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The Letters of David F. Spain

Gregory's Grubstakers At The Diggings

Edited by JOHN D. MORRISON*

Among the first to respond to the lure of the "Pike's Peak" gold regions was a group of eight young men from South Bend, Indiana. After purchasing horses and other necessary equipment, they (Wilkinson Defrees, Archibald Defrees, Charles Zigler, William Duey, Richard Bright, John Wall, David Wall and David F. Spain) left their home town March 8, 1859, proceeded by train to Iowa City via Chicago, crossed the Iowa plains to the frontier town of Omaha, and, after being joined there by two other South Bend friends, John Zigler and W. E. Chess, traversed the Platte River Route to the infant town of Denver City, which they entered April 30, 1859.

The Hoosier party moved through the adjacent communities of Auraria and Denver City to settle temporarily at the mining town of Arapahoe City, located about two miles east of present-day Golden, Colorado. David K. Wall, who had had mining experience in California nine years earlier and who was to become one of the pioneer contributors to Colorado agriculture, was approached by a broke, but hopeful, Georgia miner, John H. Gregory.¹

Grubstaking the Georgian in return for the right to accompany him, members of the South Bend party followed him to the mountainous spot where Gregory believed gold was to be found. He was right. As a result of this historic strike of May 6, 1859, the Pikes Peak Gold Rush was not only transformed from a near-fiasco into a reality, but also the foundation of early Colorado settlement was assured.

David F. Spain, an important member of this South Bend team, recorded his daily impressions of the trip and of the mining experiences in a diary, which was donated by his granddaughter, Mrs.

*John D. Morrison, Assistant State Historian of Colorado since 1956, attended Western State College at Gunnison, and later was graduated from the University of Colorado. Through his correspondence with members of the family of David F. Spain, Mr. Morrison obtained the exceedingly valuable diary and letters written by Spain. Previous historians and newspapermen, including Horace Greeley, have mentioned David K. Wall's party of Indiana prospectors to which Spain belonged, but to our knowledge *The Colorado Magazine* is presenting for the first time details of these Hoosiers' gold-seeking trip to Colorado in 1859.
—Editor.

¹According to Jerome S. Smiley, *History of Denver* (Denver, 1901), pp. 260-261: "In February he [Gregory] found himself up in the mountains, on Clear Creek, and at that time discovered some gold on the North Fork of that creek. . . . He was about out of provisions, and about out of means of getting a fresh supply. Gregory went back down Clear Creek to the 'town' of Arapahoe. . . . he became acquainted with Mr. David K. Wall . . . to whom he related the circumstances of his experience on Clear Creek, and also his need for assistance in making further search. Wall . . . had come to Colorado very early in the spring of 1859 from South Bend, Indiana, with a small party from that town which went into camp at Arapahoe."

Wall told Smiley: "I told him [Gregory] that my commissary was at a low ebb and more precious than gold, but in this case I would supply his needs in that respect if he would return and take the South Bend boys with him and make a new search."

Thomas E. Stanfield of South Bend, Indiana, to The State Historical Society of Colorado, and which was published in the previous issue (January, 1958) of *The Colorado Magazine*. Dave Spain had left behind his wife, Mary Ella Henkle Spain, and their two children, the six-year-old daughter Lillie, and the four-year-old son Ned (Edgar), and he missed them badly, as his letters to his wife so readily attest. Dave Spain's correspondence, however, indicates much more than his affection for family and friends left behind; it paints a vivid word-picture, by a discerning observer, of such historic occurrences as Horace Greeley's visit to the mines, of the early rush to Gregory's Diggings, and of the first open-air church meeting in that area.

The Colorado Magazine is indeed grateful to Mrs. Ralph W. Jones of Fenton, Michigan, the daughter of Dr. Charles L. Spain, who was the third and last child of Dave and Ella Spain, for donating these letters to The State Historical Society of Colorado. We are also indebted to Mrs. Thomas E. Stanfield, the donor of the Spain diary, who has been most helpful in giving data on the Spain family background, and to Miss Katherine Kenenah of Denver, who furnished us the original lead to the Spain material.

Returning to his home and family in August, 1859, David F. Spain was not permitted to enjoy "the pleasures of civilized life" for long. The advent of the Civil War once again took him from his family and, as a Captain and company commander of Co. "E" 48th Indiana Volunteers, Spain was injured at the Battle of Corinth. After the war he became connected with Franklin McVeagh & Company of Chicago, where he remained for twenty-five years. David F. Spain died in Detroit, Michigan, on December 12, 1903, at the age of 73, and, to quote from the obituary printed in the *South Bend Tribune*: "No man was better known here than Captain Spain and no man had more warm friends in the community. The passing away of such a man is always an occasion of deep regrets. All South Bend today mourns the death of Captain David F. Spain."—J. D. M.

Iowa City March 9th 1859

My Dear Ella,

We are here all safe and in good spirits—our horses wagons &c all nicely and without damage. we arrived in Chicago last night at 8 o'clock and remained there until 10 o'clock—when we all got aboard again, and shipped for this city—where we arrived this P. M. at one o'clock. On leaving So. Bend, our faces of course were somewhat lengthy, but after starting we cheered up some and enjoyed ourselves quite well, taking all things in consideration, I look at my little family (Ambrotype) twice between So Bend and Chicago, but dare not look long. (I need not tell why) We while traveling took possession of one end of the car and smoked laughed and talked as we pleased—without interruption, all hands "knocked under" to the *Pikes Peak* Boys. we all rode in the passenger Car after leaving La Porte as it was not necessary for us to rid[e] with the Horses

Wilk Defrees seems rather under the weather (Say nothing

of it though) but is gradually getting over it—We have not fully decided what day we will leave here but expect to start on Friday morning. but may remain longer. if so I write you from here again—I feel full as well, and in fact better, than I expected on leaving My Dear ones at home, the farther west we get the more encouraging the news from the mines. there is now four hundred teams, Mr. Bloom informs me, between this city and Council Bluffs, there was a gentleman here last night direct from the mines and is now fitting out 25 teams at Davenport for the mines and is hiring men to go there and Dig for him. the most favorable accounts are given us here in regard to the richness of the Diggings—which encourages me a great deal—

We passed some very fine country on our way so far, and some that was *horrid*. I thank my stars that I never undertook the Job of Driveing through the man that starts in that way from any point East of Illinois, will *curse* the day, for such roads as we passed in Ill I never saw I pity poor *Bus Brownfield*.

the streams through Ill are generally swollen. we crossed Rock River, and the Mississippi at Rock Island. the Town of Rock Island is a *dirty smoaky* looking place but Davenport on the opposite side of the River is a beautiful place located on the side of the hill—Iowa City is a business place no doubt, but—like all the Western Towns is very *muddy*—I have not seen as nice pleasant looking place since I left home as *Old So Bend*—

Now Ella I have given everything that I think would interest you—I am writing in Mr. Blooms store. he requests me to give his respects to my family and also to Father. We are all well, and happy [happy] in the hope of doing well—and returning to our families and friends in good season I shall write you again from the frontier and it may be sooner. You of course will send me a letter by John [Zigler] when he comes. I shall have to see the Boys all together before I write Jake [John Zigler] so that I can specify a time for him to start and a place to meet him I shall see them if possible, in time to mail with yours—I pass my time, when not otherwise engaged, in smoking my fancy Pipe—which all hands agree is fit Emblem for our Crowd (Root hog or die)² Now Ella you will not complain if I close—I have told you all I can think of

² The bowl of this pipe must have been shaped like a pig or a pig's head, as Spain refers to it in his diary as a "pork" pipe. *The Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXXV, No. 1 (January, 1958), 12.

this time I shall endeavour to keep you posted as far as possible—

Kiss My Dear little ones I dare not think of them—

Give my love to all and heres a double portion for you—you shall hear from me often

I'll give you something more definite in regard to your letters when I write again—I will write some to *father* if I can this time if I dont he will excuse me—

Good by God bless you all

Yours affectionately
Dave

March 9th/59 10 o clock at night we are all round a fire (coal) I am smokeing John Wall asleep on the floor Wilk on a lounge Charly astraddle of My leg drawing My Boots, and *Will Duey* is reading aloud from Lillie's Bible to us—tell Lillie so. tell her and Eddy to be good children and take good care of *Ma*

Dave

Iowa City March 11th 1859

Dear Ella,

We are still here anxiously waiting for fair weather. in short, we are Completely *weather bound* with a poor prospect for anything better soon.² still we manage to put in the time pleasantly. there being a Jolly crowd of us. all bent on making *fun* of everything that comes up wether good or bad. Wilk appears to feel the worst over it of any—however he dont say much—we shall in all probability make a start on Monday—if we can get away without swimming. you may talk about your *Mud* in SoBend. but if you could see how the Ladies of this city have to *wade* you never would complain again in fack almost all the Ladies I have noticed wear Boots and the *tallest* kind of Boots at that Bill Duey Charly Zigler and myself all went up town this afternoon on a little excursion in Company with our friend Bloom, and in our travels we met a couple of the “upper ten” Ladies of Iowa City dressed out and out Bloomer style Blk cassimere [Black Cashmere] pants and Black cloth coats high heel Boots, finished off with a low

² “The bad weather and muddy roads of the past fortnight have checked for a time the emigration to Pike's Peak. A number of Companies are encamped near the City, waiting for the roads to improve. We hear of a great many persons in the different states east of us, who are coming to this city to procure their teams and outfits. Let them come. This is the starting point and the best place in the West to procure groceries, etc., for the trip.” *Iowa City Weekly Republican*, March 16, 1859, p. 3, c. 2. Information courtesy of Ada M. Stoffel, Reference Librarian, State University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

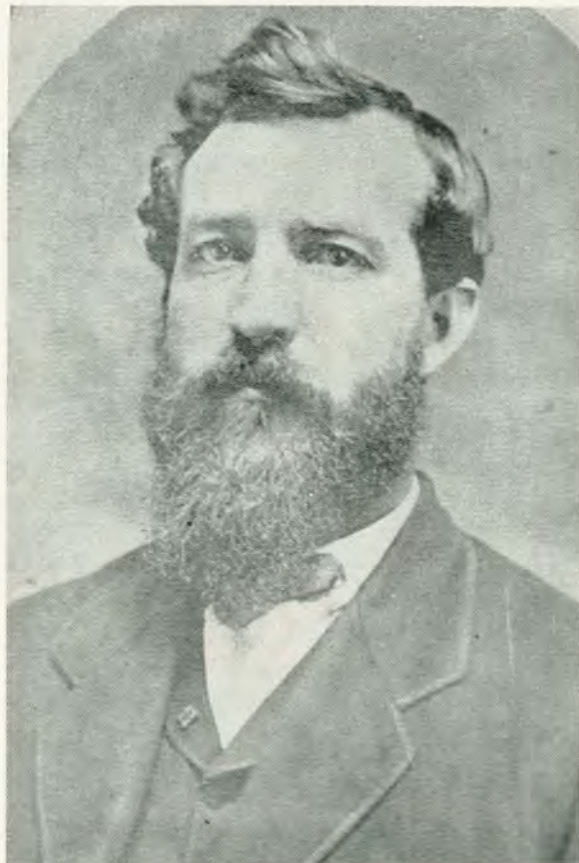
crown black hat—I think Will Duey and I followed them about three squares before our curiosity was satisfied—last night Charly and I concluded for the novelty of the thing, we would try sleeping in the waggon we leveled off our boxes bags &c as well as we could. spread down our Horse blankets then an old comfort[er]—over which we spread our own Blankets, all right—now whenever we feel like it “*pitch in*” at the back end of the waggon I hung my carpet sack my coats Hat &c at the side I hung my *over alls* in the pocket of which I put my Revolver, in the center overhead hung our Old Glass Lantern which lighted up our room nicely—We slept first rate liked it so well that we shall try it again tonight Arch Defrees is also going to sleep in *his* waggon. we all feel first rate I never felt more rugged in my life. the Boys say I am geting a good healthy color—I dined to day with Isaac Calvert had a first rate dinner and eat hearty have a good appetite all the time—

Bloom presented me with a nice little Pocket Compass he is very kind to us and does everything in his power to make us comfortable and enjoy ourselves—he furnishes us with cigars paper envelopes &c and a place to write—

I wish I could tell you certain when we will leave but I cant we expect however unless it continues *raining* to get off Monday *noon*. As soon as you get this write me by return mail and direct to Fort Des Moines Iowa—

And if there is no delay in this or in *yours*, I shall get it as we pass through if I was certain what point we will strike the [Missouri] River on the frontier I would have you write there also but as that is uncertain as yet its not worth while—

I shall write to John [Zigler] in the morning and advise him to come direct here as soon as he can get off and if we should happen to be gone—he could soon overtake us. Whether he will feel disposed to do that or not I cant tell, but under the present circumstances we can form no idea how long it will take to get from here to the frontier—nor at what point we will make for until we get some days travel from here. we shall take the most passable rout, Well Ella I have written you all of interest that has happened since I last wrote you. I may write you if I have time from Fort Des Moines I wish I knew that you were all happy and well tonight and felt as well as I do how much better I could rest I am sure you are though—its ten oclock the Boys keep bothering me so I will quit. I am so glad we have Dave Wall with us I think him a tip top fellow he and I are great cronies—My love to all,



DAVID F. SPAIN

tell Lillie and Eddie to be good children and not forget *pa*
I Look at their (and yours of course) pictures very often—
I shall write you again as soon as we can—Good by

Yours Affectionately
D. F. Spain

Iowa City Madison House. Sunday 1 Oclock P.M.
March 13th 1859

Dear Ella,

If I were writing to any one else I should be fearful of over-
doing the thing—but I know you will not object to hear from
me and what I have been doing Everyday—Mr. Bloom the
bearer of this has promised me he would deliver the letter in
person therefore I shall only write a short one this time. for

it will be more Satisfactory to hear it from him Yesterday
(Saturday) in the forenoon we busied ourselves fixing up
our Waggon putting Side boards &c. in the afternoon haveing
nothing to do Dave Will Duey Charly and myself went out
about two miles in the country to see some Horse Races,
where we had a splendid opportunity to see some of "Iowa
Birds" you may talk about your live Hoosiers, and all *that*,
but they are not a circumstance to the "long haired friends"
of Iowa—we returned about sundown got our supper and then
Will Duey and I took a stroll around the city. Met Bloom
[who] made us promise to come up this morning and go to
church with him. we agreed on Conditions he would not be
ashamed to go with us with high Boots, pants stuffed in &c.—
So this morning Bill come out to the Waggon early and Woke
me up to get ready for Church. up I got made up our bed and
commenced fixing for church by first takeing a good Wash
such as I used to take at home—You must know that by this
time my white shirt (or was white when I started) is anything
but white, so Bill and I each put on a *Red Shirt* combed our
hair and whiskers greased our Boots Brushed up our cloths
laid aside our Revolvers and put out for Church, in company
with Mr. Bloom and a Mr. Cahn.—heard a plain old fashioned
sermon delivered by a little plain looking old man whilst siting
there my mind wandered back to Old S.B. and wondered
whether you were not at that very moment listening to Old
Father Wilson, and perhaps wondering to yourself where *Dave*
was—After church we went and took Dinner with Bloom at
the Crummy House⁴ kept by H. W. Fyffe brother to Doc Fyffe
of Urbana Ohio.

Came back home and then went down to Ike Calverts to
consult Wilk as to what I should write John. I have written
him to be at Omaha by the 25th the tide of emigration seems
to be all in that direction. I expect we shall leave here tomor-
row morning—I shall buy some little presents for the children
and send them by Bloom do they talk much about me, what
do they say. O how I want to hear from you I shall write you
again at Omaha, and sooner if I can—I enjoy sleeping in the
Waggon first rate have not taken a bit of cold since I started.
I can eat anything thats set before me and feel as well as I
ever did in my life—

I wish you could see us altogether of an evening smokeing

⁴ Although this seems a ridiculous name for a hostelry with any pretense of
gentility, particularly in view of current slang usage, Ada M. Stoflet, Reference
Librarian of the State University of Iowa, reports that such an inn did indeed
exist. The spelling carried in their advertisements, however, was "Crummey."

gassing and laughing all among ourselves No one else pretends to mix. What we want we get All goes off agreeably and nice so far. Not one of the crowd has been in a *Drinking* or *Gambling* Saloon since we came to the City and I assure you there is any amount of both. I think we have a first rate crowd at least they all seem to like me, I can get anything I want from any of them no matter what it is. and they are friendly and sociable which makes it very pleasant *indeed*—

I shall expect a good long letter from you when John comes if I dont get one at Fort Des Moines tell all the particulars about the children and yourself Father Mother and all of them whats been going on in Town &c &c—

Tell Lillie & Eddie that pa thinks a great deal about them and wants them to remember and be good children Tell Lillie she must learn to read for paw by the time he get back— Tell Mother the Boys pronounced those cakes she baked for me excellent—superior to any they had, I should be glad if [I] could hear from home to night and know that all were well—Give my regards to all that enquire, and tell them I am well and in excellent spirits—Good by my *dear wife*

Yours affectionately

D. F. Spain

Camp 2½ Miles West Des Moines

March 21st 1859

My Dear Ella

For the want of ink I must inform you with a pencil (my ink all leaked out) of the reception of your kind and *Very* welcome letter of the 13th & 14th inst. and O, I cant tell you how much better I feel since I read it to know that you are all *well* and *feeling* well. and that my little ones are all happy and think and talk about pa tell Lillie not to feel bad for I shall be back again one of these days tell her to be a good Girl (I know she will) and Eddie tell him to wait patiently for his Pony. and you Ell I am so glad you feel as you do about my going away. I feel so much better contented than I would had you of acted otherwise. I cant write much to night for I have such a poor place where would you suppose I was writing I'll tell you in the front end of our Waggon with My Portfolio on our bread box by the light [of] Johns Lantern we are Camped near a farm house where we will get our supper and breakfast you say you dont like the idea of my sleeping in the waggon. I enjoy it the very best kind we sleep as cosy as you please last night we slept in the Midst of a



MARY ELLA HENKLE SPAIN
(MRS. DAVID F. SPAIN)

nice little Thunder Storm all Dry and nice. You must remember me to father Mother Henry & Wife Wm & wife Sarah Lib Fanny Grandmother and everybody that enquires I read Will Duey what you said and he seemed to take first rate we have lots of fun traveling and then we have some times that are not so funny the day we left Iowa City we only traveled 6 miles stuck in the *mud* several times and got so badly swamped once that we had to unload right in the Road where the mud was almost *waist* deep it was bad enough but we turn all our Misfortunes in to fun and laugh it off were it not for our little trials, we would have nothing [to] talk and laugh over after its all over. Bill Duey laughed at me today he said he would *bet* if my wife could have seen me after we

were stuck in the Mud and Covered with it from head to foot she would disown me I knew better than that though the Roads are geting quite passable and improveing more and more the farther West we get we shall be in Omaha next Saturday if we have no bad luck when I shall expect a good long letter from you by John you wrote me such a good one this time Wilk Defrees has got to be quite Merry none of the Boys got Letters but me dont forget to write me at New Fort Kearny Nebraska Teritory I shall write you Every Chance. Good by My love to all

Dave

Did Uncle Dave ever write me if so of course you Sent it by John

I forgot to tell that I can eat everything that comes before [me] feel as hearty as a "Buck" I am sure I weigh More than when I left the first chance I get I must weigh We have just heard some more good news from the mines by a man direct from there.

Dave

Longsdale Inn Iowa March 23rd 1859
7 O clock P. M.

Dear Ell

Haveing brot up at the above place for the night and haveing partaken of an *Old fashioned* Country supper I concluded as there was a Post office within a mile of here that I would improve My leisure moments for your benefit. But befor proceeding further, I'll state that we expect to remain over here one day in order to rest our Horses and have them *Shod* Will Duey and Wilk Defrees have gone back about a mile to a little Village to ascertain whether we can get the Shoeing done or not if we can, we shall stay, if not we will be off by sun Rise on the morrow. I have enjoyed the trip so far beyond my expectation for the last 3 or 4 days we have had splendid weather have traveled leisurely along takeing our Dinner in our Waggon by the way side and stopping at night near some country House sleep in our Waggon and Eat with the farmers. how well I enjoy it and am feeling so well, eat hearty and Sleep sound I have just witnessed one of the grandest sights I ever beheld. I have often heard, but to night I have seen a *Prarie on fire*. I have since we left Iowa City seen it several times, but to night, near by and in all its grandure the flames seemingly rolling up to the skies. I wish I could picture it out to you just as I saw it but it [is] useless

to try. I suppose John [Zigler] and Will Chess are now on their way to Omaha if we lay over here tomorrow we will not see them befor Monday if we go we shall get in on Saturday. I think however we shall remain over. I have visited SoBend in my dreams several times since I left have talked and laughed with you all. I never in my life have had such vivid dreams. I like to think over them everything seems so true every place we stop I show the picture of my little family. they all say how any man can leave such a family, they can't tell, I tell them its for their sake I go. more than anything else and its so, my dear Ell I thank you from the bottom of my heart, for that good long letter I recd from you at Desmoines, I was so anxious to hear from you, it was such a releif to know that you were all well and happy. as for myself I have no fear, I feel now as though it would be impossible for me to get sick. Such a set of "Hounds as we are to eat" you *never* saw. Will Duey has so far carried the palm he eats more and is longer about it than any of the rest We *Rig* Bill a great deal about eating so much—I wish you could see us all this evening seated around a table. Charly next me writing to his *Lady love* (I suppose) he keeps his hand over it so I cant tell who it is to—

We are now just across the Raccoon River in Guthrie County, look on your map and you can see about where I was when this was written. in all probability by the time you get this I shall be at *Omaha*

We are now all pretty fair specimens of the long haired tribe. and O how black and sunburned. Bill and Charly are the brownest of all the crew I am about three shades darker than when I left. I dont know but if you should happen to meet me in a crowd but that you would be inclined to *face* on me or in other words disown me—thats gass though, I dont think anything of the kind. you accused me of rather dissembling a little in my last letter in regard to my feelings, not so *my dear*, I feel first rate considering all things, I dont want you to think I can think of friends and home, and all things connected, without a slight feeling under my Jacket I have passed some very lonely Moments since I left but I dont allow myself to dwell on these things long at a time I think of Home, and then of something else, but when we are all together I love to talk about My little family—

We still get reliable and encouraging news from the mines we to day saw a man at his house who just returned and is

makeing speedy preparation for a return with his family. he brings very encourageing news indeed. I hope there is a small Pile there for me in a good handy place, where I can get it quick and easy, and hurry back home—Well Ella its late and the Boys are hurrying me to bed so I bid you good by until I get to the frontier and there you will hear from me again, tell Eddie there is a little Boy here just about his age, and that *pa* talked to him, and told him he had a little Boy just his size, and he said he would like to see him, kiss Lillie and Eddie a whole lot for *Pa* and I just wish I was near enough to give you one, heres one at a distance, *My love to all*

Goodnight I am anxious to get through [to Omaha] so that I may get another letter from you

Yours Affectionately
Dave

This letter was written with home made ink—

Will Duey says he wants you to say some more about him when you write he says that done him lots of good

Dave

Council Bluffs,^a
March 29, 1859

Dear Ella:

We arrived here last evening about 5:00 o'clock after a drive through Iowa, part of which was very tedious, but the last week of our travel was very pleasant. I have not heard or seen anything of John yet. We have sent Wilk Defrees ahead to Omaha, which is four or five miles farther west on the other side of the Missouri River. The Bluffs are on the east side. When Wilk returns we will then know when we will leave here provided John is there. If he is not there I can't tell when we will start.

In order to put in the time until Wilk returns, I give you a little outline sketch of our proceedings since Friday night last on which occasion (the weather being favorable) we concluded to camp and do our own cooking. So Charley being best posted in the care of horses, I gave them over to him and I took charge of the cooking department, and the boys all say that I do it up brown for a green hand. I know part of it was rather brown for I burned it. Well, the first night for supper I went to work after the following style. I set my coffee to

^a The State Historical Society does not possess the original of this letter. We are printing a copy of it made some years ago.

boil, then my rice, then my fruit to stew, then shaved off some dry beef and boiled it. By the time I had my meat ready and table set, the rest of my eatables were done so I took them up as near like you used to do as I could. The coffee was as good as ever I drank. The rest was all right with one exception—it had a little more soot and ashes than was really necessary, but all hands agree it was good for the colic, so we ate without a murmur, and honestly, Ella, I don't think I ever felt any better satisfied than over that meal. Since that night we have had Prairie Chicken for supper and breakfast, which goes good. I must tell you though about my luck on Sabbath night. Being fearful of rain we traveled and night and rain both overtook us. In a little grove bordering a small stream we camped for the night. Lit our camp fire and just about the time I commenced getting supper it commenced raining and the wind blew and it rained hard. Well, I had the following articles on the fire—eggs to boil, potatoes, rice, prairie chicken, and tea. All was going off right (except the rain) when, lo, the forestick broke and down tumbled my kettle of eggs into my pot of potatoes, and both into my chicken and rice. I pretty near swore, but didn't. I straightened out again and had a very good supper after all.

I am still in excellent health and good spirits. I eat like a pig, which makes me healthy, and we get more and more encouraging news from the mines every day which keeps my spirits up to fever heat, and as soon as I can see John and know that you are all well and happy, then I shall almost go off the handle.

We have a great deal of sport—camping and cooking I like better than I anticipated. I can go to sleep in our wagons and sleep as soundly as in a feather bed. I shall stop now until I see John.

John and Will Chess just this moment arrived on the St. Jo Packet. You ought to have seen them laugh at us for looking so sunburned and black, and, in fact, looking hard generally.

It is strange in regard to letters. I gave Mr. Bloom a letter for you and one for John and some presents for the children (bless their little lives). I think you certainly got them before this. I received your letter at Des Moines on Monday the 21st, one week yesterday, and since that time I have written two letters. You certainly have gotten some of them by this time. The presents I sent to the children were a little silk handker-

chief for Eddy and a small gold locket for Lillie. I am afraid you will not get them.

Those yarns you heard about us were all fabrications. It's true the roads were very bad when we started but we did not start until late—10:00 or 11:00 o'clock, and made 6½ miles. After that we traveled from 13 to 23 miles every day. It did not take us a day longer than we expected. We were just two weeks and laid over one day in the meantime to rest our horses and have them shod, so you now see how much truth is in Mr. Good's stories. I feel more encouraged in regard to the mines than any time since I left home and feel sure there is a chance too for me to make some money. You say if I want to come back to do so. Don't think of such a thing, my dear. Although the greatest happiness I could ask in this world would be to see my dear little ones, yet I don't think of returning until the appointed time and then I expect to be on hand. Pay no attention to reports. Wait till you hear from me and you shall know all just as it is. And I shall write as often as possible. I feel good over your letter and I feel bad, but better satisfied since I see it.

Give my love to Will. I don't know where to tell you to write.

Goodbye, my dear Ella,
Dave

As soon as possible to give you anything in regard to writing I will. We go to Omaha this afternoon. It's all gammon about the streams being high. They are the reverse—low.

Council Bluffs Iowa March 30th/59
Dear Ella

I expect you will laugh when you see this old fashioned sheet of paper, but my things are all on the other side the Missouri, at Omaha, and this is the best the Hotel can raise, that I am staying at to night. I am all alone to night, the Boys are all over at Omaha—we Ferried our teams over this afternoon, and John sent me back here to buy him a Horse I have bought the Horse, but as the Ferry does not run after Sundown I am Compelled to stay here till morning and although I wrote you a long letter, yesterday, I have nothing else to do to night so I concluded you would not object to have another today. Council Bluffs is a strange looking Town the Buildings are principally all on one street which is in a large Ravine with high Hills towering up on either side. there is about 3

thousand inhabitants, and generally a rough looking set. there is a great many Indians here. they are almost as plenty as White folks, Omaha is on the oppisite side of the River about 4 miles distant from this place it is the Capitol of Nebraska and is a great deal more pleasantly situated, although not so large as the Bluffs We shall probably start out on the plains tomorrow. they tell us her[e] that the country is thickly settled for over a hundred miles out. there is a great many teams here starting perhaps a hundred or more but not the one fourth as many as represented to us before we got here. And in regard to the overflowing of the streams, give yourself no uneasiness, for that is all *gammon* Just about as much truth in as what Sam Good wrote about us the Stage arrives almost every day from Fort Laramie, and they state that the streams were considerably swollen some week or two ago but are all right now. I was telling a man that came in from Larimee about the papers representing the *Platt* to be 9 miles wide. he laughed at me, said it never was known to be over 5 miles at any point and only a small portion of that of any depth why *Ell* I have no doubt but that we crossed a River bottom in Iowa, called "Skunk bottom" that is *far* worse than any stream we shall have to cross from here to Cherry creek so you can rest perfectly easy on that subject. I am unable to tell you anything about where you can write me but will as early as possible—you know that though without my telling—John & Will were just one week comeing from S. B. to the Bluffs. We have enjoyed ourselves finely since the Boys arrived. it seems more like home he delivered those Papers, for which I am under a thousand obligations to my *Dear Wife*. how I should love to take a peep at you all, my little ones, tell Dear little Lillie and Eddy not to feel badly for Pa loves them and thinks of them almost every moment Father tells me what a dear good girl Lillie is I am *so glad* tell her Pa will bring her and Eddie something nice when he comes home, and Ella dont let any reports you may hear worry you for they are in no way reliable for you see how perfectly groundless those you have alredy heard were. tell Kate just as soon as I let you know where to write me, I want her to write me a good long letter, and if its so I can I'll write to her but you must be served first *all* the time. I cant tell now how soon I can write again but will promise certain to writ from Fort Kearny, and as often between here and there as I can, its late and I must go to bed, and be up by times so as to get to Omaha in time for

the Boys to take a pretty early start—My love to *All*. Kiss my little ones, as often as you think of it for me—

Good By Yours ever
Dave

Orient Nebraska Territory April 2/59

Dear Ella

We left Omaha yesterday about noon we had not gone but a few miles over a beautiful Prairie Road until it commenced snowing we Drove about 10 miles through the Storm and put up at a stage Station (by the above name) where I am now writing And of all the places to "*skin the Dear publick*" this beats all, why they *have* no souls at all what do you think Ella I have a little *Boil* on my left hand and it being rather painful last night I went to the *Land Lady* and asked for a Bread poultice for my Boil, and when she had done I of course asked what she charge, only *Five cents*. I paid for it, and then thought would my *wife* do such a thing *Never Never*, we have given the Land Lord the Very appropriate name of "*Old Skin flint*" and call him by that name to his face, he dont much like it but cant help himself it Stormed all night. John & Myself, Will Duey, Will Chess, and Dick Bright slept in the House, the Defrees Boys, Charley Zigler & Dave Wall slept in the Waggon—The Sun is shineing bright this morning, and we all feel rejoiced at prospect for Fair weather, a day or two warm sunshine will dispose of the snow so that we shall not suffer much inconvenience on that account—we shall in all probability stay here till Monday and take a fresh start. we shall cross the Elkhorn River at Elkhorn City where I shall *mail* this unless I meet with a chance to send it back to *Omaha*. We camped Wednesday night just out side the City of Omaha, had fine times on Thursday shooting Prairie chickens shooting at a mark &c Will Duey and I went to the New State House it is situated on a high Hill overlooking the City and River below we could see the Missouri for miles either way we were out on top and Registered our Names on the observatory.—

As I have already told you they have installed Bill Duey and Myself as Chief Cooks. we do it up "all right" too. Thursday we each Boiled up a Mess of Pork & Beans. I followed your direction in cooking the Beans &c and my pot was done the best of any not burned a bit and well done & clean I also stewed up a lot of Dry apples in your little Brass Kettle. I done them nice too, maybe you think I am bragging. John and I

now have a good team the extree Horse fits us out nicely—

I dreamed last night of being at Home and of seeing my wife and little ones all well, and happy—it was such a nice dream I was real sorry when I woke—I waked in the act of kissing you—I have dreamed of you often since I left and my Dreams have all been pleasant ones, and I am glad it is so—I am anxious to get to Fort Kearny for that is my only hope of hearing from you till I get to the Mines—There was three men passed our Camp yesterday morning on their way Home from the Mines. One of them had six hundred Dollars in Dust that he showed how much more he had I cant tell, they say a man can make from 4 to 15 & 20 dollars pr day they are going right back. I feel greatly encouraged. I certainly think it will be my lot to make something and return to my Dear ones at home soon. I have such Excellent health that I know I can do lots of work. I wish I could *weigh*, for I am sure I have gained 10 or 15 lbs since I left home, I am growing so large that I have *Burst* all the Buckles off my Pants & Vest and several buttons besides. My beard has grown quite long we will all pass for Hoosiers of the first order.

I get along with all the Boys first rate. I never ask a favor but I get it. there is some 10 or 15 Teams traveling in the same train & all first rate fellows every team well armed So you see if there was danger of Indians we are well prepared for them, but there is *no* danger at all, I never think of it unless some one else mentions it, the Country is settled to 2 hundred miles out and stage stations every few miles clear through to the mines—You may write me as soon as this reaches you and direct to Auraria Kansas Territory Via Fort Kearny—I suppose you have recd some of the letters I wrote since I left Iowa City for this is the fifth one I hope you have got the one I sent by Bloom—also those presents for the children. A Locket for Lillie and a little silk Hdkf for Eddie, I fancy I see him now stepping round with it in his side pocket Bless their little lives how glad I shall be to see you all when I get back. tell Lillie to care of her lock[et] and She Shall [have] pa & mas picture in it one of these times Kiss them for me, I wish I was near enough to get such an one as I got in my Dream last night. never Mind I shall get a good lot of them before 6 months more roll round—My hand hurts me some so I shall have to quit for this time—Good by

Yours Ever Dave

Elkhorn April 3d 1859

Dear Ella

As we have concluded to lay by half the Sabbath and the Horses are all cared for, and Dinner is over, I have a few spare moments & I know of nothing I can engage in more pleasant than writing to you. We are now 20 miles west of Omaha as the weather was favorable we all thought best to travel a few miles and thereby gain the Elkhorn River and tomorrow cross it early and make a good long drive. I walked all the way from Orient to this place 11 miles from the fact that my little Boil is so sore I cant drive, it feels a great deal better now I have opened it, I stand walking first rate I can walk a half day and scarcely feel tired, I guess I have been liveing too *high* since I left home, for I have another *nasty little Boil* comeing on my cheek. I turpentine him pretty thoroughly a few moments ago though, so he wont trouble me much more, I guess—

We have a gentleman, his wife, and a little Boy, a little less than Eddie, traveling in our train. I was in their tent yesterday, while they were eating Dinner, all hands sitting on the ground, and the lady distributing coffee among them from her low seat. they all sleep in the tent, first throw down some dead grass then spread their quilts and comforts, and turn in—I thought to myself, this is *too bad*. I could not hear the idea of seeing my wife and children have to put up with such fare, its all well enough for men, they can enjoy such things but it looks too hard for a woman, still this same lady told me although she had never been use to anything of the kind she and her Dear little Boy (as she said) stood it well and enjoyed themselves finely. her husband just came in, and told me if we were a mind too, we might drive our Waggons around to his Tent, and cook our Meals on his stove in welcome he wishes to travel with us, and we are anxious to have him for they are genteel in their manners and very kind to us all, his name is Cady and is from Illinois. his little Boy is a fat little chubby Black Eyed fellow, I talk to him a great deal, for I fancy he looks a little like My Dear little Eddie, we have all agreed to keep company with them clear through—

It has clouded up again and is snowing a little we certainly think we shall have nice weather soon for there has been so much *gloomy* weather since we started its a wonder to me, when I think over the mud and bad Roads we have passed through that we did not all get the "Blues" but on the contrary

when we got in a Bilious place, all hands seemed to revive up and insted of Blues we had fun over it—The farther we go west now the better the Roads are geting, and the more encourageing the news from the mines, we now think we shall get through some time between the 25th of April and the 1st day of May.—

I wish I *could* hear from you every week but I cant so its no use talking I am determined, though, that you shall know of me as often as mail facilities will permit. I have not failed where there was a chance to mail a letter but what I have written, and I intend to keep it up till I get through—If you get this before you write me at Auraria (as I directed in the one I wrote yesterday) tell Kate she must be sure and write too, for it will cost just as much to express a small letter as a large one, I'll give you the direction again for fear you might not get the one I wrote yesterday at *Orient*, as I want to write a line to father this evening also you must not scold me for not filling this sheet—Kiss my Lillie & Eddie, and remember me kindly to Will & Kate.

Yours affectionately
D. F. Spain

P. S. Direct to Auraria Kansas Territory Via New Fort Kearny

Sun is shining again

Dave

Columbus N. T. April 8th 1859

Dear Ella

This is the first opportunity I have had to write since I left Elkhorn, which was on Tuesday morning last. On leaveing the [Elk] Horn we struck in to the Platt River Valley, and have been in sight of the Platt almost every day since we left Elkhorn. Since then we have been traveling through a portion of the Country inhabited by the *Pawnee* Indians. They are so far as I have seen a peaceable tribe. They have been round our camp several times. They beg for something to eat, wear &c. One of them asked me for a Button off my *vest* for *Papoose*, another for my ring. all you have to do is to deny them in a stern manner and they leave you at once. while at Elkhorn, Wilk Defrees, Will Chess, Bright, and myself visited their Lodges, which was a novel scene for me the[y] first make a kind of frame work of *Poles* and then cover that over with Sod, except a small hole in the top for the smoke to escape,

the fire they build in the centre of the lodge they leave a small hole in one side for a door we had to get on "all fours" (hands and knees) to get in side, we went in just at the time they were cooking a meal, which consisted of a few roast potatoes, and pot hung over a small fire filled with "dead Dog" which the Post master at Elkhorn had killed to keep him from dying of distemper. you may doubt that but its true as you live they are a very filthy set of beings we saw them in all sorts of dress painted and feathered off in style—So much for the *Indians*—

The *Platt* is not a very handsome River it has a great many sand bars in it which gives it a very rough uneven appearance. it is wide but not *deep*, and insted of its being very high & overflowing, it is unusually low a[t] least the settlers tell us so, and I heard a man say at *Fort Kearny*, where we shall cross it was not over knee deep in the deepest place and a smooth solid bottom. So you can see what truth there is in Newspaper reports we have had some *wet low* bad places to cross but have got along so far without serious difficulty—in fact we have got along much better than I anticipated, before leaveing home. had it not been for the recent *Snow Storm*, we should have had splendid Roads as it is they are a little bad in Spots—

The *Platt Valley* is the most beautiful Country I ever saw, as level as can be and just timber enough to make it pleasant Every few miles we find *groves* of cotton wood, which is about the only kind of timber there is—

Well Ell as I want to write a few lines to Father I must close for it is noon and we only stop here long enough to *feed*, we are all in good spirits and *well*, eat hearty and sleep well. I have had quite an interesting time with My *Boils*. They are about well now though. The one on my hand was the largest kind, for a week now I have not been able to drive, or much of anything else but am all right now. About 3 miles from here, we cross whats called the *Loop fork ferry* we shall start shortly. how anxious I am to hear from *home*. I feel quite sure of geting a letter or two, at *Fort Kearny*. we shall get there next week I may not write again till I get there, if I can I will. give my love to all kiss my dear little Eddie & Lillie for me and tell them not to forget pa

Yours Ever
D. F. Spain

Camp ½ mile West Denver City,⁶
April 30, 1859

Dear Ella:

We arrived at Auraria this morning about 10:00 o'clock, all well and in good spirits considering the very discouraging news we have heard concerning the mines almost every day since we left *Fort Kearny*, and had we not started out with the full determination of seeing the country and the mines for ourselves, and for the satisfaction of our friends at home, we should doubtless have turned back.

There are two Indians sitting in the front end of the wagon eating a piece of antelope I just gave them to keep them from bothering me while I write. They are Arrappahoe and very friendly and peaceful.

We are glad we came through and we still think from what we can gather that we will yet be able to make something. I have just been talking to a Doctor Casto⁷ (a Mason) and he advises us to go to the town of Arrappahoe. He lives there. Got here 25th of March. He showed some very fine specimens of gold that he has taken out. He thinks the richest mines will be found in the mountains. We intend going over to the above named town and prospecting and if it will pay we shall stay as long as we expected. If not we shall start back soon. We will be able to come to a definite conclusion in the course of two or three weeks. As soon as we do I shall write you again.

We heard all kinds of reports before we got here that hundreds were starving, the town deserted, etc., and you will no doubt hear the same reports greatly exaggerated but it's all false. The people have plenty to eat except flour. That is or has been scarce, but there was a pack train⁸ arrived from New Mexico today so flour will be plenty for a while at least.

Auraria and Denver are all one divided only by the little stream of Cherry Creek. There are three or four hundred houses in the two towns, a great many not yet finished, but workmen are engaged, and pretty much all the people are, of course, rough looking. A great many like ourselves just got through. I have seen but one white woman since my arrival,

⁶ The State Historical Society does not possess the original of this letter. We are printing a copy of it made some years ago.

⁷ "Dr. Joseph S. Casto, pioneer of 1859, was one of the original founders of Morrison [Colorado] . . ." *The Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (January, 1942), 28.

⁸ According to the *Rocky Mountain News*, April 30, 1859, p. 3, c. 1, "A train of six wagons loaded with provisions and goods has just arrived, consigned to Messrs. St. Vrain & St. James and James Broadwell. Flour is selling at \$15 per 100 lbs."



GREGORY POINT, SLUICING GOLD

Sluicing for gold in Gregory Gulch in 1859, from a drawing in *Leslie's Weekly* of that year. The "Gregory Diggings" in Gilpin County at Black Hawk are marked with a bronze plaque, placed by the State Historical Society in 1932, which says the district produced \$85,000,000 in gold.

but any amount of squaws, but they are all very homely (so don't fear).

The weather for some time has been very fine except an occasional cold rain. We have been living for a week on antelope and deer meat and I assure you it ain't bad to take. John and Bright killed an antelope and Will Duey and myself killed a deer. We have seen a great many buffalo but have not killed any, also elk and wild horses. Game is very plenty so you see, my dear, there is no use of any one starving. Those that have become dissatisfied so soon are nearly all foot men who got here without money or provisions, consequently could do nothing. We have but little faith in regard to rich mines, but intend to test the matter thoroughly before we return, and if there is gold we intend to have our share. If there is none then we will console ourselves with having a fine trip over a beautiful country and with meeting our dear ones at home again.

I, this morning tried my hand at baking "Slap jacks" or pan cakes, the first bread I have undertaken to make, and I tell you that I had excellent cakes—light, clean and nice, and not a burnt one in the lot. They went first best with good butter and white sugar sprinkled over. The boys say I must "do some more." Won't I be just the handiest kind of a fellow when I get back to bake cakes for you? Brag on me a little, can't you?

I am so glad we are through for when we travel again it will be homeward. Then won't I be a happy boy. But I must have some gold first if it's to be had; if not, I am off for home as soon as possible. The greatest draw back to me is, I can't hear from you and my dear little children. The mail arrangement is very poor. They have an express from Fort Laramie here only once a month. That seems so long. Now it has been over a month since I have had one word from home, but I hope in a week or so to get a letter from you and one from father. As soon as I know whether it will pay us to stay or not I shall write again which will be a week or ten days.

We have been in sight of the mountains all this week, which are beautiful beyond description. Longs Peak and Pikes Peak are the most prominent points hereabouts. The tops of all are covered with snow which gives them a fine appearance of a bright day, but at their base the grass is green and the weather is warm. I feel anxious to get over to them. We are about ten miles off but they look to be not more than two or three. We did intend to drive over this afternoon but it is raining and I guess we will remain here till Monday. We have

heard that Bus Brownfield was here but have not seen him. Tell Eddie that Pa has seen hundreds of little Indian ponies and that I will bring him one if I can but that he must not feel disappointed if I don't. And tell Lillie that I will bring her something for I know she has been a real good little girl and will be quite a little lady when I get back.

I scarcely know where to direct this but I guess to Indianapolis in Will's care. And Ella, oh how I would love to see you. I sometimes almost wish the mines would prove a humbug so I could get back to you sooner (don't tell on me though). Last night for the first time I lay awake in the wagon thinking of home. I had been dreaming of you and as usual you awoke me with a kiss. It was so vivid. It kept me awake a long time.

I warn you again against taking any account of the reports of suffering here for there is no one but has plenty to eat, so don't worry for we at least are amply supplied.

Goodbye. Write me as soon as you get this if you have not before and direct as before.

My love to all.

Yours affectionately,
Dave

Gregorys Diggings near Hoosier City
June 6th 1859

My Dear Ella

its too bad, only think I today recd your letter written at Urbana May 5th a whole month on the road. how provoking. and at the time you wrote you had only recd the letter I mailed at Ft. Kearny why I certainly have written you as many as half dozen since then but of course you have a part of them at least by this time. I have been in the Mountains three weeks and more,⁹ and have started two letters from here before this.

⁹ The following letter, believed to have been written by Clarendon Davisson, the Commercial Reporter of the *Chicago Press-Tribune*, appeared in the *Leavenworth Times* of June 10, 1859, and was reprinted in the *Chicago Press-Tribune* of June 22, 1859:

I closed my last letter with the remark that reports of rich discoveries in the valley of the North Fork of Vasquez's Fork of the South Platte had reached this city [Auraria], and that I contemplated a trip to the alleged gold field. On or about the 4th of May, Mr. J. H. Gregory, from Gordon county, Georgia, started with a party of seven with a view to a thorough exploration of the northern tributaries of Vasquez or Clear Creek. On the 6th ult. they struck what has since been called Quartz Creek at a point about 30 miles west of this point and proceeded to handle their pans and shovels. At a point about 300 feet above the right bank of said creek and on the north side of an extremely steep hill, Mr. Gregory gathered a pan of surface dirt, took it down to the water and was rewarded for the washing of it by \$1 worth of dust. . . . During the last ten days a perfect stampede has taken place from this locality to the Gregory Diggings. Altogether at least \$5,000 has been taken out the last week and much of it I have seen. . . . Mr. Martin Field, the Superintendent of the mail Department of the Express Company visited the diggings simultaneously with me . . . and at Gregory's he washed a pan of dirt from the Indiana claims which yielded \$5.00.

*I have not had a letter from you since the one I enclosed
G. Gregorys Diggings near Hoosier City
June 6th 1859*

My Dear Ella

Its too bad only think. I today recd your letter written at Urbana May 5th a whole month on the road. how provoking. and at the time you wrote you had only recd the letter I mailed at Ft. Kearny why I certainly have written you as many as half dozen since then but of course you have a part of them at least by this time. I have been in the Mountains three weeks and more, and have started two letters from here before this. well, its so And I suppose we must put up with it. Before I proceed farther, I'll tell you what we have done in the last week in the way of mining. have taken out since one week ago to day, Ten hundred and ninety (1091) Dollars, not so well as we done the week previous, but good enough, we all feel satisfied, and only hope we may be favored with a continuance of the same. I believe I never told you what kind of an operation we have to go through with every day, to save this much sought for metal. we in the first place have to pick our dirt almost out of the top of a high mountain. Carry Three hundred feet down in sacks, to the water there we have a long trough, that miners call a sluice, two of us wash the dirt thoroughly, by running it through the sluice the dirt pass out, and gold lodges in the little riffles, and blunders,

PORTION OF A SPAIN LETTER

well, its so. And I suppose we must put up with it—Before I proceed farther, I'll tell you what we have done in the last week in the way of mining have taken out since one week ago today Ten hundred and ninety (1091) Dollars. not so well as we done the week previous, but good enough, we all feel satisfied, and only hope we may be favored with a continuance of the same—I believe I never told you what kind of an operation we have to go through with every day to save this much sought for metal. we in the first place have to pick our dirt almost out of the top of a high Mountain, carry Three

hundred feet down in sacks to the water. there we have a long trough that miners call a *Sluice*. two of us wash the dirt thoroughly. by running it through the Sluice the dirt pass[es] out and Gold lodges in the little riffels and Blankets. at night we gather the Gold and fine sand up in Pans and then pore some quicksilver in with it. that gathers all the Gold from among the Sand. then we have to retort the Gold in order to Separate it from the quicksilver which takes from 10 to 12 oclock every night. no small job rest assured—

In the three weeks that we have been sojourners here there has been some three thousand persons arrived and they have built cabins in every nook and corner within five or six miles of us in every direction and while the greater portion of them are prepareing to go to work, we are fairly at it and takeing out the “Chink” in round *numbers* every day. We have crowds of New Comers around us from morning till night watching, and wishing it were them.—We sold one of our Claims to George Simmons (the Chicago man) for Three Thousand five hundred Dollars to be paid as fast as he takes it out. And on Saturday last we sold half of the claim we are now working for Five Thousand two hundred and fifty Dollars. that also to be paid as fast as taken out. so you see if they all succeed and do as well as we are doing, we will make a little money yet by the 1st September for all Uncle Dave thought I would not have time to do much good—“Fortune favors the brave” (“in a house”) Ell dont tell Eddy, but I have bought him one of the nicest little Indian Ponies you ever saw, it just comes up to my waist, and is only three years old, and so gentle you can handle it just as you would a dog its *color* is dark *Bay*. it is with our other Horses down at Dave Walls Ranch. I paid fifty Dollars and made more than enough the same day to pay for it—dont tell *Ned*, *bless his bones*, for I want to surprise him. We are all well, and the Boys do say that I am geting fatter every day. I still do the cooking, and am geting to be quite adept in the art. I can Bake Bread good Enough for any body. Yesterday John and I went a mile and a half up the creek to Doc Davenports Cabin spent the afternoon and ate supper with them. which consisted of Venison Coffee Rice & Stewed fruit all hands had to use the same spoon and two or three the same knife and fork they are not half as well fixed as we are. Doc says d---d if I aint “down on” this *He* cooking, Dave. I laughed at him

and said wait till we get Home. wont we make the provender suffer. We got back to our Cabin about dark, and as My Pants & Wills were geting a little worse for wear, we concluded to Patch them the next thing was where will [we] get Patches. all we could raise was a piece of heavy white muslin. so we took that. I sat myself down in my *shirt tail* on a three legged stool and sewed a *whopping* great big white Patch right on the seat of my breeches, and Bill done likewise. Now *laugh* at a poor fellow will you.

Now you ask several questions in your letter a part of which I have answered in letters that I hope you have recd before this time in regard to the descent on Sonora spoken of on the little slip you sent, I have heard some talk of such a thing, but know nothing of the movement only by hearsay. I think however there is nothing of it—You ask shall you go to Wills I'll say this if you wait two months & I'll tell you, O its so provokeing to have our letters delay *so long*. My dear Ella in regards to such matters do as seems best to you for I have all confidence in your superior judgment and am sure you have and will do what is most adviseable. if you see Dick Williams tell him I have one grain of sense in my cranium yet—O wont I be a happy *coon* when I get back to dear wife and little folks again, and wont I stay with them. I get home sick a little sometimes Ell in spite of my success. Especially of Sundays. you know I use to enjoy myself so well with my family on Sunday but then when I think of meeting them again and telling over my little adventures and the different scenes I have passed through, away goes the Blues to *pot* its late and the Boys are just through retorting our days work we have two hundred & forty two Dollars to commence this week with. give my regards to Uncle Dave and my love to all of your folks—and kiss my dear little Lillie and Eddie for me—and you just wait a little longer and you shall have your share—Good by My dear Ella God bless you all

from your affect. Dave

Direct as I have told you, to Denver City care P. P. Express
When do you think of going to So Bend

I have not had a letter from Fathers since the one enclosed in yours at *Ft Kearney* its strange, they surely have written

Gregorys Diggins near Hoosier City
June 12th 1859

Dear Ella,

Dinner just over, dishes washed and put away, and now for a conflag with you. Yesterday we quit work at 4 o'clock got supper over and Will Duey and I stripped off our dirty shirts, went down to the little Brook that runs hard by and washed ourselves from head to foot, went to bed feeling fifty per cent better. I was up this morning by 5 o'clock, got breakfast and roused the Boys. after breakfast all of us but Charley (who we left to keep house) went up the Ravine about half mile and listened to the first sermon ever preached in the Rocky Mountains (so far as we know) how strangely I felt as I sat there on a large Pine Stump listening to the discourse taken from the Ten Commandments. Surrounded by over a Thousand hardy rough looking miners, and while sitting there how many little incidents concerning my dear wife and little ones rushed through my mind. and as the discourse progressed in looking around me I saw the Tears rolling down many a rustic cheek. And in fact ere I was aware of it I found one steeling softly down my own. I dont know that I ever experienced such feelings before in my life. Although it was a very plain old fashioned Methodist sermon, it made a greater impression than the most eloquent discourse I ever heard. it was so well suited to the occasion that every word had its due weight

Perhaps you would like to know how I was dressed I'll tell you. I had on my Black Pants, my Blue Coat, a clean Hickory shirt my straw Hat, and a nice new pair of moccasins all work[ed] over with Beads. The Boys said I looked quite the Dandy—And I must tell you Ella this sermon is not the only thing of a literary character we have had in these wild Mountains.—On Thursday last we were honored with a Visit from Horace Greeley. Only think Horace Greeley, clambering over these ragged Old Mountains on a Mule. he was dressed in Black had an old Slouch Hat on with the rim drooping down on all sides, he visited all the sluices during the day. and took items I had an introduction to him and had the honor of giving him a report of how long we had been mining how much we had made, and what our best days work amounted too, he will send back a communication¹⁰ to the N. Y. Tribune,

¹⁰ Greeley's report on the mines was published in many newspapers including: Rocky Mountain News Extra, June 11, 1859; and Weekly Champion, Atchison, Kansas, June 25, 1859.

Gregorys Diggins near Hoosier City
June 12th 1859

Dear Ella

Dinner just over dishes washed and put away, and for a conflag with you, yesterday we quit work at 4 o'clock got supper over and Will Duey and I stripped off our dirty shirts, went down to the little Brook that runs hard by and washed ourselves from head to foot, went to bed feeling fifty per cent better. I was up this morning by 5 o'clock, got breakfast and roused the Boys. after breakfast all of us but Charley (who we left to keep house) went up the Ravine about half mile, and listened to the first sermon ever preached in the Rocky Mountains (so far as we know) how strangely I felt as I sat there on a large Pine Stump listening to the discourse taken from the Ten Commandments. Surrounded by over a Thousand hardy rough looking miners, and while sitting there how many little incidents concerning my dear wife and little ones rushed through my mind. and as the discourse progressed in looking around me I saw the Tears rolling down many a rustic cheek. And in fact ere I was aware of it I found one steeling softly down my own. I dont know that I ever experienced such feelings before in my life. Although it was a very plain old fashioned Methodist sermon, it made a greater impression than the most eloquent discourse I ever heard. it was so well suited to the occasion that every word had its due weight

PORTION OF A SPAIN LETTER

so look out for a number about the time you get this, and you will get the report in the evening at 7 o'clock he delivered an address to the miners, and I am proud to say that I was one that composed a part of the first meeting that ever assembled in the Rocky Mountains the first part of his address was a warning to the miners against the Evils of Gambling and use of intoxicating drinks, Very appropriate, dont you think so his closing remarks were a strong argument in favor of the Pacific Rail Road, showing the great advantage it would be to the present immigration he stated that his main object in taking the trip was to stimulate them by some word or hint to a speedy erection of the said Road—You had better

believe that at the close of his speech we made these Old Mountains ring with *three* rousing cheers for Greely—he left on Friday Morning, he called at our Sluice before leaveing and told me that our report was the fullest and best one he had recd and requested that we would send in the amount that we took out the three last days of this week.—We have taken out over Eleven hundred Dollars this week and there was one day we did not run, on account of moveing our Sluice farther up the Mountain. We feel well satisfied with our work so far and still hope for a Continuance until the 1st Sept. then we make tracks for the Old States what does Uncle Dave think by this time that I will yet see the time I'll wish I had taken his advice. I have not yet, nor do I believe I will its all right though he said what he did in good faith, and with the best of feelings—We all keep well, and eat hearty & have plenty too eat, and I can work right along and stand up to it with the best man in the Company I get along so *much* better than I anticipated, this is geting to be a city indeed it is estimated now that there is from 5 to 7 Thousand persons here and hundreds comeing in every day, but the poor South Benders—not a man of them has come in yet except *Old Whiskey Pete*. I suppose they all took the back track, have you ever heard whether Bus Brownfield went back or not please write me for we can hear nothing from him here, we have an express now runing from here to Denver City—it comes in on Saturday and leaves on Monday and from Denver City to the States we now have U. S. Mail—so it now costs only 25 cts each way for letters—Coryville¹¹ & Denver city is the same Coryville is the name of the P. O. but direct as before to Denver City K. T.—Will Duey is siting on a stool reading out of Lillies Bible watching a pot of Beans while I write—There is quite a number of Ladies here now which make things look so much more comfortable, there is one family lives close to us that have a cow chickens &c Every morning my ears are Saluted by the crowing of a big *Shanghai Rooster* that they have tell Lillie I am *very* sorry my little girl has a *sore Mouth* but I hope its well long ere this she must hold alum in her mouth and my little *Ned* has Corns on his toes like *pa* & can whistle too, he's geting to be a man surely tell Ned corns are naughty things, they hurt *pa* like forty sometimes, and he must be careful and not wear tight shoes or Boots any more. Ella I scarcely know where to direct this but I guess Urbana

¹¹ See: H. Parker Johnson, "Coraville, Denver's First Post Office," *The Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1 (January, 1947), 37-43.

would be the safest. Its strange I get nothing from Father not a scratch since I left *Ft Kearny*. I was really disappointed last night for I neither got one from him nor you and I felt sure I would get from one or both of you. write as often as you can for its such a satisfaction to hear from you. Give my love to all and reserve a goodly portion for Ella. Kiss My Babies,

Ever yours

Dave

Gregorys Diggings, near Hoosier City
June 26th 1859

Dear Ella,

Why I am doomed to toil in this wild desolate Mountain Gorge, and not be permitted to hear from those who are *dearer* to me than life itself is a query which I shall not attempt to answer at the present time, but it is even so the labours of the past week have been greatly lightened by the assurance & certainty of geting tidings from my dear family at its close, but Saturday came and likewise the mail, but "narry" letter for the Indiana Boys. We all shared the same fate but it surely does not disappoint any one of our Crowd *so much*, as it does poor me, and if I do say it myself (I know I am honest) I dont beleive that man lives who thinks moore and I dare say, as *much* as I do of my dear little *flock*. May the good Being protect you & me and permit us to meet, as we parted, and then me thinks I will know how to enjoy the comforts of an interesting family & the pleasures of civelized life—not that I am regretting that I embarked in this enterprize far from it. I feel that I shall not only be benifited in a pecuniary point of view, but in point of health a[nd] knowledge of the country through which I have passed and in various other ways. I feel that it will be the source of great enjoyment in the future to tell over to my wife and little ones, the many scenes through which I have passed, dureing my sojourn in the Rocky Mountains and my travels to & from them. Will Duey & I have just returned from a long walk among the tall pines which adorn the side and sumit of the *shaggy* Old Veteran just in the rear of our Cabin. We enjoy such rambles very much. We usually select some grassy spot in the shade, and there seat ourselves and talk about home, some times pictureing ourselves at the Dinner table eating our first meal off a White Cloth & clean granite dishes and wonder whether after liveing camp life so long, we would not make a very awkward appearance at a fashionable Dinner

—and other times pictureing out in our imagination our arrival at home. how we should feel when nearing the *Bend* on the cars when they Whistled *down breaks* & the Conductor cried out South Bend, and then how we should get from the Depot home whether we would ride in the Buss or walk down, and how nice it would be to slip in on you unaware, and take all by surprise—&c &c. and we keep on until we almost imagined ourselves there. One day while Bill & myself were running a sluice at Arrappahoe, we stopped to rest and got talking about home Bill says, Dave suppose we should look right over on the opposite side of this river, and there on the bank should see your wife, standing looking at us, says he, do you suppose I would take the trouble to go away up to that *dam* to get across and shake hands with her, *no Sir* says he I would go strait across if I were sure the water was ten feet deep. *Says I*, Young man you would have to do some of the tallest traveling ever you done if you got there before me why says I, I bleive a wall 20 feet high would not stop me. so we go on every day, we talk over something similar in its nature to the above, then turn and laugh at our folly O I must tell you John has bought almost an exact match to *Neds Poney* for George. John & I were talking to day how we would hitch up this Winter and go Sleighing with our Match *Ponies* George & Ned to sit in front & Lillie & Kittie behind and one of us along as a safe guard now had not we the thing nicely arranged—they are just of a Size (the Ponies) and the same color Johns is a male & mine is a female we have their manes nicely roached in regular built Pony Style they are both so gentle and kind that any one may handle them with perfect safety—well I must soon close this and write one to Father. I am at a loss to know exactly where to direct your letter for the last one I have from you was written May 5th you were then talking of going on a Visit to the Burg, but I wont send there I guess my best plan will be to send it to Father and have him forward it to you. you will perhaps get it sooner than any other way—We all still are blessed with excellent health & may *God* grant that you are all favored in like manner O how I wish I knew where you are and how you are this lovely Sabbath day—Give my Kindest regards to all, Kiss my dear little Ned & Lillie, and heres a Bushel of love for you

hopeing I may hear from you soon I am Ever yours Dave

P. S. I had like to have forgotten to tell you that we are still makeing it Pay *very well*. Dave

Memories of Aspen, Colorado

By WILLIAM W. WARDELL*

I like to see Aspen¹ through the eyes of a small boy about six or seven years of age, wading in the irrigation ditch in front of his home on the corner of Monarch and Bleeker Streets, near the Jerome Hotel. He waded in the ditch with his shoes and stockings on because the older boys had dared him to do it.

I can still hear the whistles sounding throughout the town, blown three times each day at the Mollie Gibson² and the Argentum-Juniata mines at the change of shifts at seven A.M., and eleven P.M.

I can see the lights sparkling from the O'shantassy lanterns as the miners walked up and down Aspen Mountain, going on the "graveyard" shift at eleven P.M., or coming down after being at work since three in the afternoon.

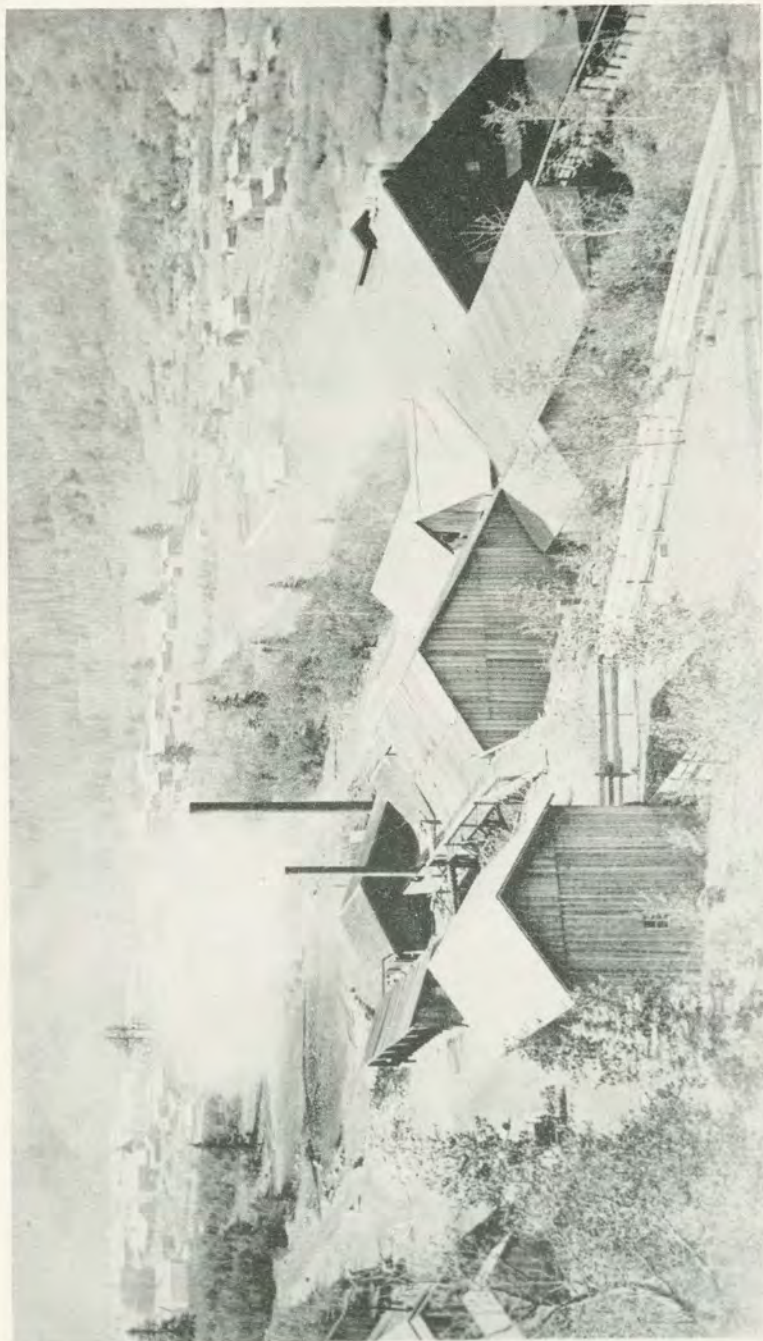
I can see the horse-drawn street cars operating on Hyman Avenue, carrying passengers to and from the center of town. The street car tracks ran through Aspen to the mesa, where my father, John B. Wardell, had a number of houses which he rented.

My father's large grocery and mercantile store was on the corner of Galena and Cooper Streets, not far from the depot of the Colorado Midland Railroad, where Jesse Waters was

*William W. Wardell of Denver, Colo., a Registered Accountant, is a member of the State Historical Society. For thirty years he was with the U. S. Internal Revenue Department. In speaking of his family background, Mr. Wardell said: "I was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on November 11, 1884. The Wardells were from England and were glass blowers by occupation. My grandfather established a glass factory in Massachusetts. My father was born in Boston about 1851. I was named after his elder half-brother, who was a lieutenant in the 8th Massachusetts Cavalry. He married my mother's aunt, Jennie Cleveland, in February, 1864. He and his wife had only about two weeks of married life when he was killed by Confederate bushwhackers on his return to headquarters from a furlough. My aunt never remarried, although she lived to be more than ninety. My mother's father was George W. Sherrick, a fine man, tall and friendly. During the Civil War he sided with the South, though my grandmother sided with the North. When the Federal troops commandeered his horses, of which he had some 100 head, he was never paid. This resulted in a great financial loss to him from which he never entirely recovered. He had a farm located about where Grand Avenue is now situated in St. Louis. My grandmother on the maternal side was a Bruce of Scotland and her parents were early inhabitants of Vermont. Her father, John Cleveland, migrated to Ohio in the early days of the country and it is said that he was one of the first settlers of Ohio to have glass windows in his cabin. He was the founder of the newspaper which afterwards became the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. From Ohio the family went to Quincy, Illinois, and from there to St. Louis, where my mother was born." Mr. Wardell arrived in Colorado at the age of six months.—*Editor*.

¹The town (Pitkin County) was founded in 1880 and named by B. Clark Wheeler, who surveyed the townsite, for the profuse growth of aspen trees in the vicinity. In 1880 it rivaled Leadville as a silver camp. It was formerly (1879) called Ute City.—"Names of Colorado Towns," *The Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (January, 1940), 34.

²According to the *Colorado State Mining Directory*, 1898, p. 294, the Mollie Gibson Consolidated Mining Company had a capitalization of \$5,000,000 with J. J. Hagerman, President.



MOLLIE GIBSON MINE WITH ASPEN IN BACKGROUND
Courtesy—Mrs. Albert S. Lynch



LUCY CLEAVELAND
SHERRICK WARDELL



JOHN B. WARDELL

the joint agent for the Colorado Midland and the Denver and Rio Grande. Because the two railways came into Aspen from different sides of town, switch engines were employed to transfer from one line to the other the cars loaded with rich silver ore from the various mines in the vicinity of the Mollie Gibson and the other large mines in that locality. The Denver and Rio Grande station was at the foot of Mill Street, down the hill from our house, so we could look out upon the depot and railroad yards and watch this activity.

I can see the large warehouse owned by Wardell and Dustin, near the present (1958) site of the ski tow which now comes down Aspen Mountain. The warehouse stood beside the railway tracks and was large enough to hold a number of carloads of groceries of all kinds, as well as hay and grain. There was a large stable in the back which accommodated several saddle horses and the horses used on the order wagon and the delivery wagons. Few residences had telephones and it was necessary for a man to go around town and take orders by using a horse and buggy, the orders to be filled later in the store and delivered by wagon. It was the practice on Sunday mornings for the drivers and stableman to give the horses a bath, curry them and trim their manes and tails, for the drivers always took great pride in keeping their horses spick-and-span.

I can see the great clouds of dust rising in columns on the mountainside, caused by the ore teams going to and from the mines loaded with supplies or ore. The narrow and rutty roads were so steep in places that the brakes would not hold and it would be necessary to "block" the wheels, which was done by hanging a large log in front of the rear wheels, supported by chains from the body of the wagon. This restrained the wheels so that the wagon actually slid down the road as the horses pulled it along. This arrangement worked very well unless there was a large rock in the middle of the road which would raise the log, causing the whole load to come tumbling down the hill on top of the poor horses.



ISABEL SHERRICK
WARDELL AND MRS.
DEXTER T. REYNOLDS

For these large four-wheeled wagons with high sideboards, six or more horses were used. The horses next to the wagon were known as the wheel horses and those in front as the lead horses. Owing to the narrowness of the roads and the steepness of the mountains it was often necessary in going around curves for the lead horses to climb up on the side of the mountain while the wagon was still on the road. There were turn-outs every quarter or half mile which would permit two teams to pass. If two teams should meet between these turn-outs, it was necessary for one team to back up to one of the turn-outs so that they could pass. Usually the lower wagon was expected to yield. If this could not be done, sometimes it was necessary to unhitch the horses from the wagon or carriage. The men would then have to carry the vehicle around the other team and rehit it. In order to avoid this work the ore



Upper: House of John B. Wardell, Aspen, Colo., 1892
Still standing back of Jerome Hotel.

Lower: Theodore Blohm Merchandise Co., later Wardell & Dustin
Corner of Galena and Cooper Sts., Aspen.



teams were all equipped with large sleigh bells which were supported on straps and extended between the heads of the two lead horses. The bells made considerable noise and could be heard a half mile away, thereby warning approaching drivers of their coming, so that they could wait in one of the turn-outs until the team passed by.

When the teamsters had large pieces of machinery to move, such as big boilers or hoists, and there was no road up to the mine, they used to "snake" them up the hill by means of ropes and pulleys, by hitching a team of horses or mules to the end of the rope and pulling the machinery up the hill in easy stages until they got it in place.

I can hear the bell tolling at the City Hall when there was a fire, and I can see ten or fifteen men pulling the hose-reel with its two huge wheels. The hose-cart was pulled by a tongue and a long rope held by a number of men. This worked well on level streets, but not when they came to a hill, as they did one night on Hopkins Avenue. The lead man fell down near the bottom of the hill and all the rest of the ten or fifteen men came tumbling down on top of him. Enough blue smoke issued from the men to start a second fire.

I like to think of the great toboggan parties, made up of men and women as well as children, coasting down Aspen Mountain from up near the Aspen mine, down across the Midland tracks and on through the town, ending up at Hallems Lake or continuing on down the Roaring Fork River when it was frozen over. The sleds, which held ten or more, were sometimes pulled back up the mountain by a horse or burro. One night a sled loaded with men and women slid into an incoming Midland train. One man was killed and several were injured. This put a damper on the sport for quite some time.

Skating parties were likewise popular in the long Aspen winters. Hallems Lake was always good for skating, as was electric light plant. There was a large steam upright boiler at Williams Lake over on the hill above the Roaring Fork and the Williams Lake, which the Williams boys used for heating water to pour onto the lake in the afternoon or early evening so that it would freeze quickly and form smooth ice. Williams and Hallems Lakes were fine for boating and swimming in the summer, and there were many picnic parties in the mountains, where hunting and fishing were popular. Aspen had a race track, and some of the wealthy citizens owned splendid race horses.

The Aspen people were great for dancing, and when they



WILLIE W. WARDELL
6 years of age



LULU WARDELL

heard that Leadville had engaged the services of a Professor Goddat to instruct them in the latest ballroom steps, it was not long until they had hired him to come to Aspen to give lessons to the town's elite. It was arranged that Prof. Goddat should conduct his classes in the ballroom of the wonderful \$50,000 home of D. R. C. Brown. Of course, it was necessary for my sister Lulu and myself to take lessons from the professor. He was a very large man, tall and straight. As I remember him now, he was over six feet and would weigh over two hundred pounds. He wore large, wide shoes without caps on the toes, and to my young eyes they looked to be about size thirteen. He seemed anything but a dancing teacher.

Burros were plentiful. When not in use packing goods and provisions up to the mines and bringing down sacks of ore, they were turned loose on the city streets and allowed to forage for themselves. Consequently, the women who did not have fences around their houses were likely to lose their laundry from the line, as the burros were exceptionally fond

of eating such rare delicacies as negligees. We children always had a burro to ride to school if we could catch one. It was not thought unusual to catch a burro and ride him for his feed. When a burro puncher was ready for his animals, he simply rode around the town and gathered up those which had his brand. No one ever thought of stealing a burro, and the puncher was glad to have someone feed the animal, for it saved him the expense.

In those days there was no free kindergarten and so a private one was established by the two Strawbridge sisters in a church on upper Main Street. During recess one day little Jimmy Ferris and I saw three or four burros go by. We chased them all the way into the mountains until it began to get dark, when we started back home without thinking that anyone would be worried about our safety. We were quite surprised to find the whole town looking for us, and we were compelled to go to the woodshed with our respective fathers for the corporal punishment that good government demanded.

My father, John B. Wardell, who had bought out the firm of Theodore Blum, was a director of the First National Bank at Aspen at the same time that David H. Moffat was President. W. S. Cheesman, who established the Denver Union Water Company and was prominent in real estate dealings, was Vice President. Other directors were D. R. C. Brown and his father-in-law, H. P. Cowenhoven.³ Mr. Brown and Mr. Cowenhoven owned and operated the Cowenhoven Tunnel, which served many of the mines as a transportation tunnel. My stepmother, Isabel Sherrick Wardell,⁴ wrote the poem that appeared on the banner held by the Silver Queen, a famous metal statue representing Aspen at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. My own mother, Lucy Cleaveland Sherrick, brought me to Aspen in her arms in 1885, and we came in by stage from Leadville over Independence Pass. The snow was so deep that the sled turned over and we were both thrown out into a snow bank at the bottom of a hill. I believe I was fairly christened upon coming to Colorado at the age of six months.

³ Henry P. Cowenhoven, a prosperous Black Hawk merchant, pioneered his way in 1849 to California and thence across country to Gilpin County, Colorado. In 1880 his family consisted of himself, his wife, daughter and Mr. David R. C. Brown. Mr. Brown hailed from New Brunswick. During the spring of that year, Mr. Cowenhoven disposed of his business at Black Hawk, and with his family and Mr. Brown went to Aspen, four mountain ranges away. In October, 1881, Brown married Miss Cowenhoven, and became a member of his father-in-law's firm.—C. S. Thomas, "An Argonaut of the Roaring Fork," *The Colorado Magazine*, Vol. VII, No. 6 (November, 1930), 205-216.

⁴ Mr. John B. Wardell married first Lucy Cleaveland Sherrick, mother of William W. Wardell. After her death, Mr. Wardell married her sister, Isabel.

The Denver and Rio Grande and the Panic of 1873

By ROBERT G. ATHEARN*

In the fall of 1871 Colorado's first narrow gauge, the Denver and Rio Grande, reached the new colony town of Colorado Springs. By June of the following year its tracks entered Pueblo, one hundred and eighteen miles south of Denver, after residents of that city had promised \$150,000 in bonds to assist in its construction. Within another four months a branch was constructed westward to the Labran coal fields, near Canon City, giving the little railroad over a hundred and fifty miles of track in southern Colorado. Nearly two years later, in July 1874, track-laying was completed from Labran to Canon City after the latter had promised, under what amounted to duress, to deliver up \$100,000 worth of bonds and land to aid in financing. With the exception of this last-mentioned piece of track, only nine miles in length, the Denver and Rio Grande was unable to expand between 1872 and 1876.

During the days of restless discontent, while the Canon City people looked in vain for their railroad, the Rio Grande management suffered from growing pains and financial depression. The year 1872 was one of rapid expansion, and while the road netted over a hundred thousand dollars in passenger and freight traffic, construction costs were enormous. Dr. William Bell did his best to raise money in Europe, but had to admit to William Blackmore that "I find I cannot possibly obtain more than \$250,000 (say £50,000) for subscription in England."¹ In his first annual report President Palmer fretted at the delay caused by building branches, necessary as they might be. "It would be better to finish the whole line to El Paso, on the Mexican frontier, as it could rapidly be done in two to three years," he told stockholders. "It takes practically no longer to get 650 miles of iron rails and joints out from Europe than 76 [the distance between Denver and Colorado

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¹ W. A. Bell to William Blackmore, February 26, 1872. William Blackmore Papers, Item 0478. Museum of New Mexico Library, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Springs]; and this is the measure of the rapidity of building a road."² Like a small boy turned loose in a candy store, he was anxious to secure all the territory he could while the getting was good. If the people of Canon City were up in arms over delays, they would have to get over it, and pay the price demanded for a branch line; Palmer was headed for Mexico.

From his standpoint, there was good reason for haste. In September, 1872, a scant three months after the Rio Grande entered Pueblo and while the Arkansas Valley branch was being built westward to the coal fields, the Kansas Pacific Railway organized a subsidiary known as the Arkansas Valley Railway Company and asked Pueblo to support it so that the mainline might reach that city from eastern Colorado. Hardly had that proposition been received than representatives of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe turned up, under the name Kansas and Colorado Railroad Company, and promised to build into Pueblo much faster than the Kansas Pacific, with the help of local money. The result was that in January, 1873, both propositions were voted upon and to the surprise of the taxpayers both bond issues carried, adding \$400,000 to the burden already assumed.³ Pueblo, like many a prairie town to the east, envisaged itself as soon wearing the title G. R. C., or Great Railroad Center. The railroad virus had struck the southern Colorado towns, hard.

Ironically, what at first appeared to save the day for worried General Palmer was the panic of 1873 that struck down many major eastern corporations. The Kansas Pacific became so distressed financially that it had to drop out of the race, while the Atchison, as it was then generally known, was stopped at the Colorado line to await the abatement of financial storms. Dr. Bell, many years later, recalled that the years 1870 to 1873 were times of great prosperity for the young territory of Colorado. The assessed property value of the four counties through which the Denver and Rio Grande passed, jumped from approximately seven million in 1870 to over eighteen million in 1873. "Mining was active and the receipts of the new railway were entirely satisfactory. Immediately following this hopeful outlook came the panic of that year,

² *First Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway to the Stockholders*, April 1, 1873, p. 12.

³ Milo Whittaker, *Pathbreakers and Pioneers of the Pueblo Region* (Pueblo, 1917), pp. 110-111; *Minutes of The Board of Directors of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway Company*, July 17, 1874, in Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Archives, D. and R. G. W. Offices, Denver.

which did not seriously affect Colorado until '74 and '75. . . ."⁴

Palmer admitted that the first eight months of the year were very good, the remainder being about as remunerative as the same period in the first year of operation. From January to August net earnings increased a hundred and sixty per cent, but the late months seriously cut anticipated profits. The panic, he said, had not hit Colorado business drastically. Only one bank was unable to meet its obligation and it later paid off every dollar. While the business of transportation suffered, because of the natural check upon immigration in hard times, the picture was not at all dark. Or so the President said. At a time when seventy-seven American railroads failed he was proud that his was able to meet all obligations and to show net earnings of nearly two hundred thousand dollars during the panic year.⁵ Privately he hoped that while the Kansas Pacific and the Atchison were obliged to delay their expansion, his road could claim the territory south and west of Pueblo.

Publicly, the Rio Grande president revealed no worry about the approach of competing lines. In his report of April 1, 1873, he said that their arrival would merely settle country to the east and create additional markets for coal, lumber and other mountain products. He reiterated the idea the following year, asserting that his line was built to tap the mountain trade and he had no objection to the coming of eastern roads. "So far from feeling that this was objectionable we have considered it always as a decidedly advantageous feature in our case. The several east and west lines can only get this Eastern trade from and to its markets by passing it over a certain distance of the Denver and Rio Grande lines. Preserving a strict impartiality, the temptation to local aggression by either of those companies would naturally be greatly diminished, and all would be benefitted. We have no quarrel to make, therefore, with any east and west line, and, so far from fearing their effects, we welcome them all, and will treat each as the most favored."⁶

Despite such professions of friendship, Palmer was very anxious to push on toward Santa Fe before any other road decided it was able to tap the New Mexican trade. In the spring of

⁴ Address by Dr. William A. Bell at a dinner given to the employees of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad at the Union Station, Denver, Colorado, January 28, 1920. In William Jackson Palmer Papers, Division of State Archives and Public Records, State Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.

⁵ *Second Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway to the Stockholders for the year 1873*, July 31, 1874, p. 5.

⁶ *Second Annual Report*, p. 13.

1873 he wrote that New Mexico already had a population of a hundred and ten thousand, which was perhaps twice that of Colorado when the road was commenced. Just beyond reach lay the Santa Fe traffic, which, he said, would nearly double the net earnings of the road if it could be reached. The extension of tracks south to Trinidad would attract a good deal of traffic, for that place was a common point on the Santa Fe trail and only ninety miles from Pueblo. But to insure the complete control desired, Santa Fe had to be reached.

Business men of New Mexico were more than enthusiastic about such plans. The *Santa Fe Weekly New Mexican* called Palmer a "gentleman of intelligence, character, wealth and large community interest with the Rocky Mountain section," and it watched the development of his plans with intense interest.⁷ In the fall of 1874 Palmer and A. C. Hunt visited Santa Fe, giving assurances that the Denver and Rio Grande would be completed to Trinidad by the following spring and New Mexico could expect a railroad shortly thereafter. While the people of the region were said to favor the Kansas Pacific or the Atchison, either of which were said to furnish a direct connection with the East, they believed that the Denver and Rio Grande would be the first line to reach them. While this road would give New Mexico a more roundabout connection with the major roads, for the moment it was the most active one in the mountain West.⁸ Already it advertised in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* that it was the "direct and only railroad to Southern Colorado and New Mexico, connecting with Barlow and Sanderson's stage line at Pueblo."⁹ Santa Fe was calling. So were Galveston and Houston, in Texas, both of which cities sought a connection with the Denver and Rio Grande. Such interest excited the railroad's promoters to renewed activity, and during 1874 plans were made to push on toward Trinidad.

The prospects were encouraging, President Palmer told his company's stockholders. By March of that year a hundred and fifty-six miles of track were in operation between Denver and New Mexico. The five counties served had trebled, perhaps quadrupled, in wealth and population since 1870.¹⁰ So far as home credit was concerned, no railroad in the western half of the United States exceeded that of the Rio Grande. Never,

⁷ *Weekly New Mexican* (Santa Fe), June 18, 1872.

⁸ *Ibid.*, November 3, 1874.

⁹ *Ibid.*, April 21, 1874.

¹⁰ William J. Palmer, *The Westward March of Emigration in the United States, Considered in its Bearing Upon the Near Future of Colorado and New Mexico* (Lancaster, Pa., 1874), pp. 39-40.

except for one month, had the road been obliged to postpone a pay day and it always met its bills promptly, Palmer said proudly.

By July, 1874, forty miles of roadbed were graded between Pueblo and Cucharas. The Trinidad extension, when finished, would double the line's gross business at a cost of a mere \$125,000 annual interest, wrote the President. Admittedly, the prospect for passenger travel on the new division was not as great as that farther north, but it ran through rich valleys like the San Carlos, Greenhorn, Huerfano, Cucharas, Santa Clara and Purgatoire, whose local traffic should be lucrative. The country south of Pueblo, between the Arkansas and the Raton mountains, was regarded as "probably the greatest grazing field in Colorado, already containing over 100,000 head of cattle, and nearly doubling annually." This, added to the coal, coke and iron traffic originating at Cucharas and Trinidad, promised rich returns.

Already the Canon City steam coal was well known. In February, R. Neilson Clark, a mining engineer, reported that the Denver and Rio Grande used only a ton for an 85.29 mile run while the Kansas Pacific, using Fort Scott coal, used a ton every 39.87 miles. But the Trinidad field, when opened, promised even greater things. Its excellent coking coal could be the basis for a whole industrial development in Colorado. "I have never seen a more valuable deposit of coal west of the anthracite region of Pennsylvania," the engineer told Palmer. It was Clark's belief that the Trinidad field contained the only coal that would coke between the Ohio Valley and the Pacific ocean, with the possible exception of the anthracite beds near Santa Fe.¹¹

The most important immediate advantage of the Trinidad extension was the promise of all the passenger traffic, and much of the freight business, passing between New Mexico and the East, the freight alone being estimated at 10,000 tons. As a specific example of the need for additional trackage, Palmer related that in a single day his road had carried almost fifteen hundred dollars in government troop fares from Denver to Pueblo. Bound for New Mexico, these troops would have gone on to Trinidad, yielding another thousand dollars in revenue, had the road been extended that far.¹²

Friends of the Rio Grande agreed with all Palmer had to

¹¹ Report of R. Neilson Clark, February 10, 1874, in *Second Annual Report*, p. 26; appendix, pp. 83, 84.

¹² *Second Annual Report*, Appendix p. 63.

say about the urgent necessity of expansion. But despite brave talk about Colorado's immunity to the panic, it was a time of national financial distress, bound to affect such local enterprises. Fortunately the railroad's traffic was largely local. This, and the fact that it was assisted by the Union Contract Company and the Central Colorado Improvement Company, made survival possible. Despite financial troubles, snow blockades in Colorado's capricious winters, and, in one instance, damage done by a wind that lifted a train car completely off the tracks, the little road maintained its schedules and offered the service it had promised.

There were those, of course, who thought the price was too high. The traveler and author, J. H. Beadle, said the railroad was familiarly known in Colorado as the "Narrow Gouge," in complaint of its passenger rate of ten cents a mile.¹³ He, and others, preferred this to the more expensive and uncomfortable stagecoach, but criticism of railroads was coming into vogue as the national indoor sport and it made good reading. Complaints against the narrow gauge were not reserved for more critical outsiders. A correspondent, signing himself "G. B. H.," wrote from Colorado Springs that Palmer's road was not the unqualified success it was made out to be. The train to Denver was then (January, 1873) running but one passenger car most of the time and it was frequently only partly filled. This, said the letter writer, was because half-fare on the D. and R. G. was higher than full fare east of the Missouri. It was asserted that two men could go from Colorado Springs to Denver with a livery outfit and be gone two days, at the same expense as if they had traveled by rail, or they could go to Canon City from the Springs for two-thirds the cost of railway tickets. The letter disturbed editor Byers of the *Rocky Mountain News*, a strong D. and R. G. supporter. He commented that if this were true, livery rates at Colorado Springs must be a good deal lower than when he was last there.¹⁴

The hostile penman from Colorado Springs came storming back into the *News* columns a few days later, with facts and figures to prove his assertion. What use was the railroad, he inquired? Colorado businessmen simply could not afford to travel by rail at the present outrageous rates. He quoted the presiding elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church, whose work was primarily along the D. and R. G., as saying he would no longer

¹³ J. H. Beadle, *The Undeveloped West: or, Five Years in the Territories* (Philadelphia, 1873), p. 443.

¹⁴ *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, January 23, 1873.

travel by steam, so costly had it become. Mercantile men were said to agree with him. Rail freight rates were so exorbitant that the dealers were going back to mule and bull teams to transport their wares. Finally, the local muckraker charged that the coal company at the Labran fields, a railroad affiliate, was charging five dollars a ton to haul fuel to Pueblo, a distance of thirty-odd miles, but only one dollar a ton to carry it north, and upgrade, the forty-five miles from Pueblo to Colorado Springs. No wonder Pueblo had grievances against Palmer's road, he said. Byers, always faithful to the railroad, again felt obliged to answer, but he had to admit that "We think their rates excessive, and their policy not as conducive to the development of the country as it might be. . . ." Nevertheless, he stoutly contended that the narrow gauge had contributed more to southern Colorado than any other single factor.¹⁵

That the feeling was persistent, and that "G. B. H." was not just a crank letter writer, is indicated by the writings of "Interested Spectator," who boldly attacked the Rio Grande in Colorado Springs' own *Gazette* during 1875. Some of that city's philanthropic men, he wrote, were so tired of the Denver and Rio Grande, which was "like a leech sucking the life blood of the town and caring not but to draw from it the last possible drop," that they had formed the River Bend, Colorado Springs and San Juan Railroad whose purpose it was to make a direct connection with the East by the Kansas Pacific Railroad. Such a connection, never actually accomplished, might have offered a city like Colorado Springs more direct service, but it did not necessarily promise low freight rates. The entire West was paying a disproportionate amount for such haulage and for the remainder of the century that fact would be a leading political issue.¹⁶

Complaints about the Rio Grande, in particular, continued on into the next decade. An Englishman who settled a few miles from Colorado Springs in the early 1880's, wrote that the line's rates were so high that no particular benefit resulted from being near it. Farming was not profitable because it cost so much to market the produce. He repeated the charge that

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, February 2, 1873.

¹⁶ *Colorado Springs Gazette and El Paso County News*, December 11, 1875. In the fall of 1871, Foster Nichols, General Agent of the DuPont Powder Company, wrote to D. C. Dodge, then General Western Agent for the Kansas Pacific, quoting an article in a Denver paper which said the freight rate from New York to Kansas City was 48c a hundred and from Kansas City to Denver it was \$2.40 a hundred. He wanted to send two or three carloads of gunpowder from New York to Denver at those prices. Foster Nichols to D. C. Dodge, September 5, 1871, in D. C. Dodge Letter Books, Volume I. Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

it was cheaper for passengers to hire a livery rig than to go by rail, and complained that while most roads tended to increase and foster travel, the D. and R. G. was a notable exception. The newcomer was undisguisedly disappointed in the management of the new road and did not hesitate to publicize his antipathies toward it.¹⁷

Palmer's enthusiasm was not dulled by all the tumult and shouting. He was a man with a mission and he was determined to make his dream of a north-south railway come true. As early as the summer of 1874 he announced optimistically that "The panic is now over, and the outlook for the future is altogether hopeful." Colorado's extraordinary growth, only momentarily checked, was once again evident to him. Anticipating historian Frederick Jackson Turner's "safety valve" theory of the frontier's attraction during times of depression, Palmer expressed the belief that immigration actually had been helped by the panic.¹⁸ He was certain that by the following year the eight hotels at Manitou would be unable to handle the flow of tourist travel.

The optimism was infectious. The *Colorado Springs Gazette* might print indignant letters such as those from "Interested Spectator," but its editorial faithfulness to Palmer never wavered. Even in 1874, when times were still hard, the paper eulogized the narrow gauge, maintaining that "In every way . . . it has fostered the growth and prosperity of the Town, doing more for it than it is ever likely to do for any other place. . . . The self interest of the Railway Co. is the surest protection for the town."¹⁹ A few months later the editor described an exhibition of fruit, received by General Palmer from New Mexico, and he predicted that "so soon as the Denver and Rio Grande gets into New Mexico, we shall doubtless have an abundance of cheap fruit, for a few hundred miles will take it into a semi-tropical climate."²⁰ On occasion papers like the *Chicago Evening Journal* printed flattering accounts about the road, and the *Gazette* was quick to publish them.²¹

Talk was not enough. It seemed clear to most people in Colorado that the D. and R. G. was charging all the traffic would bear—some said more—but still its income was not commensurate with its needs. Palmer had estimated that earnings for 1873 would reach \$250,000, but "in consequence of the

panic" actually they were just over \$195,000. During 1874 earnings continued to slump with the annual return showing a net of slightly over \$182,000. Even if the estimated earnings figure of 1873 had been reached, the Rio Grande barely would have broken even. Interest obligations on the main line alone amounted to \$20,000 a month, or \$240,000 annually.²² With income falling behind interest demands by nearly \$60,000 a year, rough financial weather ahead was indicated.

Curiously enough, Palmer showed no signs of shortening his sails. While he quite mistakenly supposed that failure on the part of the Kansas Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe to meet their own interest obligations precluded any early extension into the Southwest by them, he seemed convinced that he must expand, even in the face of financial difficulties. His work was at a critical point. He had the basis of a railroad system, but it was not yet extensive enough to attract sufficient traffic. He viewed the building of branch lines with mixed feelings. While they hindered the growth of the main line they were necessary to it for it was such traffic that Palmer originally had supposed would support his endeavor.

The larger dilemma, of course, was whether to retrench, and ride out the financial storm, hoping to survive on what amounted to a monopoly of local business, or to keep building. Whatever thoughts he may have had about pursuing the more conservative course were quickly dismissed. To the east lay a twin-headed monster in the form of the Kansas Pacific and the Atchison roads, dormant for the moment, but potentially dangerous. And then there was Palmer himself. He was not a close-to-the-vest player; it was his nature to plunge. There appeared to be no other choice but to go ahead and add enough territory to the line to assure success to the whole venture. He took that alternative, without the slightest hesitation.

Early in 1875 the General and his wife went to Paris where he hoped to interest the French in his railroad plans. The usual prospectus was formulated and publicity was commenced. At first, it appeared that money would be forthcoming, but by summer it was evident that the new promotion plan was a failure. Returning to Philadelphia, Palmer continued his efforts, trying to raise a "pool" for the Trinidad extension. A prospectus marked "confidential," was prepared for Americans who had money to invest. It told, in glowing terms, of the rich

¹⁷ Edward Money, *The Truth About America* (London, 1886), pp. 67-68.

¹⁸ *Second Annual Report*, p. 10.

¹⁹ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 16, 1874.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, September 19, 1874.

²¹ *Ibid.*, November 7, 1874.

²² *Second Annual Report*, pp. 6, 29; *Colorado Springs Gazette*, August 14, 1875; *Railroad Gazette*, September 15, 1876.

and arable country that stretched for a hundred miles south of Pueblo, of its coal deposits, and of a great trade potential. At Trinidad the railroad would intersect a profitable wagon traffic that had to pay an average rate of about twenty-five cents a ton mile. Then there was the rich San Juan country of southwestern Colorado. "More rich silver lodes have been discovered there than elsewhere in Colorado or in any of the Western States or Territories."²³

Undoubtedly Palmer drew heavily upon Dr. Bell for his information about the San Juan region. Bell and the others constantly were probing the land along the projected route. The Doctor wrote that the recent mining boom there had doubled local trade and had added at least fifty per cent to the trade of New Mexico, for the year 1875. "Indeed, the trade of these counties had yielded to the freighters and stage coach proprietors that carried it during the past year, enough money to enable a railroad to either district to pay from its net receipts 7 per cent interest on bonds to the amount of \$20,000 per mile of road. Such a condition of things is exceptional in the Western States, where very little traffic usually exists before railways have opened up the resources of the country."²⁴

South and west of Pueblo also lay a real industrial potential in the Cucharas river coal fields, the prospectus continued. The Denver and Rio Grande already had obtained enough land in that vicinity to secure what amounted to a monopoly. In the heart of the region about twelve thousand acres of townsite land was set aside, ready for occupancy, to be sold by the new Southern Colorado Coal and Town Company. "The towns of Trinidad and Cucharas will be no mere villages," the literature promised. "Besides having as a foundation the coal mines and iron and other manufactures, they will do the business of Colorado and New Mexico for an extensive area. No other points are available."

A memorandum agreement of June 30, 1875, explained in more precise terms the difficulty the Denver and Rio Grande faced. It frankly admitted that due to financial disorders in the United States and because of failure in negotiations with the French company, there was no hope of extending the road without additional inducements to the investors. Dr. Bell,

²³ Prospectus, Trinidad Extension, in William Jackson Palmer Papers, Division of State Archives and Public Records, State Historical Society of Colorado, Denver.

²⁴ William A. Bell, *Progress of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway* (London, March 10, 1877), William Blackmore Papers, Item 1047, Museum of New Mexico Library, Santa Fe.

upon whose shoulders much of the money-raising work had fallen, devised a new scheme which, as before, involved real estate development that could be used to support the railroad. It was revealed that William S. Jackson, one of the narrow gauge's original officers, held for himself and others in trust almost ten thousand acres of land in Huerfano and Las Animas counties. Other parties owned between three and five thousand acres in the vicinity. On the usual premise that these lands would benefit greatly by the construction of a railroad to them, Bell proposed the formation of a land company, some of whose shares would be offered railroad investors as a bonus.²⁵

Jackson explained his part of the plan in a prospectus entitled "Trinidad Pool." "It was not until the Summer of 1875 that I was able, in connection with other parties owning large tracts of land in the vicinity of those owned by the Pool, to arrange for the development of the property by procuring the extension of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway. This was accomplished by the organization of the Southern Colorado Coal and Town Company, whose capital stock of one million dollars was issued as full paid in exchange for the lands in proportion to their actual cost without interest." It was further arranged that half of the town company's stock was sold to the promoters of the narrow gauge who used it as an inducement to capitalists in raising money for the extension of their tracks. As in the earlier case of the Labran field, the road promised to carry coal and coke to Denver and intermediate points for twenty per cent less than that regularly charged.²⁶

During the hot summer months of 1875 Palmer worked steadily at the task of promoting his new pool. "So much hangs on it that it makes one's head whirl to think of the possibility of failure, the shadow of which has been hanging over us very close since the French failed and more or less, ever since the panic," he wrote to his wife. And then the blow fell. In July the house of Duncan, Sherman & Company, in which the Rio Grande interests had considerable bank deposits, failed. "Naturally this shakes confidence for a while in everyone and everything," Palmer explained. "It is of no use to speak to people about new business ventures just now."

²⁵ Memorandum Agreement of June 30, 1875, in Minutes of an Adjourned Meeting of the Stockholders of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway Company held at Colorado Springs, July 29, 1876. In Archives of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, D. and R. G. W. Offices, Denver, Colorado.

²⁶ "Trinidad Pool," October 20, 1876, by William S. Jackson. In Western History Collections, Denver Public Library.

Then he showed his incurable optimism. "On the other side are certain compensations. I am very glad the French negotiations did not succeed, at least a half a million of the money would today have been in Duncan Sherman's bank and lost or practically so. So I am glad our new Pool did not get along faster here. A large amount of money would have been collected and deposited with Duncan's bank. On the whole these things are undoubtedly ordered for us better than we could arrange them for ourselves."²⁷

On into the fall Palmer persisted, laboriously gathering subscriptions. "The Pool gains slow; I communicate with everybody I ever knew," he wrote. In September he explained to the land speculator, William Blackmore, that progress was steady, and admitted that there was available enough money to reach Cucharas but "[we] are desirous of compassing Trinidad before striking out." Even though the average subscription was small, the General felt those who had contributed were "strong." He was now very hopeful of reaching Trinidad where he expected to get "the whole of the New Mexican trade, worth with the travel about \$100,000 per annum to us." Better still was the prospect of a rich coal business, "the dead center of our driving wheel."

It was a good time to build, he thought. Everything was cheap. Iron rails were being offered at Kansas City for fifty-two dollars a ton. Under such conditions the five hundred thousand dollars already raised probably would put the road to its immediate goal, equipment and all. That accomplished, there should be some dividends. Why, he said, even the Utah Southern and Utah Western roads, whose stock "is all water of course," were earning twelve per cent and they were not nearly so favorably situated as the Denver and Rio Grande.²⁸

Palmer could not shake off the lingering fear that the Atchison Road or the Kansas Pacific might interfere with his plans. In 1874 he did not think either line would get to Pueblo for a long time. By late the next year it was obvious he had been wrong about the Atchison's lethargy. It was getting dangerously close to Pueblo. Palmer hurried to Boston where he tried to make an agreement between himself and the other two roads that would eliminate any building competition. Since his rivals viewed each other as two Kilkenny cats, he saw a chance "of stepping in between, making peace, and getting the best permanent terms for ourselves, which will

²⁷ John S. Fisher, *A Builder of the West: The Life of William Jackson Palmer* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1939), pp. 246-47.

²⁸ W. J. Palmer to William Blackmore, September 24, 1875. William Blackmore Papers, Item 1013, Museum of New Mexico Library, Santa Fe.

include the abandonment of all the southern country to us."²⁹

Neither of the larger companies was ready to abandon any territory to Colorado's "Baby Road," but both were willing to cooperate with it with regard to traffic. The Atchison reached Pueblo late in February, 1876, at which time it made an agreement with the Rio Grande to carry through traffic on to Denver. By this means the Atchison could offer service to the Colorado capital in competition with the Kansas Pacific road.³⁰ That September the Rio Grande made a two-year contract with both rivals promising to divide all competitive earnings between them.³¹

Dr. Bell expressed great pleasure over the agreement. Writing early in 1877 he said that "The trade of Denver with the East has yielded, during the last three years, more than a million and a half dollars per annum to the Kansas Pacific Road, and there is no valid reason why, for the future, this important and growing trade should not be shared on an equal footing by the new and more southerly route, of which the Rio Grande Road forms a link of 120 miles." He thought the arrangement made with the Atchison and Kansas Pacific "as regards the division of receipts in the through traffic are very favorable to this line, for each mile of the 120 miles is to be considered equivalent to a mile and a half as against one mile of the other roads, securing thereby 50 per cent higher charges per mile. . . ."³²

As the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe approached Pueblo, early in 1876, Palmer poked his somnambulant road into action. For nearly four years he had been able to do little but add the small piece of track from Labran into Canon City. But now the Atchison had reached one of southern Colorado's principal cities and its very name warned that it intended to tap the New Mexican trade. Before the end of January, D. C. Dodge could write that "We are now laying track from Pueblo at the rate of one and a half to two miles per day. Have all the materials to complete road to Trinidad, and will be at or near that place by middle of March unless we should have extraordinary bad weather." He predicted that his road would be hauling freight to Trinidad by the first of April and wondered "What do the merchants of Santa Fe think or say about shipping to that point?"³³ The interest of those merchants was

²⁹ J. S. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

³⁰ *The Colorado Springs Gazette and El Paso County News*, February 12, 1876.

³¹ *Railroad Gazette*, October 6, 1876, p. 438.

³² William A. Bell, *Progress of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway*, *op. cit.*

³³ D. C. Dodge to Frank Ford, January 29, 1876. *Weekly New Mexican*, February 15, 1876.

indicated shortly before Dodge wrote. A Santa Fe paper reported that as business men watched the road approach Trinidad they willingly had bought about twenty thousand dollars worth of Denver and Rio Grande bonds.³⁴

During the spring months the contracting firm of Moore, Carlile & Ormon worked hard on the extension. By the end of June tracks had not only reached Cucharas, near Walsenburg, but a branch southwestward, toward the San Juan mining country, was already twenty-five miles long.³⁵ The decision to build into the mountains is another example of the westward pull exerted upon the main line. Its intent to move south of Trinidad, into New Mexico, was not altered, but the attraction of the mines was irresistible, and ultimately it would change the direction of the entire railroad.

Toward the end of April, 1876, the Denver and Rio Grande reached El Moro and the people of Trinidad experienced much the same disappointment their friends at Pueblo earlier had known. The new company town was located on the Purgatoire River, about five miles from and in plain view of Trinidad. As unhappy business interests of the older place watched the railroad's municipal creation mushroom into a thriving trading center, they resolved that if the day ever came when they could strike back at Palmer and his associates for this deed, the retribution would be harsh and unmerciful.

But the General had no time to worry about local annoyances. As before, he was bent upon larger results and criticism of his methods amounted only to minor pin pricks. As the Atchison Road threatened to resume its southwesterly course, excitement mounted among the Rio Grande men. In January of 1877, A. C. Hunt wrote a long and impassioned letter to Palmer, urging him to hasten construction toward the San Juan country. "I fear your absence from the active field of work dampens your ardour and causes you to lose sight of the over towering importance of the bold push and a strong pull, for the banks of the Rio Grande. . . ." Just beyond the end of the road, he said, lay a million well-watered acres, awaiting nothing but the plow. Now was the time to strike.³⁶

A few days later Palmer heard from his chief engineer, J. A. McMurtrie. Go south, said the engineer. Take the road around Fisher's peak, southwest to Raton Creek and then over

the "7765 foot mountain pass" of the same name. By following this route at once the narrow gauge could command all the trade in that country without fear of competition, for to threaten this territory rivals would have to build through two hundred miles of barren country.³⁷

Palmer tried desperately to comply with both recommendations. During 1876 he had pressed the San Juan construction to the limit. When the Union Contract company officials declined to go forward without additional assurances of compensation, he made an agreement with them that further encumbered his already sagging financial structure. The Rio Grande promised the contract company \$1,500,000 in full paid capital stock plus \$300,000 in first mortgage 7 per cent gold bonds if it would build to La Veta. When that was accomplished, and if the bonds could then be negotiated at seventy-five per cent of their face value, the contractors agreed to build on to Grayback Gulch and to the Rio Grande River, as fast as securities could be negotiated. For the work from La Veta to the big river, the railroad promised to pay \$1,132,000 in first mortgage 7 per cent gold bonds. To further insure their agreements, Palmer and his associates consented to leaving the new line from Pueblo to El Moro and the proposed Fort Garland division in the hands of the construction company which was to retain the income from that trackage until May 1, 1878. If, at that time, the railroad could redeem its pledges, it was to receive possession of the newly constructed extensions.³⁸

On into the mountains Palmer drove his railroad, up over La Veta pass, up above nine thousand feet, and down into the San Luis Valley toward Fort Garland. But his resources were running out. Payrolls were not being met and his men were in a rebellious mood. The best he could do was to promise to bring up the arrears to within four months and try to give them something each month thereafter until conditions improved.³⁹

In April of 1877 he turned to the bondholders and asked for help. He told them that since the road's inception interest had been paid regularly on the \$19,000 per mile bonded indebtedness up to the year of decision: 1876. The managers had gambled that an extension to Trinidad, accomplished on an

³⁴ J. A. McMurtrie to W. J. Palmer, February 6, 1877. McMurtrie Letter Book. Denver and Rio Grande Archives, State Archives and Public Records, State Historical Society of Colorado, Denver.

³⁵ Memorandum Agreement of June 1, 1876, appended to Minutes of Meeting of Stockholders of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway Company, held at Colorado Springs, February 26, 1877. In Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Archives, Offices of the D. and R. G. W. Railroad, Denver.

³⁶ *Railroad Gazette*, April 20, 1877, p. 182.

³⁷ *Weekly New Mexican*, quoted by *Colorado Springs Gazette and El Paso County News*, December 11, 1875.

³⁸ *Railroad Gazette*, June 23, 1876, p. 282.

³⁹ A. C. Hunt to W. J. Palmer, January 15, 1877, from La Veta, Colorado. William Blackmore Papers, Item 1172. Museum of New Mexico Library, Santa Fe.

issue of bonds of the same rate per mile, would secure the Santa Fe Trail trade as well as that of the San Juan section, "taking away the temptations to other lines to seek it." They had regarded the Atchison Road, by then connected with Pueblo, as a feeder line, bringing trade from the East, and as a market for Trinidad coal all along the unwooded Arkansas Valley for five hundred miles. Hoping to take possession of a rich, virgin territory, before anyone else could lay claim to it, the Rio Grande people had pushed on to Trinidad.

Now Palmer ruefully admitted that the plan had backfired. The Atchison Road, as it turned out, was not a feeder, but a traffic raider. "We regret to announce . . . that during most of last year the Denver and Rio Grande Railway received neither the 'Santa Fe' trade nor the 'San Juan,'" the General confessed. Nor had the coal and coke business developed according to plan. The development of mines, the construction of ovens and other smelting equipment, lagged. Meanwhile, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe management watched the troubled Rio Grande road and found encouragement in its weakness. Increasingly apprehensive over the shape of things to come, Palmer had thrown his last resources into the San Juan extension, hoping that his westward flight would take him away from the threatened competition. To do it he had appropriated the money intended for interest on the bonds. In the spring of 1877 he confessed his sin to the holders of those investments.

Since there was no money with which to meet current obligations, the railroad management now asked indulgence of the bondholders. The coupons for May, 1877, could not be honored. Would the investors be willing to fund those coupons, along with the next two, including those of May, 1878? If they would deposit them in trust, the road would issue ten year certificates bearing seven per cent interest.¹⁰

In making the request, Palmer exhibited his usual optimism and unbounded faith in the future. Already, he said, the New Mexican forwarding houses of eastern Colorado were moving to El Moro, a hundred miles closer to their home market. This was valuable traffic. Back in 1874 the Atchison Road had received ten thousand tons of freight when those firms were at Granada, and the Kansas Pacific had profited likewise at Las Animas. By the spring of 1876, the center of wholesale trade

had moved westward to La Junta where the two larger roads, by means of generous rebates, persuaded the merchants to remain for that season. Now to El Moro, a Denver and Rio Grande town, there should come between fourteen and twenty thousand tons of merchandise during the ensuing season.¹¹ Added to this would be the elusive San Juan trade. The President promised that the extension of the narrow gauge to Alamosa would secure it, once and for all.

The bondholders read the arguments and agreed to wait for their interest. Denver papers expressed great pleasure at the decision and assured their readers that the "temporary financial embarrassment" of the pioneer railroad, arising solely from construction outlays and not the falling off of business, had now passed. Taking their cue from Palmer, they explained that unless the road could build its projected extensions a lot of traffic would be lost. Already the Atchison Road was making itself felt at Pueblo and even the ox teams beyond El Moro and La Veta were still formidable rivals. By moving westward, toward the San Juans, it was expected that between fifty and seventy-five thousand dollars worth of business could be gained each month. To live, the road had to grow.¹²

While Denver urged on the little narrow gauge, hopeful of tapping southern trade, the ancient town of Santa Fe, New Mexico, watched its progress with even more interest. During the spring of 1877 Alexander Hunt and some of his associates visited the latter place, promising that steel rails would touch Fort Garland by July. "We wish he could have told us when it would reach Santa Fe," sighed the editors of the *New Mexican*.¹³ Palmer shared that desire. As the road grew, slowly winding through tortuous country, the going became more difficult, physically and financially. In the original grant of land, set aside as right of way, Congress stipulated that the narrow gauge must reach Santa Fe by June, 1877. Obviously this was now impossible. By request, the legislators set aside that requirement and extended the time to 1882.¹⁴ The whole plan was beginning to falter and Palmer himself must have wondered if even the extended date would see his road to Santa Fe.

Then other signs of trouble appeared. In the spring of

¹⁰ *The Denver and Rio Grande Railway: Prospectus of the San Juan Trade*, February 1877, William Blackmore Papers, Item 1179, Museum of New Mexico Library, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

¹¹ *Daily Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), July 18, 1877; *Denver News*, quoted by *Colorado Springs Gazette* and *El Paso County News*, July 21, 1877.

¹² *Weekly New Mexican* (Santa Fe), April 10, 1877.

¹³ *Railroad Gazette*, December 29, 1876, p. 573; *Weekly New Mexican* (Santa Fe), February 20, 1877.

¹⁴ Notice to the Bondholders, April 30, 1877. Included in Minutes of an Adjourned Meeting of the Directors of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway Company, Colorado Springs, May 3, 1877, in Denver and Rio Grande Archives, D, and R. G. W. Offices, Denver.

1877 the rumor began to circulate that the road's inability to pay its May interest would result in a request for the appointment of a receiver. By August rumor became reality. On the tenth of that month, Louis H. Meyer, trustee for the bondholders and a representative of interested Dutch investors, filed application in the United States Circuit Court at Denver.⁴⁵ It was the desire of those Meyer represented—probably the Dutch, in particular—that the affairs of the railroad company and the construction company be separated. The latter was to return to the railroad the bonds it had received and if it did not, they would be cancelled.

Judge Moses Hallet denied the petition on the ground that the railroad's affairs did not require legal interference. By the time the case appeared in court the bondholders already had accepted Palmer's proposal to fund the interest coupons. Even the complainant, Meyer, admitted that company matters had been handled in a generally satisfactory manner. There was no evidence of mismanagement and not a hint of dishonesty.⁴⁶ Despite all its difficulties, a subsequent report would show that the road netted over \$357,000 in that troublous year of 1877, a figure that, with one exception, was the highest prior to 1880. It was true that for four years the line had failed to pay interest on its bonds and had declared no dividends, but this was at a time when dozens of railroads across the country were in similar straits. The Court felt that, under the circumstances, the Denver and Rio Grande management ought to have another chance.

As Palmer turned back his critics in court, made a temporary peace with the bondholders, and launched new plans for the extension of his narrow gauge, trouble struck from a new direction. It was personified by William B. Strong who was appointed General Manager of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad in November, 1877. In him Palmer found a hard-fighting, aggressive adversary who would put the General's own resourcefulness to the most severe test of his career. With the appearance on the scene of Strong the Atchison Road prepared to carry out its long delayed plans for a railroad invasion of the Southwest. Its chief adversary would be a financially extended, badly weakened narrow gauge that was still shaky from the financial sickness of '73. Still, the "war" that ensued was one of classic proportions, and its outcome changed the whole course of the Rio Grande's history.

⁴⁵ *Railroad Gazette*, June 15, 1877, p. 273; August 17, 1877, p. 381.

⁴⁶ *Colorado Chieftain* (Pueblo) August 14, 1877; *Colorado Farmer*, August 16, 1877.

Charles Autobees

By JANET LECOMPTE*

VII

The Pueblo massacre of December, 1854, and the Ute raids on the Arkansas river settlements in January, 1855, sent most of the inhabitants of the Huerfano village back to civilization, and by the early part of 1856 the town was deserted. In 1855 Charles Autobees moved too, but not far away.¹ On the west side of the Huerfano, two miles above its mouth, at the farm he had worked since 1853, he built himself an adobe *placita*. A few of the Huerfano villagers joined him there—William Kroenig, Joseph Livernois ("Levanway"), Jean-Baptiste Charlefoix, a man named Shelton and his wife Maria Lujan, Juan ("Chiquito") Trujillo, Tom Whittlesey and his wife Maria.² From time to time the settlement was augmented by other people—ex-trappers, families from New Mexico, California emigrants before 1858, Pikes Peak emigrants later—but Charles Autobees and his family were the stable element of the place. The *placita* was an adobe quadrangle with the main gate opening east onto the Huerfano river, and a back gate on the west side. Autobees and his family occupied log cabins along the west wall of the quadrangle. In 1858 Autobees was irrigating the bottom land along the west bank of the Huerfano from a mile above his house to the mouth of the river. His fields were sown mostly to corn, but he also grew potatoes, beets, and *colorabas* (rutabagas).³ His garden vegetables, said a skeptical easterner, were "as large and good as the same productions in the vallies of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers."⁴ At the head

*Copyright by Janet Lecompte, 1958. Janet Lecompte, of Colorado Springs, has been, for a long time, transcribing the Cragin notes and other materials relating to early Colorado. She was co-author with her mother, the late Dorothy Price Shaw, of an article entitled, "Huerfano Butte," *The Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2 (April, 1950). She was author of "The Hard-scrabble Settlement, 1844-1848," *idem.*, Vol. XXXI, No. 2 (April, 1954). Parts I and II of the Charles Autobees story were published in *The Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 3 (July, 1957); Parts III and IV in Vol. XXXIV, No. 4 (October, 1957); Parts V and VI, in Vol. XXXV, No. 1 (January, 1958). —Editor.

¹James Taylor testified in September, 1866, that he had lived on Autobees' ranch ever since 1855, and was still living on it. *H. Exec. Doc.* 89, 42nd Cong., 3d Sess. (Ser. 1565), 3.

²Tom Autobees, Avondale, Colo., Nov. 7, 1907, to F. W. Cragin, EFWN II-26; and Nov. 10, 1907, EFWN X-40, Cragin Collection, Pioneers' Museum, Colorado Springs, Colo. Kroenig did not remain long with Charley, for by March, 1856, he was in Taos acting as administrator of Alexander Barclay's estate (Taos Co. [N. M.] Records, Book A-1, p. 116; B-2, p. 93), and before that he had a store and distillery at Costilla, N. M. *History of New Mexico* (Pacific States Pub. Co., 1907), p. 956.

³A. J. (Jack) Templeton, Denver, Colo., Aug. 27, 1908, to F. W. Cragin, EFWN XVII-24f, Cragin Collection.

⁴Byers and Kellom, *Hand Book to the Gold Fields of Nebraska and Kansas* (Chicago, 1859, Mumey reprint), p. 90.

of his irrigation ditch Charley had a little set of burrs run by an undershot water wheel upon which he could grind three or four hundred pounds of grain in a day and night.⁵

Serafina Autobeas and the children, except for Mariano, stayed in Rio Colorado until 1857.⁶ Charley was not without a woman during these years away from Serafina, however, for he had taken an Arapahoe squaw, Sycamore, as early as 1847.⁷ Along with Sycamore, he acquired a large part of her family. There was her brother Navitaca and his wife and children, one of whom was named Miguel, and called Mike; there was another little adopted Arapahoe girl named Chow-a; and there were Sycamore's own sons, Chique or Chico, and Manuel, by an Irishman who had worked at Bent's Fort in the old days and had been dead a number of years. After Autobeas brought Serafina up from Rio Colorado, Sycamore was put out of the house and lived in an Indian lodge nearby—"not regular wife; out-of-door wife in a tent" was the way a member of the household described her status.⁸ But even after her banishment from the house, Sycamore continued to accompany Charley on his trips. On October 24, 1858, David (or Daniel) Kellogg, on his way from Bent's Fort to the Fountain, passed "Charley Otterby and squaw . . . going to their ranch on the Huerfano."⁹ Sycamore never bore Charley any children, but her influence was felt in Autobeas town, for when she died in August, 1864, at the very climax of a terrible war between the whites and Sycamore's own tribe, she was given a proper burial near Charley's placita.¹⁰

In 1856 Autobeas had a fight with the Utes during which Sycamore showed her mettle. Early one summer morning Autobeas set out from his ranch with a wagon drawn by six oxen, leading seven horses tied on behind. The wagon was loaded with sacks of corn and wheat flour to trade to the Arapahoes at Bijou Basin, on the Platte-Arkansas divide. With

⁵ A. J. (Jack) Templeton to F. W. Cragin, *op. cit.*

⁶ Tom Autobeas, Nov. 10, 1907, EFWN X-37. However, "Mariano Ortibise" was called to serve on a coroner's jury at Taos inquiring into the death of Thomas Birch at Rio Colorado on Nov. 6, 1857. Taos Co. (N. M.) Records, C-3, p. 79.

⁷ See *The Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 4 (October, 1957), Chap. III, 280. John Brown called her "Sickamore" ("John Brown's account book 1845-1848," Beattie Papers, copy in Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.); and Jack Templeton's as both "Sickamore" and "Sickamo," while he transcribed Encarnacion Avila's pronunciation of the name as "Sycamore."

⁸ Encarnacion Avila (a niece of Serafina whom Autobeas adopted and brought up) to F. W. Cragin, Pueblo, Colo., Oct. 17, 1907, EFWN III-68f, Cragin Collection.

⁹ "Across the Plains in 1858. Diary of Daniel [David] Kellogg," *The Trail*, Volume V, No. 7 (December, 1912), 9.

¹⁰ Tom Autobeas to F. W. Cragin, Nov. 10, 1907, EFWN X-37, Cragin Collection.

Charley were Sycamore, Navitaca and his family, the little Arapahoe girl Chow-a, and Juan Chiquito with his two nearly-grown boys, José Leon and José Inez. The women and children rode inside the wagon, while the men and boys and Sycamore walked alongside, goading the oxen. They crossed the Arkansas near the mouth of the Huerfano and proceeded up the trail on the north side of the river toward Pueblo. About fifteen miles from Pueblo, Autobeas turned to Sycamore and remarked that he was going to leave the wagon and find an antelope to shoot for supper.

But Sycamore said, "Old man! Look yonder!"

On the top of the high bluffs on the other side of the river were Indians on horseback. As they began to ride down from the bluffs, Juan Chiquito untied one of the horses, leaped upon its back and dashed off towards the Huerfano. Autobeas and Sycamore poked the oxen with sticks to make them hurry, as the Indians splashed through the river behind them. At the mouth of Chico creek, a dry run, the wagon wheels got stuck in the heavy sand. Autobeas unhitched the oxen and tied them to a tree, while the women and children piled sacks of grain around the sides of the wagon and crouched behind them. By this time the Indians—twenty-seven Utes under Chief Conniach (Kaneatche)—had galloped up and surrounded the wagon. Conniach stepped forward and demanded that Autobeas hand over Sycamore and the other Arapahoes. He said he did not want to kill Autobeas, only the Arapahoes with him. Charley stoutly refused to give up his squaw and her family, and the Utes began to shoot. At first there were only Navitaca and Charley to shoot back. While they loaded their rifles, which took a minute or more, they had to jump about to keep the Indians from taking aim at them. José Leon had a rifle too, but at the first sign of trouble he ducked under the wagon and dug himself a hole in the soft sand. There he hid, with the little Arapahoe children Mike and Chow-a, until the fight was over. Sycamore tried to pull José Leon out of his hole, but he refused to budge, so she grabbed his rifle and began to shoot alongside the men. When Charley was hit in the muscle of his right arm, Sycamore loaded his rifle and held it for him as he continued to shoot with his left arm.

The fight lasted from ten in the morning until Conniach was wounded at nightfall and the Utes rode off. As Autobeas boasted later, he "emptied seven Ute saddles." The only casualties in the Autobeas party were two of the oxen and

Charley's wounded right arm, although the two little Arapahoe children under the wagon had been grazed across the tops of their heads by the same bullet, and Sycamore's dress was full of bullet-holes. The party returned to the Huerfano that night, after an adventure that Charley loved to tell about for the rest of his life.¹¹

One of Charley's business interests at this time was a forage contract with the quartermaster at Fort Union.¹² On July 20, 1856, while Charley was at Fort Union, he was stabbed in the back by the Mexican named Juan Pineda, the blade entering near his heart.

The post doctor examined him and said, "You won't live a minute."

Charley drew his gun and shouted, "If I won't live a minute, you won't live half a minute, you - - -!" The doctor bolted out the door and would not return without a bodyguard.¹³

Within a month Charley was all right again. When he got back to the Huerfano he found that during his absence José Leon, son of Juan Chiquito, had murdered Felipe Archuleta at Charley's plaza.¹⁴ José Leon and his father were driven off the ranch, but Chiquito's wife ("an innocent sort of woman") and other son José Inez, remained. Juan Chiquito and José Leon camped at the mouth of the Cucharas, about twenty miles up the Huerfano, and a month later Chiquito crept into the

¹¹ Jack Templeton to F. W. Cragin, *op. cit.*; Tom Autobeas, Nov. 9, 1907, X-41, Cragin Collection; *Denver Tribune*, Feb. 9, 1879, p. 4, c. 2. David Kellogg, to whom Autobeas told some of his adventures in 1858, got this story mixed up with the Pueblo massacre, and the following is the result: "Otto told this story of the capture of the fort and the massacre of the garrison: On the day of the massacre, with his wife, a Blackfoot squaw, he had just left the fort and was returning to his home when the Indians appeared riding after them. He waved them back and held up one finger as a sign for one of them to come forward and talk, but his actions were disregarded, so he opened fire, which the Indians returned. One of their shots broke his arm and then his squaw loaded his rifle and stood in front of him while he fired over her shoulder. He wounded one Indian and the others finally rode away. When Ottaby left the fort it was full of Indians who each carried a weapon concealed beneath his robe. . . ." Across the Plains in 1858 . . . *op. cit.* Dale L. Morgan has found in the Kit Carson Papers at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, a letter, "written," says Mr. Morgan, "very incoherently and in extremely poor Spanish. . . . The sense of the letter is that on October 16 the writer and four men and some women started out to 'almagre,' and were attacked by some Utes; he was wounded, and four of his animals were taken. He says something rather unintelligible about his companions, perhaps that two of them were killed in the 2½ hour fight. He closes by saying that because he is without resources after this incident, he requests help." The letter is dated Huerfano, October 22, 1854, to "D. Capatan Bobon" and signed "Charles Ortbl." ¹² Frank Hall, *History of Colorado*, Vol. IV (Chicago, 1895), 74.

¹³ Tom Autobeas, July 29, 1908, EFVN IV-11f. Tom says this happened while his father was foreman of some Mexicans making adobe bricks for Fort Garland, but Fort Garland was not established until 1858, and Jack Templeton, who had a much better memory than Tom, said it happened at Fort Union while Charley was there seeing about his hay contract. Templeton, *op. cit.* Charley, however, might very well have been at Fort Garland in 1858, as Tom says, but there is no corroboration for this.

¹⁴ G. H. Heap hired two cousins, both named Felipe Archuleta, as guides in Taos in 1853. Heap, *Central Route to the Pacific* (Phila., 1854), p. 33.

plaza at night, got his wife and José Inez, and returned, for a while, to New Mexico.¹⁵

From 1856 until 1858 the farmers, hunters and traders at Autobeas town lived in lonely isolation. Sometimes there were whiskey peddlers living in the old houses at the Huerfano village, or within the crumbling walls of Bent's old fort. Farther down the Arkansas, William Bent and his family and a few employees lived in the stone fort at Big Timber¹⁶ until July 21, 1857, when Bent rented the fort to Robert Miller, Upper Arkansas Indian Agent, to store annuities in.¹⁷ Other than that, there were no white men we know of living in the Arkansas valley in Colorado. By 1857, said one traveller, the trail up the north side of the Arkansas past Bent's old fort was so dim it could hardly be followed.¹⁸

In the summer of 1857 a company of soldiers under Major John C. Sedgwick marched up this dim trail, but there is no indication that they had any dealings with Autobeas, or were aware of his ranch two miles up the Huerfano. The soldiers saw the deserted Huerfano village across the river, and one of them described it as "Pueblo, a small collection of 'dobe shanties."¹⁹ Sedgwick's command went up the Arkansas only as far as the mouth of Chico creek, then cut across the prairie and met the Fountain fifteen miles north of its mouth. They followed the Cherokee trail up over the divide to the south Platte river where they intended to join forces with Col. E. V. Sumner's cavalry and proceed against a band of Cheyennes who had caused trouble near Fort Laramie.²⁰ At Cherry creek, near the present site of Denver where they made their camp, they met a party of Missouri prospectors with pouches of gold dust to show them.²¹ In the spring of 1858 the guide for Sedgwick's soldiers, a Delaware Indian named Fall Leaf, showed some gold dust, probably given him by the prospectors, to pop-eyed farmers in the frontier town of Lawrence, Kansas. Im-

¹⁵ Tom Autobeas, July 29, 1908, EFVN IV-8, Cragin Collection.

¹⁶ *History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado* (Chicago, 1881), p. 880.

¹⁷ S. Exec. Doc. 11, 35th Cong., 1st Sess. (Ser. 920), 429f.

¹⁸ Theodore Clearmont Dickson, Pueblo, Colo., Nov. 4, 1907, to F. W. Cragin, EFVN II-6, Cragin Collection. Capt. Charles Deus, who later had a ranch on the Upper Huerfano near Francisco and Daigre's, gives a confused account of a gold-hunting expedition from New Mexico to the Arkansas in the middle of winter. The little party ran out of food, spent three weeks with Charley Autobeas at his ranch until Charley also ran out of food, and then the visitors went back home. Deus says at first that the trip was taken in 1857, but he spoils his story with some anachronisms about miners in South Park and the town of Tarryall (founded near later Fairplay in the winter of 1858-9). Later he corrects himself and says the trip was made in 1859. "Captain Charles Deus on the Frontier," MS. Library, Colorado State Historical Society, pp. 14, 19.

¹⁹ R. M. Peck, "Recollections of Early Times in Kansas Territory," *Transactions, Kansas State Historical Society*, Vol. 8, 484f.

²⁰ S. Exec. Doc. 11, 35th Cong., 1st Sess. (Ser. 920), 94-131.

²¹ Peck, "Recollections," *op. cit.*

mediately the farmers organized a party and set out for the "gold regions."²²

Another military force under Captain R. B. Marcy came up from Taos to the Arkansas in the spring of 1858 with supplies for General Johnston's army in Utah. A government contractor, Frank Kihlberg, freighted a wagon load of goods from Fort Union and delivered it to Marcy on Fountain creek north of Pueblo. Then Kihlberg went back to the Arkansas and down to Autobees' ranch. There he picked up a family of Arapahoe children whose father had been killed on the ranch by a bad-tempered horse a few days earlier, and took them east with him as far as the Cimarron crossing.²³ Marcy's soldiers continued up the Fountain, then up Black Squirrel creek (the Cherokee trail route) to its source on the Platte-Arkansas divide, where, in May, 1858, they were caught in one of the worst snowstorms in the history of the region. Several of Marcy's men were frozen to death within a few hundred yards of camp; several hundred head of horses and mules strayed and were given up for lost, until found and returned by "young Autoba" (Mariano?).²⁴

Marcy camped on Cherry creek, where he made the remark in his journal that "there was at that time but one white man living within one hundred and fifty miles of the place and he was an Indian trader named Jack Audeby, upon the Arkansas."²⁵ George Simpson was a civilian teamster with Marcy's command, and while they were camped on Cherry creek, just for fun he waded into the creek with a bread pan and a spade, and came out with twenty-five cents' worth of gold. He gave the gold as a curiosity to three dispatch-bearers on their way from Fort Bridger to the States.²⁶

A party of Georgia miners led by Green Russell arrived at Cherry creek on June 24, 1858, and began the serious business of panning gold at the spot some Cherokee friends of theirs from Georgia had located (and passed up) on their way to California in 1850. Then came the farmers and small-town businessmen from new towns in Kansas, some of whom had seen Fall Leaf's gold. Fifty men from Lawrence arrived in July, followed by parties from Leavenworth and Lecompton in November. Three rival town sites were laid out near the

²² Henry Villard, *The Past and Present of the Pike's Peak Gold Regions* (Princeton, 1932), pp. 7-8.

²³ Frank O. Kihlberg, Las Vegas, N. M., Feb. 11, 1908, to F. W. Cragin, LFWN XI-79f, Cragin Collection.

²⁴ Philander Simmons' account in *History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado*, op. cit., p. 548.

²⁵ R. B. Marcy, *Thirty Years of Army Life on the Border* (N. Y. 1866), p. 263.

²⁶ *Denver Daily Times*, July 5, 1883, p. 2, c. 3, courtesy of Western History Dept., Denver Public Library.

mouth of Cherry creek, the largest of which was Auraria.²⁷ At the mouth of the Fountain, the town of Fountain City was laid out just north of Marcelino Baca's cornfield by some of the Kansans joined by Americans from New Mexico, among whom was William Kroenig from Fort Barclay. To Fountain City from Autobees' ranch came George McDougal, "a talented but eccentric and dissipated genius who had left California [where his brother was governor] and the world in disgust and spent several years with Charley Autobees and other old trappers in the wilderness. . . ."²⁸

Most of the emigrants of 1858 took the Arkansas river route to the "diggings," following the north side of the Arkansas along the Santa Fe trail to Pueblo. Many of them noticed and commented upon the old village at the mouth of the Huerfano across the river, with its volatile population of drifters. Said a Leavenworth, Kansas, newspaper just before the founding of Fountain City, "The richest 'diggings' are on Fontainqui river and Huefans is the nearest settlement."²⁹ August Vorhees says in his diary, "Passed Waurfrano which is on the south side of the river,"³⁰ and Luke Tierney notes that "During the day we passed the settlements called Waufrano. The inhabitants are mostly Mexicans."³¹ It was a rare party of emigrants who saw Autobees' ranch located as it was two miles up the Huerfano and out of sight of the trail on the north side of the river. In the summer of 1859 some emigrants coming up from Texas were unable to ford the swollen Arkansas to get to the trail, and they had to stay on the south side of the river. In trying to cross the Huerfano, also at high water, their wagon capsized and they ended up on the west side of the Huerfano near Charley's house:

JUNE 6th. Today we came to Auteby's ranch, situated on the west side of Huerfano river. The ranch consists of some four or five square cabins, built of round cotton wood logs, and covered with poles and mud—flat roofs. The owner himself, is an old French trapper; his wife is Mexican. They are farming on a small scale. Corn is three or four inches high. The snow clad peaks I spoke of yesterday, are Pike's Peak and its associates, and they are about one hundred miles off . . .

JUNE 7th. Today at twelve noon, we find everything dry, and not much damaged. We backed up and started down the Arkansas, to cross, there being a small boat near by . . . There are, I pre-

²⁷ *Reminiscences of General William Larimer* (Lancaster, Pa., 1918), p. 94f.

²⁸ Wilbur Stone, "Pueblo," *Colorado (Weekly) Chieftain*, June 17, 1880, p. 1, c. 4. This article was copied in part by Frank Hall, *History of Colorado*, Vol. III (Chicago, 1891), 449.

²⁹ *Leavenworth Times*, Sept. 11, 1858, copy in Library, Colorado State Historical Society.

³⁰ *Pike's Peak Gold Rush*, ed. L. R. Hafen, Southwest Historical Series (Glendale, Calif., 1941), Vol. IX, 343.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

sume, some fifty persons here, at Auteby's. They are farming by irrigation. They raise fine corn and pumpkins, and very fine garden vegetables. They sell their corn for five dollars a bushel. Flour is worth fifteen dollars per hundred pounds. . . . JUNE 8th. Today we unloaded our wagon, took it to pieces, and have crossed the Arkansas in what may truly be called a 'dug-out.'³²

The "small boat" or "dug-out" in which the Texans crossed the Arkansas probably belonged to Autobeas, and it might even have been the same "ferry" that in 1853 Wootton promised would be located at his Huerfano village. If Charley charged these Texas emigrants for crossing the Arkansas in his boat, it was one of his first fees as ferry operator, which was to be a sideline of his in years to come.

As the winter of 1858-9 set in, most of the emigrants settled down either at the mouth of Cherry creek (Auraria or Denver, 200 houses) or at the mouth of the Fountain (Fountain City, 50 houses) and braced themselves for a bitter winter. To their delighted surprise, the winter was warm and dry and the level of health among the people was very high. The emigrants wrote home that the amount of gold panned from the Platte and Arkansas was not impressive, but that the climate was salubrious and the agricultural potential of the river valleys was exciting. With boundless enthusiasm for their new country, they began to make preparations for a huge spring emigration, writing their friends to bring out stocks of groceries and merchandise, that there were fortunes to be made not in gold but in supplying gold-seekers with goods and services. They began building speculative houses and business buildings, and laying out towns. One of these towns was "Antabee (named after the old trader)," laid out, and never more than laid out, on the Fountain river between present Fountain, Colorado, and Pueblo.³³

The emigration of 1859 was a disastrous failure, chiefly because most of the hundred thousand or so emigrants who started out for the gold regions were not the sturdy yeomen of the year before but the desperate flotsam of the cities ("a scurvy horde of paupers"),³⁴ who, deceived by guide books, frontier outfitters, and their own greed, literally expected to

³² "Diary of A. M. Gass," *Overland Routes to the Gold Fields*, ed. L. R. Hafen, Southwest Historical Series, Vol. XI (1942), 228-9.

³³ Letter of William Larimer, Denver City, K. T., Feb. 2, 1859, published in the *Leavenworth Times*, Sept. 11, 1858, and reprinted in *Colorado Gold Rush*, ed. L. R. Hafen, Southwest Historical Series (Glendale, Calif., 1941), Vol. X, 224. Other letters in this volume have been used to present the picture of the winter of 1858-9.

³⁴ *Nebraska News*, April 14, 1860, copy in Library, Colorado State Historical Society.

Note: Although there were many "go backers," there were thousands who did stay in the mining region.—Editor.

find gold lying on the ground in nuggets. When they learned that panning gold was hard work, they turned back to the States in fury, disillusioning other emigrants they met, some of whom faced about without getting within 200 miles of the gold regions. The eastern newspapers picked up the sour note sounded by these people, and gleefully called attention to the "Pikes Peak Humbug!"³⁵

That slowed the "Pikes Peak gold rush." In May, 1859, the Gregory diggings near Central City and Jackson's discoveries near Idaho Springs were made known, and Denver's pan miners took their cradles and long-toms up Clear creek, where they soon found that the real source of Cherry creek's little dribble of gold flakes was the mountain rock. The emigration of 1860 was much smaller than expected; the stores were crammed with merchandise that would not sell; the quartz mills that were supposed to crush the gold from the rock, were a failure; and a severe drouth curtailed crops to such an extent that farmers were feeding their cattle cottonwood bark. In 1861 the Civil War nearly put an end to all emigration.³⁶ In spite of these misfortunes, the population of the Platte and Arkansas valleys would never again drift away, and Charley Autobeas would never again be alone on the Huerfano.

³⁵ Dr. Hafen quotes a number of these newspaper accounts in his *Colorado Gold Rush*, op. cit., 313 *passim*.

³⁶ *Rocky Mountain News* (weekly), August 23, 1861, p. 2, c. 1; "Terrible Drouth Which Prevailed in 1860," *The Chronicle-News* (Trinidad, Colo.), July 15, 1908, p. 7, c. 5.

VIII

Throughout all the excitement of 1858 and 1859, Charles Autobeas stubbornly stuck to his familiar occupations of hunting and farming. Wootton, Doyle, St. Vrain and others rushed up to the gold regions with wagon-loads of provisions from New Mexico, or with wagon-trains of clothes and furnishings from the States, opening stores at Denver, Canon City, Tarryall and Fountain City.¹ Kroenig and Doyle bought land on the Huerfano, made farms and quickly put in crops, established cheese factories and flour mills to feed the hungry new populace.² But Charley remained rooted to his *rancho*, "farming on a small scale" as before,³ even though corn was \$5 a bushel and wheat flour, a dark polluted product of crude grist

¹ H. L. Conard, "Uncle Dick" Wootton (Chicago, 1890), p. 374f; *Rocky Mountain News*, Aug. 27, 1859, p. 3, c. 3; Nov. 1, 1860, p. 2, c. 3; Oct. 12, 1859, p. 3, c. 1; Dec. 1, 1859, p. 3, c. 2.

² *Rocky Mountain News*, Dec. 1, 1859, p. 3, c. 2.

³ "Diary of A. M. Gass," *Overland Routes to the Gold Fields*, ed. L. R. Hafen (Glendale, Calif., 1942), Southwest Historical Series, Vol. XI, 228.

mills, sold for as much as \$18 the hundredweight. Accounts kept in 1860 and 1861 by John Francisco, sutler at Fort Garland, show that Charley was still trading buffalo robes for powder and caps.⁴ But perhaps Charley knew what he was doing after all. By the end of 1860 many of the old-timers who had rushed headlong into the mercantile business had failed, and at least one of them, A. P. ("Pike") Vasquez, broke and discouraged, spent the winter with Charley at his plaza.⁵

By 1861, and probably before that year, Charley had one idea for making some money out of the gold rush—he would charge the emigrants for the privilege of crossing the Arkansas in his boat. One of the first acts passed by Colorado's first Territorial legislature granted to "Charles Autbees" the exclusive right to maintain and operate a ferry across the Arkansas at any point two and a half miles above or below the mouth of the Huerfano, with the option of building a bridge there instead. Autbees agreed to keep a competent ferry man on duty day and night to accommodate men, wagons and stock promptly upon request, and he was allowed to charge the following rates: For a wagon drawn by two animals, \$1; for every additional two animals, 25c; for every horse or mule with rider, 25c; for every man on foot, 20c; for every head of cattle, horses, mules, or jacks, 10c; and for every hog, sheep or goat, 10c.⁶

As the settlement of Colorado appeared to be a permanent and continuing thing, Ceran St. Vrain found that he had no trouble at all selling his land along the Huerfano. In October, 1859, William Kroenig and Benjamin B. Field bought and began to cultivate a little piece of the Huerfano bottom land above Charley's farm.⁷ In November Joe Doyle bought two miles of the Huerfano valley and was appointed agent by St. Vrain to sell off half-mile sections of the valley for \$100 apiece.⁸ In the second week of April, 1860, William Byers, editor of the

⁴ Francisco Papers, Library, Colorado State Historical Society. On Oct. 8 and 9, 1860, Autbees bought saddles, bridles, powder and caps, and in June, 1861, he gave Francisco 9 buffalo robes on account (which amounted then to \$105.50) and at the same time he bought some hoes and files.

⁵ Tom Autbees, Avondale, Colo., Nov. 9, 1907, to F. W. Cragin, EFVN X-7, Cragin Collection, Pioneers' Museum, Colorado Springs, Colo.; *Rocky Mountain News* (weekly), Dec. 26, 1860, p. 3, c. 4, announced that Louis Vasquez of Jackson Co., Mo., had appointed James P. Beckwourth as his attorney for the purpose of dissolving his partnership in A. P. Vasquez & Co. in which he held 2/3 interest.

⁶ *Colorado General Laws*, 1861, pp. 466-7. I am indebted to Mrs. Alys Freeze, Western History Dept., Denver Public Library, for discovering this item and providing me with a copy of it.

⁷ Appeal of Kroenig and Field, Records of the General Land Office, Colo. Private Land Claim No. 17, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

⁸ Taos Co. (N. M.) records, Book B-3, pp. 82-3.

Rocky Mountain News, took a trip up the Huerfano to see how settlement there was progressing:

Monday 9th. [April, 1860]—We took breakfast before leaving camp and about sunrise set out up the valley of the Huerfano (Waerfa-no). First we pass the ruins of J. B. Doyle's trading post, abandoned some years since. Next is the farm of Charley Autabee, and his village of retainers, Mexicans, Americans and Indians, occupying log cabins surrounding a plaza or open square. Nearby is the garden cultivated last year by Wm. Kroenig, where from less than an acre of ground he obtained and shipped to the Denver market over twenty wagon loads of vegetables, beside home consumption. Next is the farm of Mr. Patterson—just commenced—and then comes the extensive new farm of Mr. Kroenig. He is making extensive improvements and designs cultivating over one hundred and fifty acres. . . . Mr. K. at present has twenty-five men at work, most of them Mexicans.⁹

In May, 1860, Byers announced in an editorial that all the half-mile sections offered for sale had been taken.¹⁰ In June, Byers interviewed Kroenig:

Agricultural prospects in the Valley of the Arkansas.

We had the pleasure on Saturday of a call from Wm. Kroenig, Esq., of the Huerfano settlement. From him we gather many items of interest respecting farming operations in that vicinity.

He has in cultivation about 160 acres, Charley Autabee has about 120 acres, J. B. Doyle 30 acres, Mr. Young 40 acres, and Mr. Patterson 40 acres, all on the Huerfano. . . .

The crops are all in and doing well. As they do not depend upon the contingency of rain, but are watered regularly by irrigation, we may feel assured of a good supply of vegetables, and not a small amount of grain, potatoes, &c., for winter supply.¹¹

By the middle of 1861 Joe Doyle had increased his cultivated land to 600 acres, and was running several hundred cattle on the uplands.¹² The Huerfano valley was producing more food than any other valley in the territory, the price of half-mile sections of the bottom land had soared,¹³ and there was a brisk trade in undivided interests in the whole Vigil and St. Vrain grant, which included the as yet undeveloped valley of the Purgatory river as well as the popular Huerfano.¹⁴ Charley must have felt well satisfied with his choice of land.

Colorado, a part of Kansas Territory, was unofficially known as Jefferson Territory from November, 1859, until February, 1861, when it was declared Colorado Territory. William Gilpin, who had been acquainted with the terrain

⁹ *Rocky Mountain News*, April 25, 1860, p. 1, c. 2-3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, May 9, 1860, p. 1, c. 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.* (weekly), June 13, 1860, p. 2, c. 2.

¹² *Ibid.* (weekly), June 5, 1861, p. 2, c. 2.

¹³ Joe Doyle paid \$600 for a half-mile section in July, 1862. Huerfano Co. (Colo.) records, Book A, p. 172.

¹⁴ Ramona Armijo Baca, daughter of Manuel Armijo, Reyes Baca, widow of Cornelio Vigil, and many of Vigil's brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews were busy selling their interests between 1858 and 1860 (all recorded in Taos Co. N. M., Book A-1, p. 200f, and Book B-3, p. 152f); Donaciano Vigil sold his interest to Ceran St. Vrain in 1860 (Pueblo Co. Records, Book IV-356).

and its aborigines, as well as its old-timers, for nearly twenty years, was appointed Governor. In November of the same year, Gilpin appointed three commissioners to form the county of Huerfano—J. B. Doyle, Charles Autobees, and Norton W. Welton (who had bought land on the Huerfano in April, 1860).¹⁵ The commissioners took hold of their new duties with enthusiasm. They met on November 21, 1861, at the temporary county seat, which was "Autubis town," and determined upon an election of county officers to be held December 2. For this election and for county elections in years to come, Precinct No. 1 was Autubis town with polls at Charley's house, and with various members of Charley's family as poll-watchers.¹⁶ The county of Huerfano, as the commissioners determined its limits, covered all the land south of the Arkansas and east of the mountains in the present state of Colorado, an area so enormous that the population average was about one person to every 150 square miles. George Simpson recalled with vast amusement his years as the county's first clerk and recorder, when he lived at Doyle's ranch, 18 miles up the Huerfano. His duty, before that first county election held December 2, 1861, was to distribute election notices. After he had ridden 75 miles in the dead of winter to deliver a notice to the next precinct, which was Gray's ranch near the later town of Trinidad, the total vote in that precinct was 8, and included only the poll-watchers, election judges, and clerks.¹⁷

At this first election, December 2, 1861, Charles Autobees was elected Justice of the Peace, and George Simpson was elected clerk and recorder, with the duty of recording the events of the first session of county court. Court was held at Autubis town, "consisting," said Simpson, "of two log cabins and a corral." Judge Allen A. Bradford presided, Justice Autobees swore in the witnesses, and, says Simpson:

I feel like laughing whenever I think of it. There was no docket and no attorney, but as the parties concerned had been guilty of an infraction of the law (a scrimmage, the justice called it), the judge said he was going to "trot 'em through" anyhow, and he did. But unfortunately the justice was not provided with the form of oath to be administered to the witnesses, but the one he used would have answered the purpose, and it was in this wise: "You do solemnly swear to tell the truth to the best of your ability, and if you don't you'll be damned!" A laugh caused his honor to think the form of oath he had used was not according to Hoyle, and he appealed to the writer with "Look here, I don't know anything about these darn things; I wish you would tell these fellers what they've got to do." It was done, but things got so mixed up during

¹⁵ Pueblo Co. records, Book 2, p. 521.

¹⁶ Huerfano Co. records, Book A, p. 11.

¹⁷ *Trinidad Daily News*, May 1, 1881, p. 1, c. 2.

the trial that the court threatened to thrash the witness, fine plaintiff and defendant alike, and adjourned.¹⁸

O. H. P. Baxter, an early resident of Pueblo, remembers another time when Charley distinguished himself as a jurist:

He was foreman of the jury on one occasion in the seventies, in Pueblo Co. and had to swear in the witnesses. Mr. Baxter told him how to do it, the formula ending "So help me God." But Charley Autobees always swore them all in with the formula "So help me by G-d," much to the amusement of the onlookers.¹⁹

In December, 1862, Gilbert Huntington was sworn in as Huerfano County's Justice of the Peace and Charley was relieved of a job for which he was comically unfit.²⁰ He continued to act as county commissioner until at least February 10, 1863, when he was chairman of a board meeting, and then his name appears no more as commissioner in the records.²¹

The gold rush brought Juan "Chiquito" Trujillo back to the Arkansas. He settled down in Marcelino Baca's old buildings, between Fountain City and the Arkansas, with a number of other ruffians he had brought up from New Mexico. At first he appeared to be innocently farming Baca's piece of land. He finished Baca's ditch and built a little Mexican grist mill where the ditch was taken out from the Fountain. He planted Baca's cornfield to Mexican beans, chili peppers, and a little corn and wheat. He fixed up Baca's four-room adobe house and added to it a row of about twenty cabins for his friends. When Mariano Autobees and Marcelino Baca rode to Chiquito's place one day and demanded rent for Baca's land and house, Chiquito, to their surprise, paid them \$200 without quibbling.²²

Then his operations became less innocent. He built a large adobe house with portholes instead of windows, and on the roof was an observatory where he kept a man posted most of the time. North of his house, on a hill known for years afterwards as "Juan Chiquito's Lookout," he kept a sentinel day and night, scanning the valleys of the Fountain and Arkansas.²³ When cattle belonging to emigrants, settlers, and nearby ranchers began to disappear, just a few at a time, it became obvious that an organized gang of cattle thieves was at work, with stations at California Gulch (at the headwaters of the Arkansas), Canon City, Fountain City and Trinidad. The cattle were stolen and whisked away in the night to New

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ O. H. P. Baxter, Pueblo, Colo., July 17, 1903, to F. W. Cragin, EFWN XVII-3, Cragin Collection.

²⁰ Huerfano Co. (Colo.) records, Book A, p. 13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²² Tom Autobees, Nov. 7, 1907, to F. W. Cragin, EFWN 11-19, Cragin Collection.

²³ *Ibid.*, and EFWN-33f.

Mexico, leaving no trace²⁴—and of course Juan Chiquito was the gang's local representative.

Among those who missed some of their cattle was Charles Autobeas, whom Juan Chiquito had sworn to kill ever since he had been driven from the Autobeas ranch in 1856. In the spring of 1862 Juan Chiquito sent word to Autobeas that he and his gang would meet the Autobeas on the Arkansas between Huerfano and the St. Charles, "for a final settling of accounts." On the appointed day the Autobeas were there, but the Chiquito gang never showed up.²⁵

About August 3, 1862, Chiquito committed his last robbery. He stole the wives of two of his own men, took one of the girls for himself and gave the other to another of his men. The outraged husbands went straight to the Autobeas ranch. Mariano Autobeas, twenty-five years old now and as large and strong as his father, decided to settle the matter himself. Collecting some friends and relatives from around the ranch, he rode to Chiquito's place at the mouth of the Fountain. He left his men in the Arkansas bottom in charge of Sycamore's son Chique, then a young man of 21 or 22 and "as fine a shot as ever lifted a rifle."²⁶ Mariano rode up to the Chiquito settlement alone. Finding no one around, he dismounted, tied up his sorrel mare outside, went into the cabin, sat down by the door with his Hawken's rifle across his knee, and waited. Soon Juan Chiquito and José Inez, recognizing Mariano's mare tied up outside, approached the cabin with their guns in hand, shouting threats and accusations. After much parley, a wary truce was made, and Mariano and Chiquito agreed to meet at Doyle's ranch at a certain time. Mariano came out of the cabin, got on his horse and started to ride back to the Arkansas, but as he left he looked back and saw Chiquito and his men gathering the horses in the corral and mounting them. Mariano galloped to the river bottom where he had left his men, and said, "We're going to have a fight, here and now!" When Juan Chiquito and his men rode down to the river, the Autobeas party was ready for them. Again there were threats and accusations, and again a truce was made. Chiquito and

²⁴ *Southern Colorado, Historical and Descriptive of Fremont and Custer Counties* (Canon City, Colo., 1879), pp. 12, 31, describes the gang's operations from "1860-61 up to 1863" around Canon City and California Gulch; H. L. Conard, *op. cit.*, p. 282, describes the Fountain City branch of the gang. With his usual confusion of dates, Wootton says the cattle thieves were active in 1853 and 1854, and although he says the headquarters of the gang was at the mouth of the Fountain, he does not mention Juan Chiquito by name.

²⁵ Tom Autobeas, Nov. 7, 1907, EFWN II-33, to F. W. Cragin.

²⁶ Jack Templeton, Denver, Aug. 27, 1908, to F. W. Cragin, EFWN XVII-24f, Cragin Collection.

Mariano threw their rifles on the ground, embraced each other, and started to ride back up the hill to Chiquito's house "for a little drink and a good time." But near the top of the hill Chiquito turned his head and saw Chique and Manuel coming out of the brush in the Arkansas bottom with their guns pointed at him. He jumped off his horse, raised his gun and took aim at Chique, yelling, "Don't shoot, boys!" But at that very moment Chique and Manuel fired. One of their bullets struck Juan Chiquito through the chest, killing him instantly.²⁷

Mariano Autobeas and Manuel Autobeas were indicted for murder on September 10, 1862, in the first case ever to come before the 3rd Judicial District court. The indictment was quashed.²⁸ Two other cases, *The People vs. José E. Trujillo*, and *M. Autobeas vs. José Leon Trujillo*, were dismissed on December 10, 1862.²⁹ On February 17, 1863, Joseph Doyle bought from Juana Trujillo and José Leon Trujillo their land in Fountain City,³⁰ and shortly after, the widow and two boys moved to Trinidad, where, it was said, both the boys were in constant trouble.³¹

(To Be Continued)

²⁷ Tom Autobeas, Nov. 8, 1907, EFWN II-27-51, Cragin Collection. Charles Autobeas is sometimes given credit for the liquidation of Chiquito. An account of 1880, based on information supplied by A. A. Bradford, who lived in Chiquito's port-holed adobe house for many years, says that Charles Autobeas was credited with Chiquito's death, although "an Indian called 'Chickey' actually did the deed, lying in ambush for his victim." ("An Historical Rocky-Mountain Outpost," *Lippincott's Magazine*, Dec., 1880, pp. 401-2.) O. H. P. Baxter, Pueblo pioneer, said, "A fight took place, lasting two days, between Charley Autobeas' faction (which had lost stock by the gang), and the Chiquito gang. None killed the 1st day, but the gang was run into a little Mexican gristmill that stood on Fountain creek, west of Juan's plaza, and which belonged to the Chiquito outfit. On the 2nd day a truce was agreed on; and Autobeas men started home, but later sent back for Juan to come over the hill to their camp for further parley. He started over, and when a little below the top of the hill, he was shot dead by an Indian boy named 'Chico,' who had been placed in ambush in the sagebrush by the Autobeas, for that purpose." Statement of May 23, 1907, Pioneer Envelope, Cragin Collection. Mrs. Allen A. Bradford said, "He [Chiquito] had a little Mexican grist mill near the Fountain creek west of his house. It was run by water of a little ditch. . . . Into this mill he was run by Autobeas gang last day of his life; after truce he was decoyed over the hill to the east to look at a fine horse Autobeas sent word they had to trade, & he was shot while going by a half-breed Indian of Chas. Autobeas." Pueblo, Colorado, Oct. 23, 1907, to F. W. Cragin, EFWB UUU-80, Cragin Collection.

²⁸ General Index, 3rd Judicial District Court, Book I, p. 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Pueblo Co. Records, Book I, p. 73.

³¹ Stephen S. Smith, Pueblo, Colorado, Nov. 11, 1907, to F. W. Cragin, EFWN X-9, Cragin Collection.