys took precedence in print. Such activities could be witnessed daily on the main streets of these termini as hundreds of thousands of cattle with their cowboy guardians converged upon them.

One of the "classic" chronicles of an inter-camp cowboy competition is the bronco busting contest, held on July 4, 1869, at Deer Trail, Colorado. The best horsemen in the territory entered, and the conditions of the contest were "that the horses should be ridden with a slick saddle, which means that the saddle must be free from the roll usually tied across the horse, that the stirrups must not be tied under the horse, and that the rider must not wear spurs."<sup>2</sup>

The horses selected for the contest were outlaws—impossible to break—, and this made the contest extremely dangerous. One young cow puncher, by the name of Will Goff, said "he'd ride anything with hair on it."<sup>3</sup> A gentle looking bay horse was led out.

... [Goff] pulled off his coat, threw his suspenders aside, took a reef in his belt, and with one bound, landed on the bay's back. Swish! and his felt hat whistled through the air and caught the broncho across the side of the head. The pony pitched violently for fifty yards, making about 300 revolutions to the minute. Then he started to run, and the crowd howled. "Give me my spurs and I'll make him pitch," yelled Goff, and they gave him his spurs, and he cut the pony to bits, but the exhibition was not satisfactory. The rider had too easy a time.<sup>4</sup>

Another cowboy Drury Grogan tackled a sorrel pony which carried the Camp Stool brand. As soon as the horse was saddled and Drury was on its back, it pitched, plunged, kicked and seesawed but did not unseat the cowboy, who made a successful ride and was awarded with the applause and cheers of the crowd.<sup>5</sup>

The next rider was an Englishman, Emilnie Gardenshire, of the Mill Iron ranch. He drew Montana Blizzard, a bay horse from the Hashknife ranch:

Gardenshire, rawhide whip in hand, crawled aboard cautiously, and, once firm in his seat, began to larrup the bay unmercifully. A sight followed which tickled the spectators hugely. The Englishman rode with hands free and kept plying his whip constantly. There was

<sup>2</sup>"Frontier Sketches," *Denver Field and Farm* (Denver, Colorado), July 8, 1899, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

a frightful mixup of cowboy and horse, but Gardenshire refused to be unseated. For fifteen minutes the bay bucked, pawed, and jumped from side to side, then amid cheers, the mighty Blizzard succumbed, and Gardenshire rode him around the circle at a gentle gallop.<sup>6</sup>

For this magnificent piece of horsemanship, the cowboy from the Mill Iron ranch won the title "Champion Bronco Buster of the Plains," and also the prize, a suit of clothes.<sup>7</sup>



COWBOY TAKING HIS SEAT FOR A RIDE ON A BUCKER

During the early days of the cattle industry, similar exhibitions of bronco busting, also of steer riding and roping, were taking place throughout the cattle country.<sup>8</sup>

In the late 1880's we find an increased interest in cowboy sports. By this time the cattle industry had settled down. The losses sustained on the open range because of overstocking, drought and hard winters, speculation and price declivity, the incoming granger and the wire fence brought about a collapse of the range cattle industry—what had been an exciting, stimulating adventure was now converted into a hard-headed, systematic business. As the industry underwent a change, the cattleman, the cattle and the cowboy likewise changed. The nomadic life of the cowboy which spread over thousands of miles was finished; he was confined to a few thousand acres; he was closer to civilization, the towns and cities, and if he remained in the business, he became a member of the community.

From the community, and particularly from the community spirit, the second phase of cowboy sports developed—the cowboy tournament. The agricultural fairs, which best expressed this spirit, provided for exhibits of fine cattle, stock and horses raised on the surrounding ranches, and also of the various grains, fruits and vegetables of neighboring farms. The races, of which the cowboy

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>Westermeyer, *Man, Beast, Dust, etc.*, pp. 34-35.

race was one of the main attractions, were a part of every county fair, but the tournaments of cowboy skill in bronc busting and steer roping were the dramatic highlight of the community enterprise.

An example of such a community endeavor is the Montrose Fair in 1887, and the *Denver Republican* records some of the more exciting aspects of the program:

A cowboy's tournament in which roping from the ground, from the saddle, heading and healing, [sic] riding bucking bronchos, etc., afforded much sport, but well nigh terminated fatally. One of the cowboys was riding a bucking broncho when the animal made a dash towards where the ladies were seated and could not be checked before he struck Mrs. James A. Ladd, who was thrown violently to the ground beneath the animal's hoofs. The horse struck the lady with its front feet on her chest and pinioned her to the earth for a second or two, but he was quickly grasped by one or two gentlemen who stood near the lady and prevented from trampling her to death. Every lady on the grounds screamed and one or two fainted.<sup>9</sup>

After this terrifying incident, the program of the day was concluded with a 300 yard-dash cowboy race.<sup>10</sup>

Early in September 1887, the commissioners of Denver Exposition announced the date for a cowboy tournament to be held during the big show. "Genuine and experienced cowboys will be rivals for honors and the animals to be employed will be sufficiently 'fresh' to satisfy the demands of the most exacting."<sup>11</sup> Several days later an editorial in the *Denver Republican* comments on the proposal:

One of the greatest attractions yet to come at the Exposition is the cowboy tournament. There will be something both novel and exciting in it to most of the people of Denver, and particularly to strangers from the East. The lassoing [sic] of wild cattle will be almost as exciting as a bull fight; and, indeed, the show will not be unlike some of the features of a Mexican bull fight. The idea of holding this tournament is one of the best and most original which has ever been suggested in connection with a Denver Exposition. It ought to draw a large number of persons to the show on that day.<sup>12</sup>

During the weeks before the tournament, the officials received letters from cowboys, indicating that they would participate in the contests, and on October 13, a number "of expert riders and trained cowboys" registered for the events—"swelling the number of entries to over thirty..."<sup>13</sup> The published prize list gives the following information:

- Class 1—Catching, saddling and riding a wild bronco. Prize for best time, \$50 cash.
- Class 2—Roping and hog-tying a wild steer. Prize for best time, \$50 cash.
- Class 3—Best exhibition "Tailing" a steer. Cash \$30.

<sup>9</sup>"The Montrose Fair," *Denver Republican* (Denver, Colorado), September 30, 1887.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>"Cowboy Day at the Big Show," *Denver Republican*, September 8, 1887.

<sup>12</sup>"The News of the Day," *Denver Republican*, September 27, 1887.

<sup>13</sup>"Cowboy Tournament To-day," *Denver Republican*, October 14, 1887. (The final number of entrants was forty-one.)

Class 4—Roping a wild steer, by two men, and stretching him out ready for branding, best time. Cash \$40.

Class 5—Foot-roping of cattle on horseback, best exhibition of skill. Special prize by Henry Bohm, fine silver water set, value \$40.

Class 6—Picking up twenty single potatoes by a rider going at a pace not slower than a lope. Premium, silver inlaid bit, offered by Range Journal Publishing, value \$30.<sup>14</sup>

The long and detailed account of the cowboy tournament is probably the most enthusiastic report of such a competition in the annals of journalism. The reporter was a "fan" in the full sense of the word. He commented on every phase of the cowboy sport, and his observations were clear, accurate, exciting and entertaining:

Horses bucked, wild steers plunged and the crowd yelled and cheered and yelled and yelled at the Exposition yesterday afternoon.

The cowboy tournament was a success both as to attendance and exhibition. More than 8,000 spectators crowded the grandstand and grounds. They were packed in like sardines on the unroofed amphitheatre and massed twenty deep around the big corral. Nearly all of them could see. All of them could yell and they did.

... The cowboys were real, the bronchos were real and the steers were to the manor born. The horses and the steers struck and kicked and squealed and bellowed, while gentlemen in silk hats pounded with their canes and ladies clapped their gloved hands together in excited delight, and the cowboy yell mingled with the cheers from everywhere.<sup>15</sup>

His remarks about the spectators revealed their intense excitement, appreciation and enthusiasm for the cowboy sport:

The crowd of itself was a sight worth going to see. Long before 2 o'clock a line of people a half block long were extended from the ticket window up the street. Tickets couldn't be sold fast enough. Carriages in a long line passed through the big gates for a solid hour and yet they were still coming. The small boy and big boy hoodlum dispensed with the formality of buying admission pasteboards and jumped the fence. Small boys, more than a score, crawled under the grand stand, dug holes for their heads through the dirt and looked out upon the show. When a dashing horse or a wildly plunging steer threw the dirt in their eyes the whole row of heads disappeared, only to bob back in a twinkling.

So eager were the crowd around the high fence to see that they stood on anything. Twelve men mounted one horse and when the animal fell from under them with the strain they all tumbled together. Every now and then a board would become too heavily loaded with men and boys who persisted in climbing on it and down would come the whole row with a crash.<sup>16</sup>

Bill Smith, Frank Wills, Pinto Jim, Bronco Jim Davis, Dull Knife, (pseudonym) Frank Maxwell, Troy Franklin, William Cook, are a few of the names of the cowboys who were contesting on the first day. The judges for the show were H. H. Metcalf, Carey Culver, J. H. Gorman and P. G. Webster. Billy McKinley and W. W. Davis directed and supervised the arena.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>"Cowboys and Wild Horses," *Denver Republican*, October 15, 1887.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

The reporter's excitement reached the highest pitch during the bucking contest, especially a ride made by Bill Smith:

Buck!

Buck isn't a name for it. Up in the air and down with all four legs bunched stiff as an antelope's, and back arched like a hostile wildcat's, went the animal. But the rider was there, and deep into the rowels he sank the spurs while he lashed shoulders and neck with keen stinging quirt. It was brute force against human nerve. Nerve won. A few more jumps and the horse submitted and carried the man around the corral on a swinging lope. It had all been done in seven and a half minutes. The crowd cheered, and an admirer dropped a box of cigars into the hands of the perspiring but plucky victor.<sup>18</sup>

Probably the most spectacular cowboy who appeared was Dull Knife from Meeker, Colorado. Who he was, is not known; our ardent reporter, however, portrayed him in the language of the day: "But Dull Knife was a daisy. With new white sombrero, Mexican saddle, leather-fringed chaparejos, flaming red "kerchief, belt and ivory-handled revolvers and knife, he was all that the Eastern imagination of the typical cowboy could picture."<sup>19</sup>

As a brone rider, Dull Knife was not a brilliant success. The horse, selected for him to ride, was a cagey bay pony, determined that the cowboy would not rope and saddle him. The cowboy finally succeeded in roping and throwing the animal by twining the rope about its legs. Unfortunately, Dull Knife moved too far away from his saddle and was unable to reach it before the judges called time, and the horse was freed.<sup>20</sup>

Steer roping was the next event. This swift-moving and skillful contest put the cowboys on their mettle. The colorful cowboy Dull Knife tied his steer in 6 minutes. Troy Franklin, after some bad luck in roping his steer, made a neat hog-tie for a time of 3 minutes and 15 seconds.<sup>21</sup> The ever attentive reporter, however, gave his best account concerning the efforts of a Platteville cowboy:

William Cook . . . made a marvelous catch and tie. Cook was attired in typical costume. He worked like a flash. The first throw caught the animal and a sudden skillful turn of his horse brought the steer down. Cook was off and on the surprised animal's back and endeavored to force it over by main strength. The big fellow shook him off and made another dash. This time Cook caught him sure and made a quick and solid tie. One horn of the steer was broken by a fall when it went tumbling on its head. The time was close to the best on record and was announced, amid cheers, to be 1 minute and 55 seconds.<sup>22</sup>

The cowboy tournament ended the first day on the promise that the second performance would be a similar one with the added attraction of fancy riding. The only sour note about the affair came in the form of a letter to the *Denver Republican* from E. K. Whitehead, Secretary of the Colorado Humane Society. The letter pro-

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

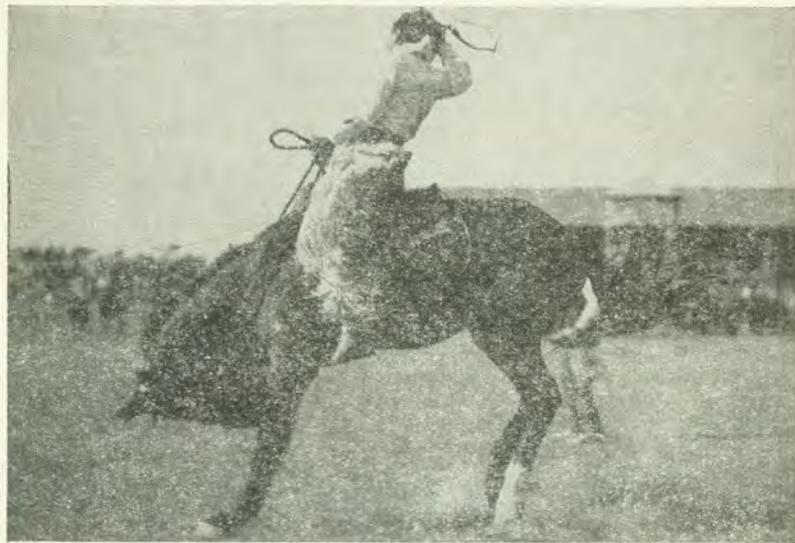
<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

tested the cruel treatment of the steers and horses, also the "brutality, and awkwardness" on the part of the cowboys. The society admitted that this information was indirect, because, although an agent was on the grounds, he was unable to get near enough to see what occurred. The society gave notice that if the "disgraceful scene" was permitted the second day, the tournament would be stopped.<sup>23</sup>

In the same issue of the *Denver Republican* the editor commented on the Humane Society's attitude:

The Humane Society threatens to arrest the Chamber of Commerce if it repeats the cowboy exhibition of yesterday. The prospect of a conflict between two institutions of such prominence is interesting. But it will be wise for both to act with judgment. The Chamber of Commerce Committee which is running the Exposition should not permit any amateur cow-punchers to take part in the contests, and the Humane Society should keep cool even if a steer should bark his shins or break off a horn. We believe that the gentlemen of the Chamber of Commerce may be trusted to keep the exhibition within bounds, and we therefore suggest that the Humane Society employ its time to-day in hunting up the poor humans who, though lame and sick, are compelled to labor while in constant pain and the little children who are half-fed and badly clothed. We offer this simply as a suggestion.<sup>24</sup>



YOUNG STEAMBOAT IN ACTION, CHEYENNE, WYOMING

The second day of the show offered no greater thrills except for an unfortunate accident—the only one of the tournament. Troy Franklin of Longmont was knocked unconscious while helping an-

<sup>23</sup>"The Humane Society," *Denver Republican*, October 15, 1887.

<sup>24</sup>*Denver Republican*, October 15, 1887. See Westermeyer, C. P., "Cowboy Sports and the Humane Society," *Colorado Magazine* 26 (October, 1949), pp. 241-252.

other cowboy in the contest of stretching a steer for branding. He suffered a concussion and did not regain consciousness for several hours.<sup>25</sup>

Because of the protests of the Humane Society, the contest of "tailing a steer" was omitted, and the final account of winners is recorded for only three of the original six events listed. In Class 1, Will Smith won first in catching, saddling and riding an unbroken horse with the best time of 5 minutes 10 seconds. Class 2, the catching and hog-tying a steer was won by W. H. Cook for the best time of 1 minute 55½ seconds. The event of two men catching and stretching a steer, Class 4, was won by Will Smith and W. H. Cook with "the world beating time of 30 seconds. The best previous time is 1:08."<sup>26</sup>

The cowboy tournament of the Denver Exposition was, without a doubt, a tremendous success. Approximately 12,000 people attended the two performances, and gate receipts, after expenses were paid, gave the Exposition Association a profit of \$4,000. All the cowboys who participated received some money, and those who did particularly well were awarded special prizes.<sup>27</sup>

The author of the article "The Cowboy Tournament" in the *Denver Republican* made some shrewd observations and suggestions which were pertinent and at the same time prophetic:

... As a whole it was unique and characteristic, and it was so well received by the vast audience that there can be no question that such an exhibition could be made successful annually.

We believe that if the right kind of men would take the management of an enterprise of this character a week's tournament could be given in Denver every fall that would attract thousands of visitors from all parts of the United States. Cowboys from all over the West would come here to compete for the prizes which would be offered.

It is much more desirable, and decidedly more profitable to get up a show that is peculiarly Western in its characteristics than to imitate the methods of the East. The tournament of yesterday was as exciting as a bull fight, without the latter's barbarous features. It was thoroughly enjoyed by the large audience. It is the kind of sport nine men in ten like, and if Denver is wide awake she will give similar exhibitions every year and advertise them thoroughly all over the country.<sup>28</sup>

The words of the prophetic writer, who anticipated the success of cowboy sports and Frontier Day Celebrations by ten years, were not heeded in his own country. Denver had a successful Cowboy Celebration ten years before Cheyenne Wyoming's great annual event was inaugurated; a year before Prescott, Arizona celebrated

<sup>25</sup>"Cowboy Tournament Ended," *Denver Republican*, October 16, 1887. The editor of the *Denver Republican* comments pungently: "When the cowboy fell from his horse at the tournament yesterday it was thought at first the hard fall had killed him. The audience expected to see the Humane Society step in and stop the show. But the H. S. had its eye on the steer. It did not see the cowboy. *Denver Republican*, October 16, 1887.

<sup>26</sup>"Cowboy Tournament Ended," *Denver Republican*, October 16, 1887.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>"The Cowboy Tournament," *Denver Republican*, October 15, 1887.

her first Frontier Day, Denver had proved the success of such an event on a large scale. Years before Pendleton's Round-Up and Calgary's Stampede were conceived, Denver had her opportunity to become the center of one of the greatest sport spectacles and entertainment features in Western America—Denver was not wide awake!

That Denver slumbered, is obvious. During the last three days of March 1888, the city celebrated a Jubilee—the completion of the Denver, Texas and Gulf Railroad, which connected Colorado with the Gulf Coast, and at the same time the International Range Association held a meeting. Thousands of visitors flocked in from Texas, Kansas, New Mexico and other adjacent states to attend one or both of these events. During the preliminary plans for the Jubilee a cowboy tournament, to be held on one of the afternoons, was suggested, and emphasis was placed on the fact that "the distinguishing feature of [it] will be fine riding as applied to the herding of cattle on the plains."<sup>29</sup> The cowboy tournament was listed in the official program for the Saturday before the opening of the Jubilee, but was dropped from the revised program, which appeared on the following Tuesday.<sup>30</sup> The newspapers devoted much space to the Celebration, the Dodge City Cowboy Band, the Grand Ball, the range meetings, but not a word appeared about the cowboy tournament nor an explanation of its omission from the program.

During these years cowboy races, half-mile and mile dashes, as well as three- and five-mile relays, were being featured as sporting and entertainment events at the various county fairs. Often bucking bronco contests were also held in conjunction with them.<sup>31</sup>

A cowboy race was run at the 15th Annual Fair of the Boulder County Industrial Association in September 1888.<sup>32</sup> During October of the same year the 2nd Annual State Fair at Pueblo staged horse races, concerning which the *Denver Republican* says:

The most interesting of all was the cowboy race of five miles, riders to change horses at the end of each mile. There were four entries and the race was run amidst the greatest excitement and some of the changes were made in remarkably quick time and with great expertness. . . . The time was not taken. When the winning rider returned to the stand hundreds of people surrounded him. He won the last mile by fully 60 feet.<sup>33</sup>

Although this type of cowboy sport drew spectators and attracted attention, the tournaments of bronc riding and steer roping

<sup>29</sup>"Colorado's Great Jubilee," *Field and Farm* (Denver, Colorado), March 17, 1888, p. 4; "A Cowboy Tournament," *Denver Republican*, March 15, 1888.

<sup>30</sup>*Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, Colorado), March 24, 1888; March 27, 1888.

<sup>31</sup>"Las Animas County Fair," *Denver Republican*, September 25, 1897; "Races at Montrose," *Denver Republican*, September 26, 1897.

<sup>32</sup>"Boulder Fair," *Denver Republican*, September 13, 1888.

<sup>33</sup>"The State Fair at Pueblo," *Denver Republican*, October 3, 1888.

really created the greatest interest. In the fall of 1890, another grand cowboy tournament was planned for Denver at the Broadway Athletic Park with \$1,000 in cash prizes to attract a large entry. "All the 'Wild Bills,' 'Rocky Mountain Jacks' and men with like nom de plumes are expected . . ."<sup>34</sup> The prize list reads as follows:

Prize \$300. \$200 to first, \$100 to second—For the most skilful [sic] exhibition of roping, bridling, saddling and riding a wild broncho. The animal to be roped from horseback. All work to be done by each contestant without assistance.

Prize \$150. \$100 to first, \$50 to second—Fancy riding. For the fastest time in picking up twenty potatoes from the ground and placing them in a basket. The horse to be ridden at a gallop, and the potatoes to be placed five feet apart. Other specialties in riding will be exhibited under this head.

Prize \$150. \$100 to first, \$50 to second. Lifting the ball. While riding at full speed a football to be lifted from the ground and held. Three trials to be allowed each contestant.

Prize \$200—Showing the method of roping a steer for the purpose of branding, inspection, etc. By two men operating from horseback; one to rope the head the other the hoof of the steer. The steer not to be thrown.<sup>35</sup>



FANCY ROPE TWIRLING, A FAVORITE COWBOY SPORT

The reporter of the event wrote a very good account—he lacked the enthusiasm of the earlier chronicler but he was accurate and just in his observation. The attitude of the Humane Society,

<sup>34</sup>"General Sports," *Denver Republican*, September 6, 1890; *Field and Farm*, September 6, 1890, p. 8.

<sup>35</sup>"Plainsmen Playing," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 7, 1890.

of the *Denver Republican*, and the action of the Mayor were more interesting than the account of the actual contest. The Sunday *Rocky Mountain News* gave a favorable account which concluded thus:

At headquarters last night it was said Mayor Londoner had instructed the police force to prevent any exhibition to-day [Sunday] by arresting the whole concern if necessary. A permit is expected to be obtained this morning.<sup>36</sup>

Both papers, the *News* and the *Republican*, advertised a Sunday performance; however, evidently the promoters did not secure a permit, for as the latter newspaper states: "A city ordinance prohibits all Sunday performances of whatsoever kind, and the mayor and the police force should be on hand to-day to see that it is enforced."<sup>37</sup> The *Republican* continued:

The cowboy tournament given at Broadway Athletic Park yesterday afternoon and evening was a most brutal affair, and one that should not be tolerated by the authorities. The sport, if such it can be called is not of an elevating class, and is one that should not enlist the sympathies of the general public.

As an exhibition of horsemanship it is commendable, but the roping of wild horses around the neck and choking them until they become most insensible, and then mounting their backs and torturing them with spurs and ropes strapped unmercifully about the flank and head until they are partially subdued, merely for the entertainment of a crowd, is something to be viewed in the light of cruelty by all lovers of dumb brutes.<sup>38</sup>

The *Republican* called upon Secretary Thompson of the Colorado Humane Society to take action and stop the show if these actions continued at the next performance. The next exhibition was given on Tuesday afternoon and evening. The *News* praised the performance in an article "The Cowboys," one statement of which is noteworthy.

The exhibition closed with the wild steer performance. The night entertainment, under electric lights, was hardly up to the day performance, although the "grand round-up" and the cowboys' farewell seemed to please the people.<sup>39</sup>

This is probably the earliest record of cowboy sport or rodeo held under artificial light—an innovation which is becoming more and more popular in modern rodeo.

The *Republican* could not write bitterly enough about the tournament. It was termed "a fizzle," "a howling farce" and:

While the fact remains undisputed that each contestant is possessed of marked ability in his particular line of work, yet, the rough handling of dumb brutes for the public's amusement received a back-set yesterday that will be long remembered by those interested in its management.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>"Discreditable Show," *Denver Republican*, September 7, 1890.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>"The Cowboys," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 10, 1890.

The seating capacity of the park yesterday was not overtaxed by the 200 people in attendance, for many left before the performance was over.<sup>40</sup>

It is difficult to understand this change of attitude in the *Denver Republican* which had given such glowing accounts of the cowboy tournament three years before. Could the moralistic tone of 1890 mean a definite change in attitude toward the cowboy sport, or did it mean that the *Republican* favored only those contests supported by civic groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, during a city or state-wide celebration as opposed to exhibitions by private enterprise? In a comparison of both contests, one did not appear more cruel or brutal than the other, and regardless of this attack on the tournament of 1890, the sport as such did not suffer any severe setback. The editor of the *Texas Live Stock Journal*, in a subsequent issue, summed up the problem in a pertinent statement:

A humane society at Denver prevented a steer-roping contest by interfering with the program. Humane societies, while they embrace a great many good people, are largely made up of cranks, who neglect their families while running around over the country to put a plaster on the raw end of a stump-tail pig.<sup>41</sup>

Contests of cowboy activities, on a smaller scale, were held throughout the state, one of which attracted particular attention. In late summer, 1891, cowboys gathered at Sullivan, Colorado, to compete for roping and bucking bronco prizes. C. L. Mosger carried off honors "for the most artistic rope throwing," and Dick Kennedy won the bronco busting contest. "After the sports the crowd devoted themselves to dancing and beer, both of which [were] obtained to the satisfaction of the most insatiable."<sup>42</sup>

The cowboy tournament and roping contest drew the largest crowd at the Grand Junction Peach Festival of 1895. Sam Pollack won the first prize.

This was a new and novel entertainment for a greater portion of the visitors, and was thoroughly enjoyed by the large crowd of spectators.<sup>43</sup>

Another cowboy tournament during the Peach Day Festival in 1897 drew a crowd of about 5,000 spectators and cowpunchers from everywhere.

All nationalities were represented, the Indian, the Mexican, the American, the Teuton, and others too numerous to mention.<sup>44</sup>

Thirty-five contestants appeared in the arena, and the contest of three hours' duration was fast and furious. Colonel J. S. Ashley of the Rio Grande passenger department, a most able judge, pro-

<sup>40</sup>"It was a Fizzle," *Denver Republican*, September 10, 1890. The *News* states that 600 attended the Tuesday performance and 2,000 saw the Saturday show.

<sup>41</sup>*Field and Farm*, October 4, 1890, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, September 13, 1891, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup>"Grand Junction Amusements," *Denver Republican*, September 6, 1895.

<sup>44</sup>"The Peach Day Crowd Lingers," *Denver Republican*, September 10, 1897; "Display of Horsemanship," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 10, 1897.

nounced the tournament "to be altogether the finest affair of the kind ever witnessed in the West."<sup>45</sup>

This spirit of praise, however, was not universal, for a complaint appeared in the *Denver Field and Farm*:

The wild west part of the program at Grand Junction last week was not a fitting finale to the otherwise splendid entertainment. Thirty poor bovines driven into the arena, one at a time, to be run down, lassoed, bound and hog-tied in the heat and dust, and left panting for an hour under a broiling sun, is certainly not up to the standard of humanity. Two of the helpless creatures had their necks broken in the rough and tumble and another a leg, while all were more or less bruised, broken and abused. It was not so rough on the horses and vaqueros, but some of the former were gored by the brutes they were tantalizing.<sup>46</sup>

Rico, Colorado, in September 1895, celebrated its sixteenth anniversary with races which included a five-mile cowboy race and a steer roping contest. There were seven entries; the first prize was won by George Babcock who roped and tied his steer in 1 minute and 5 seconds. Tom Nash won the second prize in 1 minute and 26 seconds.<sup>47</sup> The celebration was such a success that a matched roping contest was run off three days later; the prize money was \$500, "to which the citizens had added a purse."<sup>48</sup> Evidently, the people of Rico felt they were not fully supported by their neighbors and the railroads, for in a dispatch to the *Republican* the following complaint appeared:

Taken on the whole Rico's 16th anniversary celebration was a grand success. Owing to the way the trains run and apparent indifference on the Rio Grande Southern the attendance from the outside was smaller than expected, but we had a good time for all that. Rico is prosperous and is not afraid to spend her money in having a good time. . . .<sup>49</sup>

About this time, the fabulous character, Arizona Charlie, Wild West Show entrepreneur, appeared in Denver. The *News* for Monday, September 30, 1895, says:

The show, as was advertised, consisted of exhibitions of rifle marksmanship, riding of bucking bronchos, chariot races, feats in the saddle and other similar arts, but the crowning effort of Arizona Charlie's was to show his proficiency in lassoing bulls and throwing them.<sup>50</sup>

This was a Wild West Show and had very little in common with the true cowboy sport. Almost immediately difficulty arose with the Humane Society; the show was stopped, Charlie was arrested, freed and finally dismissed of the charges of cruelty. His show also had difficulties in Leadville and Pueblo; before a solution was

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup>*Denver Field and Farm*, September 18, 1897, p. 9.

<sup>47</sup>"Rico's Big Celebration Ends," *Denver Republican*, September 13, 1895.

<sup>48</sup>"A Roping Contest," *Denver Republican*, September 16, 1895.

<sup>49</sup>"Rico's Big Celebration Ends," *Denver Republican*, September 13, 1895.

<sup>50</sup>*Rocky Mountain News*, September 30, 1895.

reached, the incidents created nation-wide interest and involved a number of prominent state officials and citizens.<sup>51</sup>

During the years 1897-1898, cowboy sports, racing and bucking contests, were held at the Las Animas County Fair and the Montrose Fair; roping contests and more racing were on the programs of the Delta County Fair, the Glenwood Springs Week of Sports, the 2nd Annual Pageant of States and Nations at Pueblo, and the Fourth of July Celebration at Telluride.<sup>52</sup> On all these occasions the cowboy sports received praise and favorable comment—in most cases, they were considered the major attraction of the celebrations.

The years between the Civil War and the Spanish-American War had wrought a change in the cattle industry, the cattle and the cowboy. The industry had grown from an obscure haphazard adventure into a multi-million dollar speculative business; after a severe financial setback, it settled down into an orderly, regular business and became part of the agricultural heritage of the nation. No comparison can be made between the wild, gaunt, rangy long-horn of those early days and the blooded cattle introduced by the revitalized industry. These fine animals, when bred with the native stock, produced a hardy animal with excellent flesh-building characteristics and became the beef stock of our nation. So, too, the cowboy changed, as did his work and his charge. He no longer needed to face the long drives, the stampedes, the drifting, free and easy life, the lack of companionship, the roundup; he became a part of the community in which he worked and lived. True, many aspects of his former existence remained, conditioned by the changes; yet he clung, as did many of his pioneer neighbors, to the memories of years past. As these same memories were revived in celebration of the accomplishments of the past, so also were some of the activities, among them the exhibitions of the one-time daily work and sport of the cowboy.

The cowboy sports in the last quarter of the nineteenth century appeared as cowboy tournaments and were a type of entertainment and amusement at fairs, conventions, expositions, jubilees, and pioneer celebrations. In Colorado the cowboy tournament featured the events of cowboy races, bronco busting, steer roping, and fancy roping and riding of a sort. The contests were usually of one-day

<sup>51</sup>Westermeier, *Man, Beast, Dust, etc.*, pp. 389-390; Westermeier, C. P., "Cowboy Sports and the Humane Society," *Colorado Magazine* 26 (October, 1949), pp. 241-252. The following year Arizona Charlie appeared in Colorado Springs where he had a most successful engagement; however, in an account from that city there is no mention of his roping activities. "Colorado Springs Revelry," *Denver Republican*, August 6, 1896.

<sup>52</sup>"The Las Animas County Fair," *Denver Republican*, September 25, 1897; "Races at Montrose Fair," *Denver Republican*, September 26, 1897; "Close of Delta County Fair," *Denver Republican*, September 19, 1898; "Steer Roping Contest," *Denver Republican*, August 28, 1898; "Ready for Pueblo's Fete," *Denver Republican*, July 3, 1898; "Telluride Celebration," *Denver Republican*, July 5, 1898.

duration; however, in large cities like Denver they often were continued on a second day. Denver, because of its propensity for festivals, expositions and the like, and as the logical center for a stockyard, was the scene of some of the most spectacular cowboy tournaments in the state. These attracted expert riders and ropers from Colorado, New Mexico, Texas and the neighboring states. In most cases the spectators, many of whom were visitors, were appreciative of the contests and showed great interest in the cowboy sports. Occasionally, difficulties were encountered with the Humane Society, but usually the differences were overcome by the elimination of objectionable features.

Some of the great cowboy contests, to be known in the future by a variety of names, had already begun. At the time they were, to be sure, local affairs but in time they became some of the leading entertainment features in the West.

As the new century approached, the nation relaxed in the saddle. Did it not ride rough shod over the Spanish? Did not Teddy's Terrors, known also as the Rough Riders and the Cowboy Volunteers, lead American forces to victory in Cuba? As the nineteenth century waned, the newspapers were filled with accounts of the success of the victorious western cavalrymen, and the words Cowboy and Rough Rider were on every lip—already the truly American sport, Rodeo, had pioneered its way to a foothold in the field of American entertainment.

## Cowboy Cockrum of Canon City

By C. W. HURD\*

Richard I. Cockrum, who practically spent his life on the range, most of the time riding for Beaty Brothers of Manzanola, Colo., long ago traded his saddle for an easy chair. He now sits at ease in Canon City where he enjoys the life of a modern city, but his thoughts go back to other years.

Mr. Cockrum's heart is on the range, with the cowboys he knew and the horses he rode. Only a very few of his cowboy friends are now alive. One by one they are slipping away. When his pal, Frank Gilman of the Fred Harvey ranch, died on April 6, 1950, the blow fell hard.

Mr. Cockrum's work on the range centered in the extreme southeastern part of the state, but he was familiar with all of the

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\*Mr. Hurd, of Las Animas, has contributed a number of articles to this magazine.

country south of the Arkansas, extending from the Greenhorns to the Kansas line. He knew the cattle barons and the cowboys in every direction.

Richard I. Cockrum was born on a farm near Slick Rock, Barren county, Kentucky, July 4, 1872. When he was about ten years of age the family started for Texas in a covered wagon, pulled by a team of horses and a team of mules.



MR. AND MRS. R. I. COCKRUM

Due to the storms of winter and the hardships of travel by wagon, the mother became ill en route and Hennewell, Kansas, was as far as the party could get. There they stayed for many months, on the border of the Cherokee Strip.

At the age of twelve, Richard had to strike out and earn money to help support the family. His first job was as fence rider on a large cattle ranch in Oklahoma. His salary was \$15.00 a month. That was the beginning of his long years among cattle. In the language of the cow camp Mr. Cockrum was known as "J. B. Red." The J. B. was taken from the name of his employer, J. B. Beaty, and the red was added to match the color of his face.

On the Beaty ranch, in the early days of his career, Mr. Cockrum took charge of all new horses and broke them to ride. He was

an expert rider and could stay on the "hurricane deck" of almost any horse. He was supposed to tame down the wildest cayuse so that the other boys could ride him, if they knew how.

Early one spring, when getting ready for the summer's work, Beaty Brothers sent "Red" to camp with thirty young horses, supposedly broken to the saddle. They were a fine looking lot, but they were lively and some of them were plenty wild.

One of the cowboys, who should have known better, asked "Red" to rope the prettiest one for him to ride. "Red" did as requested and the show began. Slim Jim, the would-be rider, thought that because he was taller, older and wiser, and Irish, too, he could ride as well as anybody. The horse he had called for was a "beaut." His name was One Shot.

This horse was the highest bucking, crooked jumper, meanest horse in the lot. The boys held him and helped Slim to mount. One Shot went high, with an angry squeal; then dashed off a few hundred yards and dumped Slim in the river. The cowboys caught the horse and led him to where Slim was cleaning up. They suggested that he try it again and, according to cowboy code, he couldn't refuse.

On one occasion when "Red" was making a cross-country ride, he stopped at a ranch house to spend the night. There was a school house not far away and the rancher's wife was boarding the teacher, who happened to be a man. In the evening "Red" noticed that the teacher seemed to be packing his books and other possessions as if he were getting ready to leave. He asked him about it.

The young man reported that he had punished a boy that day and had sent him home. The father had brought the boy back to school and had told the teacher to go home and never come back or he would quirt him a-plenty. "Red" consoled the teacher and told him that he had always felt the need of more education and that if he would stay on as teacher, he believed he would go with him the next day as a pupil. Next morning they started off together for school.

The angry father was there first, as was expected. Apparently he looked down the road and saw the teacher coming with the cowboy who was equipped with his six-shooter and all. That made a difference. The father came out to meet them and apologized to the teacher for what he had said. There was no more trouble in the school room and the cowboy went on his way.

Long years afterwards Mr. Cockrum was attending an old settlers' gathering in California, where he signed the register. Later in the day a woman came through the crowd inquiring for Mr. R. I.

Cockrum, who had signed the book. She wanted to meet him as she was a daughter of the teacher whom he had befriended. She had come from Kansas, where she had often heard her father tell the story of his rescue by Mr. Cockrum, the cowboy.

In 1891 "Red" was brand inspector on the National Trail. He checked trail herds as they moved from Texas to northern pastures. One day the "D" herd showed up with about 2,500 cattle, seven cowboys and three other riders. "Red" talked with all of them. There was nothing unusual about the outfit, either in men or cattle, but one of the trail riders attracted "Red's" attention. He was young, fair of face with brown eyes and black hair. He rode a fine horse and had a good outfit—hat, boots and breeches, with all the trimmings.

Two days behind the herd came a man and his son in a buckboard looking for a run-away girl. They inquired about the riders with the "D" herd, but "Red" was sure that he had not seen any girl. After hearing the description of the young trail rider, the father was sure that he was on the trail of his daughter. He rushed on and overtook the outfit at Trail City, on the Arkansas River, but he arrived too late. The boss and the girl had gone to Syracuse, Kansas, and had gotten married. All four returned in a few days and when they met "Red," they razed him, a brand inspector, who couldn't tell a girl from a boy.

"No Man's Land," a strip thirty-five miles wide and one hundred and thirty-five miles long, was unique in its day. There was never anything else like it in the United States, as headquarters for criminals. It contained good grass and was popular with cattlemen as there were no taxes to pay. Several cattle companies with large herds attempted to range their stock within its borders. There were no schools, no churches, no law.

In that country, Mr. Cockrum served as "Regulator" for many years. He claims that he never met the man he was afraid of, but he did meet a woman one time who put fear into him. She was an outlaw and he met her in the camp of cattle rustlers where she turned her gun on him. The situation was critical until one of her companions persuaded her to spare a life.

One evening "Red" got a tip that rustlers were "dragging" through the "JB and JO" range,<sup>1</sup> taking out a lot of cattle. He started at once and rode forty miles to the camp of the men who were suspected of being the thieves.

He introduced himself to the boss and asked how many cattle he had.

<sup>1</sup>JB outfit was owned by Jasper N. and James W. Beaty. The JO outfit was owned by the four brothers: Jasper N., James W., John W., and Alvin R. Beaty.

"Oh, we have a few, but we don't have any of yours," he said.

"That's fine," answered "Red," "but I want to look them over in the morning."

He could see that he was an unwelcome guest and that he would have to rest on his guns all night, in order to protect his life.

The boss insisted, "Oh, you might as well go on as we do not have any of your cattle."

There were three hundred cattle close by and when morning came, "Red" found that half of them carried the brands of the "JB and JO" outfit, so he proceeded to take them out.

The men who had stolen them were later sent to the penitentiary at Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In September 1887, a tragedy occurred on the Cimarron, at the ranch headquarters of the "JB and JO" outfit, owned and operated by Beaty Brothers of Manzanola.

Early in the day two men rode up to ranch headquarters in a buckboard pulled by a team of fast mules. They were J. Martin Ford, sheriff, and his deputy, officers of the law from Chanute, Kansas. They explained that they had passed two outlaws headed west and that they were sure to pass the ranch house and would, no doubt, stop for something to eat. These men, they said, were dangerous characters and were heavily armed. The officers asked permission to secrete themselves on the premises to await the arrival of the desperadoes. They hid among some large boulders back of the house.

In line with expectations, the two fugitives arrived about noon and were invited to dinner. They unsaddled and hobbled their mounts. At dinner there were three men seated on each side of the table. On the side that faced the front door, one of the visitors sat in the middle, with James W. McClain on his right and John W. Beaty, Sr., on his left. On the other side of the table were the second outlaw, with R. I. Cockrum and another employee. All went well during the meal. The two visitors evidently had no suspicion of being trapped.

After they had eaten, the stranger next to the door left the dining room to get his pipe and tobacco out of his saddle pocket. As he reached the saddle he saw the officers step into view, but it was too late. They had the first shot and he fell.

Inside the dining room, when the other outlaw heard the shooting, he made a quick move to get away but Mr. McClain pinned his arms down and Mr. Beaty took his guns. He was a prisoner, without hope of escape.

Hospitality was gratis at the Beaty cow ranch, where proximity to the southern branch of the Santa Fe Trail brought a motley array. There were ministers, highwaymen, statesmen, on many missions. All were welcome and no questions were asked.

In the spring of 1895, cowboy Cockrum was headed for Channing, Texas, with a herd of saddle horses. When he stopped at a ranch house near Stonington, Colorado, he espied a maiden more charming than any he had ever met before. On the return trip he found it convenient to camp his trail wagon and crew again on the young woman's father's ranch. There he got acquainted with all of the family.

Before Christmas rolled around, everyone understood that the young lady was to become Mrs. Cockrum. Their partnership agreement included equal shares in a cattle outfit which they established on January 1, 1896, and which they operated together for a quarter of a century.

Ultimately they had large holdings in land and cattle. Their official brand was Cross J. Unfortunately the deep snows of 1920-21 wiped out the herd and cleaned the slate, leaving the two life partners to start all over again.

Now retired, with Mrs. Cockrum, "J. B. Red" looks back on a long life lived in a most interesting and exciting age. In his time there were three groups of men working side by side in building the west: the cattlemen, the freighters, the miners. They were men of iron and they had much to endure.

Among Mr. Cockrum's saddle pals of the great "JB and JO" cattle ranch, only one is now alive. In them we seem to catch a final glimpse of the "Cattle Age."

peak which has carried down through the years the name of one of the founders of the Colorado company, Hallett Peak. This 12,725-foot rocky upthrust near Bear and Dream lakes was named for William L. Hallett, vice president of the Powder River Live Stock Company.

On March 4, 1882, the Powder River Live Stock Company was incorporated under the laws of Colorado, with a capital stock of \$140,000, made up of 1,400 shares of \$100 each for the "purpose of



Top row—left to right: JAMES A. BROWN, GEORGE REX BUCKMAN, J. L. MARSTON.

Bottom row: JOSEPH L. HALLETT, WILLIAM L. HALLETT

## Powder River Live Stock Company

By AGNES WRIGHT SPRING\*

Much has been written about the Powder River Cattle Company, organized by Moreton Frewen and his British associates, which operated on Powder River in Wyoming during the cattle boom days of the 1880s. Little, however, has been recorded about the Colorado company with an almost identical name which also grazed vast herds on the same range and at the same time as Frewen's "76" outfit.

Today the British company is only a memory. But there stands in the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado a well-known

\*Author of *Seventy Years Cow Country, Cheyenne and Black Hills Stage and Express Routes*, and others, and now Acting State Historian, collected this material originally for an article published in the *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*, November 7, 1948.

raising, breeding, buying, selling, and pasturing of stock and especially cattle; the purchase, preemption, holding and selling of such ranches as may be suitable for said business."

The company's headquarters were in Colorado Springs and its main range was near old Forts Reno and McKinney, Powder River, Johnson County, Wyoming.

Members of the first board of directors were: James L. Marston, president; William L. Hallett, vice president; James A. Brown, general manager; George R. Buckman, secretary and treasurer; and J. R. Campbell. Later Joseph L. Hallett, a brother of William, joined the company.

Capital stock gradually increased from \$270,000 in 1883; \$400,000 in 1884 and \$500,000 in 1885 to \$700,000 in 1886.<sup>1</sup>

Cattle of the company were branded 21 on the left side,<sup>2</sup> also Lazy E Double X on left side. Horses were branded 21 on the left thigh.

At a special meeting in Denver, 1885, the stockholders voted to carry on business in Nebraska and in such other states and territories as the directors might determine, in addition to the places where it was then operating. The next year the Powder River Live Stock Company purchased 2,500 acres in the Elkhorn valley, Nebraska, on which it established extensive feeding grounds to fatten 2,000 head of cattle annually for market.<sup>3</sup>

In the spring of 1886, the company was running 24,000 head of cattle on the Powder River range. After the disastrous storms during the winter of 1886 and spring of 1887, only 8,000 head were "gathered."

Despite the terrific loss estimated at \$400,000, the company was able to carry on by means of the dividends earned in previous years.

Some five years later, the company was caught in the maelstrom of the so-called "Johnson County War." Because feeling in the Powder River country was running high against the "big outfits," the officers of the Powder River Live Stock Company hired their cattle "gathered" and closed their books in 1893.

James L. Marston, president of the company during its entire existence, was a native of Mansfield, Massachusetts. After traveling for a wholesale straw and millinery house three years, he took charge of a thriving lead works at Taunton, Mass. In 1878 he came to Colorado, purchased a herd of 3,500 cattle and trailed them to Wyoming Territory. He placed his two sons in charge of the livestock. Two years later he moved his family from the east to Colorado Springs.

William L. Hallett, born in Springfield, Mass., in 1857, came to Colorado for his health the same year as Marston. The next spring, he joined C. B. Mendenhall and James A. Brown of Fort Collins, in buying about 1,200 cattle. They drove them to North Park.

<sup>1</sup>Records of the Secretary of State of Colorado.

<sup>2</sup>Brand Book, 1883, p. 21, Wyoming Stock Growers' Association; Brand Book, 1885, Wyoming Stock Growers' Association; Brand Book, 1887, p. 81, Wyoming Stock Growers' Association.

<sup>3</sup>*Cheyenne (Wyo.) Sun*, Dec. 18, 1885.

After their arrival in the park, they discovered many "deep snow" signs, such as stumps of trees which had been cut from six to eight feet above the ground near trappers' cabins. In the autumn, Brown and Hallett moved their part of the herd north to Fort Reno up on Powder River. Later they joined forces with Marston in forming the Powder River Live Stock Company.

Mendenhall, who remained in North Park, became one of the leading cattlemen of that vicinity. His daughter, Harriet, married Montie Blevens, one of the best known pioneer Colorado cowmen.

In addition to his Wyoming interests, William Hallett for some years had a ranch in the foothills west of Loveland, Colo., and ran cattle in Estes Park in the summer. He headquartered at the Ferguson ranch near Mary's Lake. Hallett walked and climbed a great deal, whenever he was in the park. He was particularly interested in the vicinity of the peak which bears his name. In 1883, he located a crevasse in a glacier about thirteen miles from the peak. For fifty years the ice body was known as Hallett's Glacier. In 1933 the U. S. Geographic Board changed the name to Rowe's Glacier because it was claimed that Rowe was the original discoverer. Hallett, who spent many years in Denver in the employ of the Denver Union Water Company, lived to the age of 90. A son, William J., still lives in Denver.

Buckman, secretary and treasurer of the Powder River Live Stock Company, was associated with William P. Bonbright and Co., and was Colorado Springs' first Chamber of Commerce secretary. While serving as Chamber secretary from 1892-'97, he wrote many articles and booklets on Colorado. One was entitled, *Colorado Springs, Colorado, and Its Famous Scenic Environs*, illustrated by William H. Jackson, eminent early day photographer.

Walter C. Frost was president of the Chamber of Commerce at the time Buckman was secretary. Buckman held a seat on the Colorado Springs Mining Stock Exchange, organized in May, 1894. Because of the reputation made by the exchange, Colorado Springs became a foremost mining stock market in the United States, with business becoming so great that W. S. Stratton built the Mining Exchange Building between 1896 and 1900.

As an organizer of the El Paso County Humane Society, Buckman waged war against the docking of horses' tails. He was treasurer of the society formed in July, 1888, with Judge E. A. Colburn as president, Mrs. F. B. Hill, vice president, and F. B. Hill, secretary, all of them prominent in the life of the town.

Buckman won national recognition as a director of the Colorado Springs branch of the Leslie E. Keeley institute for the treatment of alcoholism. Headquarters were established February 14, 1892, in the First National Bank Building, but were combined with the

Denver institute in 1894 after treating about 1,000 patients and after being host to state and national conventions that year.

James A. Brown, general manager of the big cattle company during its existence, was born on Prince Edward's Island, Canada. A carriage-maker by trade, he arrived in Fort Collins in 1868, where he and his brother, John R. Brown, engaged in wagon making and blacksmithing.

After the Powder River Live Stock Company went out of business, Brown engaged in various business enterprises in Larimer County, Colorado. He was one of the committee that succeeded in



JOSEPH L. HALLETT HOUSE, ESTES PARK. FOUR GENERATIONS OF THE HALLETT FAMILY

obtaining a sugar factory for Fort Collins. In 1903 he was elected president of the First National Bank of that city. One son, Clyde H. Brown, is now curator of the Antoine Janis Pioneer Museum in Fort Collins.

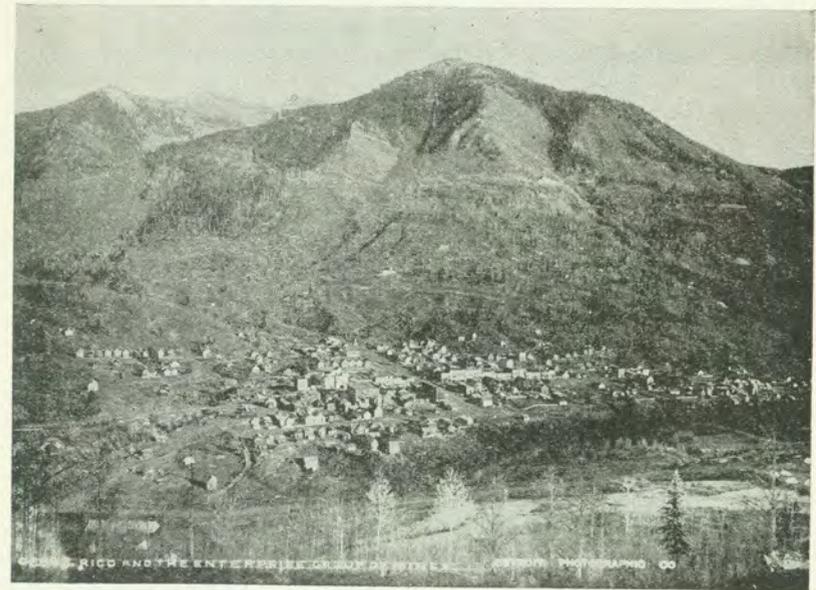
Although historians and writers often dwell upon the days of the big Powder River Cattle Company when lords and ladies were guests at "Frewen's Castle" up on Powder River in Johnson County, Wyoming, they should not fail to call attention to the fact that the members of the big English company folded their tents and moved on to other horizons, while the officers of the Powder River Live Stock Company, who simultaneously grazed great herds in the shadows of the Big Horns, stayed on in the West, particularly in Colorado, and helped in the material growth and development of this area.

## Rico, Colorado—Once a Roaring Camp

By CARL F. MATHEWS\*

Rico, former county seat of Dolores County and foremost mining camp on the Dolores River, is perhaps as little known as any district in the state, although it has a history beginning prior to Silver Cliff or Aspen and extending back almost as far as Leadville. Even with this distinction, and a production of some \$35,000,000 in the various minerals, gold, silver, lead, zinc and copper, it is doubtful if one-tenth as many people have ever visited it or even know of its existence, as have visited the more accessible camps.

This may be due in part to its comparative isolation and the gradual decline of the camp during the past several years. With only one highway into town, State No. 145, a branch of Highway No. 160, the northern end of which, over Lizard Head Pass, is often impassable in the winter months, one might expect less travel. The condition of the highway in the past has not been up to that of many



RICO AND THE ENTERPRISE GROUP OF MINES

other roads in the state, but through the efforts of Mrs. Elizabeth Pellett, well known resident of the town and state representative from that district, more and more improvements have been made and the road as far as Dolores and partly beyond, is now in very good condition.

\*Mr. Mathews, identification officer of the Colorado Springs police department, is a charter member of the Ghost Town Club.—Ed.

First known visitors to the region were a party of some sixty trappers from St. Louis, under the leadership of William G. Walton.<sup>1</sup> These men came in from Taos in the spring of 1833 and spent the summer along the Dolores River, and in camp near Trout Lake, about thirteen miles northeast of the present site of Rico. Later, in 1861, Lieutenant Howard and other members of John Baker's expedition into the San Juan region came over the mountains from the east and prospected the Dolores River, then joined the main party at Baker's Park, present site of Silverton.

Five years later, a party from Arizona under Colonel Nash, following the Santa Fe and Salt Lake Trail, reached the Big Bend of the Dolores (where the town of Dolores now stands) and explored the river to its source, then crossed the divide to Trout Lake and proceeded down the San Miguel River.

In 1869 Sheldon Shafer and Joseph Fearheiler started from Santa Fe to Montana, being well provided with provisions and tools. Upon reaching the site of Rico, they were struck with the indications of mineral, so stopped and decided to prospect the locality thoroughly. They built a cabin on Silver Creek, and in July, 1869, located a claim which they called the Pioneer, a name perpetuated today in the Pioneer Mining District, which is the recorded name of the area. This claim covered parts of what are today the Shamrock, Smuggler and Riverside claims. They also made a location which they named the Nigger Baby, because of the abundant black oxide of manganese found in the vein. This name was later applied to Nigger Baby Hill, northeast of town, so called today. In the autumn of 1869, the prospectors built a more substantial cabin near the center of the present town site and worked on the Pioneer claim through the winter.

In 1870, R. C. Darling, engaged in surveying the boundaries of the Ute Indian Reservation, passed up the Dolores on his way to Mt. Sneffels, one of the observation points, and finding Fearheiler and Shafer at work, located some claims near them and proceeded on his way. His name now survives in Darling Ridge, one of the spurs of Expectation Mountain. During 1870, Gus Begole, John Echols, Dempsey Reese and "Pony" Whittemore came in from New Mexico and discovered the Aztec and other lodes. On the approach of winter, all the prospectors ceased operations and left the district. Fearheiler was killed by Indians on his way to Fort Defiance. No one came into the district the following year but in 1872, Darling, financed by some army officers and capitalists from Washington, led a large party into the Pioneer district from Santa Fe. They carried with them a few lengths of board from which they constructed molds for adobe bricks and from these erected a

<sup>1</sup>"The Early Trail Blazers," *Rico News*, June 1892.

Mexican smelting furnace. Some work was done on what later became the Atlantic Cable, Phoenix, Aztec and Yellow Jacket claims, and three small bars of bullion were produced in the furnace. The adobe, however, was not sufficiently refractory and the furnace soon became useless. Discouraged by failure and by the low grade of bullion, the party abandoned the claims upon the approach of winter, and returned to Santa Fe.

Prospecting was again resumed in the Pioneer district in 1877, and in 1878 became quite active through the energy of John Glasgow, Sandy Campbell, David Swickhimer and others. The Atlantic Cable, Blackhawk, Pelican, Aztec, Hope, Cross, Grand View, Major, Phoenix, Yellow Jacket and Columbia claims were all located in 1878. In the spring of 1879 rich oxidized silver ore was uncovered on Nigger Baby Hill and a rush to the district from neighboring camps followed. Several claims on the Hill were sold to the Grand View Mining Company, in which Senator Jones and John W. Mackay, of the Comstock Lode in Nevada, were prominent stockholders. Ore was also found on the Chestnut vein on Newman Hill and a small shipment was made to Swansea, Wales. Men having flocked into the district, a settlement sprang up and a name was sought. The camp hitherto had been known as Carbonate City, Carbonateville (or the Carbonate Camp on the Dolores), Dolores City, Doloresville and even Lead City. Suggested names were Wilson, Belford, Patterson, Glasgow and Lovejoy.<sup>2</sup> With so many names, no decision was reached and a compromise on Nigger Baby was about decided upon, when William Weston suggested Rico, Spanish for "Rich," and this name was adopted. The town site was surveyed and divided into lots. E. A. Robinson became justice of the peace.

By August, 1879, Rico was "booming. On August 20, a meeting was held and a Board of Trustees nominated, consisting of A. C. Brainard, James Brown, Joseph Castillo, D. Crowley and M. Winfield. On August 21, John Curry brought out the first issue of the *Dolores News*, the first seven issues of which were printed on the press of the *La Plata Miner* in Silverton, and brought over the range. In this month erection of the first two-story house was begun by Charles A. Mantz, the first editor of the *News*, and formerly of St. Louis. A. K. Prescott and Paul Helderman opened a store; Frank Lovejoy started a saloon, soon to be followed by another store, that of the Cahn brothers, Ben, Harry, William and Nat, Russian-born.

The first ladies, Mrs. Henry Knight and Mrs. William Embling, arrived this month; a Miner's Social Club (not a union) was organized, and on August 31, a man known only as "Frenchy" became

<sup>2</sup>Frank Lovejoy was said to have brought the first saloon and keno layout to town.

first candidate for the cemetery, when he was shot and killed by George McGoldrick, alias "The Kid."

In September a post office was opened with A. K. Prescott, postmaster. Mail service was undertaken by Worden Grigsby, by way of Ophir; later Meserole & Blake became the mail contractors and two daily mails were established, one from Silverton by way of Ophir that brought in mail from the north and east, the other from the south, which brought in mail from the west and from Arizona and New Mexico. Great difficulty was encountered in bringing in mail during the winter months and O. T. Tyler, a mail carrier, froze to death while crossing the range in February of 1880.

During September, 1879, the first wagoned freight was brought in, in the shape of Jim McJunkin's sawmill, which was set up about three miles above the town. This was an undertaking of considerable importance as there were no roads and the mountains seemed impassable. But he brought the machinery from Silverton, up the Animas Valley and across the ridge to the Dolores Valley, cutting his way through. The people of Rico came to his assistance and helped him over the last few miles, bringing his wagon down the steep mountain side. Soon George Barlow followed with another mill. The original cost of the turbine for Barlow's mill was \$250.00, but it cost him \$425.00 to bring it to Rico from Rio San Miguel up the Dolores Valley.

In October, Reese Riley landed the office material and type for the *Dolores News*, with C. A. Mantz as editor-in-chief, and Frank Hartman as compositor, foreman and printer's devil. About December, Mantz resigned and Hartman ran the paper until May 1, 1880, when it was purchased by Charles A. Jones, formerly of Kansas City, Missouri, with Hartman as a partner.

On October 5, 1879, news of the Ute Indian uprising in northwestern Colorado brought on a first-class Indian scare and all the ladies were herded into a new log cabin. Since the cabin had no windows or doors, the women were taken to the roof on a ladder and dropped down inside. The male population stationed guards around town and a large number congregated in Lovejoy's saloon, where they barricaded with baled hay and beer kegs; shortly after dark a noise of approaching hoofs was heard. It was a belated burro puncher coming along with his pack train. A nervous guard cut loose with a Sharp's rifle, slung the gun down and lit out. This enraged the burro puncher, so he took after the killer and caught him. Casualties—one dead burro and one badly disfigured tender-foot guard. The log cabin that harbored the ladies was later occupied by Sing Lee, Chinese laundryman.

On October 11, 1879, a son, Robert C. Spencer, was born to Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Spencer. He was the first white child born in

the Dolores Valley. The first wedding to occur was that of Charles F. Middaugh and the first school teacher, Alice A. Snyder, on April 6, 1880.

On November 27, 1879, the young people of the Pioneer Mining District and the Dolores Valley celebrated the first Thanksgiving with a wild game dinner and a big ball. Sixteen ladies were present. The population of Rico at this time was estimated to be 1,250.

On December 5, 1879, the first municipal election was held, Frank Raymond being elected mayor; D. A. McGrew, clerk; M. A. Bean, M. C. Manston, E. P. Kent, and H. E. Snyder, trustees, and Jim Cart, city marshal. Cart was a man of great courage and nerve, respected and feared by the lawless element. His deputy, Jim Sullivan, was a reckless fighting man, too impetuous to be a really strong officer of the law, but held in check by Cart, he was efficient and valuable. He later killed Ike Stockton, the noted desperado. From 1879 to 1882, only three arrests were made for murder: Kid McGoldrick (already noted, in the killing of "Frenchy"), James Newmeyer, for killing John Grigsby, July 10, 1880; and C. D. Knappen for killing Patrick McDonald on October 30, 1880.

In January, 1880, J. F. Wannemaker surveyed Rico and defined the streets and alleys. The townsite comprised 320 acres, being a mile long and half a mile wide. In this month a literary association was formed; in May, a hook and ladder company, a volunteer association, was formed to fight fires. A militia was organized, primarily to protect the settlement from the Indians. Later it became a unit of the Colorado National Guard, with a membership of about eighty. An Odd Fellows lodge was organized in August, 1880, followed by the Masons in 1881.

On March 13, 1880, Richard Gentry, first president of the Grand View Mining & Smelting Company, arrived in Rico, accompanied by J. C. Steacy, mining engineer, and on April 4, erection of the Grand View Smelter was begun. The machinery for the smelter arrived on July 4, having been hauled on wagons from Alamosa, then terminus of the Rio Grande Railroad, via the Conejos range, Pagosa Springs, Animas City and Mancos and down the terrible Bear Creek Hill, thence up the Rio Dolores to its destination. This machinery was on the road sixty-six days and cost 15 cents per pound freight from the end of the railway.

One of the worst storms and snowfalls ever recorded in the San Juan country began October 5, and continued four days and nights, when better than five feet of settled snow covered the streets of Rico; however, the sun came out and melted the snow, with several weeks of Indian summer following, so that ore packing from the highest mines continued until after Christmas, and enabled the Grand View Smelter to blow in November 7, 1880, and begin producing bullion.

In July, 1880, the Johnny Bull mine was discovered by Anthony Boaro and W. L. Hull and attracted considerable attention by the rich gold ore, reputed to have assayed as high as \$28,000 per ton. The property was leased to E. B. Cushing, and on March 1, 1881, the first case of claim-jumping took place when owners of the adjacent Black Hawk lode took possession in the early morning before the employees arrived. The jumpers, nine in number, stood off the owners for a few days and even paid packers as high as 50 cents a pound to bring supplies in to the property. On March 5, Cushing, with Jim Cart, now a deputy sheriff, and a posse of seventy-five men ousted the claimants; the case was taken to court and a compromise effected in 1883, but no work was done until 1890, when some leases were signed. It is reported that the attorneys were the final owners.

Up to this time, the Pioneer mining district and the surrounding territory had been a part of Ouray County, but in early 1881, the State Legislature created the County of Dolores, with Rico as the county seat.<sup>3</sup> At this time the governor appointed the following officers to serve until the next annual election: Frank W. Raymond, clerk and recorder; E. B. Cushing, treasurer; Jacob Summa, sheriff; S. V. Rosser, county judge; J. P. Norton, assessor; A. A. Waggoner, S. W. McCormick and S. H. Burghardt, commissioners.

Early in June, 1881, a party of Rico boys turned out to help the cattle men redress the repeated wrongs perpetrated by the Indians. They struck their trail at Burnt Cabin Springs, where the redmen had just finished murdering Dick May, [Frank] Smith, and John Thurman. On June 14, the boys overtook them at the head of Castle Valley,<sup>4</sup> southwest of the La Sal Mountains in Utah. The Indians took refuge in the rocks surrounding the valley and fought like demons, killing ten and wounding three of the whites. The dead were Harg Tartar, Wiley Tartar, Jack Galloway, Hiram Melvin, Jimmy Heaton and George Taylor of Rico, the two Wilson brothers of Grand Valley, Utah, Tom Click of Dolores and Dave Willis of Mancos. Jim Hall, Jordan Bean, and Harg Eskridge of Rico were severely wounded. The loss by the Indians was much greater.

First serious fire in Rico was at 1:45 A.M., January 20, 1882, when the building and property of H. Duponte was completely destroyed. In the spring of 1882, the Rico Mining & Smelting Company began the erection of a smelter in the lower part of town and the purchase of the Newman Group of mines by the Marrs Consolidated Mining Company for \$175,000 was an event of considerable importance, being the largest transaction which had taken place in

<sup>3</sup>Session Laws of Colorado, 1881, pp. 89, 92.

<sup>4</sup>Denver Tribune, June 25, 1881; Colorado Magazine, Vol. XX, 17-25; Colorado Springs Daily Gazette, June 22, and June 27, 1881; "Legend and History of the Rio Dolores and History of Pioneer District," H. H. Van Endert.

the camp. Some time during that winter, two well-known toughs, Tom Wall and "Trinidad," were lodged in the county jail for the shooting of Night Marshal Smith at Dunton, a camp on the West Dolores; the jail was only of logs, and during the night the guard was held up and the prisoners taken out and hanged from the exposed rafters of an unfinished barn.

The winter of 1883-84 was remarkable for deep snow all over the San Juan region and a February storm blocked the road between Rico and the outside world until June 15, when travel was again resumed. During this period, mail was packed in by an expert snowshoer. By mid-June no flour, bacon or coal oil was left in Rico and beef was a forgotten quantity. By the time provisions reached the town, flour had risen to a price of \$50 per hundred.

Another severe winter in 1884-85 discouraged development, particularly so in the face of declining silver prices, so Rico reached a climax of depression in late 1885, by which time everyone who had opportunities elsewhere was gone, and the once thriving, prosperous town dwindled to some 400 people. In this year C. H. Carpenter, owner of the C. H. C. group on C. H. C. Hill,<sup>5</sup> was the heaviest taxpayer in town and his mine shipped 5,000 tons of ore to local smelters; he had also commenced work on the Falcon Lode near the foot of Nigger Baby Hill. Hon. Alonzo P. Adams was first to discover ore in the C. H. C., sinking 100 feet of shaft for a one-half interest in the property in 1882. Adams was elected state representative for the district in 1890. Production of the C. H. C. to 1900, was about \$1,000,000.

The Grand View Smelter shut down in 1887, as also did the mine; Grand View ore had averaged about 170 ounces of silver per ton. In the fall of 1887, David Swickhimer struck rich ore in the Enterprise on Newman Hill, which proved to be the turning point in the downward progress of the camp and revived operations on many other properties.

#### THE SWICKHIMER STORY

The surprising rise of David Swickhimer deserves to be set apart in the history of Rico. Even as Leadville had its Tabors, Cripple Creek its Stratton and Ouray its Tom Walsh, so Rico had the Swickhimers, Dave and Laura, whose fortunes closely parallel those of the Tabors. Swickhimer came into the Pioneer district about 1877 and as early as 1881, he, Patrick Cain and John Gault began a shaft on the Enterprise claim, but subsequently sold their interests for a few hundred dollars worth of lumber. The success of Larned and Hackett in the Chestnut and Swansea claims led Swickhimer

<sup>5</sup>Both taken from his initials.

again to investigate the Enterprise and he bought a half interest in the property from George S. Barlow and took a contract to do development work for another quarter. At this time Swickhimer had retired from the office of sheriff, to which he had been elected in 1884, and his income was limited. His wife was running a restaurant to help out with the funds for the development work. Some time in the early part of 1887, Mrs. Swickhimer had bought a ticket in the Louisiana Lottery and during the summer a letter arrived for her with startling news! She had won a prize in the lottery. Some old-timers state it was \$2,500, some \$4,000, while a later newspaper account claimed it to have been \$5,000. With this money new life was instilled in the work, but still no ore showed. Finally Dave admitted he was ready to give up, but Laura insisted on one more try, there being just about enough funds left for one more shift. The work went on, a round of shots was placed and the charges fired. Eager hands raked away the muck and there at 262 feet the great bed of silver ore was uncovered. This was the discovery of the so-called "contact" or blanket ore, named from the inclination of the deposit, where, by a lucky break, the shaft had cut the edge of the largest and richest ore body ever found on Newman Hill.

Swickhimer and Barlow worked the property for some two years, producing ore which mostly settled for at \$300 to \$350 per ton. Ore had to be rich to stand transportation charges then. On May 13, 1890, Swickhimer paid Barlow \$150,000 for his remaining quarter interest.

Dave was becoming a rich man now and with the opening of the Rico State Bank on February 15, 1890, he was chosen the president. This was to bring disaster upon him in later years. The First National Bank was opened on June 16, 1890.

In May, 1891, Swickhimer sold out to George Crawford of New York and Oliver Posey of Whitewater, Wis., who had shortly before effected the sale of the Yankee Girl, Guston and American Belle mines at Red Mountain to an English syndicate. It was rumored that the same syndicate was interested in the purchase of the Enterprise. Purchase price was stated to be two million dollars and the properties involved included the Enterprise with ten claims, the Jumbo group of two claims, and the Group and Onomee tunnel sites, altogether about 125 acres. The Enterprise group had produced about \$800,000 and the Jumbo about \$100,000. Swickhimer and his wife received \$1,250,000 in cash for their interests. The promoters were most optimistic, as they hoped to pay one million dollars in dividends the first year of operation. A company was organized under the laws of New Jersey with a capital stock of \$2,500,000, shares \$5 par value. The first two cars shipped from the property in August netted \$14,000. Low grade ore was piled on the dump awaiting completion

of the Rio Grande Southern Railway. Up to October 1, 1891, nearly \$200,000 worth of ore had been shipped.

Meanwhile, the Swickhimers were to face the same problems which have plagued wiser heads, namely, what to do with their riches. Dave had invested in the Rico State Bank, while Laura, much against the wishes of her attorney, had invested a goodly part of her fortune in a second mortgage against the Tabor Block in Denver. With the crash of the Tabor fortune this was lost and she was again reduced to comparative poverty. Friction developed between Dave and Laura, finally resulting in divorce. Laura later married a man named Smith. Her remains now lie in the cemetery a mile or so below Rico, in the valley which she loved. Dave was remarried in 1896, to Miss Annie Shear of Missouri, and for several years they lived in Denver. The panic year of 1907 struck the Rico bank and its doors were closed on December 23, 1907, at which time Swickhimer promised to pay all depositors their full amounts with interest. He was told by his friends that this was foolish but he replied that his name was at stake. By February, 1908, all accounts were closed and the receiver of the bank discharged. Swickhimer and his wife now moved to less pretentious quarters. On February 5, 1920, he passed away at their residence, 75 Downing Street, Denver.

On March 1, 1890, the boiler for the Rico electric light plant, weighing 9,200 pounds, was loaded on sleighs at Rockwood. It was hauled ten miles the first day, then delayed by snow storms. On April 12, 1890, the light plant was placed in operation. That summer the Enterprise Hotel, 80 by 100 feet in size, with 62 rooms, was opened. The first major accident in the mines occurred on August 29, 1890, when Daniel M. Williams and Edgar W. Bennett were killed in the Lexington Tunnel by a premature blast.

The first church services held in Rico were conducted in a tent by Reverend C. M. Hoge, an itinerant minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church. A church was organized in the fall of 1890, with the aid of money loaned by the Congregational Church Building Society of New York City. Services had previously been held in the G. A. R. Hall and in a partitioned off part of the Enterprise Hotel bar. Reverend T. C. Dickinson, now living in Eaton, Colorado, was the first pastor, being succeeded by a Rev. Kennedy.

On Sunday, July 12, 1891, P. D. Hudson, 23, proprietor of the Enterprise Hotel, shot and killed Rose Conway, 19, then killed himself. C. L. Petherbridge was a later manager of the hotel. The St. James Hotel and Restaurant advertised "Best cook and finest bill of fare in Southern Colorado; Board \$7.00 per week."

On October 1, 1891, the Rio Grande Southern Railway crossed the town line. Assessed valuation increased from \$480,000 in 1890

to \$750,000 in 1891. Late in 1891, the Rico-Aspen Consolidated Mining Co. was formed by D. H. Moffat, Denver banker, with about 35 mines in the district. This company also purchased the Waring-Lexington works and intended to move it nearer their mines. On May 6, 1892, D. H. Moffat was elected president of the company, which had a capital stock of \$5,000,000. Eben Smith of Leadville, vice-president; A. B. Roeder of Rico, treasurer, and D. L. V. Browne, manager. Moffat and his party paid a visit to Rico in May, at which time an elaborate banquet was prepared in his honor.

On April 16, 1892, fires were started in the large furnace of the Grand View Smelter. In September trouble developed between the Enterprise and Rico-Aspen groups when the Enterprise blasted out a raise and burned sulphur to drive out the Aspen men; the Montezuma connection was also blasted down with an estimated damage to the Aspen of \$40,000.

In May, 1892, J. W. Burley & Company started the Burley Block on lots recently vacated by the Merchant's Exchange and Nickum's Barber Shop. When finished, it was to be the handsomest stone building in the city.

In June, 1892, contractor Peterson was laying the foundation of the new school house, 40 by 66 feet in size and two stories in height, the basement to be constructed of stone of fine quality, while the remainder was to be of pressed brick from Durango. Estimated cost was in the neighborhood of \$12,000. In October, the same year, George A. Phillips of Ouray purchased the old Pasadena Smelter, intending to tear it down and erect a modern sampler with capacity of 100 tons per day. Also in 1892, the Blackhawk tram, 3400 feet in length and costing about \$10,000, was built. It had a capacity 80 tons per 10 hours.

The Rio Grande Southern constructed a switch-back road up Silver Creek with a 4% grade; this road reached most of the mines on Nigger Baby and Newman Hills and had a length of about four miles. It has all been torn up since. In this year an estimated 1700 to 2000 miners were working. The population of the town was estimated at 4,000.

By 1895 the large bodies of "contact" ore were mined out and many veins also had been worked down to a depth beyond which the ore could no longer pay for shipment; the declining price of silver also had a depressing effect.

In 1901 many of the mines were consolidated under the name of the United Rico Mining Company, which included the Rico-Aspen, Enterprise, Rico Townsite & Milling Company, the Swansea, Atlantic Cable, Grand View, Hope and Cross, the Rico Mine Co., which had a 150-ton smelter and a 100-ton mill, the Lexington,

Onomoo and Syndicate tunnels and the Grand View Coal Company, with 320 acres of coal land.

A decade later the United Rico went into receivership and was reorganized as the Rico Mining Company, which also went into receivership in 1915, emerging as the Syndicate Mining and Milling Company. In 1912, Fred Price of Salt Lake City (now deceased) formed the Rico-Argentine Company with a lease on the old Blackhawk property, having about 140 acres under its control. The property was operated intermittently until about 1931. The company had no milling facilities but at times availed itself of the 250-ton mill of the International Smelting & Refining Co., which was closed down during the 1930's and dismantled in 1941. In the early 1920's the company became involved in prolonged litigation but finally won out.

About 1919 Robert L. Pellett, a mining engineer who had "lost his shirt" in a manganese venture in Georgia, recalled that his family had some interests in Rico. Telling his bride that they would spend a couple of years in settling up affairs, he moved into the Rico mining picture. In 1923 he obtained a lease and option on the Falcon and Yellow Jacket mines on Nigger Baby Hill from the Syndicate Company; followed in 1924 by a lease and option on the Newman Hill and Shamrock, including the Pro Patria Mill and the Atlantic Cable Mine, this also from the Syndicate Company. Later the first properties were grouped into the Falcon Mining Company, and the Newman Hill and associated properties into the Pelleyre Mining & Milling Company, which in turn became a subsidiary of the International Smelting Company of Salt Lake City. For many years he furnished employment to a large number of men at a time when work was scarce. He might well be said to have been the savior of the camp. Mr. Pellett passed away in 1949, due to serious injuries received in an automobile accident. His widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Pellett, continues to be an outstanding figure in the community, being the State Representative from that district, comprising Dolores, San Miguel and Montezuma counties. In 1942, she made a personal trip to the capitol in Washington in an effort to pull the Rio Grande Southern Railway out of the financial hole in which it had become mired. As the result of this trip she was able to obtain a mail contract for the line, which insured operation for several years, although the contract was again taken away during 1950, and the Southern is having trouble, both financial and operational.

Control of the Rico-Argentine was obtained in 1937 by J. A. Hogle of Salt Lake City, and under the management of C. G. Van Winkle, the property has been expanded from 240 acres to more than 3,000, having acquired control of most of the mines in the

camp. In 1941, the options of the International Smelting Company were taken over; in 1942 the Pelleyre properties on Newman Hill were acquired, and in 1943, when the St. Louis Smelting & Refining Company withdrew from the district, its properties were also taken over. In addition, a lease and option on the Falcon group on Nigger Baby Hill was taken. From 1939 to 1948 the gross production has been just under ten million dollars; more than a million dollars transferred to surplus and substantial dividends paid. Total production of the county in 1947 was \$1,482,000, most of which came from the Rico-Argentine. Due to economic conditions, mining was suspended in May, 1949, the mill shut down and operations ceased. However, in 1950, the company again re-opened the mill and is now working 40 to 50 men.

#### NEWSPAPERS OF RICO

No article of this character would be complete without some mention of the weekly newspapers which have exerted much influence in the Rico community. The *Dolores News* and its successors have been outstanding examples. As related before, the *Dolores News* began publication on August 21, 1879, being at first printed on the press of the *La Plata Miner* at Silverton, but on October 8 began on its own press. John R. Curry was the first owner, Charles A. Mantz first editor. Curry published the paper until May 1, 1880, when he sold out to Charles A. Jones of Kansas City, Missouri, and Frank Hartman of Farmington, New Mexico. They jointly published the paper until September 2, 1882, when Jones became sole owner and continued as such until February 13, 1886, when he sold the plant, Washington handpress and all, to the Wyman brothers, lawyers of Rico, who soon faded out of the picture. By 1890, W. C. Morrish was publishing it as the *News-Record*. In 1892 Morrish and Coughlin were the owners. In that year, the *News-Record* had 1000 subscribers. Another paper, the *Rico Sun* was also being published by F. E. Rust and George Hutt in 1892, but does not seem to have survived long. In 1896, Hutt and Casey were publishing the *News-Sun*, but in 1902, we find Hutt alone in the field with the *Weekly Rico News*. For the past several years there has been no paper published in the town.

Charles A. Jones, publisher from 1880 to 1886, married Miss Virginia Bartlett of Rico on January 8, 1884, and from this union was born a son, Clifford Bartlett Jones, on April 9, 1885. Clifford B. Jones is now President Emeritus of the Texas Technological College, Lubbock, Texas, and has the original files of the *Dolores Sun* from 1879 to 1886 in his possession.

Charles A. Jones was a man of outstanding ability. After his departure from Rico, he went to the National Water Works of Kansas City. In 1895 he became Purchasing Agent for the Armour Packing Company and continued as such until 1907, when he assumed the management of the vast Spur Ranch in West Texas, owned by the Swenson banking interest of New York City. In 1913, he built and subsequently managed the Freeport Sulphur Company plant at Freeport, Texas, also a Swenson enterprise. In 1922, Mr. Jones moved to New York City as Vice-President of the Freeport Sulphur Company and allied interests. Prior to the time of his retirement in 1927, he was a director in all and president of most of the following: The Freeport Sulphur Company; the Freeport Texas Company, Freeport Sulphur Transportation Company, Freeport Gas Company, the Freeport Townsite Company, Freeport terminal Company (railway and docks), the La Espuela Oil Company and the Houston & Brazos Valley Railway Company. He died at Spur, Texas, on November 25, 1934.

The few old-timers in Rico affirm that at one time the little town had as many as 4,000, 5,000 or 6,000 population, and one wonders where they all lived, although you learn that most of the houses have either been torn down or have burned during the years. The 320-acre townsite has been encroached upon by dense growths of aspen. Where once numerous hotels—fourteen at one time flourished, and business houses, saloons, two banks, numerous mills and smelters, and many business and professional men carried on the business of a thriving community, today there is only one general store, no hotel, and the Rico-Argentine interests, the sole owner of almost all the scores of properties which once operated.

Several years ago the granger population of the Dove Creek area, after one reversal, succeeded in having the county seat changed from Rico to Dove Creek and the fine two-story stone courthouse stands deserted.

Thus ends the story of Rico, once the metropolis of the Dolores Valley; may it again taste some of the excitement of the old days and see the mines producing as of yore.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Mrs. Carl Armeling of Denver, Mrs. Elizabeth Pellett, George Moore (now deceased) and Charles Engel of Rico; Dr. Clifford B. Jones of Lubbock, Texas; Miss Frances Shea, librarian, Colorado State Historical Society, and Mrs. Margaret Reid, librarian, Colorado Springs Public Library, without whose cooperation much of the information contained herein would not have been obtained.

## The Beginning of Holly

HELEN FLETCHER COLLINS\*

In 1870, Hiram S. Holly,<sup>1</sup> an Englishman, established a ranch consisting of about 50,000 acres, which included the present site of Holly, Colorado. This ranch, known as the SS (Double S), extended from Granada to the Kansas state line and until 1885 was enclosed by a fence. The vast domain abounded in natural hay (buffalo grass, gramma grass, and blue stem.)<sup>2</sup>

Later when the Santa Fe railroad extended its shining steel to La Junta, the roadbed ran through the SS ranch. In 1896, a company of English engineers arrived and as the Arkansas Valley Land and Irrigating Company, began an irrigation project to develop the sandy acres north of the river. In time and in tune with the principal industry, the Holly Sugar Company began operations and the community became the town of Holly.<sup>3</sup>

But while Holly was little more than a village blacksmithery, it had begun to reflect on the days that were past. The *Holly Chieftain*, established in 1897, spoke nostalgically in May of that year of an old, old-settler, "Dutch" John Luke of Sand Creek. At that time, Mr. Luke was conceded to be the resident who had lived longest in the area. He had dropped in from "nowhere in particular" in 1866, he said. For many years he was foreman of the SS Ranch under Mr. Holly, and rode the SS range from Chivington on the north line, to Butte Creek on the south, a distance of more than seventy miles. While acting in the capacity of foreman, "Uncle Johnny" stated that he had loaded 127,000 head of cattle on the cars. He also recalled that when he first came to this region large herds of buffalo were common, and "Indians circulated promiscuously through the country." Mr. Luke was a great favorite with the children of Holly and his infrequent appearances in the village were always hailed with glee, according to Mrs. Laura Wilkin.

The *Chieftain* also mentions another oldtimer whose identity is lost in the haze of fifty years:

"Burro Joe" was seen on the streets today, a smiling reminder of the days when Holly was Holly's Double S.

Perhaps this account could best be told from the viewpoint of Fred Gores. Mr. and Mrs. Gores moved to Lamar a short time ago,

\*Mrs. Collins, author of "Prairie Wife and Other Poems," is a newspaper woman, poet, and radio commentator. Formerly news editor of the *Holly Chieftain*, and now with the *Lamar Daily News*, she is the cheery MC for a program on KLMR, entitled "Valley Women in the News."—Ed.

<sup>1</sup>Although a map in the office of the Prowers County treasurer uses the spelling "Holley," R. G. McGrath, local historian, says that it is a mistake to use the "e." See also, *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XVIII, 152.

<sup>2</sup>*Colorado Magazine*, XI, 137-138.

<sup>3</sup>Incorporated, Sept. 4, 1903. A postoffice was established December, 1880.

but up until that time, he was the oldest person who had lived in Holly continuously. He was born on the XY Ranch, August 3, 1876. The story of the Gores family pronounced "Goreess" is the story of Holly.

Fred Gores was four years old when his father, John Gores, moved to Holly's Ranch in 1880. Love of the wide open prairie filled the staunch heart that beat under the short jacket with the lace collar above the kilted skirt. His gentle way and quick wit were heritage from his New York Irish mother, the former Agnes Keough.



ENGLISH ENGINEERS AND HOLLY BELLES ENJOY MUSICAL EVENING. CLARA MILLINGER, LATER MRS. JOHN DUNCAN, AND JOHN DUNCAN IN LOWER RIGHT FOREGROUND

There was no town when John Gores established a home here, just the huge SS Ranch, where he went to work as carpenter and blacksmith. In 1879, he built the stone barn and stone ranch house, now the home of Prowers County Commissioner William N. Wilson, Mrs. Wilson, and their children, Mary Louise and Billy. Portholes were let into the walls of the barn, ostensibly for light and air for

the cattle, but, actually, says Mr. Gores, "just in case there should be an Indian raid."

Choteau's Island<sup>4</sup> was a real island in the 1880's, not the hay-field attached to the mainland that it has since become. Then it was still good trapping ground with plenty of beaver and bobcats.

The Gores family lived on the ranch a couple of years and Fred and his brothers and sisters attended the little red school-house that stood on the river bank south of the tiny frame depot. One of the chief memories of those schooldays, says Mr. Gores, was not of willow withes near the teacher's desk, nor red-topped, copper-toed boots, but rather that of jovial Frank Means, cook for the SS outfit. Means was a man of perhaps fifty, big of body and soul, and his brown-crust white loaves drew all the children from the nearby school to the ranch kitchen.

Then the elder Gores built a new house. This house is now owned by John Hixson. The old home is used as a scale house at the Hixson feed lot.

The community's only store was the commissary operated by C. L. McPherson, ranch bookkeeper. It was filled with everything and anything, from red hair ribbons to potatoes and onions. There was nothing north of the river, until John Gores built a blacksmith shop where the Hotel Grand now stands. Much of his father's income, recalls the son, was obtained from the hundreds of land-seekers, going through in ever lengthening wagon-trains. Even the cows were shod, as well as horses and oxen, because of the rigors of trail travelling.

Then came the memorable year of 1897, with the boom days of the Arkansas Valley Irrigation and Land Company. The little settlement took on the proportions of a village and mushroomed into a town. The first commercial building was a grocery store, owned by C. L. McPherson, who was the frontier town's first post-master. Fred Gores laid aside lasso and chaps to help put up this structure which in the past few years has been converted into an apartment house.

First editor of the Holly *Chieftain* was a Mr. Milford, from the short-grass country around Tribune, Kansas. In fact, relates another pioneer daughter, Mrs. Laura Millinger Wilkin, many of the early business men came from Horace and Tribune.

The *Chieftain* of February, 1897, speaks of work progressing at great speed on a new hotel building, whose owners were Mr. and

<sup>4</sup>Named for A. P. Choteau, who with Jules De Mun, were with a large trapping party which operated on the Arkansas, Rio Grande, Platte and Canadian rivers from 1815 to 1817. (The name is also spelled Chouteau.) *Colorado Magazine*, XIII, pp. 175-177.

Mrs. Lew S. Millinger. Foundations were laid that month. By the time the sides were up, according to Mrs. Wilkin, there was a heavy demand for rooms. Planks were laid across the upper beams, and there the hordes of Easterners pouring in, in answer to the advertising of the land company, felt themselves lucky to have a cot bed under the open sky. A touch of metropolitan eliteness . . . a hand-bell "connected the front desk with the landlord's sleeping quarters." In July, the proprietors gave a grand opening ball. Mrs. Millinger and the four pretty daughters served ice cream, berries, cake, and lemonade to the whole town, and dozens of visitors from nearby communities.



LAURA MILLINGER, WITH MANDOLIN, IVY  
MILLINGER, WITH GUITAR  
About 1890.

The youngest daughter, Ivy, was later named Maid of Honor for Prowers County. Three of the Millinger girls became wives of men whose names were linked inseparably with the rise of Holly. Maude, was married in 1897 to Merton E. Fisher of Pueblo, who was connected with the Guggenheim mineral interests; Clara became the bride of a civil engineer, the late John Duncan. Mr. Duncan, an Aberdeen Scotsman who came to the Valley by way of California, designed the Amity Canal. *The Chieftain* publicly lauded Mr. Duncan for his confidence in the Valley, and said that he set out four hundred apple trees on his own ranch. Laura's husband, the late J. W. Wilkin, was a real estate and insurance man

in the early 1900's, and also served as Justice of Peace, and as a member of the schoolboard.

It was to be expected that the vast cattle holdings of the third quarter of the nineteenth century would diminish as farm-minded settlers entered the area. It was in 1897 that Fred Gores' brothers, Charley and John Jr., began to feel themselves fenced in and departed for the more open range of Texas. It was about this time, too, that George A. H. ("Kid") Baxter, a cowboy of local renown, bought himself a "dazzlingly white vest" and hitched his trotter to a cart. With a cowboy companion, Floyd Place, he set out for a drive. Soon Place was reported to be walking back, rolling a wheel. "Kid" was driving the horse, while one end of the axle dragged the ground. Their explanation was that the wheel was used to following a burro around and just could not keep up with a horse.

The pioneers, whose daily lives were in the hand of God, seem to have had little time for and expression of formal religion. Yet, there is record that an illiterate Christian, one George French, provided services at the schoolhouse for all who might come. Mrs. French coaxed hymn tunes out of the school's small parlor organ. French was the father of a large family, wresting a precarious livelihood from the sodland about eight miles north of Holly on what is now the Allen Cooper farm on the Towner Road. Each Sunday the entire French family drove the long distance in a broken-down farm wagon, drawn by two skinny horses.

The schoolhouse was more or less a community center. Dances were held there, with fiddles scraping away all night. Babies were cradled on the rude desks pushed against the walls. Older children were bedded down in hay-filled lumber wagons. The long sessions were not only for fun, but were necessary in order that the horses would have light to find their way home over the trackless prairies.

At Christmastime, Santa Claus always found the schoolhouse. The SS Ranch folk saw to it that there was always a big Christmas tree. Folks from near and far brought presents for their own families and cowboys in the region never let anyone go away without gifts. Needy families would find fuel and food waiting for them at home after the Christmas Eve program.

Then, as now, cowboy was a glamorous word. And the lads did their best to live up to their impressive reputation. Cowboys on the big ranch considered themselves uncles by adoption to the children of the little village and the outlying settlers. They conveyed the children home on horseback whenever high winds or blizzards made rough going for little legs. Mrs. Wilkin relates that folks in the surrounding area, too, were recipients of the cowboys'

thoughtfulness in the winter. At least one rescue testified to their heroism. A young teacher and her tubercular sister were living in a canvas topped soddy several miles south of Holly, when a blizzard loosened the flimsy tent-roof. A heavy snowfall accompanied the storm and the sisters were buried under the sodden blanket for two days. They owed their lives, finally, to the cowboys who risked their own lives to save the girls.

Holly had its first telephone in 1902. The first wire was up, and the second about to be strung. A brick station was replacing the tiny frame depot. Western Postal Telegraph put in an office at Holly, with a direct line to *The Chieftain* office.



MRS. LOUISE McPHERSON, WIFE OF  
FIRST POSTMASTER AT HOLLY, 1897

Never think that all the gold was in "them thar hills." F. G. Hoffman made a trip down to Springfield, seventy-five miles away in the southeast corner of the state. There was, he said, considerable excitement over the discovery of gold in the Carriso country. Several claims had been staked out, in fact, almost the whole country, he reported. But, he didn't think much of it, opined that the surest road to wealth was to come back to Holly and raise crops on his ten-acre tract of irrigated land.

First levelling operation officially listed in the Holly neighborhood was that of Webster and Rockwell, who used eight horses on forty acres, north of town. Ditching contractors brought up the

demand for oats for horse feed. This was also the year that Amity Mutual Irrigation Ditch company abandoned the idea of sowing wheat on irrigated fields and decided on alfalfa, instead. Loose alfalfa hay was selling at \$3 a ton, and XY Ranch pridefully said they got eight tons to the acre and had four cuttings a year. XY had holdings of 5,000 acres, of which 2,000 were under cultivation, irrigated from their own ditch.

James Kendall irrigated his large farm from a private ditch. He announced in print, his intention of keeping a four horse sulky plow going all summer to break sod. It is told of Kendall that he was such a good horseman, that shown a worn halter for a clue in the morning, he could "run in" any animal in the area by nightfall. Another horseman of repute was H. A. Pettee, who took along his saddle when he and Mrs. Pettee went to Denver to attend the Mountain and Plains Festival of the late 90's. "Going to give the crowds pointers in the art of riding bucking brones," he said.

Holly continued growing near the end of the century. It was fashionable to talk about "Old" times. We quote from *The Chieftain*:

Another old landmark was effaced from our town this week for the many improvements going on. The building which stood at the corner of Santa Fe and Fourth Streets has been torn down and moved south of the track. The Holly School building has been moved to a more central location, north of the track.

It was added that the school term would be for seven months, and the teacher would be a young woman from Nebraska. The water supply was a galvanized bucket with a single tin cup. Sanitation facilities consisted of a wash basin on a low bench in a back corner, and a path that led to a Sears-Roebuck catalog in a small out-building.

Building activities included three residences going up in August, with the prediction that this average would continue for several weeks. By this time, too, Holly had become a full-fledged post office, boasting that orders in any amount might be purchased from Postmaster McPherson. New businesses were developing by leaps and bounds. Robert King of Tribune started a wagon factory at Santa Fe and Fifth Streets. His building stood in its original form until razed in 1948. A land development company announced plans to build "The Great Plains Water Storage" reservoir and ditches, but nothing came of it. Howard Brown constructed a contrivance for harvesting grasshoppers. Denny Conley exhibited fine pie cherries from trees set out in 1896 by A. A. Parrish, northwest of Holly. The trees were reported to be loaded.

Broommaker John Starkey figured on buying a tract to grow broomcorn. This is the first mention at Holly, of a crop that has

proved to be a dryland standby, and an important industry fifty-four years later. It was in July that the Amity Company sold nine farms with an aggregate acreage of 780 acres. Wheat in Chicago reached a dollar a bushel. Butter was twenty cents a pound. Editor Milford complained bitterly that neighboring Coolidge, Kansas, six miles east, had put in a new "Skim house," and Holly has "nary a creamery, as yet. Wake up," he advised.

No account of Holly at any time, in early days, or the steady upsurge of the twenties, through the discouragements of the thirties, or the Horatio Alger "Dust to Diamonds" episodes of the forties would be complete without reference to weather and soil conservation in the area. Conditions were no different in 1897 than in 1950. "Terrible" electric storms were recorded, washing out the Buffalo Creek Bridge, and causing similar distress for the Buffalo Canal.

The foregoing paragraphs have been largely devoted to the conception and birth of this little southeastern Colorado town, now known as the Gateway to Colorado's Market Basket, the Colorado Arkansas Valley. The sound and fury that was the town's adolescence, and its further growth and maturity will be treated in future articles.

## Harry E. Niven—Pioneer for Social Security

SELETHA A. BROWN\*

On November 20, 1950, Harry E. Niven became eighty-seven years old and completed more than a half-century of living in Colorado. He and his wife, Viola, celebrated their sixty-first wedding anniversary in April with a quiet family party. It is not longevity which makes Mr. Niven worthy of acquaintanceship, but his alertness of mind and the continuation of his life-long habit of public service.

In the past, he worked for social reforms and increased pay for rural mail carriers, was a member of the State Legislature, supervisor of W.P.A. projects, and one of Colorado's first District Governors of the Lions Club. He is now an ardent supporter of the National Annuity League, a reporter of the findings of the Un-American Activities Committee, and a worker for civic enterprise.

Mr. Niven tells us:

"I was born at Bellefontaine, Ohio, but at the age of seven, my parents moved to South Bend, Indiana. Because my father

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\*Mrs. Brown, of Longmont, has previously contributed pioneer articles to this magazine.—Ed.

was a victim of liquor, my mother was the principal support of five children, and it was necessary for me to quit school when I was in the sixth grade to lend my efforts to the family support. I found employment at the Singer Sewing Machine factory as a 'tender boy' for the sum of 60 cents per day. I stayed with this company until 1885, and had advanced my wages to \$1.25 a day.

"When I was twenty-one, the urge to go west sent me to Kansas where I worked in planing mills and on cattle ranches. I was at a ranch twenty miles south of Florence, Kansas, in the winter of 1885-86, and worked through a storm that is recorded in Kansas history as one of the most severe storms of the state.

"The ranch, where I worked, followed a stream bed, and was protected by trees and bluffs, so we were wintering 300 head of Texas long-horns, preparing them for spring market. The blizzard struck unexpectedly in the first week in January, and lasted for three days. Thousands of cattle drifted with the storm, piling up along the Santa Fe railroad. Many were frozen or smothered in snow, among them most of the cattle we were wintering.

"Ranchers were so 'hard hit' that I went to Kansas City and again found work in a planing mill. Some friends arranged a blind date for me with Viola Chase, a capable young lady vacationing from her duties as matron of the Haskell Institute for Indians. It was a happy meeting for both of us and culminated in our marriage at Viola's home in Lawrence, Kansas, on April 17, 1889."

The following year, in July, Mr. and Mrs. Niven moved to Denver. Harry found work in a planing mill; bought a lot "away out in the suburb" at what is now 415 Garfield Street. There he built a two room house, almost entirely by his own labor, that is in use today although it has been added to considerably.

Viola Niven's tall figure shudders as she recalls how they moved into this home before the partitions were plastered. The green lumber housed thousands of tiny bugs which made life miserable until plaster could be applied to the walls, then the lime of the wet plaster killed the pests.

"And we could live in peace again," concludes Mrs. Niven, "but that was a trial many pioneer women endured."

Five years later, the Nivens moved to Gilpin County, opening a mercantile store, which Viola managed, while Harry tried his hand at mining operations near Apex. There he helped develop and build a stamp mill for the Anna H. Mining and Milling Company. High altitude did not agree with Mrs. Niven, nor the children who now numbered four, so the family located at Berthoud, Colorado, in the summer of 1898.

After a brief venture in the lumber and contracting business, Harry worked for the Davis-Hartford Mercantile Co., a thriving company of that farming community. He served as Town Marshall of Berthoud for two years (1906-08), at the same time acting as Deputy Sheriff for Larimer County. When the water works and filter plant were built for Berthoud, he was Water Superintendent of the town. This caused the Roberts Filter Co., of Philadelphia, to hire him as supervisor of work while they constructed the water and filter plant for Fort Collins in 1909-10, on the Cache la Poudre, seventeen miles from the city.

While in Berthoud, Mr. Niven had his first insight into political conniving. He says of this:

"I was appointed Rural Free Delivery Carrier of Route 1, Berthoud, in July of 1902. For this I received \$50.00 a month and furnished my own rig, team, and feed. I recall one month that the family had but \$17.50 after I paid my feed bills and the payment on the house. That was the year in which we buried one child and a new one was born. You can understand why I began soliciting subscriptions to magazines to supplement my income. It wasn't long, however, before I received a curt note from the Post Office Department warning that such solicitation was against the rules and regulations.

"It was then that I joined with other rural carriers of the state to take the lead in organizing a Rural Letter Carriers Union or association. After much correspondence, a state organization was consummated, and I was elected as its secretary. In this capacity, I was sent to the national meeting of Rural Carriers held in the Sherman House at Chicago, in September of 1903.

"The present generation, taking labor unions as a matter of course, can't comprehend the secrecy which surrounded the entire proceedings. Because some officials in the United States Postal Department opposed any organization of employees, all of our meetings in Chicago were held behind locked doors.

"I recall that there were two publications that greatly assisted the rural carriers in their fight for higher wages and a national organization. These were the *Rocky Mountain News* and a small publication, *R. F. D. News*, whose editor was H. H. Windsor, who was also editor of *Popular Mechanics*. Mr. Windsor was present at our national meeting, giving us much wise counsel. My earnestness of purpose was recognized, and I was elected to the Executive Board of the National Rural Letter Carriers of the U.S.A.

"In the course of time, the secretary of our national organization turned traitor to our cause, turning over a great amount of correspondence to the officials of the Postal Department who op-

posed our efforts. This resulted in all officers of the National Rural Carriers being discharged from their rural carrying jobs, and of course, that included me. Our discharge stated we were, 'too perniciously active in politics as a civil service employee'.

"Since most of these carriers had never taken a Civil Service examination, and received none of the benefits of Civil Service, this came as a surprise. Although it cost me my job, I've never regretted working for this cause. We proved to the world that, 'Co-operation is not a sentiment, but is an economic necessity.' The organization of Rural Carriers, which I helped to form, is in active existence today, and is recognized as being helpful to the Post Office Department as well as to the carriers. It has helped develop pension plans, increased wages, and secured other benefits for rural carriers."

After being discharged as a mail carrier, Mr. Niven worked at various jobs until he was appointed manager of promotion and insurance for the Woodmen of the World in Idaho and Wyoming. This meant being away from home for months at a time.

"But when you have five growing children, you take the best job you can get," explained Mr. Niven.

Since 1891 he has been a member of the Presbyterian Church, often serving as superintendent or teacher of a Sabbath School class. While working for the Woodmen, he made it a point to attend church in whatever town he found himself on Sunday.

The Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. at Pocatello, Idaho, became well acquainted with Mr. Niven, noting his ability to inspire others.

"I wish you'd speak to our Businessmen's class which meets at the 'Y' each Sunday afternoon," said the Secretary. "I believe you can bring them a worthwhile message."

Harry consulted his schedule and agreed to a date four weeks hence.

"During those four weeks I labored over a subject," he says, "I copied and recopied my notes until I thought I had a creditable speech prepared. Then as I walked into the classroom to give my talk, I saw this motto on the wall, 'Others First.' Somehow it struck me! I discarded my carefully prepared notes, and talked about that motto. I was told that it was a long remembered talk."

In March 1917, Harry quit traveling for the Woodmen of the World, and the Nivens moved to Longmont, Colorado, where they have since remained save for brief interludes.

The Longmont Commercial Association, which became the Chamber of Commerce, needed an aggressive secretary to push local enterprise, and Harry was selected for the job. In this position,

he had an active part in building and opening Sunset Park at the outskirts of Longmont. This was first established as a tourist park and Niven's advertisements of Longmont's attractions brought visitors from many states to enjoy its facilities. While he was secretary, Roosevelt Park was developed at the city's old Fair Grounds; a steel grandstand being built along with a 4-H clubhouse and exhibit buildings. At the same time, he served as secretary of the Boulder County Fair Association where he aroused such co-operation between farmers and businessmen that the fair became known over the country as "The Fair Beautiful."

He was elected to the Colorado House of Representatives from Boulder County for the 24th and 25th Assemblies. Later he served as Sergeant-at-Arms of the House for the 28th Assembly, and Head Doorkeeper for the 29th Session.

"I was Sergeant-at-Arms during the depression years!" said Mr. Niven. "One day 500 or more people marched on the State House demanding relief for their families. They intended coming into the room where the legislature was in session to demand action. It was an unpleasant situation for me since I was in charge of, and responsible for, the properties of the room. However, we induced the crowd to appoint a committee as their representative which was allowed to enter and address the House of Representatives."

In January 1921, Dr. C. C. Reid of Denver, president of Lions International, asked Niven to fill the unexpired term of the Governor of Lions District 6, which comprised parts of Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado. The following year he was elected to the office. While serving as District Governor, he helped organize fourteen new clubs in Colorado. For this outstanding work the local Lions, of which he is a charter member, conferred upon him a Life Membership. In 1940, all past District Governors were made members of the Lions International Council, so Niven bears that distinction along with being the oldest past governor living in Lions International.

Recently Mr. Niven has given his energy to the work of the Annuity League of Colorado, publishing a ten page booklet of publicity for the League. He endeavors to keep the public informed of the dangers of communism among indifferent people by his writings and public address.

Mr. and Mrs. Niven have a family of useful citizens. Harold F. is Superintendent of the Great Western Sugar Factory at Delta, Colorado; Clarence E. is Assistant Chemist for the Santa Fe Railroad and lives at Topeka, Kansas; Willard I. is manager of H. E. Sutter Co., a bank and office furniture and supplies company, of Los Angeles. They have two daughters, Mrs. F. D. Simons of

Longmont, and Mrs. Robert Brown of Denver. Mrs. Brown, a widow, served as a W.A.C. for fifteen months during World War II, and her three sons, Robert, Harold, and Melvin were in the armed forces at the same time. There are now sixteen grandchildren and eighteen great-grandchildren in the Niven family.

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## The Life of Henry Meder

MRS. RUTH BEAN WERNER\*

Henry Meder was born in Albermarle County, Virginia, on March 15, 1847, of parents whose ancestors had come over from England some time before the Revolutionary War. He often said his parents were of that class which we now call "poor white trash." He was left an orphan at the age of seven and was raised on a farm by his uncle, until he was fourteen years old. He then entered the Civil War.

In 1861, he enlisted as field musician in Company A, 18th Virginia Volunteers, of the Confederate Army. He was in service during the entire war and fought in every battle in which General George E. Pickett participated.

Meder was a close witness to the battle of Gettysburg and took part in most of the battles around Richmond. He was taken prisoner near High Bridge, while assisting a surgeon to take care of wounded. With other prisoners he was sent to Fort Monroe and kept there under guard until he was paroled in June, or July, 1865.

Meder returned to his uncle's farm in Virginia. In December, 1866, he went to Baltimore where he enlisted as a private in Troop G, 7th Cavalry, of the regular U. S. Army. The officers of the 7th Cavalry at that time were Captain Barnitz, First Lieutenant Henry Jackson, and Second Lieutenant E. S. Godfrey. Meder was sent to Fort Wallace, Kansas, where they were having some trouble with the Indians. In the spring of 1868, Meder became a musician in the regimental band at Fort Wallace. Some time during September, he was sent with a message from Fort Wallace to Fort Hayes. While he was gone, there occurred the so-called "Battle of Beecher Island" in which Roman Nose, a Cheyenne chief, was killed. Sergeant Raymond, according to Mr. Meder, was credited with killing this famous Indian.

\*Mrs. Werner now resides at Superior, Arizona. She wrote this sketch as a term paper in Colorado History at Adams State College. It was written soon after Mr. Meder's death. It is presented as one of three sketches which are designed to bring attention to the San Luis Valley and the San Luis Centennial Celebration which will be held during the summer of 1951.—Ed.

Later in the year, the 7th Cavalry was sent into Indian Territory to punish Black Kettle and his Cheyennes who had been giving trouble. Meder was a member of the band on November 27, 1868, when the battle of Washita took place, in Indian Territory. He said that Custer, who was in command, sneaked up on the Indians during the night. At daybreak the band began to play "Garry Owen," which was the signal for charging. It was so cold the band could play only a strain and a half before the wind instruments froze up. Custer, on his favorite horse, Dandy, a black stallion, led the attack. Meder, on a short-legged brown horse, started directly behind Custer, but was unable to keep up with him. He saw Custer's horse jump the Washita which was about twenty feet wide, and saw him shoot several Indians. An Osage scout with Custer would jump off his horse and scalp the Indians that Custer had shot. When Meder reached the Washita, his horse would not jump it, so he had to go down stream to ford. Here he came up behind Captain Barnitz, just as an Indian raised up and shot the captain, wounding him.

The battle of the Washita was a decisive victory for the army. Black Kettle's tribe was almost wiped out. After the Indians were put to flight, the troops went down stream and burned the Indian village. On the way back to camp, the band played "Coming Out of the Wilderness." At sunrise the next morning the troops left with forty prisoners, mostly women and children, for Camp Supply,<sup>1</sup> where they rested a few days and were joined by the 19th Kansas Volunteers. Both regiments then started for Fort Cobb.<sup>2</sup> When they passed the battlefield they stopped to hunt for the bodies of Major Joel R. Elliott and nineteen men who had struck out on their own during the fight and had become entangled in the brush below the battlefield. Among these men was Corporal Courtney, a close friend of Meder. The Indians had scalped the men, stripped the bodies of all their clothing, and had also taken their guns and ammunition. They had even cut off one of Major Elliott's fingers in order to get a ring.

At Fort Cobb, the soldiers were met by General Phil Sheridan, who went with them to the site of Camp Wichita, Indian Territory, where they laid out Fort Sill, at the junction of Medicine Bluff and Cache Creeks. They stayed the entire winter of 1868 at Fort Sill, and in March, 1869, set out to rescue Miss White and Mrs. Morgan who had been taken captive by the Cheyenne Indians in the Solomon River Raid. When Custer, with his staff and band, came upon the Indian village, he was about five miles ahead of the command. Custer ordered the band to form a circle around the chiefs. When this was

<sup>1</sup>At the confluence of Wolf and Beaver Creeks in Indian Territory. Heltman: *Historical Register and Dictionary of U.S. Army*, Vol. 2, p. 549.

<sup>2</sup>At junction of Pond Creek and Washita River, *ibid.*, p. 489.

done, Custer instructed his interpreter, Romeo, a Mexican who had been captured when a boy by the Cheyennes, to inform the chiefs that if the women were not brought in by sundown the next day he would hang the chiefs. Romeo did this, which so angered one of the chiefs that he drew a bow and arrow which he had hidden in his blanket, and pointed it at Romeo. Romeo dodged quickly behind Custer, and the chief put down his bow because he did not dare shoot Custer. The women were freed before sundown the next day. When the troops paraded at sundown, the women stood before the tent assigned them, while the regimental band, of which Meder was one, played "Home, Sweet Home."

In the spring of 1870, Meder was transferred from the 7th Cavalry to Troop K of the 6th Cavalry, located at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Here he was detailed as a messenger in the Medical Director's office at Headquarters of the Department of the Missouri. It was during this time that he met the son of the famous scout, Kit Carson, Billy Carson, who was a civilian messenger in another office of the Department Headquarters.

When Meder's five-year term with the army expired in December, 1871, he was mustered out at Fort Leavenworth. He returned to his home in Virginia, but in June, 1872, went to Washington and re-enlisted as a field musician in Company D of the 15th U. S. Infantry. He was sent to Governor's Island, New York, where he took six months' training. In November he was sent to Fort Garland, Colorado.<sup>3</sup> He came as far as Pueblo on the railroad, and started from there on the stagecoach. The pass was blocked by snow, so he went to Fort Union, New Mexico, where he spent the winter. He reached Fort Garland on May 23, 1873, coming by way of Raton Pass and Badito.

Meder's happiest days were those spent in Fort Garland. There was one company of cavalry at the fort, and, because the Indians were not giving much trouble, the infantry never left the fort. Because Meder played both the fife and bugle, he had every other day off. He spent his time fishing in the streams nearby, in which trout were abundant.

While Meder was at Fort Garland, Captain Horace Jewett was the post commander. The first regimental commander was General Alexander, who was succeeded by General Granger. Both of these men kept the regimental office in Santa Fe. General D. N. Couch was made regimental commander, and he moved the office to Fort Garland. He retired, and the office was filled by Lieutenant-Colonel Peter T. Swaine, who had the office at Fort Wingate.

<sup>3</sup>For history of Fort Garland see: *Colorado Magazine*, XIII, pp. 13-30.

In August, 1876, Major General John Pope, who was Department Commander at Leavenworth, Kansas, came to Fort Garland on a tour of general inspection. A captain and a first lieutenant were scheduled to meet Pope and his party about two miles from the fort to escort them in, according to military custom. But, related Mr. Meder, they were so intoxicated they couldn't, so Second Lieutenant Basil N. Waters met them. This so angered the General that when he left, he ordered the company to Fort Wingate, New Mexico.

While General Pope was visiting at Fort Garland, Meder was detailed as special scout and guide for his party. His duty consisted mainly in catching plenty of fish for the General's mess. The party spent two weeks on Trinchera Creek and two weeks at the forks of Ute Creek above the fort at the site of old Fort Massachusetts.

While Meder was at Fort Wingate, his second five-year enlistment expired, and he was mustered out. He immediately returned to Fort Garland and in the latter part of 1877 or early months of 1878 started teaming for the government as a civilian. He and three other teamsters left in August, 1879, with four six-mule teams to take supplies to Captain Francis S. Dodge, in charge of Company K of the 9th Cavalry, which detachment was surveying in North Park.<sup>4</sup>

Meder and his companions reached Captain Dodge some time in October, and that very day the captain received orders to make a forced march to Milk Creek to rescue Major T. T. Thornburgh's men, who had been ambushed by the Indians. The entire force, including the teamsters, pulled out just at sundown. At Fortification Creek, all the mules but the wheelers on each wagon were unhitched and packed with supplies. From there the cavalry with the pack mules pushed on for Milk Creek. Meder and the teamsters with the wheeler mules were left with the wagons. The next day, October 5, General Wesley Merritt, with a regiment consisting mostly of infantry, came to Fortification Creek. The infantry was put into the wagons, and set out for Milk Creek. When they arrived at the battle field, General Merritt ordered the sharp shooters to pick a spot and get to work. Meder watched one of them fire three shots, the first two to get the range. At the third shot an Indian fell. Soon after this the Indians disappeared. About an hour later Meder could see their signal fires in the hills. The Indians evidently were heading for Chief Ouray, who was then in camp on the Uncompahgre River. The soldiers buried their dead, then left, going down Coal Creek Canyon for the White River Agency where the Meeker massacre had taken place. They made camp on Flag Creek six miles

<sup>4</sup>According to Senate Ex. Doc. 31, pp. 106-108, Dodge, with a colored company had been ordered in July, to do scout duty in Middle Park. Dodge's base camp was near Hot Sulphur Springs.—Ed.

above the Agency.<sup>5</sup> Meder and the other teamsters were sent to Rawlins, Wyoming, for supplies. When Meder reached Rawlins, he resigned his job and immediately went back to Fort Garland.

On April 17, 1880, Henry Meder married Mary Kandjoro from San Antonio, Texas. Her parents, immigrants from Poland, arrived in this country a short time before Miss Kandjoro was born on December 22, 1862. In 1879 Miss Kandjoro was working for the wife of Captain Lee of the 22nd U. S. Infantry at Fort Clark, Texas. When the Meeker Massacre took place, Captain Lee was ordered to Fort Garland. He brought his wife and Miss Kandjoro with him. It was at this time that Meder met her. When the Army took over the field next spring, the other women at the fort were sent back to Fort Clark, but Mary stayed at Fort Garland and married Meder. Eleven children were born to this couple. Only six lived to adulthood. Alfred, Benjamin, and Vincent survive and live at Fort Garland.

In 1880, 1881, and 1882 Henry Meder and his wife ran the officers' mess hall at the fort. After this he began working on the section gang on the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railway. He worked off and on at this job for several years and trapped while he wasn't working on the railroad. In 1884 he went to Antonito, Colorado, where he hunted ducks for market. It was at this time that Fort Garland was abandoned. Meder came back to Fort Garland in 1885 and trapped until 1886 when he again joined the section gang and worked on La Veta Pass on the railroad. He returned to Fort Garland with his family in 1888, and for two years operated a meat market there.

In the years 1890 and 1891, Meder carried mail to Placer, a mining town on Sangre Creek. The La Veta Pass railroad had been shut down, and all mail came by way of Villa Grove. Three times a week Meder carried the mail to Placer in a two-wheeled cart. In 1892 the railroad over La Veta Pass revived operations, and Meder again joined the section gang. In 1894 he was made foreman. He worked at this steadily until 1912, when he was retired at the age of sixty-five. At that time he bought a small farm on Ute Creek west of Fort Garland, and moved there.

In March, 1919, Meder received an Indian War Pension of \$20 per month. In March, 1927, this sum was increased to \$50, and this continued until his death at the age of eighty-three.

Many of the old-timers in Fort Garland called Henry Meder "Johnny," a nickname he had received in Fort Leavenworth when he played in the band. Kilfer, one of the musicians, was married,

<sup>5</sup>For an account of the Thornburgh battle see: Burkey's "The Thornburgh Battle with the Utes on Milk Creek," Colorado Magazine, XIII, pp. 90-110.

and the boys in the band would go to his home for a general get-together at night. It was at one of these meetings that they were telling yarns about the Civil War. Somebody happened to ask Meder what side he had been on during the war. Meder replied that he had been on the Confederate side, and asked,

"Didn't you see me rolling rocks down on the Yankees at Look-out Mountain?"

At this Kilfer's wife broke into the conversation and remarked, "Oh, so you were a Johnny Reb?"

After that, Mrs. Kilfer always called Meder "Johnny Reb" or just "Johnny." Within a few weeks everybody seemed to have forgotten that he had ever had any name other than Johnny. Later, in 1872, when Meder was sent to Fort Garland, he went by his christened name, Henry. When General Pope came to the fort in 1876, he brought the band with him. Kilfer was still with the band, and his wife accompanied him. When Mrs. Kilfer saw Meder, she again called him Johnny, and, as before, the name spread and stuck.

Henry Meder never went to school a day in his life; and he never learned to read. After he was married, his wife read to him. When she died on April 27, 1920, Meder's oldest son, Alfred, took the job of reading to him everything that either of them could find to read.

When the Fort Garland Historical Association was founded in 1928, Meder went over to the old fort buildings and helped the members locate the spot where the old flagpole had stood. On July 4, of that same year, with uncovered head, he raised aloft the Stars and Stripes which he had saluted so often while in active service. Always was he willing to help establish any fact concerning the old fort.

"Daddy" Meder, as he was known to the children to whom he delighted to tell many stories, was a great lover of birds. After he bought his farm, he cared for them during each winter and spring. Even today the bluebirds and robins return early in the spring to his ranch where they know food awaits them, for his two sons, Alfred and Vincent, continue to care for his feathered friends.

On May 17, 1930, this old soldier passed on. Although he was inconspicuous to most people, his counsel was always sound. He is the type of pioneer whose experiences and fortitude made possible for us the enjoyment of this western country which he loved so well. It is a source of personal satisfaction that I have been able to sketch the life of him whom I knew and highly honored.