

CAMPING VACATION, 1871

BY ANNIE B. SCHENCK

Edited by Jack D. Filipiak

Snow still rested on Colorado's higher peaks but summer had arrived. It was time to carry out a decision that had been made earlier—to take a trip to the mountains and holiday at the Twin Lakes area. "Journeying for pure pleasure" as well as to improve the health of "Uncle George Dwight," the trip began on August 4. This "journal of a camping trip in the Rocky Mountains in August, 1871," relates the places the party visited and their daily experiences.

While the most fascinating portion of the account is the description of crossing the now abandoned Argentine Pass, it is of interest for indicating the similarity of both the satisfactions and difficulties of camping—whether it be 1871 or 1965. Our journalist is Annie B. Schenck, later Mrs. Matthew Griswold of Erie, Pennsylvania, whose record of the trip was presented to the State Historical Society of Colorado in 1964.

LUPIN CLUB¹

Party consists of Uncle George Dwight, Aunt Mollie (Mary), Minnie, Jeannie, Theodore and Carrie, Mr. James R. Johnson of Coshocton, Ohio, and myself.²

Outfit consists of one two-horse covered wagon—

1 saddle horse	1 tent 9 ft. x 9 ft.
2 buffalo robes	7 pr. blankets
3 buckets	1 wash pan
1 skillet	1 wash bowl
1 fry pan	1 tin cup
1 coffee pot	13 plates
1 2" boiler	8 spoons
1 axe	7 knives and forks

¹ After the flower with eight petals because there were eight in the party. See below, entry for August 4, 1871.

² Later they hired a "Mr. Pratt of Georgetown" as a guide. See entry for August 9.

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|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 large knife | 7 cups |
| 3 lariats | 2 glasses |
| 1 camp chair | 1 jar ext. meat |
| sardines | 1 " piccalili |
| mackerel | 1 " baking powder |
| salmon | 1 " current jelly |
| blackberries | vinegar |
| pineapple | coffee |
| pepper | lard |
| 2 doz. eggs | 4 lbs. sugar |
| 2½ " lemons | 1 " salt |
| 3 cakes soap | ¼ " tea |
| 1 box Al. crackers | 2 " crackers |
| 2 " matches | 2 tongues |
| 5 cans con. milk | 1 ham |
| 1 whetstone | corn meal |
| 1 trowel | flour |
| 1 jug | potatoes |
| 1 lantern | rice |
| candles | hominy |
| 1 qt alcohol | horse feed |
| Nails, screws, twine | gun and pistol |
| 1 trunk | straw hamper |
| 2 carpet bags | wooden hamper |
| 2 silk comfortables | 2 saddles |
| 2 pillows | umbrella |
| 5 shawls | rubber waterproof coats |
| | our dear selves. |

CAMP SEPARATION

Friday August 4th, 1871

Our camping tour has begun. We left Creswell³ this morning at 10 A.M. for Twin Lakes, a pretty place high up in the mountains, one hundred and twenty-five miles southwest of Wilson's Ranch. We have traveled eighteen miles today meeting with no accident and no adventure whatever, except the rather tame one of capturing a grouse which has been served for supper and found very palatable. The road we came over was very beautiful though Uncle George says it is nothing compared to

³ Now a ghost town, it was located in Jefferson County, six miles west of Morrison. George A. Crofutt, *Crofutt's Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado* (Omaha: Overland Publishing Co., 1881), p. 89. Other sources give it as six miles west and three miles south of Golden. It had a population of twenty-five, according to the *Rocky Mountain News*, May 27, 1874, p. 2. Used for all locations in the journal was *Nell's New Topographical and Township Map of the State of Colorado* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880).



Map of the route taken by the "Lupin Club."

what we will see hereafter. I'm sure our friends would laugh heartily could they see the style of conveyance and our mode of travel.

We have a large, old fashioned, white, canvas covered wagon—an immensely long thing drawn by two horses, and we also have Uncle George's pony and two saddles. We find it convenient and useful to change sometimes and take a ride. The day has been variable but on the whole pleasant and more enjoyable for the two or three little showers we have had. We had one little fright. Mr. Johnson had been riding the pony and becoming tired, had fastened him on behind the wagon. On looking around afterwards, the beast was nowhere to be seen. However, we found his rope had broken but a short

distance before his departure was noticed, so Mr. Johnson had not far to go after him. We took our dinner on top of a pretty little knoll and called it "Harebell Noonning" as the ground was covered with those delicate little flowers.

We have decided at Uncle George's suggestion to name our expedition the "Lupin Club" because the leaves of the flower so called, have eight divisions, just the number of our party. We are also going to give all our Noonings and campings a name. Tonight we arrive at a ranch which we have called "Separation" as Aunt Mollie, the children and I go indoors to sleep, while Uncle George and Mr. Johnson occupy the tent. This was arranged because only a few nights ago, there was a large bear prowling around that carried off a young calf from the yard. The gentlemen are well protected with fire and pistols. The tent is pitched on a little rise near the house and their camp fire is burning vigorously, looking very picturesque in the surrounding darkness. We intend taking our journey by slow degrees—traveling when we feel inclined, and timing our campings by our feelings and the surroundings. When we come to a nice ranch, Aunt Mollie and I will go indoors with the children and Uncle George and Mr. Johnson take the tent. We are journeying for pure pleasure and intend to have things as easy and comfortable as possible.

I was quite touched today at the little graves one sees at the roadside. Every now and then we come across one of these with a little picket fence around, and the house nearby deserted and forlorn. One cannot imagine the desolate look it has. The people come out, settle down, while they are either "prospecting" or sawing up timber, and when they fail in the former or use up all the available timber, they move off somewhere else. The houses are rough log huts so are no considerable loss. We are staying in one tonight that has in its sitting room a large open fire place, and while I write, the huge old logs are burning and blazing away at a most delightful rate. But I must to bed, we have gone nineteen miles today, and I am tired.

CAMP RIPPLING WATER

Saturday August 5th.

Today we have ridden only twelve miles. We were a little tired and as we found a pleasant camping ground, concluded to pitch our tent and spend the Sabbath here. We are on the bank of the South Fork of the Platte, a lovely rippling stream forty or fifty yards wide at this place. We have had a pleasant unevent-

ful day and have gone through some very green beautiful valleys—have enjoyed the day very much. I rode quite a while in the morning and went some distance in advance of our party to see if I could enjoy the Rocky Mountains alone. Things sometimes seem so very different when one is quite alone and I found it so in this case. The silence made the mountains seem grander and though it was very wild and lonely, I enjoyed the ride hugely. We lunched at the roadside under a large tree and called the place "Fleming Noonning" after an old man who lived solitary and alone in a house nearby. Tonight we had our first cooked supper and it was good. I'm happy to say my coffee was pronounced delicious by the crowd. Uncle George says it is the best he has had since leaving home. We had for supper, ham, cold biscuit, coffee, canned pineapple, crackers and rich milk. We were all hungry and ate heartily and now we are going off to bed very early. Aunt Mollie, the children and I in the tent, Mr. Johnson and Uncle George in the covered wagon, and all as snug and comfortable as possible.

Sunday August 6th.

We have had a pleasant day—trying to spend it in as profitable way as possible. Had a nice breakfast of ham, fried potatoes, biscuit, coffee and milk from a ranch nearby. For dinner we had ham, corn bread, eggs, milk and plum pie. Our bill of fare, though not very varied, is good. Our table, a cloth spread on the ground around which we all sit on robes and blankets. We enjoy the luxury of rising just when we please and lingering at table without regard either to business or servants. I believe I should have been born an Indian or Gypsy for this life suits me exactly. In the morning Mr. Johnson carried a buffalo robe and pillow up under an old pine tree overlooking the water, and we read the Presbyterian and I took a nice nap, after my arduous labors in the breakfast line, I felt tired. We had quite a fright last night. We were awakened suddenly by a violent pulling of the tent and then a whole side of it was torn from the ground. Aunt Mollie and I jumped to our feet and called Uncle George who came running in stockings and drawers and found a stray horse at the side of the tent with one foot caught in the rope. He succeeded in loosening it soon but our fright kept us awake for some time. They had quite a laugh on me for when the tent went up I jumped to the door half asleep and flung a basin of water out that side of the tent, it being the only weapon against wild beasts that I had at hand. Sunday closed quietly and pleasantly sitting around the camp fire. One pleasant



Annie B. Schenck about 1880.

feature about our camping is that we have a blessing at meals and morning prayers.

MEETING OF THE RIVERS

Monday August 7th.

Was up bright and early this morning and as soon as our breakfast was over and our wagon packed we started off. The only excitement of the day was my being thrown or rather falling off my horse. In saddling, the saddle had not been fully tightened and while I was in full gallop, the saddle turned under the horse and off I went without any hurt, however, except for the spraining of my side a little. Mr. Johnson fixed it right, and helped me on again, and I had a good two hour ride afterwards. The Mountains through which we passed today were wilder and more beautiful than any we have yet gone over. The spruce trees here are very graceful and beautiful and have a peculiar shade of green which makes them stand out in pretty relief against the pines. These two, with the aspen, are about the only trees one sees except low bushes and willows along the streams. We stopped for dinner at Shoat's ranch where we had a good plain meal. It is a small place of half a dozen houses and a mill. We found the landlady absent and her husband taking the whole charge of the house, including the cooking and washing. We arrived here about 5 P.M., and after cooking and eating our frugal meal, we made up our tent beds and camp fire. This is the most beautiful spot we have yet chosen for camping, and we have named it "The Meeting of the Waters" because we are camped on a point where the North Fork of the South Platte

and the North Branch of that unit unite. The Platte has the most everlasting lot of branches or forks, that I ever saw in a river. This place is in a narrow valley or gulch—as they call them here—with tall mountains rising on every side covered with spruce and pine trees. The streams are lined with willows and long grass which are exceedingly green and beautiful. We are so in love with the spot that we have concluded to remain over a day here, trout fishing and looking around. We have taken Uncle George into our tent as Aunt Mollie felt a little nervous about the bears which report says, are quite thick in this neighborhood. I am sitting in Mr. Johnson's wagon bed now with a light on the trunk writing, and as Aunt Mollie and Uncle George have both retired, I think the most proper thing would be for me to follow their example.

Tuesday August 8th.

Today has been a very enjoyable one though after one expedition and camp work, we are ready for bed. Was up this morning at half past five, made the fire and got the breakfast. I enjoy getting this meal more than any of the others for we have such cool, lovely mornings and everything is so fresh and beautiful. We shall miss our pretty stream very much when we leave it for we find its banks not only [a] pleasant camping place, but in cooking and washing we have such a goodly quantity of nice soft water. This morning I made corn bread and ran to the ranch near by and had it baked. I was surprised to find it good. Aunt Mollie delighted my heart by saying it was as nice as any she ever ate. Today for dinner I made some mashed potatoes which I pounded with the bottom of our tall vinegar bottle. Aunt Mollie and I take turns in cooking and fussing and taking care of baby, Caro. The other children require no care as they find plenty of amusement in camp life. The girls have blue flannel bloomer suits, and they are capital things for such a trip. This morning I have had a nice quiet time sitting on the bank of our stream writing and meditating. While there I happened to look up and about a yard from me sat a little brown animal on its hind legs looking at me with all its eyes. It stayed quite a while and seemed very tame. On describing it to the gentlemen, I found it was a weasel. We found some poles from an Indian wigwam, which Mr. Johnson proposed I should hang behind the cars to take home as a relic. I concluded they would make better fire wood and used them for that purpose. In the afternoon Mr. Johnson and I took the horses and went on a two mile ride up a ravine to get raspberries. There is

an immense patch of them there, as we found, and we picked three quarts in less than an hour. We had them for supper on our return home and found them perfectly delicious. But such a ride as we had! I never went through a wilder or more dangerous looking place in my life. We followed a narrow rocky path around the hills high above the Platte which ran foaming and leaping over logs and stones some fifty or a hundred feet beneath us. I fairly trembled at some of the places I went over for I was unused to riding a trail and it looked so dangerous, yet there was an excitement about it and I think I never enjoyed a ride more. Sometimes we went down near the river into shady, dark places where the trees grew so close together that there was no room for any small vegetation, and when the opposite banks rose perpendicular for hundreds of feet. It would be rather a dismal ride for a solitary horseman for the large dark holes and caves in the rocks were very suggestive of bears. We retire early this evening in order to make an early start for the Kenosha House as we drive ten miles before dinner.

KENOSHA HOUSE⁴

Wednesday August 9th.

Arrived here at 12 P.M. Mr. French knew we were coming and had a capital dinner ready for us. We are getting higher in the mountains and the scenery is growing wilder as we go along. We enjoyed the ride exceedingly, though Uncle George is feeling quite under the weather, and lay in the back part of the wagon in the children's "cubby house" among the robes. As we were going along, who should we meet but Uncle George's old guide, a Mr. Pratt, from Georgetown. He was on his way to see Uncle George and the latter considers it quite fortunate, his having met him as he is just the man we need. Uncle George finds it too fatiguing, both to himself and Mr. Johnson, to do all they have to do about camp, and as Mr. Pratt is a regular guide, willing and ready to do everything—from putting up the tent to washing dishes—he has been secured for the rest of our expedition. I felt quite sick in the afternoon—think I am billious. I laid down a while and feel better now. It rained all the afternoon, and we had a home time indoors listening to Mr. Pratt's yarns of which he is full. I had the honor to have my shoes blackened by Mr. Johnson who insisted on doing it! It is a luxury I have never before enjoyed. Mr. and Mrs. French are very kindly, pleasant people and do everything for our comfort. Their



The tracks of the Denver, South Park, and Pacific did not cross Kenosha Pass until 1879.

dwelling is a rough log house, but is kept as neat as a pin. The whole house is papered with old newspapers—daily and weekly, *New York Ledgers*, etc., it looks very funny, but certainly makes the house warmer and cosier. The event of the day—which Aunt Mollie says I must put in my journal—is that baby said "Mamma" quite plainly. The little tot is getting as fat as butter and as sunburned as she can be—she bears the journey splendidly, and is never happier than when we are driving along in the old wagon.

Thursday August 10th.

As there was no cooking to do this morning, we had a good long sleep. Before breakfast I ran out with Mr. Johnson and the children to get a drink at the spring and a breath of fresh air—the air was so cool and bracing. I felt my blood fairly tingle. The snow mountains are quite near, seemingly about half mile off—Mr. Johnson said we were just two miles higher than Philadelphia, so I presume we are somewhat cooler than the good folk there. We had a fire both last night and this morning,

⁴ A very small settlement at Kenosha Pass. Crofutt, *Grip-Sack Guide*, p. 113.

and found it extremely comfortable. Uncle George, Mr. Pratt and Mr. Johnson have gone off to establish a claim on some pasture land as they are going to invest in cattle. The gents have come home soaking wet having been caught in a heavy shower—they are now in their room donning some of the landlord's pants. Tomorrow we make an early start for Fairplay, twenty-five miles across South Park.



Fairplay in the seventies.

FAIRPLAY

Friday August 11th.

Reached here at 6 P.M. after a ride of twenty-five miles. Mr. Murdock⁵ (the landlord) was expecting us. After showing Uncle George his room, he turned to Mr. Johnson and told him he would give him a room for himself and his lady! My embarrassment can be imagined but we all joined in a laugh though mostly at my expense.

How I wish I could describe the view as we entered South Park. It is the most extended and beautiful one I ever saw, reaching seventy-five miles in one direction, and more than a hundred to the south and surrounded on all sides by Mountains—the Park itself being nine thousand five hundred feet high. I had a fine gallop for several miles with Mr. Pratt and another

⁵ Hugh Murdock, who operated the South Park Hotel and treated his guests "in a manner which cannot fail to please and satisfy all." *Rocky Mountain News*, August 11, 1869, p. 2. See also S. S. Wallihan and T. O. Bigney (eds.), *The Rocky Mountain Directory and Colorado Gazetteer for 1871* (Denver: S. S. Wallihan & Co., 1870), p. 49. Fairplay was not incorporated until November, 1872, and was earlier known also as South Park City.

with Mr. Johnson—the road is quite level and good, a first rate place for riding. We took lunch at noon beside a little muddy stream made so from gulch mining. One of the prettiest things we saw was a natural terrace, as smooth as velvet and extending along the base of a high ridge for more than half a mile. I was glad to find a nice letter from Arch awaiting me.⁶ Took a walk with Mr. Johnson to get a sight of the gulch mining. Fairplay contains about four hundred people, mostly miners and is a green little place with one street and the cabins scattered around at every conceivable angle. The views around are beautiful both of Park and Mountains, but the town is very homely. The hotel table is anything but good, though our rooms are quite comfortable.

Saturday August 12th

I have enjoyed every minute of today. Uncle George, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Pratt, and I started out early this morning on horseback, and following a trail went to the summit of Silver Heel Mountain.⁷ This is the first real mountain I ever ascended and I never enjoyed anything more in my life. It is thirteen thousand six hundred feet⁸ to the summit and we went twenty-five hundred feet above timber line—but what a journey it was! It seemed to me the more we went the further we had to go. When we got near the top the clouds around the other peaks were dark and lowering so we sat down in a hollow and had a funny little time eating our lunch over which there was so much laughter that I came within an ace of losing my breath altogether. The clouds stopped short of our peak and we were agreeably disappointed in having no rain. The wind blew in a perfect gale and on the summit it was as cold as any day in winter, so cold that my chin was stiff and I could hardly speak and our fingers and toes were in the same condition. Fortunately, we had maps with us, but though I had on—beside my thick alpaca dress—a flannel sacque, a shawl and a waterproof, I was cold then. But the view! If only I had words to describe it—it was the most glorious one I ever beheld. Off on one side lay the Park stretching nearly one hundred miles to the south, to Colorado City⁹ and terminating with Pikes Peak which loomed

⁶ Apparently a young suitor.

⁷ By tradition so named after the dance-hall girl at Fairplay who wore silver slippers. During an epidemic she nursed the sick and the miners named the mountain after her. The story is repeated in John L. Jerome Hart, *A History of the Naming and Early Ascents of the High Colorado Peaks* (2nd ed.; Denver: Colorado Mountain Club, 1931), p. 31.

⁸ Listed today as 13,825 feet.

⁹ For a short period the capital of Colorado Territory until it was switched to Denver in 1862. Frank Fosset, *Colorado: Its Gold and Silver Mines, Farms*

up in the distance high above all other mountains. On the other side, peak after peak rose rugged, grand and lofty, many of them tipped with snow. We found about an acre of snow on one side of Silver Heel and Mr. Pratt climbed down the ravine and got some for me so that I might say I had eaten snow in the middle of August. It was wonderful the variety of flowers we found at such a height and they were more profuse and handsome near the snow than in any other part. My horse was sick coming down and took the little liberty of reclining on the ground for a space of ten or fifteen minutes. Fortunately I was leading the beast or I might have had a charming little fall down some hundred feet into the bottom of the ravine. I walked the rest of the way down, as it seemed much less dangerous, and by that time my animal had recovered himself. The most disagreeable part of the descent was just at the summit where it was very steep and where there were acres of small stones over which my horse slid rather than walked. We had a gay gallop home through a lovely green gulch. While out we saw antelope, deer, a ground hog and a flock of grouse, but not being provided with firearms were unable to capture any. We arrived home at 6 P.M. fully satisfied with our day's ride which to me will always be a lasting source of pleasure. In the evening went with Aunt Mollie to buy up a portion of this small town preparatory to further camping, after which I mended a rent in Mr. Johnson's pants and so made myself even with that young man.

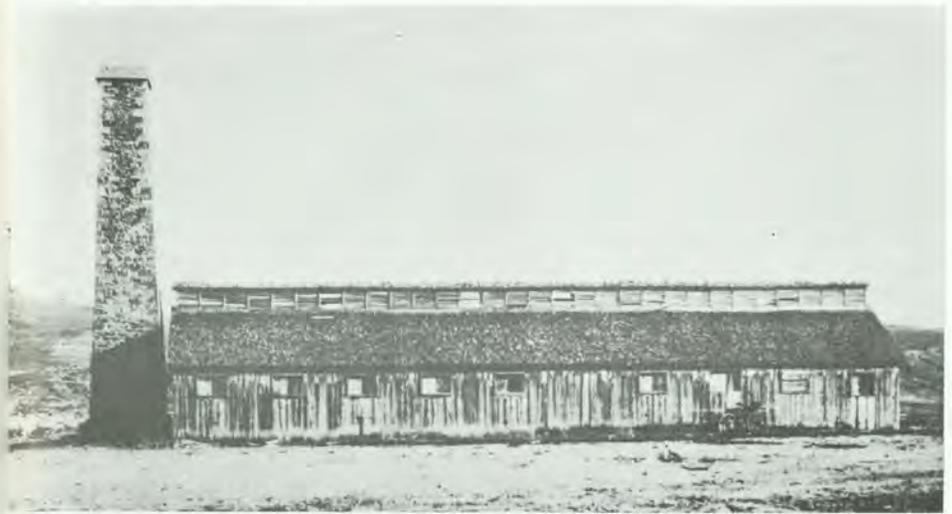
Sunday August 13th.

Today has been passed, as most of our Sundays are, in this wild western region, very little Sabbath-like and very long and dull. In the morning wrote a long letter to father, in the afternoon took a nap then went with Mr. Johnson to visit the Fairplay Cemetery which counts twenty-two graves, only three persons dying a natural death. On the grave of one was painted, "Died accidentally. Pray for him." In the eve Aunt Mollie went to hear preaching from a minister who was passing through town, and I stayed home with the chicks.

SALT WORKS

Monday August 14th.

We are resting tonight at some extensive salt works¹⁰ near the border of the Park, which we leave tomorrow. Am sorry the works are not going. I saw the well with the salt water bubbling up—it has a decidedly salt taste as I found on partaking of one



Charles L. Hall's Colorado Salt Works, a South Park landmark.

mouthful. Mrs. Hall's dairy is enough to delight ones' heart, I went in this evening to see it. It contains about a hundred pans of milk covered with the richest cream, two or three kegs of golden butter and large pans of buttermilk. A cold spring runs through the place, making the dairy as cold as ice. We are indoors and the gentlemen in the tent. We are pretty tired as usual, and ready for a good sleep. Our ride today was a very hot one. I tried the horse, but got into such a state of broil that I was glad to crawl back into our old wagon. We saw a beautiful "Mirage"; I had never seen one before and I could hardly believe that the beautiful water in the distance, with such distinct shadows of trees in it was all a delusion. We also passed what are called the "Buffalo Springs"¹¹—they bubble up through the ground taking a perfect spray of sand with them—they were so beautiful and the water as cold as ice.

and Stock Ranges and Health and Pleasure Resorts—Tourist's Guide to the Rocky Mountains (New York: C. G. Crawford, 1879), p. 90. Just a few days previous a Pueblo newspaper reported Colorado City as a "bright, active place" because of the expected arrival of General W. J. Palmer's railroad. *Colorado Chieftain*, August 10, 1871, p. 2.

¹⁰ About one-half mile south of Antero reservoir. The Colorado Salt Works was established by Charles L. Hall in 1862, but by 1875 it was reported that "the works have been idle most if not all of the time." *Rocky Mountain News*, September 1, 1875, p. 3. After moving to Leadville in 1878, Hall became a partner of H. A. W. Tabor in the firm of Brush, Tabor and Hall. A biographical sketch of Hall is in *History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado* (Chicago: O. L. Baskin & Co., 1881), pp. 340-42; see also a pamphlet by John J. Lipsey, *The Salt Works in Colorado's South Park* (Colorado Springs: Western Books, 1959).

¹¹ Twelve miles south of Fairplay on the South Platte River. Crofutt: *Grip-Sack Guide*, p. 81.

CAMP WIGWAM

Tuesday August 15th.

Not so called because we were attacked by Indians, but simply because we were staying on their recent camping ground where they left a large wigwam. We are in a narrow gorge in the Arkansas valley,¹² through which runs the river of that name and would be very beautiful if it were not for the gulch mining which makes it a very muddy stream. We are in a rocky place—mountains behind us and a precipice opposite, rising twenty-five hundred feet from the water—a wild place that makes one think of bears and other intruders—but we have grown to be very courageous campers and care not for such trifles. We had a nice ride over the mountains and as we descended into the Arkansas Valley, the view was most extensive and beautiful, the mountains in the distance looking very grand and picture-like in their misty blueness.¹³ Rode some time on horseback and so missed much jolting over a very stony road. We lunched at "Recollection Nooning," so called because Uncle George stopped there on the anniversary of his wedding day when traveling in June. We took tea by firelight and lantern and had a jolly little supper in spite of the surroundings. We wished so that some of our far-off friends could have been with us in the evening around our huge camp fire to have a good chat. Between Mr. Pratt, Mr. Johnson and Uncle George, we are never short of laughing and yarns at such a time. Mr. Pratt is our yarner, Mr. Johnson our dictionary and Uncle George our punster. The two latter are the nicest men in camp, they never get cross or angry and are so entertaining and enter so heartily into everything that it makes it doubly pleasant for us. On starting out a lady told us that it was a good test of temper to go camping, but though of course we have had little trying things happen I think on the whole, and without any conceit we have been a very good natured party.

TWIN LAKES

Wednesday August 16th.

At last we have arrived at our destination and such a lovely place it is. In spite of all the grand and beautiful places and things I have seen since coming among the mountains, this

¹² Likely just south of Granite, then the county seat of Chaffee county. *Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft*, Vol. XXV, *History of Nevada, Colorado, and Wyoming, 1540-1888* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890), p. 583.

¹³ Although the account does not indicate it they most likely used Trout Creek

"caps the climax" and is just a piece of perfection. The lake we are camping on is three miles long and a mile and a half wide, the upper one is much smaller, but more retired and romantic and is connected with this one by a pretty little stream.¹⁴ Both lakes are hemmed in with mountains—those at the western being very high. One of them has two peaks which have been called Estebrook and Copp after two young men who were drowned just a few weeks before we arrived.¹⁵ The lakes abound in trout and are quite a celebrated fishing resort out here. On one side of the eastern lake stands a log cabin, the stopping place of tourists and pleasure seekers.¹⁶ It is very roomy and clean—papered as most all these western cabins are with newspapers—one funny feature about this mansion is that the roof is made waterproof with old tin cans straightened out and nailed on. Portia, the land-lady's daughter, some times takes the novel means of awakening the boarder by throwing pebbles up on the roof—the effect is quite startling. She gave Uncle George a touch of it when he was here before, and almost frightened the life out of them. We shan't starve here that is certain—they set the nicest table we have seen yet. The day we arrived, we had for dinner delicious salmon-colored trout, canned corn, fresh peas, fresh raspberries with lots of cream—which they put on the table in big bowls—good pie and hot coffee and biscuit. A bigger dinner I never ate. I had been riding on horseback all the morning and that always makes me starving.

We are to live in a funny log hut, of only one room and without a floor and the gentlemen take the tent. We make our breakfast and tea in camp and dine at Mrs. Deny's as in the middle of the day it is extremely warm. One ride along the Arkansas Valley was wild in the extreme, the river running along the bottom of a deep gorge through which we rode high above the river. Most of the time, a foot or two from a steep precipice. We encountered three teams, but two of us being some distance ahead on horseback, we warned them of our team, and got it safely past them. After dinner went with Mr. Johnson

Pass, for to use Weston Pass they would have had to back-track. On his expedition Pike crossed Trout Creek Pass. See the helpful volume by Marshall Sprague, *The Great Gates: The Story of the Rocky Mountain Passes* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964), p. 53. The elevation of Trout Creek Pass is 9,346 feet.

¹⁴ The lower lake covered 1,525 and the upper one 475 acres. Crofutt, *Grip-Sack Guide*, p. 150.

¹⁵ The "very high" mountains are Mt. Elbert, 14,431; La Plata, 14,340; and Lake Mountain. The "two peaks" are now called Twin Peak.

¹⁶ Possibly "Lakeside House" mentioned in Crofutt, *Grip-Sack Guide*, p. 150. By 1888 Twin Lakes had become "one of the most popular" of the Rocky Mountain pleasure resorts according to the *Colorado Graphic*, May 15, 1888, p. 10.

to the upper lake which is more secluded and romantic than this. This evening, Miss Portia is playing on her melodian and singing sundry Sabbath school tunes which make me feel very homesick. They have just treated us to some capital ice cream of their own making.

*Thursday August 17th.*¹⁷

Was obliged to stir Mr. Johnson up with a little cold water. He is getting very lazy, both he and Uncle George. After breakfast and cleaning up our dining room—which is just behind our tent—a lot of us went in swimming and it was a luxury to get in the water once more. I had a grand swim, but I find I am getting somewhat out of practice. In the afternoon Mr. Johnson and I found a lovely little nook on the bank of the river when we wrote our letters and played lazy while the sun was hot. Spent part of the evening in the parlor and the rest chatting at the camp fire.

Friday August 18th.

Went out rowing with Mr. Johnson for wood and brought home a whole boat load. In the afternoon went with Mr. Pratt to fish and succeeded in catching my first trout, whose tail I keep in remembrance thereof. The sunset tonight was gorgeous—its rays came floating over the upper lakes, between the mountains, bathing the lower one and the distant hills in one flood of violet and gold.



Saturday August 19th.

In the morning burned my hand quite badly during my cooking. Went boating in the afternoon with Mr. Johnson—had a small battle, put him out on shore and rowed by myself for

¹⁷ The brief entry for this and the following days would indicate a busy vacationer with little time to write.

ever so long. Afterwards went on horseback with Miss Portia to see a deserted village on the far shore of the upper lake. One can hardly image anything more desolate than these abandoned villages. The miners are a queer impulsive set of folk. If a settlement of them find they are making some three or four dollars a day when somewhere else they can make seven or eight, the whole lot of them will pull up stakes and leave for the richer mines. Sometimes they are obliged to desert their town when their mines give out. This was the case with Dayton¹⁸—the place was started by miners who dug for gold in Red Mountain,¹⁹ a mile or two above, and when the mines ceased to yield they were obliged to go off and seek their living elsewhere. We rode around among the houses, of which there were twenty-five or thirty—all log cabins with mud roofs. It was just at dusk and the place looked most dismal and forlorn in that light. On the lake we saw floating around a little child's cradle and in the same place Uncle George picked up a baby's shoe. Strange to say there is a gentleman from Springfield, Mass., staying alone in one of the houses. He is here for his health, but how he can endure such a spot and alone I can not see. He must have pretty strong nerves for it is a ghostly place. This eve we have been sitting at the camp fire watching Uncle George and Mr. Pratt clean trout, pick a grouse and skin a woodchuck.

Sunday August 20th.

Spent a quiet day. In the afternoon went with Uncle George and the chicks to say farewell to the upper lake. We sat some time and enjoyed the quiet view of the lake and mountain. Uncle George says when we get to Georgetown he will have to put a tub of water in front of my door. Aunt Mollie and the baby go in the house tonight as the latter is quite unwell from teething. The other children stay with me in our hut.

CAMP UTE

Monday August 21st.

This has been decidedly a day of adventures and trials and to cap the climax, we are camped tonight in the midst of Indians, after whom we call our camp.²⁰ We left Twin Lakes with much

¹⁸ Dayton was the county seat of Lake County in 1867 but was deserted by 1869 when the county seat was moved. John L. Dyer, *The Snow-Shoe Itinerant: An Autobiography of the Rev. John L. Dyer* (Cincinnati: Cranston and Stowe, 1890), p. 227.

¹⁹ In addition to this one there are three more "Red Mountains" nearby.
²⁰ The Utes may have been on their way to the White River Agency, as was the group reported one month earlier in "Summit County Notes," *Daily*

regret early this morning. I started off with Mr. Johnson on horseback and so missed an accident that came near proving a very serious one to those behind. We rode on quite a long way over the mountains and at last becoming rather anxious at the nonappearance of the wagon, we got off our horses to rest and wait for them fearing that either something had happened or else we had taken the wrong road. At last the latter came in sight and on reaching us we found them much excited over a bad time they had just after leaving the lakes. We had some very steep hills to ascend and near the top of one of them the horses balked and the wagon slipped backwards about fifty yards. Aunt Mollie and the children were gotten out when one of the horses fell flat causing the wagon to stop and preventing it from going over a very steep hill. They were much frightened. Afterwards at all dangerous hills, we turned out and walked. The day was one of clouds and sunshine—we had several very hard showers during one of which we ascended one of the steepest hills we had yet gone over. I wish our absent friends could have seen us just then. Aunt Mollie with baby, I with Theodore and the two other children all crowded under a big umbrella, puffing up the afore mentioned hill. Mr. Pratt leading our saddle horses. Uncle George leading and whipping the others and Mr. Johnson at the brake. The hills, some of them were so formidable looking, that we had about a dozen walks during the day. We went some distance above timber line and there found a pretty little lake with snow near by, but owing to the rain, were unable to enjoy either them or the view.²¹ Our next little experience was a ride through a deep marsh—all owing to the stupidity of Mr. Pratt. Uncle George was angry enough and called to Pratt that if he didn't follow him, he would take the reins from him. We succeeded in getting out at the risk of breaking our necks. When we stopped at noon, we were prepared to call our lunching place "Adventure Nooning." I rode horseback up the next mountain, and we came across a deserted Indian Camp. A wigwam stood in the midst of it with some fresh deer horns and strips of buffalo skins hanging on the top out of which I pulled a wigwam memento. A few minutes after, a large snake ran across our path almost under the horses feet, but we let it depart in peace as it possessed no rattles.

Central City Register, July 21, 1871, p. 1. According to Wilson Rockwell, *The Utes, A Forgotten People* (Denver: Sage Books, 1956), pp. 72, 110, the agency was near the present town of Meeker.

²¹ By the description, especially "very steep hill," they probably used Weston Pass on their return to Fairplay. Sprague, *Great Gates*, p. 242 gives its height as 11,945 feet.

Our next misfortune was in not being able to reach the ranch we expected to. We had just decided to camp for the night when on looking down the valley we discovered a lot of fires, and on driving on to them, discovered we were in the midst of an Indian encampment. We found one white family in the valley and joined our forces to theirs, thinking that in a multitude there was safety. While we were arranging matters for the night, the leader, a couple of squaws and a little papoose came and gazed at us talking among themselves and giggling at little things we did that struck them funny. At last the young papoose set up a melancholy howl, and they all took their departure. We took tea by firelight and we found that in spite of the dampness we could make ourselves quite comfortable with buffalo robes, blankets and a huge fire in front of tent and wagon. Jeannie is quite alarmed because of our near proximity to Indians. She refused at first to leave the wagon for fear of the latter "pulling out her hair."

FAIRPLAY

Tuesday August 22nd.

Back again in this homely old town but fortunately in pleasanter quarters. Mr. Murdock's house is full so we are ensconced in a smaller but much nicer abode. We were up early this morning and took breakfast surrounded by a lot of squaws, who stood gazing at us with all their eyes. They brought a little papoose which I took in my arms, but soon returned to its maternal as it squalled most vigorously. The children stuffed it with lumps of sugar which delighted its little heart. We had the honor of the leader's company at breakfast and he seemed to enjoy his coffee and corn bread. The women giggled and laughed at seeing Mr. Johnson help me wash the breakfast things. They do everything and the men nothing. After breakfast we intended making them a visit and getting some bead work but were prevented by another accident which happened to me. I was crossing the stream to the Indian encampment when my horse slipped on a large stone and we both went down flat in the water, I falling off and getting a small wetting. My foot was in the stirrup and all the while I was endeavoring to extricate it, the horse was making his way pretty briskly up the bank. I should not have cared if it had been old "Billy" but this was a new and untried pony which Uncle George had traded the latter for, and though it was all over in a couple of minutes, yet I was much frightened and was nervous and foolish enough

to sit down and blubber. I got into the wagon, changed my shoes and stockings, and remained there the rest of the day. We left the mountains about noon and the rest of our ride was through South Park in a heavy hail storm. The mountains were covered with the latter making them seem as though they were enveloped in snow. They looked perfectly beautiful. We met Sheldon Jackson²² and his party starting for Twin Lakes in four large covered wagons and thought it rather a stupid looking set. Mr. Lowrie was with them and came to our wagon to have a talk. He was complimentary enough to inform me that I had grown as brown as a Ute squaw. It's all very true; I am as black as an Indian, especially my hands, but I'm out on a long spree and mean to enjoy myself anyhow. I was most sadly disappointed on reaching here to find no mail. There has been some mistake about our letters and we shall have to wait in patience until we reach Georgetown. I'm getting very impatient to hear from home. We have come forty-five miles from the lakes.

MONTGOMERY

Wednesday August 23rd.

This is the highest town we have yet been in and is the greenest old place I ever saw in my life, being another deserted village with only this one family living here.²³ As we approached the place from the valley, the log huts looked like bird houses perched here and there on the side of the mountain. This is another place when the mines gave out everyone flew away to seek something better. It has been quite a town as the number of its empty stores testify. They all stand with the different signs on their fronts—such as “Drug Store,” “Post Office,” “Vegetable Market,” etc. Mrs. Myers is so full tonight that the gentlemen have gone to camp in an empty building, which as its sign still says, was once the “Colorado House.” This afternoon Uncle George, Mr. Johnson and I took a stroll up the mountain to see the falls and examine the old stamping mill.



The falls are very beautiful as they rush and foam over huge rocks, tearing madly down the mountain side on their way to the valley. Mr. Johnson and I climbed out to the middle of a huge log lying across the stream where we could sit and look up and down the falls and at the same time see the lovely valley view. Our journey from Fairplay this morning was pleasant and otherwise. I rode the whole twelve miles with Uncle George. We were caught in a heavy thunder shower and got soaking wet, but our road was good and we galloped fast and on reaching here got nicely toasted at a big fire. I fully expect to end my days by breaking my neck, for today I have been thrown from my horse again. I thought I would try Mr. Pratt's animal, warranted to be “perfectly safe” but I found through all my ride that he was a great stumbler and in one of our gallops he went down flat and off I went, over his head. My dress caught in the horn and my foot stayed in the stirrup as usual—but I kept tight hold on the reins and the beast stood still after rising. Uncle George rescued me from my half-way position between the horse's back and the ground and we jumped on again and

²² Rev. Sheldon Jackson was a noted Presbyterian who had founded a church newspaper that year. *History of Clear Creek and Boulder Valleys* (Chicago: O. L. Baskin & Co., 1880), p. 30. In 1869 he had been named “superintendent of missions” which covered “western Iowa, Nebraska, the Dakotas and regions beyond,” and founded over a hundred churches in the west, including one at Fairplay in 1874. See Iris Gilmore and Marian Talmadge, “The Bishop of all Beyond: Sheldon Jackson Took the Gospel into the Rockies,” *Denver Post Rocky Mountain Empire Magazine*, May 28, 1950, p. 6.

²³ Montgomery, about six miles north of Alma, at the base of Mt. Lincoln. It once housed 1,500 and had its own opera house. Dyer, *Snow-Shoe Itinerant*, p. 150; *Rocky Mountain News*, May 27, 1874, p. 2. Although mention is made of the “Myers” family, four months earlier there was also a “Mr. Grose” living in Montgomery; see *Daily Central City Register*, April 7, 1871, p. 1.



reached here without further accident. I came into town in a rig that would hardly do East. My dress and the horse's corn bag over my shoulders and my hair down my back, indeed I have not fixed up the latter for two weeks, my morning duties as cook have made me very negligent as to appearances. My usual morning programme in camp is to rise about six o'clock, rush to the brook—for we always camp near water—and wash myself, then to the kettle and put it on to boil for coffee—Mr. Johnson having by that time made the fire—then cook the breakfast, after which we all gather around our cloth spread on the ground and eat with appetities enough to startle any looker-on. This house is kept by an English family, is very cosy and neat and we have excellent meals. Mrs. Myers has in her parlor a cabinet organ and a sewing machine which look very strange away off in this mountain nook. They have a room full of skins of different kinds. Aunt Mollie has bought a very pretty silver fox skin. Mt. Lincoln, fourteen thousand five hundred feet high, towers up right above us.²⁴

BRECKENRIDGE

Thursday August 24th.

We are in a small mining place having come fifteen miles in a slow but not very sure way.²⁵ Of all the roads we ever passed over, this was the worst. It is called the "Breckenridge Pass" and is steep, stony and dangerous.²⁶ When we started we had a hill to climb which was almost perpendicular for a mile so Uncle George hired an extra team of horses for this wagon, Mr. Pratt driving, the extra man leading and Mr. Johnson managing the brakes. Uncle George walked guiding his horse on which Minnie and Jeannie rode. Aunt Mollie brought up the rear on the other horse with Theodore in her lap. The event of the day was our losing our way on the mountain and instead of the right road, taking one which led us to the very summit to the "Hatch Mine" over two miles out of our course. When near the top we began to doubt the road so, as the gentlemen were all busy with the horses, I puffed my way up to the

²⁴ Once known as Montgomery Peak, its name was changed in 1863 when Lincoln was president. Its elevation is 14,284 feet.

²⁵ In 1869 it had "only twenty or thirty cabins." Samuel Bowles, *The Switzerland of America: A Summer Vacation in the Parks and Mountains of Colorado* (New York: American News Company, 1869), p. 105.

²⁶ Our journalist is in error. Breckenridge Pass, also known as Hamilton Pass, Tarryall Pass, and as Boreas Pass is between Como and Breckenridge. They actually used Hoosier Pass, 11,541 feet, from Montgomery to Breckenridge, roughly along what is now Colorado State Highway 9. See Sprague, *The Great Gates*, pp. 176, 182, 389, and 400. Fremont crossed Hoosier Pass on June 22, 1844.

tip top taking nearly all the breath out of my body and discovered that there the road ended! A most delightful situation for a whole wagon load of folks to be in. I took the opportunity of peeping into the mine but finding it deserted I picked up a small piece of quartz and returned to the party. We were a disgusted lot of folks and much provoked with Mr. Pratt who *pretends to guide* us but of whom we are becoming more and more tired. The day has been a succession of getting in and out of the wagon, running down hills and scrambling up others and jolting over at least a million stones, the drive ending at last in a hard hail storm, the stones being the size of good large peas—but we retired under our big canvas covered wagon and were as snug and comfortable as could be. Uncle George rode on ahead to order dinner and got a soaking for his thoughtfulness. I picked some gentians wherewith to remember the very worst road I ever expect to go over. I have been out this afternoon to have my first view of gulch mining and was much interested. One of the men panned a lot of dirt for me and found a "Color" of gold in the bottom. I found a pretty piece of "Forest Rock" here too. It is a wonderful stone and impressions of moss on some of it are delicate and beautiful. Aunt Mary bought another pretty fox skin this afternoon at the Recorder's Office. Tomorrow we make an early start for Montezuma.



MONTEZUMA

Friday August 25th.

Another mining town, it seems as though they never come to an end, but this is a regular old mining state and one cannot

travel a few miles without seeing prospecting holes or real mines.²⁷ We have left the gold and are now among the silver mines. The next county—which is much smaller than this, has seven thousand “Lodes,” recorded.²⁸ We have traveled twenty-two miles today, a very peaceful happy family. I contented myself indoors and left the horse to Aunt Mary, she and Uncle took a long ride and the children retired to the back part of the wagon and took their naps. We left the Blue River and turned into Snake River Valley through which runs a lovely stream of that name. Here we had our first glimpse of Gray’s Peak, one of the tallest of the mountains—fourteen thousand five hundred feet high.²⁹ Stopped near some Soda Springs for lunch which we named “Crystal Noonning” as we found there some very pretty specimens. The Spring water has a decided soda taste which is to me extremely disagreeable. We left it to its bubbling and made friends with Snake River. Yesterday’s ride brought us over into the Pacific Slope and we are now really separated from home and friends by the Rocky Mountains. It seems strange to think that all the streams we now see are running into the Pacific Ocean. The latter part of our journey was through pretty, shady woods of our three steady friends the spruce, pine and aspen—they stand by us to the end. We are now truly shut in by mountains, there being no open view but mountains rise on every side. Today we have traveled twenty-five miles.

Saturday August 26th.

Of all the queer houses we have yet been in this is the queerest specimen. It is a rough two story log house with openings between the boards so large that we can lie in bed and view the surrounding country. All the surplus clothing we have is stuffed around the sides of the room to keep out the breezes. We have two rooms that are boarded off from the attic—where nine miners sleep—and through which we have to pass to and from our rooms! The gentlemen have one room and we have the other. As we retired at this seasonable hour of half past seven we all awoke quite early and carried on a lively little conversation between the apartments about our plans for the day. But alas! “The best laid plans,” etc., instead of getting to Georgetown this evening and dressing up in our

²⁷ Montezuma was the first settlement in Summit County, according to the *Rocky Mountain News*, October 24, 1877, p. 2.

²⁸ Clear Creek County.

²⁹ Named after Asa Gray, noted American botanist. Elevation, 14,270.

very best tomorrow and going to church like good people here we are stuck fast—the first hindrance of the kind we have had. They found the screw holding the brake had broken and this morning we’re obliged to have another made. Then the extra team which was ordered to help our horses was late so instead of leaving very early we were delayed until noon. When that time arrived there were such heavy clouds hanging over the mountains that, after our usual council of war, we decided it safest to remain until Monday. It is a great disappointment, here in the shadow of the famous Argentine Pass, which we are all so anxious to see, and only eighteen miles from Georgetown, where all our letters are lying, to have to stay two days. Monday we make an early start for the Pass. We think we are very courageous people to undertake it as it is the highest wagon road in North America—thirteen thousand five hundred feet high!³⁰ They set a capital table here although the house is such a forlorn affair—this morning we had the best buckwheat cakes I ever put in my mouth and for tea had delicious strawberry shortcake made of canned berries. There is but one chair and half dozen long benches in the house and no basins or pitchers. We use in our room a tin basin and tin pail with water. Our mattresses are stuffed with antelope hair and the bedsteads are made of pine boards. Such is western life! This afternoon Mr. Felch—our landlord—took Mr. Johnson, Minnie and me to see a couple of lodes, the “Cooper” and “Umpire.”³¹

We got some very pretty specimens which contain a little silver. After the tea Mr. Johnson and I took a walk to Lawrence a queer little nest of half a dozen houses and a mill perched up on the mountain side where there are two lodes the “Lawrence” and the “North Star.”³² Tonight we are a literary crowd being all seated around the dining room table writing letters and journals.

³⁰ Argentine Pass, which crosses the Continental Divide, was given as the route to Georgetown by Frank Fossett in *Colorado: A Historical, Descriptive and Statistical Work on the Rocky Mountain Gold and Silver Mining Region* (Denver: Daily Tribune Steam Printing House, 1876), p. 420. Sprague, *The Great Gates*, p. 387, states: “This historic old mining camp road crossing was called Sanderson Pass in the 1860’s, often Snake River Pass in 1870’s. It is the highest CD [Continental Divide] road crossing in all the Rockies.” Sprague gives the elevation as 13,132 feet. Ralph H. Brown states that the road was abandoned in 1912. See his “Colorado Mountain Passes,” *The Colorado Magazine*, VI (November, 1929), 235.

³¹ The Cooper mine is mentioned, with a few others, as one of “the most noted lodes of Montezuma” by Ovando J. Hollister, *The Mines of Colorado* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Samuel Bowles & Co., 1867), p. 332.

³² A North Star mine and an Atlantic mine, formerly called North Star mine, are located on the southwest slope of Collier Mountain, one and one-half miles from Montezuma, by Robert A. Corregan and David F. Lingane (eds. and comps.), *Colorado Mining Directory* (Denver: Colorado Mining Directory Co., 1883), pp. 836 and 745 respectively.

Sunday August 27th.

Have spent a quiet and pleasanter day than I anticipated and a much more Sunday-like one than any since I left home. I found a shady, pretty nook near the river where I spent an hour alone reading and listening to the water and to the sighing of the spruce and pine trees which music I love to hear. Mr. Johnson, the children and I spent the rest of the morning rambling along Snake River, a wild beautiful walk. In the afternoon Mr. Johnson took me up the mountain to see another mining town—St. Johns. The walk and the view were lovely—



St. Johns was a Sunday afternoon stroll from Montezuma.

the former winding along the mountain side through a forest of spruce and in the openings we caught such pretty little glimpses of the valley beneath. St. Johns is in a little green hollow just below the summit and owns a rich silver mine of the same name.³³ Our stay has not been so disagreeable as we expected but we shall be glad to jog along.

³³ *Ibid.*, 755, has the mine being worked in 1883. Sts. John, about half a mile south from Montezuma, had a change of fortune in 1871 when the Boston Mining Company acquired the mine. By 1874 its population had increased to 150, after the mine was reopened. Wallihan and Bigney (eds.), *Rocky Mountain Directory and Colorado Gazetteer*, p. 52; *Daily Central City Register*, April 28, 1871, p. 4; *Rocky Mountain News*, May 27, 1874, p. 2.

GEORGETOWN

Monday August 28th.

Our dear, old camping days are ended and I'm sorry as I can be. Our ride over the pass was very exciting and a journey to be remembered for the rest of one's life. We left Montezuma at 7 A.M. riding six miles to the foot of the Pass. We had two little Jacks for the children to ride and Mr. Johnson and I tried them for three or four miles. Such odd little things they are, not more than three and a half feet high. I felt remarkably



Argentine Pass, where the road was "cut like a groove out of the rock."

safe on mine considering I gave one little step to get on and off his back and by reaching down my foot could touch my toes to the ground. We rode them with only a rope tied around the neck and guided them by slapping them on either side with a stick. At the foot of the Pass we formed ourselves into the following procession and I'd like to have our photographs taken then and there so imposing an appearance we made. Aunt Mollie and I went first on Uncle George's and Mr. Pratt's ponies the former having baby tied to her waist. Mr. Johnson walked—then came the children on Jacks—two on one and one on the other, their father and another man leading them.

The wagon brought up the rear drawn by our horses and two mules. Mr. Pratt and the teamster managing that. We started off quite jolly and with much laughter but alas! We came near having a sad termination to our journey. On reaching the first little ascent we stopped to rest a minute and when my horse started forward Aunt Mollie's gave a little unexpected jump forward and threw her and the baby off on the ground—the latter coming down with a hard thump. We were terribly frightened about baby but found on examination that she was entirely unhurt though the poor little soul was dreadfully scared and cried ready to break her heart. This accident disgusted Aunt Mary and me with horseflesh and we walked the entire road to the summit—nearly three miles. Uncle George took baby on one of the jacks and Theodore was put on the horse with Mr. Felch leading him. Baby was evidently very safe for Uncle George could touch both feet to the ground and funny is no word for the way he looked. We took it slowly, resting often and so reached the summit from which I was the first to enjoy the prospect and it was *grand*.³⁴ At the summit we stopped and had a good rest and I picked my posy necessarily very homely as we were far above the snow and timber line. The most dangerous part of the road was when we crossed a bridge over a small gulch—it was open on either side and we could look down a steep precipice hundreds of feet. I brought away a small fragment of bark from one of the logs in remembrance of the *dizziest* place I ever was in. All the way was frightful looking. We went first to the right then to the left up just one side the mountain the road being cut like a groove out of the rock which on one side rose high above us and on the other descended hundreds of feet beneath, sometimes being almost perpendicular. The grade is twelve thousand feet to the mile and at the top we looked down a precipice twenty-five hundred feet. One can imagine our feelings as we stood there and looked down. I'm sure I can't begin to describe them. On reaching the top we were soon obliged to take shelter behind the rocks as it was cold and gusty. Sometimes when the wind is high travelers have to pass this place on their hands and knees. Here we dropped our mules and the jacks went back to Montezuma.³⁵ We were not so tired with our walk

³⁴ Sprague, *Great Gates*, p. 387, says that "the view is magnificent beyond belief."

³⁵ Charles Williams Henderson, *Mining in Colorado, A History of Discovery, Development and Production* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926), says that in 1872 the road was used "only as a trail for jack trains and for travel on horseback," p. 230.

as one would expect but the lightness of the air made us puff so that we had to stop often to regain our breathing powers. My climbing pole I shall take home in memory of Argentine. One peculiarity about this place is that the valleys we came up and down end here being walled across by the mountain we passed over. We came down very safely of this side, most of us taking the short trail. We lunched at the bottom near a pretty stream and called our stopping place the "Argentine Nooning." The rest of our journey was shady and pleasant and without excitement until we reached the "Equator" road—so called from a mine of that name—which runs for about two miles along the mountains south of Georgetown and then descends abruptly into the place. Here we had a falling out

Georgetown in the early seventies was popular with tourists.



with Mr. Pratt but being utterly and entirely disgusted with the man we cared very little. I ventured on horseback accompanied by Mr. Johnson as we were anxious to hurry on and get our letters. We had ridden but a short distance when we were hailed from the wagon by Pratt who coolly asked Mr. Johnson to go down the bank a little way and get his cow—which was grazing there—and drive her to town before us. I was in a small state of wrath and called back to him to drive the cow himself and Aunt Mary informed him she would not have left me alone on such a road. Mr. Johnson coolly proceeded without answering Pratt and we left him boiling over. After our wrath had subsided we had a good laugh at the idea of our riding into town behind that fellow's old cow. One road before reaching the place was much on the Argentine style and I think nothing but letters from home could have persuaded me to take it on horseback. The view of Georgetown down the valley is very fine—it is completely shut in by mountains.³⁶ The Postmaster grinned when he handed me the letters for besides Uncle George's big pile there were no less than twelve for me, much to my joy and Mr. Johnson's amusement.

Tuesday August 29th.

Today ends our camping, my journal, and breaks up our party. Mr. Johnson left us this morning for his home, from which he has been gone since June. We parted from him with many regrets as he has been a very agreeable, entertaining and thoroughly nice friend and we are sorry to have him go. He looked very solemn and lonesome as he drove off alone in our friendly old canvas covered wagon. He goes by way of Creswell to take the establishment home. We are settled for a couple of weeks in as nice a hotel as we could find anywhere East—



a clean, cheery pleasant house, comfortable beds and a very good table. It is wonderful that Mr. Barton gets all his supplies from Boston—he is a native of that place.³⁷ I hope our trip will have done Uncle George good—the improvement in his health is not as great as we could wish. We have greatly enjoyed our trip—I most thoroughly. I shall never forget my camping expedition in the Rocky Mountains and all the wonderful, grand and beautiful things I have seen will be a lasting source of joy.

JACK D. FILIPIAK is writing a doctoral dissertation at the University of Denver on the life of General Charles King, who traveled through Colorado in the early seventies.

³⁶ The county seat of Clear Creek County, Georgetown's population in 1870 was 802. Fossett, *Colorado*, p. 147; *Rocky Mountain News*, May 27, 1874, p. 2.

³⁷ The Barton hotel was just one of a number of fine and unusual hotels in Georgetown at that time to serve the tourist trade. W. E. Barton succeeded his father as proprietor in April of that year. In January of that year a fire had destroyed part of the hotel, located on the corner of Fourth and Taos streets, and it had just been rebuilt and refurnished—including furniture from Boston—shortly before the arrival of our campers. It had opened for business on August 5, 1867, and had served many noted guests. U. S. Grant, the Republican nominee for president in 1868, stayed there on July 27 and was followed shortly after by his Republican running mate, Schuyler Colfax, the next month. Grant's party included Generals Sherman, Sheridan, and Dent. On October 8, 1875, President Grant stayed at the hotel as a part of a western trip. For the journey's relationship to the corruption of his administration and the crisis in his cabinet see Allen Nevins, *Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1936), pp. 762-89. In essence, Grant found it expedient to be out of Washington when his Secretary of the Interior resigned, so as to convey the impression that he did not concur in the resignation.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

BY MERLIN K. POTTS

An important milestone in the history of Colorado was reached on January 26 of this year. Fifty years ago on that date the bill creating the Rocky Mountain National Park was passed by Congress and signed by President Woodrow Wilson.¹

Enos Mills, often referred to as the "Father of Rocky Mountain National Park," was the one individual who worked most faithfully for its establishment. He came to the Estes Park region from Kansas as a young man, actually a boy. He was sixteen when he built a home in the Long's Peak valley in 1886. He probably conceived the idea of a national park along this portion of the Rockies when he was working with a survey party in the Yellowstone in 1891.²

Although many groups backed the Mills plan from the start, a few did not. Mills was particularly critical of the opposition offered by the Forest Service, and he later accused that agency of having used extreme methods to prevent the creation of the park.³ In support of Mills's view, Congressman Atterson W. Rucker said that the Forest Service was opposed to the park idea because of a possible decrease in its revenue from timber sales.⁴

State Senator Elias M. Ammons was among those who originally opposed the park idea. The *Denver Republican* on December 30, 1910, described him as "an ardent opponent of the conservation policy that has been in vogue for several years in this part of the West."⁵ Four years later, after the park pro-

¹ U. S., *Statutes at Large*, XXXVIII, Part 1, 798-800.

² Lloyd Musselman of Denver kindly allowed me to read his manuscript history of Rocky Mountain National Park; this and other information is based on his research.

³ Enos A. Mills, *The Story of Estes Park and Grand Lake* (4th ed. rev.; Estes Park, Colorado: Enos A. Mills, 1917), p. 108.

⁴ *Denver Republican*, January 3, 1912, p. 1, Denver Public Library Western History Collection clipping file, referred to hereafter as DPLW clipping file.

⁵ *Ibid.*, December 30, 1910.



The dedication of Rocky Mountain National Park was celebrated in Horseshoe Park Valley, September 4, 1915.

ponents had decided on a somewhat smaller park than the one Mills originally planned, Ammons supported the Park Bill in testimony before the House Committee on Public Lands.⁶

By this time nearly everyone in Colorado backed the idea for Rocky Mountain National Park. The Denver Chamber of Commerce had long been in favor of the bill. Boulder, Larimer, and Grand Counties, within whose bounds the park would lie, had given their blessing.⁷ The Colorado Democratic Party in 1914 called for the creation of a Rocky Mountain National Park. Finally, The Colorado General Assembly and the state's congressional delegation came out for the park.⁸

The Park Bill was shepherded through the U. S. Senate in October, 1914, by Senator Charles S. Thomas. But time was growing short, and it took some adroit maneuvering on the part of Representative Edward T. Taylor to get the bill through the House before the session ended.⁹

The Park Bill was passed in 1915, but the infant park began its existence under some difficulties. The National Park Act which established the National Park Service was not passed until 1916. As a result, there were no administrative policies, no guidelines to follow, and there was little knowledge as to just how this National Park was to be administered.

C. R. Trowbridge, a native of New York, was made acting supervisor and was instructed to operate the park on \$10,000 a year. One of Trowbridge's initial moves was to hire the first park ranger for Rocky Mountain, and R. T. "Dixie" MacCracken was selected. "Dixie" still lives in Estes Park. His memories of those days are a valuable record of early park administration.

A number of policy decisions had to be made by the first park supervisors. Among these were questions involving public transportation, federal jurisdiction over the area as opposed to state jurisdiction, and entrance fees. These were of tremendous importance as the administrative policies of the area developed. Although the decisions were often controversial, all were approached from a basic viewpoint, how best to protect the natural features of the area for the use and enjoyment of the people.

⁶ U. S. Congress, House, *Hearing before the Committee on the Public Lands on S. 6309, a Bill to Establish the Rocky Mountain National Park*, 63rd Cong., 3rd Sess., 1915, pp. 3-7, referred to hereafter as *Hearing on S. 6309*.

⁷ *Rocky Mountain News*, June 26, 1914, p. 2. DPLW clipping file.

⁸ U. S. Congress, House, *Hearing on S. 6309*, 63rd Cong., 3rd Sess., 1915, p. 60; U. S. Congress, House, *Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado*, 63rd Cong., 3rd Sess., 1915, Rept. No. 1275, p. 7.

⁹ U. S., *Congressional Record*, 63rd Cong., 3rd Sess., 1915, LII, Part 2, pp. 1889-93.

DENVER POST

★ THE BEST NEWSPAPER IN THE U. S. A. ★
 DENVER, COLO., WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 1915.

Circulation, 1910, 213,338
 U. S. Census, esti.
 date, 1914, 245,522



The public transportation question was opened in 1919 when Interior Secretary Franklin K. Lane gave the Rocky Mountain Transportation Company a twenty year exclusive franchise to operate a public transportation service within the park. Enos Mills, owner of the Long's Peak Inn, led the fight against what seemed to him to be an illegal monopoly. Mills and other hotel owners charged that the Rocky Mountain Transportation Com-

pany could discriminate against them by taking tourists to other lodging places.¹⁰

At Mills's insistence the State of Colorado brought suit to end this "discrimination." The state contended that the roads in the park had been built at state expense and that Colorado had never surrendered jurisdiction over the area. But when Congress refused to appropriate any additional funds for park improvements, the state—with almost unanimous public approval—withdrawed its suit and ceded control to the federal government.¹¹

In 1939 Rocky Mountain National Park became the last major National Park to charge an entrance fee for automobiles. In spite of precedent for this action Rocky Mountain Motorists (AAA) opposed the plan, calling the fee "a toll charge for the use of highways which the motorists have already paid [for] through Federal taxes."¹² In answer to a letter from the auto club, John R. White, Acting Associate Director of the National Park Service, said that the fee was intended to "offset more or less the appropriations made for the construction and maintenance of roads." White told the Rocky Mountain Motorists that the fee was introduced at the insistence of Congress and the Bureau of the Budget. "The department will gladly forego the imposition of fees," said White, "if such is the policy of Congress."¹³ On that note opposition ended.

When May 31, 1939, dawned at Estes Park, two old settlers were waiting at the gate to vie for the privilege of buying the first permit. A judicious park ranger settled the matter by tossing a coin. Charles Reed, Sr., who won the toss, told a reporter that he had first entered the park region in 1879 by way of a toll road up the North St. Vrain Canyon. Abner E.



Sprague, who had to be satisfied with permit number two, said that he had moved to the area in 1875 and there wasn't any road at all.¹⁴

One of the latest policy matters of major proportions involved the Colorado-Big Thompson Project. Water, the lifeblood of the arid eastern plains of Colorado, was the stake. The problem was how to divert a portion of the relatively abundant water of Colorado's Western Slope to the eastern side of the Continental Divide. Both of the agencies involved were bureaus of the Department of the Interior—the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation. The latter bureau contended that the only feasible means was a tunnel beneath the Continental Divide, through the park from Grand Lake. The National Park Service realized the need for the diversion, but feared desecration and drainage of the high mountain lakes by the sub-surface disturbance of rock formations, believed that an alternate tunnel route could be found, and so opposed the plan.

In spite of NPS opposition, the project was eventually approved. Bills authorizing construction were introduced in June of 1937, and construction began in 1938. The first water was delivered through the mountains by the Adams Tunnel in 1947, and all authorized features of the project were completed by 1954. Contrary to expectations, the Colorado-Big Thompson Project was an unqualified success. In the severely dry year of 1954 the project was credited with supplying water for over half of the \$41,000,000 in crops grown in the areas under irrigation from this water source. Nor was there a discernible effect on the scenic values of the park proper.

In recent years another phase of park management has been questioned—the decision to reduce the numbers of deer and elk that winter in the park. These animals were so abundant, and the population was so concentrated in a limited area in winter, that the winter range forage was undergoing a rapid and serious deterioration. Many of the animals were starving to death, simply because the range would not support the numbers present. This was obvious to those in close contact with the situation, but not so obvious to those who regarded the herds as a principal park attraction. Yet as a result of herd reduction the winter range

¹⁰ *National Parks Forum*, I (November-December, 1903), pp. 2-5; see also *Denver Commercial*, June 2, 1921, DPLW clipping file.

¹¹ *Rocky Mountain News*, January 9, 1926, p. 1, and February 15, 1929, p. 1; *Denver Post*, February 3, 1929, p. 17; DPLW clipping file.

¹² *Monitor* (Denver) April 21, 1939, DPLW clipping file.

¹³ *Rocky Mountain Motorist*, June, 1939, DPLW clipping file.

¹⁴ *Denver Post*, June 1, 1939, p. 7, DPLW clipping file.



Trail Ridge Road, following the route of an old Indian trail, crosses the alpine tundra land in sweeping curves.

is recovering, and the health of the deer and elk is greatly improved. Although their numbers are not so great as they were in past years, they are still readily observed and are still a major attraction, particularly to park visitors in the fall and winter seasons.

One of the first major tourist developments was the construction of the Trail Ridge Road. The cession of park jurisdiction from the state to the federal government opened the way for appropriations for this project. Completed in 1932, the world-famous road follows the route of an old Indian trail along a ridge high above timberline. The alpine tundra land through which it passes is unique in the travel experiences of most park visitors, and the road provides access to one of the finest scenic areas of the continent.

The Shadow Mountain National Recreation Area, established in 1952, can be regarded as a by-product of an early controversy, the previously discussed Colorado-Big Thompson Project. This area, with Shadow Mountain Lake and Lake Granby, both created in connection with water impoundment for the project, is administered by the National Park Service through agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bureau of Land Management. Today it is considered to be an important adjunct of Rocky Mountain National Park. It provides many recreational activities not available in the National Park, since the policies for the preservation of the natural scene are not as strictly defined as those governing the administration of the park. It is one of the country's finest recreation areas, and the same qualities of interpretive services and campground accommodations may be enjoyed there as in the National Park.

Another recreational facility of fairly recent vintage is the Hidden Valley Winter Use Area. Skiing had been popular in

the park for several years prior to 1954, when the Hidden Valley facilities were expanded. While this area does not rival the extravagant and extremely popular ski centers elsewhere in Colorado, it does provide a great deal of winter sports enjoyment for family groups, and it has markedly increased winter visitor use.

In 1956 the National Park Service initiated a far-reaching and effective plan of nationwide park development. MISSION 66, so named because it was originally planned for completion in 1966, had a dual purpose. First, the program was aimed at the development of additional and vitally needed accommodations for park visitors. This included campgrounds, visitor centers, interpretive exhibits, additional trails, and other facilities that would provide for the greater enjoyment of the park by visitors. Second, but of equal importance, was the decision to locate these facilities in areas where they could be developed without harm to the natural features which the park had been established to preserve. The results of MISSION 66 are evident in many areas of the park, including the ski lodge in Hidden Valley, new entrance stations, further development of campgrounds, a series of roadside interpretive exhibits, and a fine new Alpine Visitor Center at Fall River Pass which will be dedicated this year at the Golden Anniversary Celebration.

The basic policies of the National Park Service will continue. Two policies of particular interest will be followed: (1) the acquisition by the government of private inholdings within present park boundaries will continue; and (2) because of adequate facilities in communities adjacent to the park, there will be no motels built within the park.

The past fifty years have marked great progress in Rocky Mountain National Park. The first annual appropriation of funds for park administration was, as mentioned previously, \$10,000. For the current year it is nearly \$1,000,000, with an equal amount for construction. Travel has increased from a few thousand in 1915 to very nearly two million in 1964.

This short sketch has touched only briefly upon a few highlights of Rocky Mountain's past fifty years. Colorado's greatest National Park is only one of the thirty-two National Parks of America which are indeed a priceless heritage. They belong to the people. They are the last living remnants of a land of natural beauty which stretched from sea to sea.

MERLIN K. POTTS is *Chief Park Naturalist at Rocky Mountain National Park.*

MADRID PLAZA

HUGH AND EVELYN BURNETT

In the valley of the Purgatoire, late in the 1860's, there were a number of small settlements, built by the people who came up from New Mexico to settle in Colorado Territory. These settlements, or villages, were known to their inhabitants as "plazas," and were so called throughout their active use. Some grew in size and wealth to become modern towns. Others served their time for the original settlers and were left to melt away in the rains of time.

Many of the plazas were fashioned after the old New Mexico estates, retaining much of their Spanish culture and charm. The larger ones accommodated a small community of people and others only a single family with its many relatives and their accumulation of goats, pigs, and cattle, all of which shared the plaza grounds. The plazas served a dual purpose: one as a habitation for its occupants, and the other as a fortification against the Indians. In those days with the Apaches and Utes so numerous, and their friendship uncertain, this security was of vital importance.

Present-day records and memories of old settlers account for thirty-seven or more plazas of recognized importance having been built east of the Sangre de Cristos in the southern part of Colorado. These were located in areas south of Trinidad to the present New Mexico line, west up the Purgatoire River, to the north on the Apishapa and its tributaries, and as far as the Huerfano. In the lower part of the Purgatoire Valley only a few miles above the present city of Trinidad there were a number of plazas that are well remembered today, although few are identified as such. The ruins of some are still seen along the roads or streams as flat-top adobes, their sod roofs grown to grass, cactus, or wildflowers, picturesque as those seen in old Mexico.

Madrid Plaza, named for Hilario Madrid, one of the early immigrants from New Mexico, was among the first to be built

in this area.¹ The plaza stood on a small grassy bench about forty feet above the river. It commanded a broad view of the bottom land, east and west, and the forested hills on each side. It was a beautiful spot and one wisely chosen from which to view any redskins that might approach. Across the river and to the east about a mile is Riley Canyon. Across the valley to the west about the same distance is Burro Canyon, which runs into the river at Tijeras Plaza. East, over the bench, is Madrid Creek, which flows out of the canyon from the south, joining the Purgatoire.

This river may always be known by both the long and the short versions of its name. The local people seem invariably to use the French name "Purgatoire" instead of the more romantic Spanish "El Rio de las Animas Perdidas en Purgatorio." Some, too, prefer the old story of the souls lost in Purgatory, and still call the river the "Las Animas." Although this name might have been romantic in the 1700's when it originated, it could have a more serious significance today in view of the decline of its former prosperous economy.

Hilario Madrid came to this area either by some persuasion on the part of one Don Felipe Baca, later a man of prominence in Trinidad affairs, or because of seeing a prosperous life for his family in this area, so convincingly described by Baca as a valley of rich opportunity. Whatever brought him to this territory was his good fortune, for he prospered well, and his family was later related through marriage to the Bacas, becoming prominent also by family name in this part of the state.

Felipe Baca and Don Pedro Valdez in the year 1860 had taken four wagon loads of flour from Mora County, New Mexico, to market at a small settlement on Cherry Creek (now Denver). When camping at the river crossing near the present site of Trinidad, Felipe Baca observed the abundance of vegetation in the river bottom and concluded that the area might be good for agriculture. It so appealed to him that he returned to the area in the fall of that same year and staked out a tract of choice bottom land about a mile long somewhere near where Commercial Street crosses today.²

In the spring of the following year he went about a planned scheme of land development. He had men clearing and grubbing and oxen at the plow, all in preparation for a bumper crop which he anticipated having by fall. He must have succeeded,

¹ Luis Baca, "Guadalupita Colony of Trinidad," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXI (January, 1944), 22-25.

² *Ibid.*, 23.

or at least he must have been convinced that he had found the ideal location for an agricultural colony, for that same fall Baca returned to Mora County taking two loads of melons and other produce he had raised. He exhibited his produce, making bold statements to his home comrades about the fertility of this green valley on the Purgatoire.

To get the people to come to the Purgatoire Valley Baca told them:

The soil and vegetation are so immeasurably rich on Las Animas River that you can make a plow beam out of a well seasoned sunflower. There the corn is so well developed and heavy that you can take an ear of corn and use it as a club to down your adversary in case of a fight.³

This bit of advertising by Don Felipe touched off a migration of Spanish-American people from New Mexico to the valley of the Purgatoire. In the same year meetings were held among the residents of Mora County, and plans were made for an historic journey.

In March of 1862 twelve heads of families made ready to go. Twenty wagons with ox teams were outfitted, all loaded to the limit with belongings and the necessities for the adventure to follow. They were aware that they might encounter unfriendly Indians and made some preparation for hostile incidents, having acquired what they considered ample firearms and ammunition. They had determined to stand together in all emergencies. Before starting, a prayer meeting was held in which they appealed to their patron saint, Our Lady of Guadalupe, to protect them against any perils they might encounter. The convoy was well arranged. The cattle were put in one herd, the horses in another, and the sheep and goats in another. The swine were put in the rear, because they were the slowest. The little colony en route was no doubt a spectacular sight—the wagons loaded to the limit, the men with guns slung on their backs and pistols tied to their sides, some on foot and others on horses or burros, marching in a convoy about three miles long. As described by Luis Baca: "In some features it was like a 'Spanish Armada' coming over from New Mexico to El Rio de las Animas." He continued: "In a few days on the road Mr. Baca's biggest porkers got tired, and with all the kicking that was susceptible in man power, together with the vociferous vocabulary that was used, they refused to move. Mr. Baca said, 'My friends, we cannot

wait; time is too precious now. I have got a plan by which we won't lose them altogether. Go ahead and give those tired fellows a blow on the head, and we will eat them—and why not.'"⁴

As the convoy came to Rayado Creek, they reached the home of Hilario Madrid. Baca invited Madrid to join the colony, informing him that there was plenty for all and that he could pick up land in the new territory just as it suited him. Madrid saw opportunity in the venture and the advantage of traveling with a protected convoy. He asked Don Felipe for a few days to get his stock together, and the convoy was soon on its way again.⁵

After reaching the Purgatoire they camped for a few days before going out to select individual plots on the choice land they had come to claim. Madrid went up the valley about nine miles and chose the piece on which was later built the plaza bearing his name.⁶

Records in the office of the Las Animas County Clerk show that Hilario "Madril" homesteaded this land in September, 1879, the land comprising four contiguous forty-acre parcels in Section 35, Township 33S, and Range 45W. On the same date his brother, Juan "Madril" also took out a homestead on three forty-acre parcels of the same section adjoining Hilario's land on the east.⁷

The plaza was located in the NW¼ of the SE¼ of the same section on Hilario's land. Records of abstracts on file since the beginning of the homestead days show that patents were granted October 19, 1882, to Hilario and October 31, 1882, to Juan, both being given by the United States of America under the hand of President Chester A. Arthur. The name was spelled "Madril," and the abstract records carry this spelling until a transaction dated January 6, 1890. Thereafter the name is recorded as "Madrid" for all members of the family.⁸

The abstracts indicate that land ownership changed often in those days. Hilario's original plot changed hands more than seventy times between 1879 and 1936, and similar transfer actions involved other parcels of his land as many as fifty times in the same period. Nonetheless, the records consistently show ownership by members of the Madrid family.

⁴ Baca, *The Colorado Magazine*, XXI (1944), 24.

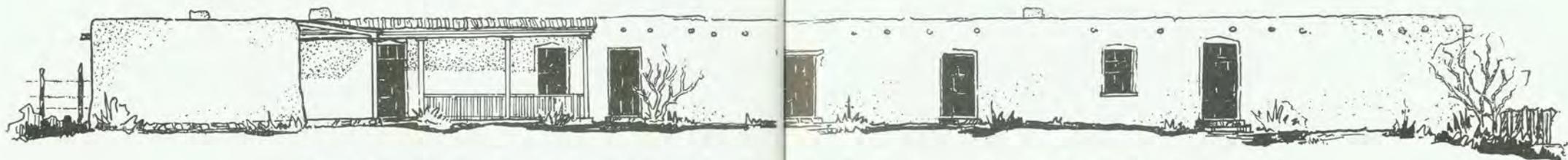
⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

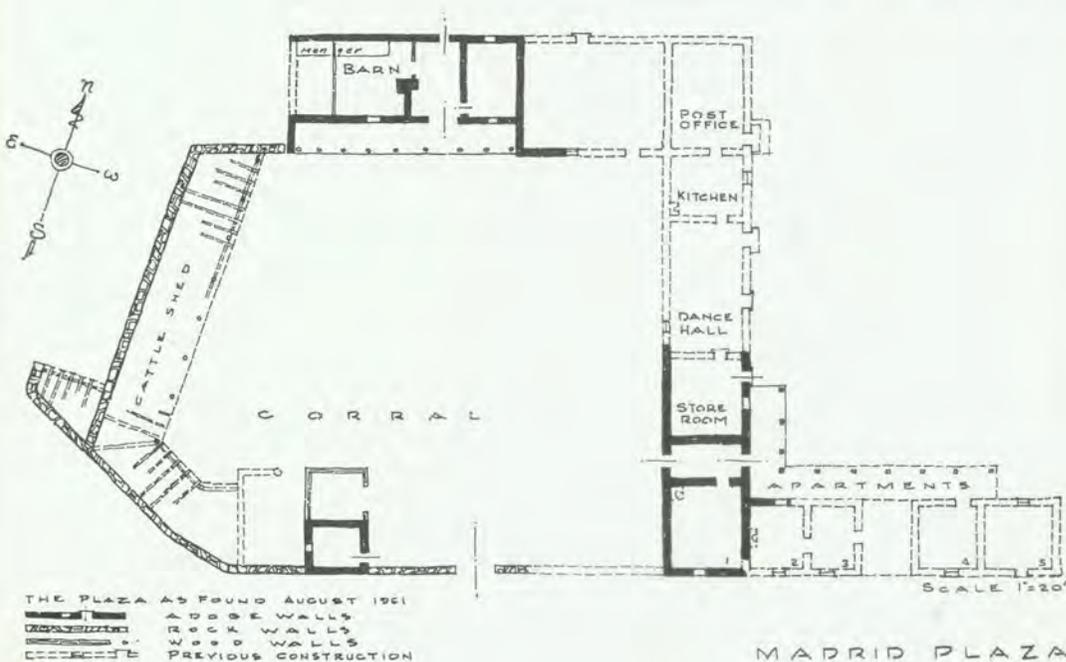
⁷ Records of the Clerk of Las Animas County, Colorado.

⁸ *Ibid.*

³ Honora DeBusk Smith, "Early Life in Trinidad and the Purgatory Valley" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Colorado, 1930), p. 52, quoting Felipe Baca.



R E C O N S T R U C T E D E A S T E L E V A T I O N



Madrid Plaza stands today, a crumbling ruin of the once secure and prosperous home of the Madrid family. The remaining adobe walls, now cured in the Colorado sun for almost a century, are typical examples of the architecture of the time. The main plaza structure was built in the shape of a "Z." If extended in a straight line, the "Z" would be about 285 feet long and 20 feet wide. This part comprised the family apartments, kitchen, storage-rooms, barn, post office, and a room said to have been used as a dance hall. To the west of the main buildings was an adobe wall about 4 feet high, extending in a general circular pattern and attached at each end to the "Z" to form a corral.

The corral was about 100 feet wide, north and south, and 130 feet long, east and west. Along the west side of the corral cattle sheds were built, extending from the wall out to a row of wood posts. The barn on the northerly side had a similarly framed roof, giving a north and west perimeter shelter about 156 feet in length. There was also a small building on the south side of the circle built for some farm purpose.⁹

The apartments were located in the southeast part of the main building group and are described as containing five rooms. Next to these was storage space for grain and other supplies, and next, the room used as a dance hall. On the northeast corner was the post office and later a small store. The kitchen adjoined the post office to the south. All buildings were of adobe, and all had flat roofs, except the barns, one small farm building, and the cattle sheds.¹⁰ The walls of the apartments which are seen today are about twenty-one inches thick, and those of the barn are about thirteen inches thick.

The adobe appears to be of good quality and free of the coarse rock commonly seen in adobe made in more recent years.

⁹ Interview with Mrs. Carmela Veltri and Dan Veltri, living at the plaza site.
¹⁰ *Ibid.*

It contains straw and a few corncobs, giving it strength which has no doubt contributed to its preservation through the many years. The blocks were laid up quite square and plumb in a uniform pattern, with joints not much over one inch thick, exhibiting comparatively painstaking workmanship for adobe construction. The flat roofs were of dirt, which became good cactus-bearing sod. The sod was supported on rough boards laid over heavy log beams about thirty-six inches apart, held up only by the mud walls. These logs of native pine were eight to twelve inches in diameter, straight and uniform in size from end to end, and larger than are seen now among the species of the nearby hills. The pitched roof of the barn was framed with logs, from a heavy ridge pole out to the walls, and covered with wood planking. The cattle sheds were constructed of milled lumber.

Construction principles were very simple and typical of construction both before and after the plaza was built. The bearing walls rested on rock foundations, some extending as much as a foot above the ground. Bearing plates on top of the walls were of two- or three-inch hand-hewn plank to take the loads of the heavy logs and the sod roofs. Window and door lintels were of two- or three-inch hand-hewn wood extending into the mud walls twelve to twenty-four inches on each side. Window and door casements were of dressed lumber. Window



sash was double hung type with wood muntins quite like those made in recent years, and doors were made of plank.

The window and door frames were well made for the times, either cut at a mill before being brought to the site or made by a carpenter on the job. Heads and sills were rabbeted or notched into the jambs, fitted to the walls with casings, and finished with quite refined wood moldings, all of which in its time would add a touch of elegance to an otherwise plain adobe wall.

It is noticeable today that the joints of this woodwork after many years of exposure to weather are still relatively tight, the square nails are firm in the wood, and little splitting from them can be seen. Hinges and locks of the slab doors, only two of which remain, are hand forged and fastened to the slabs with hand forged pins driven through and clinched. The dirt roofs appear to have been put on in several layers and at different times. The first layer is of light brown adobe soil about eight inches thick. Above this is a strata of black soil containing coal cinders (possibly put on after the coal mines were in operation), covered with one or more layers of dark colored adobe to a total thickness of about thirteen inches.

The apartments opened onto a long porch providing a sheltered passage from one to another. The porches were built of wood with square posts and timbers, some hewn and some sawn. The porch cornice was finished with several offset pieces and a finished molding somewhat simulating a colonial pattern. The porch railings were of square timbers with balusters of slender square pieces mortised together in a neat pattern. The general appearance from the front of the apartment, with this refined porch, windows of small panes set deeply into the walls, and the slab doors with forged hardware, must have given the general appearance of country culture to this pioneer plaza of mud blocks.

It is said there were three fireplaces in the plaza.¹¹ Evidence of one corner fireplace is seen in a room still standing, but there is no evidence of any other. The one was built of adobe in the corner of the room, extending about two feet from each wall and about two feet above the floor, with a chimney about a foot square.

The interior of the one remaining apartment room shows mud plaster in three or more main layers, each about one-half inch or more in thickness. Close examination of these layers reveals that each heavy layer is made up of three or more thin

¹¹ *Ibid.*



layers. It being a common practice in those days to lay up plaster by hand, daubing on and smoothing down with a piece of sheepskin, this plastering might well have been done the same way and added to from time to time as repair was needed. The plaster as seen in this room had at some time been coated with clean lime, making a smooth white finish typical of Spanish interiors. Now, the roof being gone and the elements of weather having moved in, the walls are streaked with dark mud melted down from the top like wax from many candles. The resulting texture and color contrast form a pattern more interesting than might be achieved today by the best of western decorators in their attempt at the "creative modern."

The corral walls were originally of adobe and later in the early 1900's replaced in most part with shale rock laid up in mud. On top of the walls at present are heavy sawn timbers about ten inches square set in mud to form plates for the low side of the cattle sheds. It appears that those timbers might have been salvaged from other uses as there are notches and holes which appear to have had no purpose in this construction. It is said that the shelters were built while the original adobe walls were there, which might indicate that the timbers were brought in at the time of the new rock construction.¹²



The present state of the plaza is forlorn and desolate. The floors are gone, and weeds have taken their place. The heavy log timbers are fallen and rotting. Only a few walls remain of the apartments and store room. The barn and about half of the small farm building are standing and in quite good condition. The rock walls of the corral are as good as when built, but the cattle sheds are collapsed and taken over by tall weeds. The post office, kitchen, dance hall, and east wing of the apartments are gone. Their foundations are barely traceable in the weeds, showing only an occasional rock to verify their original locations. Wood fences have replaced some of the adobe walls of the corral.

No record is found of the date the plaza was built, whether it was built complete in the final pattern, all at about the same time, or developed building by building as needs arose. It was common practice in those days at other plazas for communal dwellings to grow as families increased in size. As the offspring became adults and married, a new room was built against the family dwelling, requiring only three new walls instead of four. Several such communal dwellings are seen today at sites of old plazas up the river from Madrid.

Madrid Plaza seems to have more importance in Colorado history when the prominence of its founder and his family is considered. The Madrid name was well known in the Purgatoire Valley and in later years gained eminence in the affairs of the entire state. Hilario, one of four brothers, was the pioneer of the Madrid venture in this area. We know nothing of his youth, his parents, or why, upon encountering the exuberant enthusiasm of Don Felipe Baca, he so willingly abandoned life in a settled New Mexico community for the uncertainty of this unknown land. He may have been the pioneer of the family's participation in public life, having been appointed as one of the three members of the first board of county commissioners for Las Animas County.¹³

It was Hilario's nephew, Jose Miguel Madrid, better known as "J. M.," who became the best known member of the family in this area. His parents brought him from New Mexico to the area of the Purgatoire when he was one year old. He lived as a boy at the plaza, later in a small house a few yards to the north, and again later in a place about one-half mile south on the river. In 1879 he moved with his family back to New Mexico,

¹² Interview with Alex Chavez, present owner of the plaza.

¹³ Michael Beshoar, *All About Trinidad and Las Animas County, Colorado* (Denver: Times Printing House & Book Manufactory, 1882), p. 85.

where he grew up and became superintendent of schools in Colfax County. Soon thereafter he gave up this distinction to return to the plaza area, and he taught school for twelve years in the same school room where he himself had started his educational career. His records show that he had an enrollment of from forty-five to sixty-seven pupils in constant attendance.¹⁴

In 1902 J. M. Madrid was elected to the House of Representatives, 14th General Assembly, Las Animas County; and in 1904 was elected county superintendent of schools. In 1932 he was elected to the state senate from the 4th District on the Republican ticket. J. M. Madrid continued to be prominent in important affairs of the Trinidad area and the state until his death in 1944 at the age of eighty-one.¹⁵

Life at the plaza was a bountiful one. The land was fertile and productive. It provided the plaza settlers with the essentials and served them well during the days when they could be satisfied with the simple contentment it offered. Senator Madrid related in later years that the bottom land along the river near Trinidad was exceptionally fertile in the seventies and up to the nineties. He recalled that the grain crops raised in the valley consisted mostly of wheat, oats, and barley, and that in one season it took four threshing machines four or five months to thresh the grain that was grown there.¹⁶

There were five grist mills in the area, which ground local grains into flour. Of these, three were located in Trinidad, one at La Junta Plaza (now Weston), and one at Stonewall. The first of these was started in 1867 or 1868 and the second a year or so later, both being operated by water power. It was not until the early seventies that the first steam-operated mill was put into use in this area, and this one was on Elm Street in Trinidad.¹⁷

Irrigation contributed greatly to the agricultural success of the Purgatoire Valley. Irrigation ditches were started in the Trinidad area by the Spanish-American settlers in 1860. The following year the Gurule Ditch was built up the Purgatoire. In 1862 four others were started and in 1863 five more, including the Hilario Madril Ditch. The Madril Ditch was designed for a carrying capacity of nine cubic feet of water per second and to irrigate 190 acres of land.¹⁸

¹⁴ A. K. Richeson, Interview with Senator J. M. Madrid, CWA Interviews (1933-34), Pam 350/10, p. 148, MS in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Interview with Alex Chavez, secretary of the ditch board. See also Frank Hall,

Common diet at the plazas was cornmeal mush, beans, onions, corn, goat meat, and a variety of wild game. Hunting was good and contributed considerable variety to an otherwise plain country diet. Wild turkeys were plentiful, as were rabbits, prairie chickens, geese, ducks, and mountain grouse. There were black-tailed and white-tailed deer and a few bears. Bighorn sheep, wild goats, antelope, and buffalo also are mentioned in accounts by early settlers, but these might have been in areas more remote from the plaza.¹⁹

Aside from the daily toils of farming there must have been some gay life because there are well confirmed accounts of dances being held in one specific room of the plaza on many occasions, and the music for the high stepping was supplied by a violin and a guitar. Although the main portion of this plaza was occupied only by members of the Madrid family, there was a lively community surrounding it. There were other families in buildings almost adjacent and in the larger settlement of Tijeras Plaza about half a mile up the river. People of pioneer spirit in those small communities no doubt had the spunk to spark, and some merry times were surely had.

There could well have been uneasy times too, because the Indians, who had chosen this valley as a hunting ground in advance of the white settlers, made camp on the low hills less than a mile to the west. There were doubtless disputes between the two parties. Indian tents were seen in long rows from the plaza grounds, and the redskins continually looked down on the small number of dwellers. Rings of stones which outlined the Indian tepees can still be seen on the nearby ridges. Senator Madrid in an account of early life at the plaza tells that he and his brothers as boys played with the Indian boys and that he remembered well the Indians Juan Antonio, Salvador, and "Kanihoche," who was Ute chief at the time. Felipe Baca, who was a perpetual promoter, assured his friends that there should be no fear of the Indians. He contended that he had entered into an understanding with them to give them something to eat in the way of flour and cornmeal whenever they were hungry, and that he was raising enough grain to back up his agreement. In this way, according to his thinking, the Indians would always be friends and not molest either the settlers or their livestock. This may have been comforting to some extent,

History of the State of Colorado (Chicago: Blakeley Printing Co., 1895), IV, 193-94.

¹⁹ A. K. Richeson, Interview with Agapito Duran, CWA Interviews (1933-34), Pam 359/38, p. 327, MS in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado.

but nevertheless there was concern as long as the savages were peering down from their vantage point on the hills.²⁰

It is told that relations between the Spanish-Americans and the Anglos were surprisingly harmonious, considering the cultural differences that existed between the two groups. It was pointed out also that the common dangers to be met by both in contending with common problems in developing the new land were so great as to encourage cooperation and harmony.²¹

The prosperity of plaza life started a gradual change about 1900, when the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company opened its coal mines at Primero near Los Baros Plaza, and others at Tercio and Cuatro on up the river. When the Colorado and Wyoming Railroad was built to the coal mines in 1901, it took some of the rich bottom land along the Purgatoire Valley for its right of way. The better timber was cut for ties or lumber for the mines and the agricultural resources were somewhat diminished.²²

Although there may have been no mad rush for riches, as in the gold and silver camps of the state, there was no time or incentive either on the part of the mine interests to preserve the agricultural fertility of the valley. Refuse from the mines was dumped on the land and in the river. Forest timber having been slashed and large areas having been cleared for mine activities, the soil began to erode and the valley became deprived of much of its fertility. Senator Madrid said in 1933 that the valley was less than one-sixth as fertile and productive as in the nineties.

Felipe Baca's scheme for an agricultural colony had been successful and the early settlers in the valley had been prosperous. But the settlers had been drawn to the mines, and the soil fertility having fallen off, farming stood at too many odds, and the valley lost much of its agricultural prominence.

The plazas, too, lost out as mine workers came and coal towns were built. The new era brought a different way of life, a regrouping of communities, and new buildings to serve their



needs. The adobe villages began melting away into the earth from which they were taken.

The plaza named for Hilario Madrid made only a short appearance in the history of Colorado, but it was a classic of its time in "The Valley of Souls."

HUGH and EVELYN BURNETT, *who live in Colorado Springs, have been "collecting" old plazas for a number of years.*

²⁰ A. K. Richeson, Interview with Senator J. M. Madrid, CWA Interviews (1933-34), Pam 359/10, p. 149, MS in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado; Baca, *The Colorado Magazine*, XXI (1944), 26.

²¹ Smith, "Early Life in Trinidad and the Purgatory Valley" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Colorado, 1930), p. 87.

²² A. K. Richeson, Interview with Senator J. M. Madrid, CWA Interviews (1933-34), Pam 359/10, p. 151, MS in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado.