

Henry M. Teller and the Edmunds-Tucker Act

BY M. PAUL HOLSINGER

Historians of the Mountain West have never lacked significant themes. Monumental gold and silver bonanzas, Indian massacres, trailblazing explorations, and cattlemen's wars have all played a part in the region's past. Perhaps no related series of events, however, has provoked so much controversy as the establishment and growth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the entire Rocky Mountain area. Vilified and denounced, the Mormon church and its members were, for at least sixty years after their arrival in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, repeatedly accused of depravity and un-Americanism.¹ At the height of the virulence against the denomination in the 1880s, few national leaders were willing to speak out in favor of either religious toleration or constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties for Mormons. Of the small handful who dared stand against the almost overwhelming, adverse public opinion about the Latter-day Saints, only one, Senator Henry M. Teller of Colorado, was from the new frontier states of the West. Jeopardizing his own career, Teller, though in a losing cause, repeatedly championed unrestricted constitutional freedom for all persons regardless of their religious creed. Nearly thirty years ago the senator's biographer aptly termed him a "defender of the West," yet glossed over his battle for Mormon rights.² It is a story that deserves telling; in the light of present-

¹ The three best scholarly studies of Mormonism are Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Leonard Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1830-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958); and Nels Anderson, *Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942). As late as 1907 bitter anti-Mormon feeling came close to forcing one of Utah's two United States Senators to relinquish his seat in Congress. For material on this later episode, see M. Paul Holsinger, "For God and the American Home: The Attempt to Unseat Senator Reed Smoot, 1903-1907," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, LX (July 1969), pp. 154-60.

² Elmer Ellis, *Henry Moore Teller, Defender of the West* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1941). Material on Teller and the Mormon question covers less than two pages (pp. 172-73).

day realities it is, indeed, one of which Coloradoans can be justly proud.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had followed its leader, Brigham Young, to Utah with the hope of escaping the constant persecution which had plagued the denomination since its founding by Joseph Smith in 1830. Outside the mainstream of traditional Protestant theology, the Mormon belief in a new, divinely inspired prophet of God had caused members of the church to be driven successively from New York, Ohio, Missouri, and finally Illinois. It had been hoped that Utah, far removed from the mass of population, would be different. With the great gold rush to California and the influx of non-Mormon "Gentiles" into and through the Salt Lake Valley, however, conflict became inevitable. Even before the Civil War a so-called "Utah War" had been fought in 1857-58 testing which group would dominate the region religiously and politically.

Of the many causes for bitterness, real and imagined, probably none was so pervasive as the Mormon doctrine of polygamy.³ Plural marriage within the church had been practiced since its days in Illinois, but it was not until after the denomination's settlement in the Far West that the policy was officially announced and drew nationwide attention. Pressured by thousands of its evangelical Protestant constituents, whose revulsion to the idea knew no ends, Congress in 1862 and again in 1882 passed acts "to punish and prevent the practice of polygamy in the Territories of the United States."⁴ From the end of Reconstruction in the South until the turn of the century, every president spoke out against the "evil."⁵ James A. Garfield certainly echoed the sentiments of a large majority of Americans when, during his inaugural address in March 1881, he vowed that Mormonism, by its sanction of polygamy, "offends the moral sense of manhood."⁶ During this period, too, the flow of books and periodical literature which viewed the new Zion in Utah as a center for unbridled sin continued unabated. If one



"Arrival of a new batch of lambs for the Mormon fold," from the National Police Gazette.

were to believe the multitude of books, thousands of pure and innocent young girls were every year degraded by being forced into almost harem-like conditions in order to placate the wild sexual appetites of their Mormon husbands.⁷ That something must be done to crush, once and for all, the practice seemed indisputable to all non-Mormons; that the thrust should come from Congress seemed only logical.

Congress accepted the challenge in December 1885. In his annual message on the eighth, President Grover Cleveland set the stage for renewed action when, after emotionally discussing the problem of polygamy in Utah, he called not only for "further discreet legislation as will rid the country of this blot upon its fair fame" but also for a law to prevent Mormon immigration into the United States.⁸ That afternoon Senator George Edmunds

³ From 1852 to 1890 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints taught publicly the doctrine of plural marriage as a direct revelation from God. The practice of polygamy began in 1843, the year before the assassination of the "Prophet," Joseph Smith.

⁴ Congress had passed the acts on July 1, 1862, and March 22, 1882. Both acts were incorporated in Section 5352 of the Revised Statutes of the United States, 1890.

⁵ See, for instance, the comments of Rutherford B. Hayes in 1879, reported in James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), VII, 559-60, or Chester A. Arthur in 1884, *ibid.*, VIII, 250. In the latter address Arthur called for the passage of the "most radical legislation consistent with the restraints of the Constitution."

⁶ James A. Garfield, "Inaugural Address," *ibid.*, VIII, 11.

⁷ Examples of some of the more sensational fictional treatments of the day are Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Study in Scarlet," published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in London, 1887, and Mrs. A. G. Paddock, *The Fate of Madame La Tour: A Tale of the Great Salt Lake* (New York: Fords, Howard & Hulbert, 1881). An excellent recent summary of the anti-Mormon literature of the nineteenth century is Leonard Arrington and Jon Haupt, "Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature," *Western Humanities Review*, XXII (Summer 1968), pp. 243-60.

⁸ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 49th Cong., 1st sess., December 8, 1885, 17, pt. 1:119.

of Vermont, the author of the 1882 anti-polygamy statute, introduced Senate Bill number 10, a bill which, in its sweeping condemnation of everything Mormon, was unparalleled in American history.⁹

The severity of the Edmunds-Tucker Act, as it was eventually to be called after its passage in early 1887, became legendary even in its own time. In order to destroy polygamy, Congress ignored most of the generally accepted concepts of civil and criminal law. Polygamous marriages were to be ended regardless of the consequences to the families involved. A man with several wives was expected to dissolve all but his original marriage. Any other wives or children from subsequent marriages were no longer allowed to be legal relatives. If a man refused to comply, he was liable for federal prosecution as a bigamist, imprisonment, and fine. Wives were to be forced to testify against their husbands in the hopes of ferreting out polygamous relationships; witnesses could be brought to court without subpoenas for their appearance; marriage records could be confiscated at any time by judges or federal commissioners and used as evidence against suspected violators of the law. Woman suffrage, which had been allowed in the territory since 1870, was abrogated. The corporate structure of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was now challenged and abolished, despite the long-standing acceptance of its legality by the Legislative Assembly of Utah. Election districts which, it was argued, were favorable to Mormonism, were completely restructured and the assembly forbidden to reapportion them. The territorial school system was rigidly controlled and a newly appointed group of federal commissioners given sweeping power to enforce the laws with their severe penalties for conviction. Any vestige of popular government by the people of Utah was now virtually destroyed.¹⁰

Judged by today's standards, it is difficult to imagine how Congress could so easily have been willing to deny to the Latter-day Saints the constitutional guarantees implicit in the Fourteenth Amendment's "equal protection of the law" clause. Yet, in 1886 Senate Bill number 10 clearly reflected the popular will of most Americans. It had the nonpartisan backing of nearly all leaders in both executive and legislative branches of government. Only four days were consumed from the time that the bill was reported out of the Committee on the Judiciary

until its passage by the full Senate on January 8, 1886. Guided forcefully by the powerful Edmunds, a man who twice since 1880 had been considered seriously for the Republican nomination for president, the bill moved past every hurdle with lightning speed. Few men dared try to stem the rising tide of anti-Mormonism. Of those who refused to acquiesce in the almost Machiavellian politics involved, Henry Teller stands out as one of the most important.

By the winter of 1885-86 Henry Moore Teller had been a member of the Senate for almost seven years. Originally elected as a Republican in 1876 as one of the state's first two senators, his flirtation with Silver Republicanism and his later defection to the Democratic side of the aisle were still some years away.¹¹ A spokesman for various Colorado and far western interests, he had, along with all his colleagues from the West, voted in favor of the original Edmunds Act.¹² Between 1882 and 1885, however, while serving as Chester Arthur's secretary of the interior, Teller soon came to realize that the act, far from being fairly enforced, was being applied so that it violated only the rights of the Latter-day Saints. On several occasions, Teller spoke out against the unreasoning prejudice that forced a Mormon husband to go into hiding rather than surrender to the federal dictates. The result of his protests was the undying enmity of such stridently anti-Mormon journals as the *Salt Lake Tribune*. To the editors of that paper, Teller was "as good a Mormon" as any leader of that denomination. "We believe," they continued, "that polygamy has no horror for him; we believe that in his coarse and sensual, animal nature, he secretly grieves that it is not, under our laws, the legitimate thing for a man to swap off or ignore a woman as soon as her fresher charms leave her. . . . We believe he is an enemy of the Republic, and that it is the duty of every free man in the West to despise, if not hate him."¹³

In 1884 the Republican Party had been defeated nationally and Teller was returned to the Senate the following year. Bitterness toward him, however, lingered on, and it came as no surprise that the senator remained antagonistic toward any

¹¹ Henry Moore Teller had been elected to the United States Senate in 1876 and served until April 17, 1882, when he became secretary of the interior. He became a senator again in the spring of 1885, a post he occupied continually until 1909 when he retired from office. From 1897 to 1903 he was listed officially as a Silver Republican; during his last term he switched party affiliation to become a Democrat. *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 1697.

¹² U.S., Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 47th Cong., 1st sess., February 16, 1882, 13, pt. 2:1217.

¹³ Quoted in Ellis, *Henry Moore Teller*, p. 173.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, January 8, 1886, pp. 566-67.



Henry Moore Teller

further attempts to deny to the majority of Utahans what he believed to be their constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms. Now the eloquence which formerly had protested forcefully the expropriation of land by corrupt business practices or the failure of the government to protect mining rights throughout the Rocky Mountain territories was turned against the latest legislative proposals.

As the bill was slowly dissected and its component parts voted on piece by piece during the first weeks of January, the decision to revoke woman suffrage in Utah received primary consideration. To the authors of the bill, their action was fully justified. Utah's women would now be released, Edmunds argued, "from the slavehood of being obliged to exercise a political function which is to keep [them] in a state of degradation." Thus, "the lash of [the Mormon] priesthood to perpetuate their [sic] power" would now be stilled.¹⁴ Teller disagreed; when an amendment was proposed that would have deleted the section on revocation from the act, the senator from Colorado was recorded along with an all too obvious eleven-man minority.¹⁵ It was his first public response to the implicit intolerance of the new proposal.

¹⁴ U.S., Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 49th Cong., 1st sess., January 5, 1886, 17, pt. 1:406.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 457. The final vote was thirty-eight to eleven with twenty-seven abstentions.

Late in the afternoon of January 6 as the Senate continued its debate on the bill, Teller rose to challenge the entire act. The resulting speech and later defenses of it during the succeeding days remain today among the senator's most important statements of principles. Polygamy flourished, Teller noted, because federal authorities had created martyrs by resorting to "persecution and outrages" against many of the leaders of the Latter-day Saints. Now Congress seemed determined to compound the error through even harsher legislation. Mormons, for any faults they might possess, "were not without virtues." They were "an honest, painstaking, hard-working, industrious people." Having often visited Salt Lake City, the senator could not help being impressed by the temperance, the lack of gambling, and even the absence of prostitution in the territory. For the Senate to condemn openly a whole people for one evil was a mistake.

Polygamy was wrong; Teller had no doubt the practice was a "vice" of the worst sort, but, he added, it could not be eradicated by the "harsh and strained measures" of the new bill. Common sense seemed to dictate that Congress was expecting the impossible of the devout Mormon followers. Men who had in some instances "raised four or five families" simply could not be expected to "bastardize their children" without a struggle:

You cannot expect that the president of that Church who married his wives more than a generation ago will put them from him and declare that they are prostitutes. You ought to have some respect for the prejudices, for the feelings, and for the religious bigotry of these people. They are ready to suffer martyrdom as others have suffered it. . . . If you expect to approach . . . and save them, you must do it by the proper and legitimate exercise of authority, strong, yet soft. . . . This bill, in my judgment, bristles everywhere with vengeance and blood.

His unorthodox position was, the senator continued, somewhat strange since he was not religious in the commonly accepted sense of the term. Under the circumstances he was aware of the risks to his political career.

I know that no man stands upon this floor and defends [the Mormons] without being slandered and traduced throughout this land. I know that the bigotry and the hatred that grows out of religious enthusiasm and zeal can never see beyond the very question that is presented, that polygamy is a crime. . . . I am as anxious to clear the country [of it] . . . as anybody, but . . . in my judgment it is quite as creditable that polygamy should exist untouched within our borders as that we should go beyond the constitutional powers of the Government and establish a precedent here that may come back some time to rebuke us and to cause us immense trouble.¹⁶

Edmunds and other defenders of the proposed bill were quick to challenge the Coloradoan's conclusions. There was no persecution implicit in the act, Edmunds averred. The only repressive acts that might possibly have occurred since the Latter-day Saints had moved to Utah had been those caused by the Mormons themselves.¹⁷ Teller, however, refused to accept such a biased view of history. Only persons unfamiliar with the West and with Utah Territory could make such a statement, he replied. The federal courts had been misusing the law repeatedly in their dealings with the Latter-day Saints. "I have myself," the Senator responded, "left the court-room [in Utah] . . . outraged so that I could not stay there for fear . . . that . . . I should be compelled to rebuke the presiding judge." Under Colorado law a judge would have been removed from office for less than the federal government willingly sanctioned in Utah Territory. And things boded to become worse. The concept of compelling wives to testify against their husbands, for instance, was unknown in common law, unheard of in any other state or territory, and never allowed in "any country where there is due respect for human rights."¹⁸

In the days after the speech, other senators, following Teller's lead, began to object to parts of the proposal. Wilkinson Call of Florida, another of the most consistent opponents of the Edmunds bill, attacked it in a long and impassioned speech which echoed Teller's fear that under the provisions of the new act Mormons who refused to obey the law would become martyrs to their co-religionists.¹⁹ But it was Teller's speech which roused the most attention. On the morning of January 7 Senator Shelby Cullom of Illinois, a long-time bitter foe of Mormonism both in and out of Congress, sweepingly denounced not only the Latter-day Saints but also Teller's assertion that there had ever been any persecution of the church in the past. The history of Mormonism, he argued, had always been "one of outrage, one of disregard of law, one of disregard of the public or private rights of the surrounding peoples." Such a course, coupled with the Mormons' refusal to end their heresy, made "it absolutely necessary that they should be driven from the communities or localities in which they had settled." Despite the obvious inconsistency in his argument, however, the Illinois senator re-emphasized the generally held belief of most members of the



George F. Edmunds

Senate that in regard to Mormons "there has been no persecution of them."²⁰

Teller could not remain silent. Calling for the floor in challenge to Cullom's history and logic, he commented:

I expressed my idea yesterday of perhaps the folly of a man saying anything against this bill; first, because it comes from a committee of so high authority in this body; secondly because it touches a question that I do not think the mass of the people are capable of coolly, carefully, [or] dispassionately discussing.

Cullom was seemingly no exception. On Mormonism, "like the great mass of men," Teller charged, the senator from Illinois "thinks from his prejudices." The crime of polygamy indeed ought to be condemned and ended as soon as possible but not by unlawful methods.

I have been educated in a school which taught me that whenever a government attempted to repress crime by methods unknown to the law it was a greater crime than that which it attempted to repress, because it is the greatest of crimes. . . . We want, as a Senator said to me to-day, to put the knife in [to polygamy]. So say I, but put the knife in under the color of law; put the knife in by a constitutional movement.²¹

Teller's rebuff was completely unsatisfying to Cullom, and the two men were soon engaged in a polite, but pointed, name-calling debate. Teller felt particularly stung by the accusation that he was "an especial advocate of the Mormon people." This he felt called upon to deny emphatically even while noting that he knew members of the church more personally than perhaps

¹⁶ Ibid., January 6, 1886, pp. 460-61.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 461.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 462.

¹⁹ Ibid., January 7, 1886, pp. 506-08.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 512.

²¹ Ibid.

any other senator. Yet, friendship with individual Latter-day Saints had never convinced him of the correctness of their theology. The senator added:

I believe that the great mass of the Mormon Church are fanatics, steeped in fanaticism, believing in that religion of theirs as the true religion. I can not account for it; I can not understand it . . . [but] I will not vote contrary to my conscience and judgment for anything. . . . I hold my allegiance to the law, to the fundamental principles that pervade all civilized governments now, that there shall be no interference with men's religious beliefs.²²

It had been said by some, Teller continued, "You ought not to have defended these people. . . . |Y|ou must be a Jack Mormon." This was as far from the truth as possible. The history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, however, could not be read "without feeling for them some little sympathy." Though his plea for toleration may have sounded more like a call for Mormonism, the Coloradoan concluded, it should rather be seen for what it really was, a "defense of a people who are without friends. . . . I believe that my ear has always listened to the cry of the oppressed and distressed. I believe I may have a weakness, when people complain of oppression, no matter from whence it comes, and [I always have] a desire to look into it." That, and that alone, he had done and would continue to do, even though it was obvious from the lack of support for his position that the new Edmunds bill would soon be driven through the Senate to passage virtually unchanged from its original form.²³

Senator Cullom continued to press the issue, seemingly intent on doing all the damage possible to Teller's reputation. "The Senator," he said shortly after the Coloradoan had finished, "seems disposed to take the side of the Mormons all the way through."²⁴ Teller, however, once again rose to vindicate his reasoning.

I knew that my conduct would be liable to that construction, at least from those who can not see beyond their prejudice and their passion. I knew the risk that I took in defense of what I believe to be a constitutional right that these people have, not the right to practice polygamy, but the right to be treated as we treat every other citizen of this great country until they infringe the law, and then that they may be punished according to the forms and methods known to the law.²⁵

²² Ibid., p. 514.
²³ Ibid., pp. 513-14.
²⁴ Ibid., p. 514.
²⁵ Ibid., pp. 514-15.



Shelby M. Cullom

As debate on the bill continued, it soon proved obvious that the senator was an apt prognosticator. All efforts to soften the impact of the bill were summarily defeated. An attempt to delete the provision forcing a wife to testify against her husband and establishing prison terms for contempt of court if she would not was defeated forty-two to eleven, with Teller and only one other western representative in opposition.²⁶ The section which would establish trustees to confiscate all Mormon non-religious property was upheld without even a roll-call vote, though Teller had strongly objected to it.²⁷ An attempt to protect legally the confiscated property of the church by making the federal courts the agents responsible for seeing it returned to its original owners rather than, as the bill required, having it sold indiscriminately by the secretary of the interior was defeated thirty-nine to six. Teller once again was in the minority.²⁸

And then a final vote was called for. Edmunds, as floor manager of the "friends of human liberty in the Senate,"²⁹ now confident of victory, refused to permit any additional amendments to be considered and a roll call was begun. Teller de-

²⁶ Ibid., January 8, 1886, p. 554. The other Westerner to vote against this provision was former California governor Leland Stanford. Stanford's position on the bill was ambiguous, however, and on the final roll call he chose not to vote.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 562. When Teller had asked why the Senate felt it must take from the church all moneys which it held outside its religious activities, Senator Edmunds showed how completely committed he and the opponents of Mormonism were to the "devil theory" of history when it involved the Latter-day Saints. The Utah-based church used its money, the Vermonter said, for only one purpose: to promote polygamy and encourage immigration for the mere object of getting polygamous subjects for the lust of these [Mormon] vagabonds." Ibid., p. 560.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 563.
²⁹ Ibid., p. 550.

clined to vote when his name was called. Instead, he announced that he was pairing his vote with that of Arkansas's senior senator, James K. Jones, who, if he were present, would have voted for the bill. "And I should vote 'nay,'" the Coloradoan emphasized.³⁰ The final vote of thirty-eight to seven³¹ was overwhelming evidence of the intention to destroy the Mormon "menace" once and for all.

Reaction to the position taken by Teller was quick in coming. The *Salt Lake Tribune*, already on record in opposition to him, editorialized that his actions "dishonor the mother that bore him; if he has a wife and daughter his speech dishonors them; as a Senator of the United States, he dishonors the Government of which he is a part."³² Teller was, the Utah editor noted, little more than "a Mormon attorney."³³ The *Denver Tribune-Republican*, concurring in the Salt Lake paper's assessment, reprinted its editorial verbatim several days later with a word of endorsement,³⁴ and numerous smaller Colorado newspapers joined the chorus of opposition.³⁵ But not all papers spoke against the senator. In Salt Lake City, as might possibly have been expected, the *Deseret Evening News*, the "official" Mormon Church paper, reprinted his "manly and vigorous" speeches on the front pages of their editions with the thought that, although he was an opponent of the religious beliefs of the Latter-day Saints, his comments put the real situation in a "true and forceful light."³⁶ The defamers of Senator Teller, the Mormon editors wrote, "cannot injure him by their cowardly slanders. He knows he is right in his opposition to plunder and oppression and his arguments are impervious to such mean and contemptible mud-throwing."³⁷

It remained for the *Rocky Mountain News*, however, to have what ultimately proved to be the final word. After passing lightly over the senator's speeches at the time they were made, the *News's* editors rose to challenge all those critics of Teller who were attacking him for his "pro-Mormon" stand. The Edmunds bill, the paper argued, "in many respects runs counter

to all our accepted theories of the true basis of true government." The accusations against Teller because of his speeches against the bill were said to be nothing short of idiotic. "If Senator Teller never does anything worse than that he will never forfeit the confidence of honest and intelligent men," the editors concluded.³⁸ Obviously, most Colorado voters agreed, once the passions of the hour had passed.

The final steps in the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act were, after the vitriolic Senate battle, anticlimactic. Sent to the House of Representatives on January 12, 1886, Senate Bill number 10 was bottled up in committee for almost five months and then, because of the adjournment of Congress in the summer, not even put on the agenda for debate until the following January. When it finally reached the floor of the House, however, debate was rushed through in less than a day, and without a roll call the bill passed.³⁹ After a conference committee had ironed out several minor disagreements in the two versions of the bill, the Senate, on February 18, 1887, approved it thirty-seven to thirteen. Senator Teller, absent from the Senate, paired his vote again in one last gesture of opposition.⁴⁰ President Cleveland, to his credit, refused to sign the act but did not veto it, and on March 3 it automatically became law.⁴¹

The aftermath of the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act was, as Teller had feared, one of persecution and anger. Families were broken up, husbands hunted down and imprisoned, property confiscated, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints legally unincorporated with the blessings of Congress and the United States Supreme Court as well.⁴² The church, however, did not surrender meekly. Believing strongly in the Constitution,⁴³ it appointed lawyers to defend denominational practices before the federal courts.⁴⁴ In the years following the passage of the act the courts refused to support church

³⁸ *Rocky Mountain News*, January 11, 1886, p. 4.

³⁹ U.S., Congress, House, *Congressional Record*, 49th Cong., 2d sess., January 12, 1887, 18, pt. 1:596.

⁴⁰ U.S., Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 49th Cong., 2d sess., February 18, 1889, 18, pt. 2:1904.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, March 3, 1887, pt. 3:2667.

⁴² A pro-Mormon discussion of the bitterness toward Mormons in the late 1880s is in Wayne Stout, *History of Utah*, Vol. I: 1870-1896 (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1967). Firsthand accounts, both openly antagonistic to the Latter-day Saints, are R. N. Baskin, *Reminiscences of Early Utah* (Salt Lake City: Tribune-Reporter Printing Co., 1914), and Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J. O'Higgins, *Under the Prophet in Utah: The National Menace of a Political Priestcraft* (Boston: The C. M. Clark Publishing Co., 1911).

⁴³ The Twelfth Article of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints affirms the idea of a government of law: "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law."

⁴⁴ United States v. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Others, 15 P. 473 (1887).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 565. Teller's refusal to vote does not seem to indicate so much a political fear of Colorado reaction (his position on the bill, after all, was by this time clear) as a courtesy in allowing a colleague who had taken no active role in the debates an opportunity to have his stand noted even though in opposition to his own.

³¹ *Ibid.* If votes paired for and against the bill were counted, the final vote would have been forty-four to thirteen.

³² *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 8, 1886, p. 2.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Denver Tribune-Republican*, January 10, 1886, p. 4.

³⁵ Noted in the *Deseret Evening News* (Salt Lake City), January 20, 1886, p. 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, January 16, 1886, p. 1, and January 7, 1886, p. 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, January 20, 1886, p. 2.

arguments and upheld the confiscation proceedings as outside the protection of the First Amendment guarantees of freedom of religion.⁴⁵ In September 1890 with all legal and constitutional resources exhausted, Mormon President Wilford Woodruff, church leader since 1887, announced his intention to acquiesce reluctantly to the inevitable pressure of the government. In its October General Conference, the church followed suit. After thirty-eight years the doctrinal sanction of polygamy officially was ended. Six years later Utah, which repeatedly had been denied the privilege of statehood, was admitted as the forty-fifth state in the Union.⁴⁶

It was argued frequently in the 1890s that the end of polygamy justified any of the means employed in its termination. Polygamy, considered outside the acceptable American system of social mores, needed to be destroyed no matter what the cost or the number of laws ignored to obtain the final result. But it was at this very point that Henry Moore Teller had disagreed. Never during the remainder of his long career is there evidence to suggest that he regretted his stand in 1886. His repeated re-elections to the Senate speak for themselves as proof of Colorado reaction. It would, of course, be foolish to claim that one episode, no matter how honorable, elevates a man to greatness; but in Teller's case this result nearly can be said to be true. The senator from Colorado believed first and foremost in constitutionalism and the law; nothing seemed to him worth superseding either. Elmer Ellis, Teller's only biographer, clearly states what, particularly after the anti-Mormon crusade of 1886-87, is the senator's most fitting epitaph: "He was an honest man, a patriot, an American statesman of the best type."⁴⁷

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⁴⁵ *United States v. Late Corporation of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 16 P. 723 (1888), and *The Late Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints et al. v. United States*, 136 U.S. 478; 10 S. Ct. 792; 34 L. Ed. 478 (1890) and 140 U.S. 665; 11 S. Ct. 884; 35 L. Ed. 592 (1891).

⁴⁶ Utah became a state on January 4, 1896, almost a quarter of a century after the first petitions requesting such admission reached Congress.

⁴⁷ Ellis, *Henry Moore Teller*, p. 392.

Republican Comeback, 1902

BY STEPHEN J. KNEESHAW

AND JOHN M. LINNGREN

The political environment of Colorado for the first decade and a half of its statehood was characterized by an equilibrium in which neither the Democratic nor the Republican party enjoyed a clear dominance. From 1876 until the election of 1892 the Colorado governorship as well as the lesser state offices passed back and forth between the two parties. Only once did the victorious party in the biennial election receive more than a five-thousand-vote majority. The balance was destroyed in the election of 1892. In that election the state and national tickets of the newly emergent Populist party swept to victory, displacing both of the traditional parties. The intrusion of the Populist party onto the Colorado political stage in 1892 ushered in a decade of political activity which saw three parties in turn at the extremes of victory and collapse. The Populist victory in 1892 initiated a political roller coaster which continued with the overwhelming Republican victory at the gubernatorial level in 1894 and the ascendancy of the Democratic-Populist-Silver Republican fusion in 1896.¹

That roller coaster ride was most spectacular for the Republican party. After giving up the governorship to the Populists in 1892 by a substantial margin, the Republican party two years later recaptured that office by an eighteen-thousand-

¹ The political activity during this period of Colorado history is covered in Charles S. Thomas, "Fifty Years of Political History," in *History of Colorado*, ed. James H. Baker and LeRoy R. Hafen, 5 vols. (Denver: Linderman Co., Inc., 1927), III, 901-55; R. G. Dill, *The Political Campaigns of Colorado, with Complete Tabulated Statements of the Official Vote* (Denver: Arapahoe Publishing Co., 1895); Stanley L. Jones, *The Silver Issue and Political Fusion in Colorado: 1896*, University of Wichita Bulletin, University Studies No. 46 (Wichita, 1960); Stanley Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964); Elmer Ellis, "The Silver Republicans in the Election of 1896," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XVIII (March 1932), pp. 519-34; Elmer Ellis, *Henry Moore Teller, Defender of the West* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1941); and Thomas F. Dawson, *Life and Character of Edward Oliver Wolcott, Late a Senator of the United States from the State of Colorado*, 2 vols. (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1911).



Edward Oliver Wolcott

vote majority. This impressive victory was followed in 1896 by the jarring repudiation of the state and national Republican tickets. The damage done to the party in that election is measurable by the following facts: the party structure was nearly destroyed by the defection of Republican Senator Henry M. Teller, who took with him most of the party regulars; Senator Edward O. Wolcott, who chose to remain in the loyalist faction, felt his personal safety in jeopardy to the extent that he delivered only three speeches throughout the campaign;² and the Republican candidates finished with less than fourteen percent of the 180,000 votes cast. Despite this near-fatal blow dealt by the silver question in 1896, the Republican party survived and, in fact, commenced a slow but steady comeback, which culminated in a Republican gubernatorial victory in 1902. The extent of that resurgence is reflected in the approximately fifty-two percent of the popular vote garnered by the Republican party just six years after the 1896 debacle.

The revival of the Republican party, crowned by the 1902 election, had important implications. The Republican victory in that year marked a return to the two-party system that had characterized Colorado elections prior to 1892, for the election was a contest between the Democratic and the Republican parties. As such, the election also signified the reappearance of stability in Colorado politics; the Populist party and the fusions generated by its activities after 1892 were by 1902 a thing of the past.

² Dawson, *Life and Character of Edward Oliver Wolcott*, I, 251.

This present study is an investigation of those conditions which made the reconstruction of the Republican party possible. To understand the Republican revival one must determine what changes accounted for the political setting of the post-1896 elections; one must likewise determine what base of support allowed the party to recover to the degree that it did so quickly.

The decade of political activity which saw the fall and rise of the Republican party in Colorado began with the Populist convention held in Omaha on July 4, 1892. Colorado's voters were especially attracted by the silver plank of the "Omaha platform," which called for the free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio of sixteen to one, and certain of the state's politicians fell in line with that popular demand. The Populist party was organized in Colorado at the expense of the two traditional parties; under the leadership of Davis H. Waite it took in silverites from the Democrats and Republicans.

Before the summer of 1892 the Populist supporters in Colorado were Democrats and Republicans. With the national conventions of those two parties a significant number of traditional loyalties became dissolved, in direct response to the failure of either major party to offer proposals for monetary reform consistent with the desires of the people of Colorado for the free and unlimited coinage of silver. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 had authorized the Treasury Department to purchase 4,500,000 ounces of silver each month for coinage into silver dollars. But even this failed to satisfy the demands of the western mining states; they continued in their unwillingness to settle for anything less than the free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio of sixteen to one. That the Populist party provided a proposal embodying this principle and that the Colorado voters were responsive to the Populist promise threatened the pre-1892 equilibrium.

Failure to account for the relative unity of the Colorado voters on the important silver question loosened party ties. In a Senate speech delivered on April 6, 1892, Senator Edward O. Wolcott, one of Colorado's two Republican senators, pointed out that neither the Democratic nor the Republican party represented the majority of Americans on the silver question. He stated that the voters in his state felt so strongly as to comprise "practically a unit" which felt the passage of a silver bill "of far greater importance than any other legislation or the success or downfall of any political party."³ Wolcott accurately antici-

³ "Silver and its Enemies," April 6, 1892, Edward O. Wolcott Papers, State Historical Society of Colorado Library.

pated what was to be the fate of Republican politics in his state: the Populist gubernatorial candidate, Davis H. Waite, received a plurality of nearly six thousand votes. In addition to the gubernatorial candidate the third party also selected Colorado's presidential electors by a margin of fifteen thousand votes. In contrast to the Populist showing at the state and national levels, the two traditional parties, in defeat, could muster a vote scarcely equivalent to that of the third party.

Silver was still a critical issue by the time of the next state election in 1894, but other issues had emerged to play a vital role in the politics of that year. The most prominent question was the Populist incumbent himself, who had shown evidence throughout his two-year tenure of misconduct of the gubernatorial office. During his governorship Waite was admonished for calling out the state militia to quell the 1893 miners' strike at Cripple Creek, for intervening in the Denver "city hall war," and for meddling illegally in the "penitentiary war." In short, the governor tended to overestimate his own ability and his rapport with the people of Colorado.⁴

Although Senator Henry M. Teller had spent the greater part of the period 1892-94 in Washington, D.C., he recognized the crucial significance of Waite's record in the state. In an interview with the *Denver Republican* the senator commented that the coming state campaign would center on the issue of good government.⁵ Attempting to minimize the significance of the charges against Waite's administration, the Populist press insisted that free silver would be the only issue.⁶ The *Boulder Daily Camera*, a Populist newspaper, maintained that the Populist incumbent would be a "better governor than any man whom the gang Republicans of the state will name."⁷ Thus, the silver question had taken on a new role—at least in the hands of the Populists—as a cover up for the mistakes and problems during Waite's tenure. Senator Teller denied that silver would serve as a major issue in the state campaign, since "every man and woman in Colorado, of whatever political complexion, is for the free coinage of silver."⁸ Capitalizing on the conduct of the Populist administration and promising to purge the state of corrupted government, the political roller coaster in 1894 with a good-government banner brought a Republican gubernatorial victory by a margin of eighteen thousand votes.

With favorable action by the Republican national convention the Colorado Republicans in 1896 might have repeated their 1894 victory. Their hope hinged on the national party's embracing the cause of free silver. There was little criticism voiced about the Republican state administration's handling of its two years in office, and it appeared that the national Democratic party would not respond to the demands for a strong silver stand. The Democratic administration of President Grover Cleveland had shown itself consistently hostile to the cause of free silver, even to the point of repealing the restricted coinage of silver, Cleveland thereby earning the sobriquet "Our Single Standard President—the Honest and Outspoken Enemy of National Prosperity."⁹ Furthermore, Coloradoans assumed that the Cleveland forces would control the Democratic national convention and support the gold standard,¹⁰ thus leaving the way open for a Republican victory—a victory for silver. Such were the presuppositions upon which the state Republican party's hopes for victory were grounded.

The adoption of a gold plank at the 1896 Republican national convention and Senator Teller's subsequent repudiation of the Republican party before the November election combined to kill all hopes for a Republican victory at the state level. The Republicans' platform saddled the most loyal party members with a program contradicting the expectations of a majority of the Colorado voters. Senator Teller's bolt, followed as it was by many of the Colorado Republican politicians, fragmented the state Republican forces.

Senator Teller accurately foresaw the immediate prospects of the Republican party in his home state when he stated: "If the Republican party becomes the party of the gold standard, from that day it so declares, in my judgment, its disintegration will begin."¹¹ Disintegration is the only appropriate way of describing what happened in 1896 to the Colorado Republican structure. Senator Teller and his state organization entered the Populist camp, along with the Silver Democrats, resulting in a fusion of the state's silver forces. The split over silver within the state organization left only Senator Edward O. Wolcott, who had refused to bolt with Teller, and a mere handful of followers to constitute the state Republican party. The unpopularity of the regular Republican party was indeed quite evident, and the fate of the party in Colorado appeared to have

⁴ Dill, *Political Campaigns of Colorado*, pp. 207-57.

⁵ *Denver Republican*, August 9, 1894, p. 1.

⁶ *Boulder Daily Camera*, September 22, 1894, p. 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, July 16, 1894, p. 1.

⁸ *Denver Republican*, August 9, 1894, p. 1.

⁹ *Denver Times*, May 5, 1895, p. 1.

¹⁰ *Denver Republican*, March 25, 1896, p. 1.

¹¹ Reprint of speech delivered in the Senate, April 29, 1896, Henry M. Teller Papers, State Historical Society of Colorado Library.

been decided for some time to come when it polled less than fourteen percent of the total popular vote. It was a nearly complete and seemingly fatal collapse.

The Republican demise in 1896 was due only in part to the Republicans' adoption of a gold-standard platform and the bolt of Senator Teller. The state's silver forces also were able to effect a workable political coalition. That fusion was born out of the decision in the Democratic national platform to espouse the cause of free and unlimited coinage at the desired ratio of sixteen to one. It was given life as the Populists and the Silver Republicans rallied to the Democrats' silver plank. In return for the distribution of various lesser state offices, the Populists and the Silver Republicans agreed to support the Democratic nominee for governor, Alva Adams.

Thus, the Republican party in 1896, just as in the two previous elections, saw its fate determined by a shift in political realities. But where the conditions of 1894 had provided the party with a viable issue and a victory, those in 1896 worked in the opposite manner. The combination of an unpopular campaign platform, the splitting off of the pro-silver faction, and the emergence of the effective Democratic-Populist-Silver Republican fusion proved sufficient to swamp the Republican effort.

Given the realities of the 1896 elections and the near annihilation of the Republican party, the Republican defeats in 1898 and 1900 were not unexpected. In 1898 the Republican candidate for governor, Henry Wolcott, the brother of Senator Wolcott, polled nearly forty-three thousand votes less than the successful fusion candidate. The Republican candidate in 1900 experienced a similar, though not so overwhelming, defeat.

Yet, even while the Republican efforts in 1898 and 1900 proved futile, new factors were emerging which would condition future elections. The elections of 1898 and 1900 marked a return to the predominance of personalities over purely ideological considerations. Henry Wolcott was defeated largely because he appeared to be a political hack, a mere front man for the more self-seeking interests of the Republican party.¹² The campaign of 1900 was in a similar vein. Contributing to the increasing emphasis on the personality issue after 1896 was the fact that the silver question had been supplanted as the primary concern. Certain politicians, notably Senator Teller, continued



Henry R. Wolcott

to cite the importance of the monetary issue, but with pessimism rather than vehemence.¹³

The return to the predominance of personalities was only one of several changes in the political scene. Another, and more significant, factor was the return of prosperity by 1897. Good harvests and rising prices allowed farmers to meet creditors' demands; gold discoveries in South Africa and Alaska brought inflation.¹⁴ The decline of the silver issue as a correlation of the returning prosperity was recognized by the Republican faithful in Colorado and by high-ranking national Republicans: "There come the shouts all over the United States that the Silver movement is dead because silver has gone down and wheat has gone up."¹⁵ Thus was established a new context in which the political parties of Colorado could operate.

Political fortunes are often difficult to predict, even in the most stable political environment, and in unstable political

¹² On August 15, 1900, the *Boulder Daily Camera*, p. 1, quoted Senator Teller as saying that silver would be the paramount issue in the 1900 campaign and election.

¹⁴ Fred A. Shannon, *The Farmer's Last Frontier: Agriculture, 1860-1897* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1945), pp. 326-27, and Paolo E. Coletta, "Greenbackers, Goldbugs, and Silverites: Currency Reform and Policy, 1860-1897," in H. Wayne Morgan, ed., *The Gilded Age: A Reappraisal* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963), pp. 138-39.

¹⁵ Letter from W. E. Chandler to Wolcott, August 10, 1897, Wolcott Papers.

¹² Throughout the campaign of 1898 the *Rocky Mountain News's* political cartoonist directed his barbs and biting comments at Edward and Henry Wolcott. Many of his cartoons are catalogued in scrapbook number 3, Wolcott Papers.

climates, such as that which characterized Colorado politics after 1892, prediction becomes impossible. In such instances wild speculation often abounds. But not even the most partisan and loyal Republican would have ventured to forecast that his party would fashion a comeback within six years after the 1896 catastrophe. Yet, in 1902 the Republican party was able to emerge victorious, installing James Peabody in the governorship by a plurality of seven thousand votes. The 1902 campaign centered on two issues: the large number of questionable candidates running for the state legislature and the preponderance of local issues.¹⁶ This new political environment facilitated and was symbolized by Peabody's victory—the culmination of the Republican reconstruction.

The Republican victory of 1902 was not a political miracle. It was the logical consequence of a variety of factors acting in combination. The most significant factor in the Republican party's ride from the depths of defeat to victory was the major reconstitution of the base of popular support. In fact, it becomes a paramount concern in understanding the reconstruction of the Republican party that some account be made of its popular support.

For an initial description of the renewed strength of the Republican party after 1896, one can turn to the traditional interpretation provided by the period's politicians and political analysts. The traditional view explains that the Republican party enlarged its support as those Silver Republicans who had bolted in 1896 began returning to the regular party organization, a process noticeable by the election of 1900, and explains that the control of the state patronage by the regular Republican party, control due to the Republican administration then in Washington, D.C., permitted the Republican party to solidify its position.

The Silver Republican group, which had contributed to the destruction of the state Republican organization by virtue of its bolt in 1896, found itself without a major issue after the 1900 election. The silver question had been disposed of dramatically by 1900 in the popular national mandates against the free and unlimited coinage of silver. Thus, the Silver Republican party's reason for being—support of silver—was eliminated, and there was little for the Silver Republicans to do but return to the regular party or remain forever in opposition with virtually no hopes of achieving the silver goal.¹⁷ With the silver

issue dead for all practical purposes, the tendency for the Silver Republicans to reunite with the regulars increased.¹⁸ The drift back to the regular Republican party included such influential state leaders as A. M. Stevenson, who had been the chairman of the Silver Republican state committee before he rejoined the regulars in August of 1900.¹⁹ The movement of individuals such as Stevenson and those who followed him provided the Republican party with renewed leadership, as well as with the influence attending those politicians who had put principle above party in the 1896 election. The most noticeable absence in the returning group of Silver Republicans was Senator Teller. His influence by the 1902 election, however, was largely gone.²⁰

Patronage, the second aspect of the traditional interpretation, was perhaps more significant for the Republican reconstruction than the return of the Silver Republicans. The McKinley administration delegated to Senator Wolcott, who had shown his party loyalty in 1896, the responsibility for filling the federal offices in Colorado. Elmer Ellis accounts for the voter support received by the Republican party after 1896 in this way:

The Republican Party in Colorado had become simply a patronage machine when the Silver Republicans left it in 1896. Between that time and 1902 its control of the Federal offices, together with the vast influx of new population in the prosperous years about 1900, had given it an effective vote-getting organization that could compete on equal terms with the remnants of the combined silver parties.²¹

By controlling the patronage denied Senator Teller, Senator Wolcott was able to install in positions of authority—ranging from the postal system to the government bureaucracy—a group of individuals whose livelihoods depended upon the future good fortunes of the Republican party.

But the return of the Silver Republicans to the regular organization points only to a reconstructed leadership. The behavior of the vast number of Republicans, however, cannot be documented by reference to public statements. The Republican control of patronage explains only the tentative voting activity of those most directly benefitting from the distribution of that patronage. The traditional explanation, based on contemporary political analysis, newspaper reports, and the opinions of the major figures involved in the reconstruction of the Republican party, proves inadequate in the important area of popular

¹⁶ Ellis, *Henry Moore Teller*, p. 349.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

¹⁹ *Denver Post*, August 13, 1900, p. 1.

²⁰ Ellis, *Henry Moore Teller*, p. 335.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 347-48.

support. A general survey of the voting statistics for the elections from 1892 through 1902 provides information not available in the traditional sources.²² It suggests certain patterns of popular voting behavior.

In the 1892 and 1894 elections the Republican gubernatorial candidates carried the state's three largest counties—Arapahoe, El Paso, and Pueblo, the areas of largest urban concentration—and the “rim counties” running from Archuleta east to Baca and north to Sedgwick. Those counties voting against the Republican party were primarily the mining counties—including Gilpin, Clear Creek, Lake, and Boulder—and the counties on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains. What emerged in these two elections, in terms of party strength, was a coalition of the urban and eastern agricultural sections against the mining and the western areas.

The election of 1896, with the silver question the major and only real issue, witnessed the complete dissolution of the previous political alignments. That dissolution meant that the Republican party was able to carry only two small rim counties, Baca and Kit Carson. The Republican party, bound to a national platform espousing the gold standard, was repudiated throughout the state even by those urban and eastern agricultural counties which had supported it in the two previous elections.

The first noticeable trend towards a Republican reconstruction occurred in the rim counties during the election of 1898. That election saw the Republican candidate for governor, Henry R. Wolcott, capture the following eastern counties: Sedgwick, Phillips, Washington, Lincoln, Kit Carson, Cheyenne, Prowers, and Baca. In the same election the Republican party won four south-central counties, including Archuleta, Conejos, Costilla, and Huerfano. Thus, 1898 marks the return to a Republican dominance in the eastern and south-central rim counties.

This trend, established in 1898, continued in 1900. The aforementioned rim counties were again in the Republican column, but in addition the Republicans were victorious in one of the urban counties—El Paso. Inroads were also made into Logan, Morgan, Elbert, and Douglas counties. In short, the Republican base of support, partly reestablished in 1898, had moved west to include most of eastern Colorado by 1900.

The culmination of this move to the Republican camp took



Threshing days in Logan County in the early 1880s.

place in 1902, an election in which the Republican gubernatorial candidate was victorious in thirty-four of Colorado's fifty-seven counties. The coalition of voters which elected James Peabody included the following areas: the northeastern counties, the eastern rim counties without exception, the south-central counties, and the three large urban counties. Indicative of the Republican resurgence was the vote in Boulder County. This county, which had voted strongly anti-Republican in five previous elections, chose to support the Republican candidate.

These general voting statistics make clear two salient features of the revitalized Republican effort. The agricultural counties on the state's eastern and southern rim provided the most stable base of Republican support. The second feature is the prominent role played by the urban vote. The vote of the three urban counties appears to have made the difference between victory and defeat for the Republican party. In the three elections between 1896 and 1900 when the Republican party failed to capture the urban vote, it likewise lost each election. When Arapahoe, El Paso, and Pueblo counties voted Republican in 1894 and 1902, the party won the governorship.

It would be extremely valuable if one could determine what kind of voters and what voter blocs represented those counties which returned to the Republican fold by 1902. To establish a correlation between the areas of Republican strength and the nature of the voters in those areas, one must use both the un-

²² For the general voting statistics for the period 1892-1902 the authors utilized the original manuscript voting statistics, which include a breakdown of the votes at the precinct as well as the county level. These records are available at the Colorado State Archives. However, because these records lack any suitable pagination, references will not be footnoted in this paper.

published "census manuscripts" and the precinct-level voting statistics for the period.²³

The precinct is the smallest unit within the Colorado electoral system and that area in which a vote shift becomes most easily recognized. Thus, the precinct provides the most workable focal point for research that attempts to define the local nature of the Republican bases of support. It is the precinct, then, in terms of both voting statistics and unpublished census information which we will consider in this study. A major obstacle to the use of the precinct involves the change in precinct boundaries between the compilation of the available census manuscripts and the elections of the 1890s. Very few precincts remained intact during this period, and the boundary changes of the vast majority are undocumented. Nevertheless, even on the basis of the limited number of precincts which validly may be employed, an indication emerges of the type of support the Republican party was receiving most consistently throughout the period 1892 to 1902.

The most stable Republican areas in the state were the eastern and south-central rim counties, the urban counties being too unstable to provide valid analysis. There is no consistent precinct information for the eastern tier of rim counties, but an analysis of the south-central area suggests several significant things about this conservative Republican support. In that south-central region there are five precincts from which one can draw a portrait: Manassa precinct in Conejos County; Cucharas, Walsenburg, and Badito precincts in Huerfano County; and Costilla Village precinct in Costilla County.

At the time of the 1880 census reports the majority of the adults in the Manassa precinct were native-born Americans engaged in either farming or laboring occupations among the men and in housekeeping among the women. In Cucharas precinct all but three (out of 182) adult persons surveyed in the census were native-born, with the largest part of those listing New Mexico as place of birth. Their livelihood derived chiefly

from farming, sheepherding, cattleherding, and housekeeping. As in the Manassa precinct, Cucharas precinct reported an ancestry mainly native-born, with many individuals of New Mexican parentage. By the election of 1898 these two precincts supported Republican candidates, in contrast to their previous non-Republican voting behavior. The average voter in Manassa and Cucharas precincts, then, was a native-born American of American parentage, engaged in either farming or some type of herding; his wife was a housekeeper. And beginning in 1898 he voted Republican.

Costilla Village and Badito precincts present a basically equivalent situation. Out of 219 adults in the Costilla Village precinct, 217 reported New Mexican parentage, and a large majority cited New Mexico as place of birth. The occupations in Costilla Village clustered around laboring and housekeeping. Badito precinct indicated a like parentage for its inhabitants; and, while there was a scattering of other states listed as place of birth, the predominant reference was to New Mexico. The occupations again ranged only between farming and laboring for men; the women were housekeepers. These two precincts, like the preceding two, voted Republican beginning in 1898.

In this same region of the state, the Republican party drew support from slightly different kinds of voters, those in the Walsenburg precinct. Walsenburg precinct contained a larger proportion of voters of non-New Mexican birth than the four precincts mentioned earlier. Out of 353 adults 49 were foreign born, with the remainder split between those born in either New Mexico or Colorado and those born in other sections of the United States. The parentage was diverse, following lines similar to those of birth. Unlike the occupational breakdown for Manassa or Cucharas precincts, employment in the Walsenburg precinct was heterogeneous. Although some of the males were farmers or laborers, many were engaged in mining—especially coal—and occupations related to an urban situation. The majority of the females were housekeepers, but others worked as cooks, nurses, and store clerks. These people also contributed to the support which the Republicans received in the late 1890s.

The significance of these five precincts becomes clearer when their voting behavior and population characteristics are contrasted with those of other precincts in the state. Both Louisville and Salina precincts in Boulder County continued voting in opposition to the Republican party. The ethnic background of the voters in these two precincts is very dissimilar

²³ The "census manuscripts" contain information relative to the occupation, the ancestry, and the place of birth of each individual in the enumerated census district. Ideally, documentation should come from the census manuscripts of 1890 and 1900. However, that documentation of 1890 was destroyed by a fire in the National Archives, and that of 1900 has not yet been released for study. Thus, we are forced to rely upon the 1880 census. The use of the 1880 manuscripts as a reference to those voting after 1890 is of less value than the use of later manuscripts might have been. The time lapse and the formation of many of the eastern rim counties after 1889 make it difficult though not impossible to establish a correlation between voting behavior and population characteristics. The census manuscripts for the Colorado population of the late nineteenth century are available at the Colorado State Archives. As with the voting records inadequate pagination makes footnoting impossible.

to that of the south-central rim counties. The population of both Louisville and Salina precincts was largely immigrant, with the non-immigrant dwellers listing the eastern coastal states as place of birth. But more important is the occupational orientation of the voters in these two Boulder County precincts. Louisville derived its livelihood chiefly from coal mining; Salina derived its from "hard" mining. These two precincts, in contrast to the five mentioned earlier, were immigrant, non-agricultural areas. They consistently voted Democratic-Populist-Silver Republican fusion.

What emerges from this precinct analysis is a suggestion of the general character of the most steady Republican vote. Those precincts which continued to support Republican candidates—the five south-central rim county precincts—were agricultural areas. They were inhabited primarily by individuals of New Mexican or Mexican heritage. And they were the first to return to the Republican column after the catastrophe of 1896.

The voting behavior of these five precincts seems to support a thesis more generally suggested by the county voting statistics of the eastern rim counties: the agricultural regions of Colorado were the most ready to reembrace the Republican party after the 1896 election. That the eastern and south-central rim counties, in fact, did come back to the Republican camp by 1900 indicates that the near annihilation of the Republican party in 1896 was not due entirely to a categorical stand on the silver issue on grounds of principle. Rather, some of the support received by the fusion ticket, at the expense of the Republican party, can be traced to an identification by the state's farmers of the silver question with prosperity. The repeal of the Silver Purchase Act, following so closely the precipitation of a general depression by the Panic of 1893, came to be associated with the early phases of that general depression. Hence, in 1896 the agricultural regions of the state turned to the silver stand of the fusion party in hopes of reestablishing prosperity. When that prosperity returned by 1897 independent of the efforts of the fusion party, Colorado's rural and farming elements were prepared to return to their traditional political affiliation. The farmer got inflation, relief from debt, good weather, and prosperity. Thus, he saw no reason to remain in opposition to the Republican party.

The Republican reconstruction appears much less of a miracle, then, as the facts become clear. The control of patronage by Senator Wolcott after 1896 and the return of the dissident Silver Republicans after 1900 supplied the regular Republican

organization with a renewed leadership. But, more importantly, the Republican party was able to reconstruct itself because it could depend increasingly upon certain sources of popular strength. Wooed away in one election by the identification of the silver question with prosperity, the eastern and south-central rim counties remained essentially loyal. The county vote totals for the decade verify the faithfulness of the eastern rim counties; the precinct analyses indicate the stable Republican support from the south-central agricultural areas. The end of the general depression in the late 1890s allowed this base of support to expand to include the urban votes of the state's three largest counties, beginning with El Paso County in 1900. Ultimately the Republican reconstruction depended upon two factors. One is the conservative voting patterns of the rural districts. The other is the return of prosperity by 1897. These two factors, more than the explanations of the period's political observers, define the expanded scope of the Republican party after 1896 and account for the Republican victory in 1902.

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Colorado's Populist Leadership

BY G. MICHAEL MCCARTHY

In the continuing historical debate over the nature of the "Populist Revolt" which swept across rural America during the last decade of the nineteenth century, one persistently recurring point of discussion has been the nature of Populist leadership. Analysis of Populist leadership generally has focused on two primary questions. First, what was the essence of Populist leadership; what was its source? Given the fact that Populism was essentially an amalgam of agrarian and silver interests, were the leaders of the movement, in fact, either farmers or owners, operators, or employees of western silver mines? Second, after the disintegration of the Populist movement and the dissolution of the People's party in the wake of the election of 1896, what became of the movement's leaders? Did they suddenly vanish from the national political scene or did they join the ranks of American Progressives in the first decade of the twentieth century to see their reforms carried through? Various interpretations exist regarding both questions.

One thesis is that Populist leadership—perhaps surprisingly—was derived neither from the ranks of the "yeoman farmer" nor from the silver interests, but, as the late historian Richard Hofstadter has stated, the Populist leaders were, rather, professional men, rural editors, third-party veterans, and professional reformers.¹ Secondly, it has been suggested often that when the Populist movement collapsed, these leaders joined the Progressive movement and helped promote their "program" for another decade and a half. Whether these hypotheses are accurate or not is a point of conjecture, but analysis of the Populist experience in Colorado indicates that the first thesis is partially accurate while the second is not accurate at all. It

would be unwise to base any final conclusions regarding the nature of national Populist leadership on the findings in any one state. But Colorado—a typical Populist state despite its tendency to emphasize "silverism" over agrarian problems—may be used profitably as a prototype. As John D. Hicks contends, Colorado's Populist leaders were "fairly characteristic" of Populist leaders everywhere.²

In the fall of 1892, as the Populist party's first national ticket went down to defeat at the hands of Democrat Grover Cleveland, the Populist party in Colorado scored stunning statewide victories. Running on a platform emphasizing the eight-hour day, regulation of state railroad freight and passenger rates, the reduction of the salaries of state public officials, and the free coinage of silver at a ratio of sixteen to one, Populist Davis H. Waite, an Aspen lawyer, was swept into office by a plurality of 4,537 votes.³ In the eyes of the Populists the Waite victory was, at the very least, proof of a substantial statewide "protest against the rule of a ruthless plutocracy strongly entrenched in the silver state, dictating legislation, influencing courts, and exercising complete hegemony over the economic life of the commonwealth."⁴

The People's party of Colorado found itself in an excellent position to capitalize on this sentiment. Populists held the vital positions of lieutenant governor, secretary of state, auditor, treasurer, attorney general, and superintendent of public instruction, as well as governor. They counted twenty-seven of their number⁵ in the state house of representatives (as opposed to thirty-two Republicans and five Democrats) and thirteen in the state senate (as opposed to fifteen Republicans and seven Democrats).⁶ In addition, they elected two men to the United States Senate—Lafe Pence by a plurality of 12,005 votes and John Bell by a plurality of 2,395 votes.⁷

What were the backgrounds of these men? Were they farmers or men with silver interests, or, as Hofstadter and others maintain, were they professional men, rural editors, third-party veterans, and professional reformers? Did they,

² Hicks, *Populist Revolt*, p. 201.

³ Lois L. Dawson, "The Populist Movement in Colorado" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Denver, 1930), p. 29.

⁴ Leon W. Fuller, "Colorado's Revolt against Capitalism," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXI (December 1935), p. 345.

⁵ Colorado, General Assembly, House, "Members of the House, 1893-4," *Journal*, 9th General Assembly, Extra Session, 1894, pp. 13-14. A prominent Colorado historian numbers the Populists at 32 by including the Democrats (whose state platform almost completely coincided with that of the People's party) as Populists. Wilbur F. Stone, *History of Colorado*, 4 vols. (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1918-19), I, 436.

⁶ Colorado, General Assembly, House, "Members of the Senate, 1893-4," *Journal*, 9th General Assembly, Extra Session, 1894, pp. 15-16.

⁷ Stone, *History of Colorado*, I, 437.

¹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform, from Bryan to F. D. R.* (New York: Knopf, 1955), p. 101. This theme is also discussed in John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party* (1931; reprint ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Books, 1961), p. 151, and in Paul Glad, *The Trumpet Soundeth: William Jennings Bryan and His Democracy, 1896-1912* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Books, 1960), p. 53.

whatever their nature, become Progressives after the demise of the Populist party, or did they simply disappear from state and local politics after the turbulent Waite administration of 1892-94? Answers to these questions should be relevant to any study of national Populism. But since biographical material on the forty-nine men in question is fragmentary, it must be stressed that any conclusions derived from this study are tentative.

Hofstadter contends that most Populists were third-party veterans, "cranks or careerists who had failed to find a place for themselves within the established political machines" and who embraced Populism mainly because it had a chance to "succeed." He states that the majority of them were "old men born in the Jackson era, gray-haired veterans of innumerable Granger, Greenback, and antimonopoly campaigns."⁸ Most Colorado Populist leaders were born between 1825 and 1864, the majority being born in the 1850s—some time after the "Jackson era." Most of them were only forty to fifty years old in 1892. Under such circumstances it seems unlikely that many of these Populists had prior third-party affiliations. Only two third parties of note existed in the United States between the end of the Civil War and the formation of the People's party—the Greenback Labor and Union Labor parties—and both were short-lived. Existing biographies—fragmentary though they may be—give no indication that these parties attracted any of Colorado's future Populist leaders. Even had these men been third-party "regulars," their experiences in the parties would have been negligible due to their youth (most of them would have been only in their twenties or thirties at the time) and the fact that the parties were not in existence long. If this is an accurate assumption, it would hardly corroborate Hofstadter's thesis that by the 1890s these men were all "gray-haired veterans" of third-party movements.

Aside from established third parties, however, there were other quasi-political movements in which the leaders of the People's party could have participated prior to the 1890s. Historian Chester M. Destler has suggested that in addition to promoting agrarian goals through the Granger and Alliance movements, Populist leaders had adhered long to radical politico-economic philosophies such as Locofocoism, "free trade," Greenbackism, Kelloggism, the single tax, nationalism,

and various other forms opposing monopoly.⁹ Again, it is questionable as to how deeply the Colorado Populist leaders could have been influenced by these philosophies. Locofocoism, for example, clearly antedated most of them. The free-trade movement, Greenbackism, and Kelloggism were primarily products of the 1870s when most of these men were young (and when their records indicate they were busily engaged in business endeavors rather than political activities). The single-tax concept of Henry George and the nationalism of Edward Bellamy were relatively new ideas in 1892; if the Populists in question were advocates of these philosophies, it is unlikely that they had been for long. Available biographical material does not link the Populists under study with any of these philosophies, although one cannot deny categorically that Davis Waite and his fellow Populists were third-party members or adherents to other semi-political movements or philosophies. One simply can state that available evidence regarding the Colorado Populist leaders of 1892 does not support the contentions of Richard Hofstadter. The evidence is that rather than being disillusioned old men who had experienced years of political failure and who had embraced numerous radical ideologies before incorporating them into "Populism," they were comparatively young, relatively free of the disillusion which attended chronically lost political causes, and not overtly dedicated to radical political philosophy.¹⁰

Although the Populists elected to office in Colorado in 1892 do not appear to have had third-party backgrounds, many of them had been active in politics. Most of them, however, had remained within the framework of established parties. Davis Waite himself served in the Wisconsin legislature in 1856.¹¹ David H. Nichols, Waite's lieutenant governor and one of Colorado's most prominent men, had been a member of the Colorado constitutional convention of 1875-76, of the territorial legislature from 1864 to 1865, and of the fourth and fifth general assemblies and had served on the State Penitentiary Commission for fourteen years.¹² Floyd Goodykoontz, state auditor, had

¹⁰ It is well to remember that Davis Waite, a "radical" by almost any definition, was a clear exception to this generalization. However, it is significant that he was by far the oldest of the Colorado Populist leaders—sixty-seven years of age in 1892—and that only two others, David H. Nichols and David Boyd, approached his age.

¹¹ Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, 4 vols. (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Co., 1889-95), IV, 613.

¹² *Representative Men of Colorado* (New York and Denver: The Rowell Art Publishing Co., 1902), p. 84; Henrietta E. Bromwell, comp., "Colorado Portrait and Biography Index" (unpublished 5 vol. typescript; Denver, 1935), III, 766; *History of Clear Creek and Boulder Valleys, Colorado* (Chicago: O. L. Baskin & Co., 1880), p. 668.

⁸ Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, p. 102.

⁹ Chester M. Destler, *American Radicalism, 1865-1901* (New London: Connecticut College, 1946), pp. 1-23.



William J. Thomas

served as deputy assessor for Montezuma County.¹³ Eugene Engley, attorney general, had been the Animas City mayor in 1880, Conejos County attorney in 1884, and Antonito town attorney in 1891.¹⁴ John Murray, superintendent of public institutions, had served two terms as Bird County (Kansas) commissioner and one term in the Kansas state legislature before coming to Colorado, where he was elected justice of the peace in Burlington.¹⁵ Emmet Bromley, representative from Arapahoe County, had been Arapahoe County assessor and deputy sheriff and had been elected to the state house of representatives in 1890.¹⁶ A state representative from Ouray County, Francis Carney, had served as Ouray's county commissioner since 1879.¹⁷ Stephen R. Fitzgarrald, representative from San Miguel County, had been the county attorney since 1889.¹⁸ William J. Thomas, who had been Gilpin County judge—the youngest in the United States—from 1889 to 1892,¹⁹ was elected representative from Gilpin County, running on the Populist ticket. David Boyd, Weld County state senator, had been a prominent member of the State Board of Agriculture from 1870 to 1876.²⁰ Thomas Wells had served as Lake County probate judge, justice of the peace, and state superintendent of mines and had been a member of the territorial legislature.²¹ H. C. Balsinger, senator from Gilpin County, had been elected a state representative in 1887-88 and senator from 1890 to 1892.²² George E. Pease, state senator

from Park County, had been a member of the constitutional convention of 1875-76 and of the state house of representatives in 1887 and 1888.²³ Before being elected state senator from Cripple Creek on the Populist ticket, Robert Turner had been a member of the eighth general assembly.²⁴ And new United States Senator John Bell had been previously elected Saguache County attorney, mayor of Lake City, Hinsdale County clerk, and judge of the seventh judicial district.²⁵

Just as the Populists in question appear not to have been worn-out third-party veterans, neither do they appear to have been "professional reformers." Analysis of their careers prior to 1892 indicates that none of their occupations ran along the lines of "reform" (unless one proceeds on the shaky premise that politicians were automatically reformers). Occasionally a biographical entry might record the fact that one of the Populist leaders (like Lake County Representative Hugh Dyatt, for example) possessed "great sympathy for the great masses of people."²⁶ This kind of information is relatively meaningless, however; on the basis of such vague biographical material it would be foolhardy to conclude that Colorado's Populist leaders had been "professional reformers" in the past.

The contention of Hofstadter and others that many Populist leaders had been rural newspaper editors seems valid for Colorado. Some of the Populists of 1892 had been engaged in newspaper editing in the years prior to the formation of the People's party. Davis Waite, for example, had been an editor in Jamestown, New York, and again at Aspen prior to 1892.²⁷ Eugene Engley published two newspapers — the *Southeast*, first newspaper in La Plata County, Colorado, and later the *Daily Republican* in Durango.²⁸ John F. Murray had published a newspaper in Pennsylvania before migrating to Colorado, and upon moving to Colorado Springs he headed the *Saturday Mail* there.²⁹ Others, such as State Senator Clark Wheeler from Pitkin County, had had more limited experience in journalism.³⁰

The majority of Colorado's Populist leaders had had varied occupations. At one time or another they had been employed as clerks, contractors, soldiers, lumbermen, blacksmiths, explorers, hotel owners, typewriter retailers, druggists, restaurant owners, ditch company and sawmill owners, telegraph

¹³ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 459.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 446.

¹⁹ *Representative Men of Colorado*, p. 84.

²⁰ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 386.

²¹ *History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado* (Chicago: O. L. Baskin & Co., 1881), p. 687.

²² Bromwell, "Colorado Portrait and Biography Index," V, 902.

²³ Colorado, General Assembly, House, *Journal*, 6th sess., 1887, p. 5.

²⁴ Bromwell, "Colorado Portrait and Biography Index," V, 1032.

²⁵ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 385.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 612.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

³⁰ Bromwell, "Colorado Portrait and Biography Index," V, 1105.

agents, bankers, printers, oil drillers, glassmakers, coal company owners, railroad men, stonemasons, bookbinders, and geologists. The most prevalent occupations, however, seem to have been real estate, retail marketing, law, and education.

The real estate business had engaged two of the most important Populist leaders before 1892. Nelson O. McClees, secretary of state, had a real estate business in Pueblo from 1884 to 1892.³¹ And Albert Nance, state treasurer, had been in Denver real estate from 1888 to 1892.³² Lieutenant-Governor David H. Nichols, one of the most prominent state Populists, had engaged in the mercantile business in California from 1853 to 1859.³³ Auditor Floyd Goodykoontz had been in both the freighting and grocery businesses in southern Colorado for many of his adult years.³⁴ John Murray had a profitable mercantile business in Bird City, Kansas, for years before moving to Colorado.³⁵ John Crowley, prominent representative from Otero County, worked in merchandising in Nepesta for two years.³⁶ Saguache County State Representative James L. Hurt was involved in retail merchandising at Crestone between 1881 and 1885,³⁷ while Fred Lockwood, state senator from Boulder County, worked in Canadian mercantile houses from 1865 to 1870 before migrating to Colorado and establishing the Lockwood Trading Company in Boulder.³⁸

Law also was a profession of several of the leading Populists. Both Davis Waite and Eugene Engley, for example, had backgrounds in law. Stephen R. Fitzgarrald was admitted to the Iowa bar in 1879 and later took up law in Telluride, Colorado, in 1881.³⁹ William J. Thomas practiced law in Central City,⁴⁰ and John Bell, prominent United States Senator, was

Eugene Engley



admitted to the Tennessee bar in 1874 and, after taking up residence in Colorado, practiced law at Saguache.⁴¹

Several of these men, finally, had backgrounds in education. Davis Waite, one of the most versatile of the Populists, taught school in Houston, Missouri, before moving on to a principalship in Warren, Pennsylvania.⁴² Nelson O. McClees had been a teacher in his early years.⁴³ William J. Thomas had taught and had served as Gilpin County superintendent of schools from 1887 to 1889.⁴⁴ David Boyd, state senator from Weld County, had taught, served as Weld County superintendent of schools, and was president of the Colorado State Teachers' Association in 1880.⁴⁵ John Murray had taught school in Nebraska before moving to Colorado,⁴⁶ and Clark Wheeler had been a full professor at one point in his life.⁴⁷

Since the People's party of 1892 reflected a fusion of agrarian and silver interests, the Hofstadter thesis that the leadership of the farmers' movement was entrusted primarily to non-farmers and non-silverites seems paradoxical. Yet, this theme is stated and restated in histories of Populism. As John D. Hicks has written, for example, the farmers elected "lawyers and other professional men to represent them and their interests." To explain their reluctance to elect their own, Hicks says:

If the farmer went to the capital fresh from the plow, among a crowd of lobbyists, he was as clay in the hands of the potter. If his constituents kept him there year after year, until he learned the ways of legislation, then he ceased to be a farmer and became a member of some other class, perhaps a stockholder in a great railroad, or manufacturing corporation, with interests in common with the opponents of agricultural classes.⁴⁸

If it is true that farmers and silverites on a national level were not among the leaders of their own movement, it is pertinent to determine whether or not they shared the reins of leadership in Colorado.

³¹ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 525.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 523.

³³ *History of Clear Creek and Boulder Valleys*, p. 668.

³⁴ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 459.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 411.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 478.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 501.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 446.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 597.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 612.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 597.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

⁴⁷ Bromwell, "Colorado Portrait and Biography Index," V, 1105.

⁴⁸ Hicks, *Populist Revolt*, p. 151.



David H. Nichols

Several important Colorado Populist leaders had agrarian backgrounds, but their biographies do not suggest that—except for a few men—farming was their primary occupation before or in 1892. Davis Waite, significantly, had ranched for a time at Larned, Kansas, but by profession he did not consider himself a farmer.⁴⁹ Nelson O. McClees had raised sheep in Kansas but seemingly had not engaged in crop raising.⁵⁰ David Boyd had been a farmer in Lenawee County, Michigan, from 1854 to 1857 and had later been president of the Union Colony at Greeley. As previously mentioned, he had also been a member of the State Board of Agriculture.⁵¹ Several Populists are known to have farmed or raised stock as late as 1892. David H. Nichols, for example, was a prosperous part-time stockman near Denver.⁵² Emmet A. Bromley, district grange master for Arapahoe County, had a thriving two-hundred-acre farm on Sand Creek which he had owned since 1877.⁵³ John H. Crowley, who began farming in Lucas County, Iowa, in 1856, was running a 160-acre farm in Otero County,⁵⁴ and James L. Hurt was raising cattle and sheep in Saguache County.⁵⁵

Since what Hofstadter terms “silverism” was practically as important to Populists as was agrarian reform, the “silver interests” in Colorado logically should be expected to have shared party leadership. But they did not. At least eleven of these

men had backgrounds in mining—though not necessarily silver mining—but only three were connected with mining of any sort in Colorado in 1892. Thomas Wells, representative from Fremont and Chaffee counties, was engaged in mining at Leadville.⁵⁶ James G. Johnson, senator from Fremont County, was part owner of the Rocky Mountain Oil Company based at Florence.⁵⁷ And David A. Mills, state senator from Eagle County, operated out of Redcliff where he had “extensive interests in good silver mines.”⁵⁸ Of all the Populist leaders only Mills had obvious silver interests.

A concluding look at the Populist leaders in Colorado in 1892 reveals the significant fact that almost none of them were by profession farmers or silver men. Available biographies record the fact that on the eve of the election of 1892 the Populists numbered among their leaders two private lawyers, one town attorney, two county judges, two real estate men, one state senator, an oil company executive, a contractor, a merchant, a bookbinder, a grocer, a teacher, a newspaper editor, two miners or mine owners, and four farmers or ranchers. If Colorado can be used as a yardstick, Richard Hofstadter's thesis may be partially correct. Though Colorado's Populist party was devoid of professional reformers and third-party veterans, its positions of leadership were filled, as he maintains, with businessmen and politicians; few of them seem to have had any overt connection with farming and free silver. Neither dissatisfied silver inflationists nor disgruntled farmers, they seemed to be dissenters not so much against the “oppression” of the gold standard or subversion of the yeoman farmer but against what they believed was “financial economic imperialism” centered in the East and committed to a policy of exploiting the resources of the state.⁵⁹ If the fundamental objective of Colorado Populism was, in fact, a thoroughgoing reform of the entire political-economic order, then it is not surprising that the businessman was in the vanguard of the movement.

Due to the extreme radicalism, even fanaticism, of Davis Waite, the Populist “experiment” of 1892-94 was a debacle.⁶⁰ By 1894, due to Waite's controversial administration, the Populist party in Colorado had all but disintegrated. Many members of the party and even of Waite's cabinet had deserted the movement; and when Waite was renominated for the governor-

⁴⁹ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 613.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

⁵² *History of Clear Creek and Boulder Valleys*, p. 668.

⁵³ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 391.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 411.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 478.

⁵⁶ *History of the Arkansas Valley*, p. 687.

⁵⁷ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 487.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

⁵⁹ Fuller, “Colorado's Revolt against Capitalism,” p. 349.

⁶⁰ Hicks, *Populist Revolt*, pp. 291-99.

ship by his party in 1894, he was defeated. Nationally, the People's party survived a few more years, but after 1900 it vanished. Most historians concede that even though the Populist party ceased to exist, the "spirit" of Populism lingered on, fusing itself to the urban reform movement that emerged from middle-class America at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is not difficult to argue that many Populist goals and programs were incorporated into Progressivism; but it is difficult to argue that Populist leadership was incorporated as well.

If Populism grafted itself onto Progressivism one might assume that Populist leaders also made the transition. It appears, however, that few, if any, did. As Theodore Saloutos explains, refuting that former Populists were leaders in the Progressive movement:

Many of the Populist leaders . . . were broken in spirit and demoralized after the campaign of 1896 and gave up in despair. Some dropped out of politics entirely, others returned to one of the regular parties, and still others became Socialists.⁶¹

A look at what happened to Colorado's Populist leadership after 1894 confirms Saloutos' view. Only five Populist representatives elected in 1892 survived as Populists after 1894 in Colorado politics. Reelected to the house in 1894 on the People's party ticket were David Crow from Fremont County, George W. Jenks from Eagle County, M. V. B. Page from Mesa County, James L. Hurt from Saguache County, and C. L. Westerman from Grand and Summit counties.⁶² After 1894 only one Populist made the transition from house to senate—Francis Carney from Ouray County—and he left the senate in 1898. While there, Carney joined fellow Populists Hamilton Armstrong from Arapahoe County, Charles C. Graham from Routt County, James G. Johnson and M. A. Leddy from El Paso County, and David A.

Mills, Robert Turner, Clark Wheeler, Fred Lockwood, and David H. Nichols.⁶³ In 1894 Nelson O. McClees was elected secretary of state under the Republic Governor McIntyre, the only Populist to hold a position in the new state administration. In 1896 Eugene Engley was elected state senator, and he served until 1898. After 1900 few of these men were involved in Colorado politics in any capacity.

Only a handful of Populists remained active in the early stages of the Progressive movement—but not as members of the People's party. They again became Democrats or Republicans. Albert Nance, for example, was defeated in his bid for the position of Denver city treasurer in 1907.⁶⁴ Emmet Bromley returned to the house in 1905 and 1906.⁶⁵ John Crowley was a prominent state senator from 1905 to 1910.⁶⁶ Francis Carney served as lieutenant-governor from 1900 to 1902.⁶⁷ William J. Thomas served as justice of the Denver police court in 1901.⁶⁸ Hamilton Armstrong served as Denver chief of police in 1901 and 1909 and was sheriff in 1904.⁶⁹ And William F. Hynes, former Arapahoe County representative, was elected a Denver justice of the peace in 1901 and became a Denver county court judge in 1904, serving through 1905.⁷⁰

Although these men, Populists and ex-Populists, remained active in Colorado politics after the demise of the People's party, no evidence exists in available biographies to identify them with the Progressive impulse. Analysis of existing works on the Progressive movement in Colorado fails to link a single Populist name with any local or statewide reform movement. On the basis of such information—or lack of it—it would be difficult to theorize that Populist reformers became Progressive reformers. The Progressive administrations of John Shafroth and Elias Ammons between 1908 and 1914 perhaps indicate most clearly how completely the old Populists had vanished. Only one was present in the Shafroth administration—Lieutenant-Governor Stephen Fitzgarrald—and only John Crowley was left in the state legislature by 1908. In 1912 when Ammons was elected on the Democratic ticket, Fitzgarrald was reelected,

David A. Mills



⁶¹ Theodore Saloutos, "The Professors and the Populists," *Agricultural History*, XL (October 1966), p. 240.

⁶² Colorado, General Assembly, House, *Journal*, 10th sess., 1895, p. 4.

⁶³ Colorado, General Assembly, Senate, *Journal*, 10th sess., 1895, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Bromwell, "Colorado Portrait and Biography Index," III, 901.

⁶⁵ Colorado, General Assembly, House, *Journal*, 15th sess., 1905, p. 4.

⁶⁶ Colorado, General Assembly, Senate, *Journal*, 15th sess., 1905, p. 4; 16th sess., 1907, p. 4; 17th sess., 1909, p. 4.

⁶⁷ Bromwell, "Colorado Portrait and Biography Index," II, 544.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 1001.

⁶⁹ Jerome C. Smiley, *Semi-Centennial History of the State of Colorado*, 2 vols. (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1913), II, 350.

⁷⁰ Denver City Directory, 1902, p. 36; 1904, p. 31; 1905, p. 31.

Stephen Fitzgarrald



along with M. A. Leddy, former Populist state senator, who became state treasurer under Ammons.⁷¹ In 1912 the newly-formed Progressive Party ran not a single ex-Populist for state office.⁷² With the passing of Fitzgarrald and Leddy from the state scene in the wake of the Republican landslide in 1914, no more members of the old People's party appeared again.

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⁷¹ Ibid., 1913, p. 31.

⁷² Colin B. Goodykoontz, ed., *Papers of Edward P. Costigan Relating to the Progressive Movement in Colorado, 1902-1907* (Boulder: University of Colorado, 1941), pp. 206-07; Charles J. Bayard, "The Colorado Progressive Republican Split of 1912," *The Colorado Magazine*, XLV (Winter 1968), pp. 61-78.

Students, Populists, and a Sense of History: An Essay

BY ROBERT W. LARSON

During the spring of 1970 residents of Colorado were shocked when the oldest building on the campus of Colorado State University was burned to the ground. The fire that incinerated the famous campus landmark, affectionately known as "Old Main" to students and alumni, was presumably the work of arsonists, and, as it was set during a time of student agitation throughout the country, many associated the senseless act with that remarkable modern phenomenon the student movement. Coloradoans were shocked that such an act should occur in the peaceful countryside along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, but this shock was tempered for students of local history, who are aware of past violence in the beautiful Mountain State.



*Students
at Old Main
on a serene
day in
1885.*

Those familiar with the Populist movement in Colorado remember the turbulent spring of 1894, when in early June an army of 1,200 men deputized by the sheriff of El Paso County almost clashed with a large force of striking miners in the Cripple Creek area. During that bitter strike a governor was almost lynched. Davis H. Waite, Colorado's only Populist governor, was in a conference with representatives of the mine owners and miners' union on the campus of Colorado College in Colorado Springs when an angry mob of people, who opposed the strike, began to gather. Fortunately, the governor and a union official slipped quietly out by a back door, or there probably would have been a most sensational incident of campus violence. The growth of Populism and severe economic hardship, two interrelated developments, had caused these dangerous tensions in Colorado and in other parts of the Rocky Mountain region. Earlier, in March of 1894, the state militia under the command of Governor Waite almost had fired upon an army of special deputies in Denver guarding the fire and police commissioners of the city, who had refused to be removed by the governor in the famous "city hall war." In the Territory of New Mexico several years earlier a group of small Hispano farmers and ranchers organized a society of night riders called the White Caps, or *Gorras Blancas*, to prevent Anglo ranchers from encroaching upon their community land grant in San Miguel County. The *Gorras*, who cut fences and burned barns, were among the organizers of the first People's party in the territory.

The inclination of historians of American reform to compare the student movement of today with the Populist movement of the nineties is naturally a very strong one, particularly in Colorado. But the now almost monotonous student query about what relevance any historical comparison has is cause for hesitation. One need only recall C. Vann Woodward's admonition to historians, during the national meeting of the American Historical Association in 1969, that their discipline is no longer meaningful to growing numbers of students. The nationwide drop in history enrollments, which he cited, seems solid evidence of a significant loss of interest. Some historians attribute this decline in popularity to the way the subject is being presented. Historians must relate the past to the present, they insist. History must constitute a useable past. Without carrying this thesis to its ultimate conclusion, which would result in total degeneration of disinterested historical scholarship, even as an ideal, it is possible that an analysis of the outstanding characteristics of the

Populist crusade in the Rocky Mountain area will provide some insight into the current student rebellion.

The similarities between the two movements are remarkable in many ways. Both students of today and Populists of yesteryear have opposed bigness. The so-called military-industrial complex of which the late President Dwight D. Eisenhower first spoke, has generated frenzied action among many student activists, who see this concentration of power as one of the major threats to human progress. The Populists also had their grand menace in an industrial-financial complex made up of railroad barons, manufacturers, and influential New York bankers with international connections. Both groups felt a strong disenchantment with government per se. The alienation of students of today with the processes of government was more than matched by the Populists, to whom many historians, indeed, trace the origins of modern alienation in America. The Populists in their national convention in Omaha in 1892 passed a resolution unique in political conventions, stating that no government official at any level should ever sit in a future Populist convention. And yet the Populists, like the students, recognized government as a potential instrument of change. Both students and Populists believed in greater popular participation in government. The agrarian radicals of the nineties certainly equaled any efforts on behalf of participatory democracy by the Students for a Democratic Society with their intensive campaign to bring about direct legislation and the direct election of senators.

Because choice of dress can be indicative of social attitudes, the similarities between the dress of the Populists and the student left of today are of interest. But while the tattered overalls and faded shirts of the Populists were a necessary result of their poverty, the similarly ragged appearance of many militant students today seems to be not only a bold new life style, but perhaps an indication of a deep desire to join symbolically with those who have not yet become part of a society of superfluous material goods, like the one to which most of their parents belong. So, in a crowd, Populists and student militants might look much alike. Nevertheless, if the Populists and students could talk, they would find the nature of their goals far different. The Populist was essentially seeking quantity—he liked what there was in American society and wanted more of it. He wanted his fair share. He wanted the economic system that existed to work to his advantage more than it did. The student does not like what he sees in American society, and

desires far-reaching change in quality, rather than quantity. Thus, although there are distinct parallels in style between the angry reformers of the 1890s and the angry reformers of the 1960s, there are important differences in the substance of their grievances. But in the intensity of their anger and in their absolute determination to affect significantly the political reality of their respective times, the Populists and the students are bound together. One thinks of a wheel that has again turned round to the same stubborn spoke, while the world has changed as the wheel turned.

When the struggling, poor farmers of the West and Midwest shook their fists angrily at the establishment, the overwhelming tragedies of two major world wars had not yet lessened the belief of men that they could influence their own destinies. The deeper sense of bitterness that at times seems pervasive among the militant students may well be due to a feeling of profound hopelessness. In comparing Populists and today's students one is immediately aware of the great disparity in the ages of the two groups. A generation gap did not separate the Populists from their opponents. Governor Waite was sixty-seven years old when he took office and Mary Elizabeth Lease, the hard-bitten Kansas farm mother who once told farmers "to raise more hell and less corn," was well over thirty. Another difference between modern student activists and Populists is their method of protest. Populists generally forsook direct confrontation, preferring traditional political participation, wherever possible, to advance their reforms. The instances of violence cited earlier were, in general, the result of aggressive acts inflicted upon them. Governor Waite may have earned his nickname "Bloody Bridles" by uttering in a famous speech that it was "better, infinitely better, that blood should flow to the horses' bridles rather than our liberties should be destroyed," but he added with emphasis in the same speech that the weapons he had in mind were the "argument and the ballot." The student movement, on the other hand, was weaned on non-political methods, and only reluctantly has it moved to political efforts within the elective system. There is no unanimous commitment to nonviolence among the student left.

The program of reform presented by the Populists was a very specific one, while the student movement thus far has refused to limit its objectives to specific, attainable goals. This fact constitutes both a strength and a weakness of the movement. Always open to new causes and new ideas, the students have found their ultimate goals for American society difficult

to pin down in any but the most nebulous manner. Then too, the Populists possessed a measure of patience. They waited twenty-one years before two of their demands, the graduated income tax and the direct election of senators, became amendments to the Constitution. Today's youth regards all injustice as already having continued longer than is tolerable. Having grown up in a world where their material needs were quickly satisfied, they refuse to accept the fact that political and social needs may take longer to satisfy. If it can be effectively channeled, however, the impatience of youth with war and injustice may prove yet to be their greatest contribution to human progress.

Of all the differences in the nature of their grievances and in methods used to bring change, the most significant difference between the Populists and the student reformers is their attitude toward the American political system. Perhaps still looking back to the country of their fathers and grandfathers, the Populists, despite their bitterness at the unjustness of certain aspects of American life, still regarded America's way as the best available and well worth preserving. Populists organized their own political party and vigorously fought to gain power, in order to bring about change through constitutional political processes. Although characterized in the eastern press as dangerous anarchists, the agrarian reformers convened their 1892 national convention on the Fourth of July and authorized the maximum number of delegates who could attend to be 1,776. Among the student reformers there is a decided ambivalence about political participation. Even when acting in a political way, an undercurrent of thought seems to regard the American political and economic system as bankrupt. But in the aftermath of the decision to send American troops into Cambodia, the concern and frustration of students was so deep and widespread that almost with one voice they turned to the political system for a response, and, perhaps to their own surprise, found their intensive lobbying in Washington to be most effective. The dangers connected with bypassing the political system are very real. The emergence of a radical right reaction to the students is more than just a possibility, not only among the general population but also among the burgeoning student population. Students and their allies do not constitute a majority in this country, and many would argue that radical student action has already become self-defeating.

The Populist era provides proof that the current student rebellion is not a total departure from the American tradition. To know this and to realize that, historically, the dreams of

reformers in American life have frequently been absorbed into the political mainstream may or may not seem to make this historical comparison worthwhile. History does not repeat itself; therefore, it cannot tell us exactly what decisions to make. Even if men of the same characteristics and ideals were present, the same circumstances are not. Both men and the situations in which they find themselves required to act shift continually.

The study of history also presents frustrations by providing the student with endless examples of how the solving of a great problem only brought new and more persistent ones along with the solution. But this is not to say that some choices are not infinitely better than others. Man, the most rational creature of all, is always faced with a greater or lesser number of choices, and history significantly can help him to evolve principles to apply to those choices. John F. Kennedy once spoke of the importance of having a sense of history; and, indeed, the disciples of Clio feel that their discipline is the most meaningful of all for those who want change, because history is, after all, the story of change.

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The Nims and Czar Incidents in the Denver Press

BY DWIGHT L. SMITH

From the early spring in 1889 when Frank C. Kendrick and Frank Mason Brown set a survey stake at Grand Junction, Colorado, through the summer of the next year, the newspapers of Denver excitedly followed the activities of the Denver, Colorado Cañon, and Pacific Railroad Company. Given the problems of communication, and even considering the gratuitous editorial trimmings that accompanied the accounts of the press, the coverage was pretty good. A reliable and accurate account of the Denver-based DCC&PRR survey of the Colorado River could easily be written from the detailed reports appearing in the *Denver Republican*, the *Rocky Mountain News*, and the *Denver Times*. In a couple of instances, however, in order to scoop the competition, perhaps tempted by an urge to be sensational, or handicapped because sufficient information was not immediately available, what a paper reported was distorted or fabricated. These occasions brought denunciations and charges from the other papers.

The considerable amount of publicity that attended the John Wesley Powell explorations, of 1869 and afterwards, in the Colorado River country fired numerous schemes and ideas to exploit the potential of the Southwest. Since Powell had navigated the river itself, civil engineers imaginatively projected a low grade railroad along the river. Such a line would open Colorado and the western base of the Rockies to the Pacific. Nothing less than the economic development of the whole area would be possible if such an engineering triumph could be accomplished.

S. S. Harper, a northern Arizona prospector, had watched the survey for the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad push over rugged mountains projecting westward to San Diego, California. Not knowing of the Powell expeditions and having only a limited knowledge of the Colorado River, he, nevertheless,



The DCC&P survey in 1889.

envisioned a line along the river. He suggested the idea to Frank Mason Brown, a successful Denver real estate businessman who wanted to invest in a scheme of some sort. Harper's idea and Brown's money for an engineering reconnaissance inspired the formation of the DCC&PRR company on March 25, 1889.¹

They planned a survey, hoping for a favorable report that would interest a syndicate in financing the construction of such a road. Three days later Kendrick, a Denver mining engineer, commenced the survey of the Grand (Colorado) River at Grand Junction. His assignment was to record data on the river for some 160 miles to the mouth of the Green River in southeastern Utah. He reached this location seven weeks later, on May 4, 1889.² From here the main survey party was to take over.

Frank M. Brown, president of the DCC&PRR, and Robert Brewster Stanton, a civil and mining engineer whose accomplishments included construction of the Georgetown Loop or Devil's Gate Viaduct in Colorado, headed up the party of sixteen. They chose to embark on the Green River at Green River Station in Utah where the Denver and Rio Grande Railway crossed the river because of the relative ease of down-river navigation from this point to the mouth of the Green.

¹ Robert Brewster Stanton, "Exploration and Survey of the Canyons of the Colorado River of the West, 1889 and 1890," manuscript, New York Public Library, 22n. This is Stanton's official report to the DCC&PRR Company.

² For Kendrick's journal, see Helen J. Stiles, "Down the Colorado in 1889," *The Colorado Magazine*, XLI (Summer 1964), pp. 225-46.

Accident-prone, the expedition moved down the Green and the Colorado, losing cooking utensils and supplies and nearly all of the provisions. Clothing and bedding were frequently soaked; two boats were totally destroyed, and the others sustained serious damage. Disaster came in early July after the expedition plunged into Marble Canyon. President Brown drowned when his boat upset. A few days later two more met the same fate. Under the leadership of Stanton it was decided to quit the river until more adequate preparations could be made. The party climbed out of the gorge and returned to Denver.³

On December 10, 1889, Stanton's party of twelve with re-designed equipment and improved safety devices was back on the river at the mouth of Crescent Creek, a short distance above Dandy Crossing, Hite, Utah. Nearly three weeks earlier, the *Denver Times* had published a lengthy article announcing and previewing the new effort, reviewing the first expedition, and including portrait sketches and biographical remarks about some of the members of the new expedition.⁴

With that report, however, reliable coverage by the *Times* seemed to cease. After the Stanton party emerged from the river at Lee's Ferry, Arizona, two days before Christmas, the paper carried an account of the Denver, Colorado Cañon, and Pacific Railroad Company survey to date. Appearing in its Christmas Day issue and labeled as "special to The Times," it was approximately correct in its story but inaccurate in its detail. In a scrapbook collection of miscellaneous clippings, Stanton later commented that "this whole letter in 'The Times' is a lie from beginning to end."⁵ It was not until about four weeks later that a Christmas letter from Stanton at Lee's Ferry reached the *Denver Republican* with details of the progress he had made.⁶

Perhaps to maintain its lead over its Denver rivals in reporting the expedition to its readers, on January 22 the *Times* again printed "trustworthy and reliable information." This was based on a letter which Stanton purportedly was able to send out of Marble Canyon to Lee's Ferry; from there it was dis-

³ For a convenient summary of the story of the expedition, see Dwight L. Smith, "The Engineer and the Canyon," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XXVIII (July 1960), pp. 262-73. Stanton's own narrative is published in Smith, *Down the Colorado* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965). Stanton's field notes have been edited for publication by Smith and C. Gregory Crampton. The progress of the survey was followed in the newspapers, especially in those of Denver.

⁴ *Denver Times*, November 22, 1889, p. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, December 25, 1889, p. 1. Canyon Scrapbook, Robert B. Stanton Papers, New York Public Library, p. 28.

⁶ *Denver Republican*, January 19, 1890, p. 3.

patched to his wife in Denver. Stanton's scrapbook comment was a caustic "it was written in the Denver office."⁷

This was all mild, by comparison to the irresponsibility in which the *Times* was soon to indulge. On New Year's Day Frederick A. Nims, the official photographer of the expedition, had an accident. He broke one of the bones in his leg just above the ankle and sustained other injuries in a fall from a high place where he was imprudently trying to take some pictures. He was in considerable pain and discomfort. In a heroic effort Nims was carried up out of the canyon on a stretcher and taken by wagon to the nearest rail station. He found it necessary to telegraph friends in Denver for funds to cover his travel and other expenses. After he regained sufficient strength he returned to Denver.⁸

According to the Tuesday, January 28, evening *Times*, Nims had written a short note to a friend in Denver a week earlier saying that he had been "badly injured" and "nearly killed. . . . I think three of the other men were killed. I have been crazy since then, so they tell me." The purpose of the letter was to request funds for expenses of lodging and travel. Six days later, he telegraphed for funds. On this slim evidence, the *Times* screamed:

THE FATE OF STANTON'S PARTY

Letters and Telegrams Received From a
Member of the Party That Show the
Terrible Danger Encountered On
the River.

A Report of the Sad End of a Handful of
Courageous Men
The Latest Intelligence Shows That One-
Fourth of the Entire Party Has
Perished in the Gloom of
the Marble Canon.

One of the Survivors Bereft of Reason
for Three Weeks.⁹

The next morning the *Rocky Mountain News* charged the *Times* with foisting "a horrible hoax" off on the public. "The

heated imagination of a feverish patient" had given birth to "baseless sensation" and rumor, for Stanton's men were, in fact, safe. The *News* had checked the *Times* report with Mrs. Stanton, who was much amused by it all. She had letters of January 3 and 4 from her husband that the expedition was progressing smoothly. Stanton explained the unfortunate Nims accident and then commented: "Don't let the papers get hold of this, as it is no fatality to the expedition and they might exaggerate it." The *News* further included a dispatch from Winslow, Arizona, of the day before, giving an accurate account of the accident, the condition of Nims, and the continued progress of the expedition.¹⁰

The story of the accident in the *Denver Republican* of the same day was based upon the Winslow dispatch. More cautiously it added that "two more of the party are said to be drowned, but definite information has not been received on that point." The *Republican* reprinted the Nims letter from the *Times* but explained that the *Times* had carried it "under flaming headlines of a misleading character." The *Republican* blamed the *Times* for irresponsible journalism, for publishing the letter without checking with Mrs. Stanton. To allay the fears and apprehension of relatives and friends of the expedition's personnel who lived in Denver, she released excerpts of two of her husband's letters. One of Stanton's comments anticipated what a stir the news of the accident might have made: "Now do not let this get to the papers, as it will worry them, and they would think it all on account of the canon, when in fact it might have happened in Denver."¹¹

Even with all of this, the *Times* was not convinced. It insisted there was indeed basis for what it had reported the previous day. In the Wednesday evening edition it again asserted:

STANTON'S ACCIDENT A REALITY

Telegrams Received By "The Times" Con-
firm the Previous Reports and Point
to the Probable Loss of a Whole
Boat's Crew.

* * *

Graphic Accounts Received by Wire
Last Night and This Morning.
Doubts of Nims's Sanity Dispelled by the Accumulation
of Facts. . . .
Interviews With Local People Who Are
Informed on the Matter.¹²

⁷ *Denver Times*, January 22, 1890, p. 3. Canyon Scrapbook, p. 28.

⁸ For the Nims account of his work for the survey and of the accident, see Frederick A. Nims, *The Photographer and the River, 1889-1890*, ed. Dwight L. Smith (Santa Fe: Stagecoach Press, 1967).

⁹ *Denver Times*, January 28, 1890, p. 1. Stanton's daughter, the late Mrs. Anne Stanton Burchard, frequently recalled in interviews with the author how as a small girl she heard the "EXTRA" cry of the newsboys and was puzzled by it. Her mother had received word from Stanton himself about the safety of the party.

¹⁰ *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), January 29, 1890, p. 5.

¹¹ *Denver Republican*, January 29, 1890, p. 1.

¹² *Denver Times*, January 29, 1890, p. 1.

Another salvo was fired in the Thursday morning *Republican*. "Its brutal hoax," referring to the account in the Tuesday evening *Times*, was a "Cruel and Foolish Sensation Created by an Unreliable Evening Paper. . . . Ordinarily," it blasted on, "a fake by that paper is unworthy of even passing notice," but this bit of sensationalism, "combining cruelty with the usual stupidity, was so outrageous" as to excite everyone's indignation. Even in the face of this, according to the *Republican*, the Wednesday evening *Times* not only failed to retract this "flimsy tissue of misstatements" but even reprinted them "with sundry additions calculated to cause distress" to the relatives of the expedition members. The families were misquoted and a structure was raised "with only a shadow of foundation in truth." Though Mrs. Stanton and others did not believe the *Times* coverage of the Nims accident and its ramifications, by continuing "its imbecile chatter the *Times* may succeed in causing them the amount of anguish it has mapped out as their duty to undergo."¹³

On Saturday morning, February 1, submitting further dispatches from Stanton to his wife, the *Republican* concluded that this fresh evidence of the safety of the expedition could only cause consternation in the office of the *Times*, "where, inspired by malice, stupidity or lust for truant nickels, a most brutal and outrageous falsehood was devised and printed." The rival paper was declared to be "utterly unreliable and without any trace of conscience." At last "the public had awakened to the fact that it was being swindled, that Mrs. Stanton was being tortured, that Mr. Stanton was being maligned, that the whole affair was a sell without one redeeming feature."

The *Republican* concluded the attack with scathing contempt. "No one expects the *Times* to utter a word in apology or defense. No one would heed either. The sheet has deliberately brought upon itself such odium that its statements are regarded as absolutely worthless."¹⁴

That evening the *Times* reported the return of Nims to Denver and his account of the expedition. Also included was other news from Stanton himself about the safety and health of the members of the surveying party. The nearest to any acknowledgment of the charges made by the rival newspaper about the coverage given the Nims affair in the *Times* came in an editorial in the same issue. "No one is more rejoiced" to receive the good news of Nims and the Stanton party than the *Times*. That Nims in his telegram to the paper "expressed the belief" that



three men were killed "was more than sufficient to cause general apprehension and alarm. He was in a much better position to know the facts than any one in Denver, and undoubtedly had good reason for his belief. It is a great consolation to learn that he was mistaken and that the members of the party are all safe and well." No rationalization was offered for the way in which the paper had stretched and fabricated other details from sheer imagination.¹⁵

After going through the Grand Canyon portion of the river, the Stanton party emerged at Peach Springs, Arizona, on Sunday, March 2. The next evening the *Times* published the details in the form of an interview of J. D. Selken, the proprietor of a Peach Springs stage line, with Stanton. Since the information it contained was approximately accurate, it was not questioned. Interestingly enough, however, when Stanton read it later he labeled it as a fabrication. "This telegram is untrue. Selken never had an interview with me."¹⁶

In other details which followed the interview, knowledgeable readers might have detected other misleading or incorrect information. In the roster of the Stanton group, for example, were included two names: Harry McDonald, who had left the party about three weeks before and some 150 miles upriver when it was in the Grand Canyon, and John B. Probst, who never had been a member of the expedition.¹⁷ The *Republican* and the *News* either did not catch these discrepancies or regarded them as insignificant and unworthy of note.¹⁸

The flap about the *Times*'s coverage of the Nims accident

¹³ *Denver Republican*, January 30, 1890, p. 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, February 1, 1890, p. 1.

¹⁵ *Denver Times*, February 1, 1890, p. 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, March 3, 1890, p. 1. Canyon Scrapbook, p. 36.

¹⁷ *Denver Times*, March 3, 1890, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Denver Republican*, March 4, 1890, p. 1.

was forgotten as the papers continued to give adequate and generally accurate accounts of the progress of Stanton's outfit down the river. On March 23, however, the morning *Rocky Mountain News* printed a story that was sure to set Denver tongues wagging. Headlining Stanton as the "Czar of Colorado," whom his men declared to be "Incapable, Arbitrary and Tyrannical Beyond All Measure," it further asserted that he "Ordered Subordinates About for the Purpose of Seeing Them Suffer." The coverage given the expedition thus far, it continued, created the impression to the average reader that it was a one-man endeavor, or that his companions made no significant contribution to the enterprise.

"They were along all right, lugged heavy boats over rocks, carried disabled companions up precipices, lived on repulsive fare, and otherwise bore the heat and burden of the day." It was not surprising that Stanton gave them little publicity because, in addition to their normal duties, they were expected to rectify "the blunders" and to endure "the insults" of their commander. Stanton gave the impression that he was "a bold and daring leader . . . valiantly threading his way through all manner of perils solely by his marvellous [*sic*] skill and energy and dauntless courage."

"Sub rosa whisperings" were beginning to circulate in Denver bringing "a woeful shattering of the idol." According to some of the mutterings of the men who just returned from the trip, "Explorer Stanton suffered exceedingly from an aggravated attack of the big head" and had alienated the entire party. Enough was learned from these men to determine that Stanton was considered to be "not only a dictatorial autocrat, but also . . . in some respects . . . positively incapable." Stanton had lost the confidence of his men who now ignored his orders "by tacit consent among themselves, so far as could be done and still let him retain the office of commander."¹⁹

The rival *Republican* set out immediately to check the allegations made by the *News* in its "Czar" charges. Since the *News* gave as its source of information the men who had recently returned from the trip, the *Republican* decided to check with them. The next morning its reply was headlined:

SHOTS AT LONG RANGE

The Attempt to Lower the Standing and Character of Stanton.

¹⁹ *Rocky Mountain News*, March 23, 1890, p. 4.

²⁰ *Denver Republican*, March 24, 1890, p. 9.

Some Anonymous Individual Gets a
Susceptible Ear and Fills It to
the Brim With Falsehoods—The Re-
sult—An Unjust and Silly Attack—

Although they proclaimed the *News's* attack "hardly worth notice," his friends "deem it but fair to stand between the absent explorer and such cowardly assaults." The accusations of czarism were labeled as completely false, "the result of anonymous malice working upon stupidity." It was ridiculous to label Stanton as a "tyrant," and to declare him as an incompetent engineer "simply displays ignorance." James S. Hogue, one of the men who had recently quit the party and who was "at full liberty to speak as he pleased," characterized the charges as "a lie from beginning to end. . . without a shadow of foundation . . . the meanest sort of abuse."



The chief engineer of the 1890 survey, waiting for the rest of the party below Cataract Creek.

Hogue speculated that A. B. Twining, another former member of the expedition, was the source of the charges. He described Twining as an "English gentleman" who did not adjust well to the work and hardships entailed in the engineering survey of the Colorado River and who had labeled it as slave labor. The *News* article concluded there was no reason to question Hogue's refutation of the "Czar" blast.²⁰

Twining, himself, meanwhile, had reacted to the "czar" piece in the *Rocky Mountain News* by writing a letter, in which he said that it was "unfair" to attack Stanton in his absence. While "doubtless there is a substantiation of fact upon which such statements might be made . . . the greater part is untrue. Individually and personally, no doubt, each man thought he had at the time causes for complaint on certain occasions, but now that they are past and gone they seem small and trivial, and should be forgotten in the feeling of general satisfaction at the successful ending of the expedition."

When Twining learned that he had been credited by Hogue as "the inspiration of the original screed," he was surprised and indignant and gave "a total denial" to it. Stanton himself should be the source of news of the expedition. Then Twining indulged in some mudslinging against Hogue. Leaving no stone unturned, the *News* elicited a further statement from Hogue that he now felt he was mistaken about Twining.²¹ With that, the charges and countercharges ceased.

The Stanton party successfully traversed the Colorado through the canyon country and left the river at Needles, California. They returned to Denver in late March for a rest and supplies. The *News*, in contrast to its recent Czar innuendo, reported that "the party are all in excellent health and spirits and enjoyed their wild, adventurous trip." Later Stanton resumed the balance of the survey to the mouth of the river. This journey was reported in the Denver papers in a straightforward manner with no reference or hint to the controversial coverage that had attended the Nims and Czar incidents.²²

Indeed, except for the sensational reporting of the *Times* on the Nims accident and the character-smearing Czar charges in the *Rocky Mountain News*, the history of the entire expedition might well be constructed from their pages and those of the *Republican*.

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²¹ Ibid., March 25, 1890, p. 2.

²² *Rocky Mountain News*, March 25, 1890, p. 1.

Captain Baker and the San Juan Humbug

BY VIRGINIA McCONNELL

The year was 1860. From Gregory Gulch to Pound Diggings and Oro City, Colorado's "gold belt" was staked, panned, sluiced, and cradled. But the majority of the gold seekers, who had left home behind, many having sold all that they owned to outfit themselves for the venture, had little to show for their effort except a shirt full of lice and a growing awareness that they might "see the elephant" but not riches. They were in a strange land, much of it a wilderness, but they were not fearful of pushing deeper into it—even four hundred miles farther to the San Juan country, a new El Dorado reported by Charles Baker.

Baker may have been the pied piper, the shamin of the San Juan, but he discovered neither the mountains nor the gold in them. Indeed, the area centering on Durango, Colorado, is said to have had more prehistoric Indian homesites than any other comparable location.¹ Spaniards were sufficiently interested in the lands north of their settlements to explore the San Juan country by 1765, when a party under Juan Maria de Rivera penetrated the region, crossing the La Plata Mountains to the Gunnison River.² As Spanish missions were established in California and a land route from New Spain became desirable, the 1776 expedition of Escalante and Dominguez followed generally Rivera's route to the Gunnison from Santa Fe.³ Later the Old Spanish Trail, which was used by traders between Santa Fe and California, used a similar access into southwestern Colorado without going on into the mountains.

¹ I. F. Flora and Helen Sloan Daniels, *Sherds and Points: Durango Amateur Archaeology Story* (Durango: The Durango News, Inc., 1940). Tree-ring specimens have dated regional sites at c. 600 A.D. These sites were developed by the San Juan Chapter of the Colorado Archaeological Society, the Reverend Homer E. Root, and Earl H. Morris of the Carnegie Institution.

² Alfred Barnaby Thomas, "Spanish Explorations in Colorado," *The Colorado Magazine*, I (November 1924), p. 297.

³ "Diary and Travels of Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Fray Silvestre Velez de Escalante," in W. R. Harris, *The Catholic Church in Utah* (Salt Lake City: Intermountain Catholic Press, 1909), p. 131.

These trails from Santa Fe followed the Rio Chama north from its junction with the Rio Grande del Norte through Abiquiú and the Tierra Amarilla country. Abiquiú, which was to figure prominently in the activities of Baker and other San Juan gold seekers, had been settled in the mid-eighteenth century with Genizaros.⁴ By the 1820s Abiquiú had become an important trading center, as is indicated by its population of 3,600—equal to that of Taos and exceeded in New Mexico only by Santa Fe and Santa Cruz near Espanola.⁵ Following the annexation of New Mexico to the United States, the settlement was a military post when Major William Gilpin and his men were stationed there in 1846 to counter Navajo raids. In yet another role Abiquiú became a Ute trading post in the 1850s.⁶ Access to this hub of frontier activity from the plains of present-day Colorado was by the Trappers' Trail over Sangre de Cristo Pass just north of La Veta Pass and down through the San Luis Valley, Costilla, Questa, and Taos.

By 1860 the territory along the Trappers' Trail was scarcely an unknown wilderness. Through the first half of the nineteenth century the area had become increasingly well traveled and settled. After Mexico attained its independence, trade between the United States and Santa Fe expanded, using this route on occasion, and beaver trapping came into its heyday along the Rio Grande and the Chama. The trappers used the Spanish route to the San Juan and worked on northward even to the Gunnison River.⁷ To augment commerce, the United States government appropriated funds in the 1850s for road improvements in New Mexico, with Captain John Macomb in charge, one of these roads being from the junction of the two rivers northwest to Abiquiú.⁸

During this same period Hispanos were settling the San Luis Valley despite hostile reactions from the Utes. To protect settlers and travelers in this section, still part of northern New Mexico, Fort Massachusetts was established, being replaced by Fort Garland in 1858, the year of the Cherry Creek gold discoveries.

⁴ Genizaros were Moqui Indian captives, who were rescued by Spaniards from hostile tribes and who were to serve as a buffer between the hostiles and Spanish or Pueblo settlements. Adolph F. Bandelier, "Final Report," *Bureau of American Ethnology Ninetieth Annual Report, 1897-98*, pt. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), p. 54.

⁵ Richard E. Ahlborn, "The Penitente Moradas of Abiquiú," *Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology Bulletin* 250 (N.p., n.d.), pp. 128-29. In *New Mexico State Records Center*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁷ DeWitt C. Peters, *The Life and Adventures of Kit Carson* (New York: W. R. C. Clark and Co., 1858), p. 70. Antoine Robidoux crossed Cochetopa Pass into the Gunnison River.

⁸ William H. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 362.

In the ensuing period personnel of the fort, San Luis farmers delivering food supplies, and traders probably relayed to the gold seekers tales about minerals in the San Juan region and routes to it—routes used by Indians, fur trappers, and explorers such as Marcy, Frémont, Gunnison, and Macomb.

The Pikes Peak miners were fortified also with an array of published reports and guidebooks. One of these, *Guide to the Kansas Gold Mines at Pike's Peak*, printed in 1859, contained an address delivered by William Gilpin in Kansas City in the preceding year.⁹ Gilpin waxed eloquent in his description of the "metalliferous band of metals"¹⁰ which he had observed during his military assignments in the San Juan area. The Sierra la Plata, a southwesterly extension of the San Juan Mountains, he described as being a "veritable arcana [mystery] of the Mountain Formation and its metalliferous elements."¹¹ However, the *Santa Fe Gazette* credited itself with bringing the San Juan region to the attention of prospectors with a journal which it printed in its columns in the spring of 1860. This journal contained the notes of Albert Pfeiffer and a Mr. Mercure, who had spent several weeks in the San Juan country and who gave "a description of the region through which they traveled, making mention of many gold deposits that came under their observation."¹² This journal is, indeed, a very plausible source from which Baker and others who might have been in Santa Fe could have learned about the San Juan.

Although Kit Carson had warned of the perils of prospectors' trespassing into Indian lands,¹³ some of those swarming the mountains in the summer of 1860 were not to be deterred. A Captain McKee with thirty-six men from California Gulch explored the tributaries of the Rio Grande in July and August.¹⁴ And in the same month another group, led by Richard Sopris, left Denver to investigate the lands from the Blue River, down the Grand (Colorado) River and its tributaries, and into the territory lying between the Grand and Green rivers. They returned via the San Juan Mountains. D. C. Collier, later a Central City newspaper editor, sent lengthy reports from this expedition to the *Rocky Mountain News* with exciting tales of diamonds and

⁹ William Gilpin, "Pike's Peak and the Sierra San Juan," in *Guide to the Kansas Gold Mines at Pike's Peak, from Notes of Capt. J. W. Gunnison . . .* (1859; reprint ed., Denver: Nollie Mume, 1952), pp. 21-40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹² Quoted in the *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), December 4, 1860, p. 2. Pfeiffer, later an Indian agent at Pagosa Springs, is memorialized with a bronze plaque for having won Pagosa's hot springs for the Utes in a hand-to-hand duel with a Navajo.

¹³ *Rocky Mountain News*, November 11, 1859, p. 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, August 27, 1862, p. 2.

gold to be had for the taking in the San Juan region.¹⁵ Such tantalizing reports must have abetted Charles Baker's own plans.

July had seen the beginning of his venture also. California Gulch was the starting point. That much is certain, but wonderful is the variety of accounts which have been printed about what occurred in the next year of his activity and even, indeed, who Baker was. He has been surnamed Charles and John with one report solving the problem by referring to them as brothers.¹⁶ Hubert Howe Bancroft, calling him John, stated that he gathered from a "few" to one thousand or five thousand men to lead to the new mines¹⁷—a happy vagueness which reflects some of the confusion of facts. A mining company's prospectus in 1883 was closer to the truth in saying that the party numbered "about 200 men from Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Pacific Coast."¹⁸ Historian Marshall Sprague seems to have a reasonable explanation that Baker, a Southerner, went out to find the diggings for the support of the South in the Civil War and that he planned to use Santa Fe as a Southern supply center.¹⁹

A reliable source on what took place is the account by two people who had roles in some of his activities—Mrs. Thomas Pollock and S. B. Kellogg, the latter having arrived in California Gulch in 1860 with H. A. W. Tabor:

In 1860 California Gulch was swarming with placer miners. Among them were S. B. Kellogg & Co. . . . Also Charles Baker, a restless, adventurous, impecunious man who was always in search of something new. He entertained extravagant theories about the riches of the country beyond and at last prevailed upon S. B. Kellogg and F. R. Rice to outfit him for a prospecting expedition. He set out in July 1860 to explore the San Juan country—meaning the country along the San Juan river. Six men went with him, of whom three were Cunningham, Bloomfield, and Mason. The names of the others are forgotten. Baker reported to Kellogg from time to time and finally that they had found diggings that paid twenty-five cents to the pan.²⁰

Possibly Kellogg's own memory failed him concerning the number of Baker's companions; for a Golden, Colorado, newspaper reported in September 1860 that the party numbered

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, September 21, 1860, p. 2; September 28, 1860, p. 2; October 2, 1860, p. 2; October 5, 1860, p. 2; October 11, 1860, p. 2.

¹⁶ Raymond H. Cooper, "A History of San Juan County," *Pioneers of the San Juans*, issued by the Sarah Platt Decker Chapter, N.S.D.A.R., Durango, Colorado (Denver: Big Mountain Press, 1961), IV, 12.

¹⁷ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Nevada, Colorado, and Wyoming, 1540-1888* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890), p. 495.

¹⁸ *Prospectus, Constitution and By-Laws of the Washington and La Plata Mining Company* (Washington: Joseph Bart, 1883), p. 6.

¹⁹ Marshall Sprague, *The Great Gates* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964), pp. 177-78.

²⁰ *Rocky Mountain News*, November 11, 1877, p. 4. This account is repeated in Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, 4 vols. (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Co., 1889-95), II, 132-37.

twenty-one and added that the journey was much like the Sopris route.²¹ Baker gave his own account of his route and certain events in a letter written from Abiquiú to the *Santa Fe Gazette* on November 29, 1860:

I reached the Sierra La Plata range early in July, after having traced the "great central gold belt" for over three hundred miles. . . . The quartz leads re-appeared from Lake Fork of Gunnison's river, and near where it flows out of the mountains. This stream, contrary to the representations of map-makers, takes its rise far west in the Sierra La Plata range and for the first fifty miles flows north east . . . and near its source . . . will be found remunerative gold mines. After spending some time upon these streams, I ascended Lake Fork to its head and crossed the range to the head waters of the Rio de los Animos, which stream flows south into the Rio San Juan, taking its rise far north in the mountains. . . . In these mountains, on the waters of the Rio de los Animos are the gold mines discovered by myself and party in August last. They are extensive gulches and bar diggings, and I believe them to be richer than any mines hitherto discovered to the North-East of them. . . .

Much the greater part of the gold belt and nearly all of the tillable land is upon the southern slope of the mountains and not accessible from the North. Hence early in October I arrived at Abiquiú with a small party, in order to determine the practicability of reaching these mines from some central points on the frontier of New Mexico. In the absence of Mr. A. H. Pfeiffer, the Indian Agent, I met with a cordial reception from H. Mercure, who kindly furnished me with all the necessary information, and in ten days after we reached the mines, about one hundred and seventy-five miles distant from Abiquiú, over the only good practical road to this district of Country—organized in accordance with the usual mining customs—claimed a town site in a beautiful park in the center of the mining district, and organized it. Having accomplished the object of our mission, and the falling snow and scarcity of provisions warning us of the necessity of departing, a portion of my men returned directly to Abiquiú. A few others and myself went to San Miguel [sic], thence to the Dolores and Rio de los Marcos [Mancos]. Here learning that Mr. A. H. Pfeiffer had kindly consented to accompany Capt. Dodd's company in quest of me, I found them upon the Rio de los Animos, stopping at the base of the mountain in consequence of falling snow.

On the Rio de los Animos, at the mountains, and at the upper margin of a magnificently beautiful agricultural valley of great extent, is located Animos City, at present containing a population of from three to five hundred men. At the Pagoso (the great Boiling Spring) is claimed and organized the city of Pagoso, in the vicinity of which are many very fine agricultural valleys. On all the tributaries of the Rio San Juan, and upon the Rio San Juan itself, is to be found a large extent of arable lands.

There will not be less than twenty-five thousand Americans

²¹ *Western Mountaineer* (Golden), September 20, 1860, p. 2.

engaged in mining and agricultural pursuits upon the waters of the Rio San Juan within a year from the present writing, and perhaps double that number. Justice to New Mexico requires that the territory should be the direct beneficiary of the development of these mines, and I learn with regret that a movement is already on foot to divert the travel and commerce to a more northern channel, a movement alike prejudicial to New Mexico and injurious to the mines. If you desire the city of Santa Fe to be a mining metropolis, and a point upon a great national line of commerce, you occupy the natural position, but prompt and energetic action is necessary to secure it. You have to compete with capital, energy and men familiar with these things.

The establishment of a private mail from the mines to a connection with the United States mail, to be succeeded by a reliable express for the transmission of gold is an immediate necessity. It will be either by way of Denver City or by way of Santa Fe. The people of Santa Fe can say which route will be selected.

Very respectfully yours,
CHARLES BAKER²²

In addition to the data on routes, towns, and mining prospects, Baker's letter contains the name Charles, not John, thus clarifying the problem of his name, although it is possible, of course, that the entire name was assumed. The letter also reveals something of his qualities, for he could write both literately and persuasively, even with a ring somewhat akin to a missionary. And it is clear that his purpose was to promote a major venture, not simply his own chances of finding a gold mine. Perhaps he was, in fact, the servant of the Southern cause, for how else does one explain his concern that Santa Fe rather than Denver should benefit from the development of the San Juan? Surely, his repeated references to agricultural lands also implies a more far-reaching interest than a quick bonanza. Or possibly he, with Pfeiffer and Mercure, who would profit from the rush if it were directed past the trading post at Abiquiú, had conspired to generate a wave of immigrants.

In any case, the migration had started, as Baker's letter indicates. But who were the men at "Animos City" if he had left California Gulch with only a few, perhaps gathering some recruits en route? By October Denver newspaper accounts told of one group after another departing for the San Juan Mountains—a single party having as many as seventy-five men.²³ At Fort Garland Richard Sopris with sixteen men and a Dr. Arnold with another party decided to turn toward the San Juan mines. From Abiquiú Sopris wrote to his father in Denver that "reports were

very encouraging, and if they were properly supplied with pack animals, they felt confident of getting through without trouble." However, the newspaper, which reported the letter, continued:

Abiquiú is a miserable Mexican village with supplies, and the very worst starting point. . . . Taos, on the north, or Santa Fe, on the south, are either much better. They were obliged to send to Santa Fe for supplies. Unbolted flour was ten dollars per 100 lbs. Mr. S. describes the country as the most dreary, God-forsaken one he ever saw. He thinks it must be the one which was offered by his Satanic majesty to tempt the Savior, and that it was no wonder he refused it. A number of small parties had come in after them, and all had banded together for mutual protection, and organized an independent company, sixty or seventy strong, with which to penetrate the Navajoe country.²⁴

To the *Santa Fe Gazette* a John Ward gave additional detail about activities at Abiquiú:

Many experienced miners have been assembling at Abiquiú, and last week formed themselves into a company and started on a prospecting tour. . . . Pfeiffer and Mercure . . . gave them all the information they possessed in regard to the geography of the country, etc. T. H. Dodd, of Omaha, N. T., was chosen captain of the party, which is composed of about fifty men. Those who have gone out will, after having made observations, return and conduct the balance to the field of operations. A portion has been left at Abiquiú to take care of the stock, wagons and mining implements, with all of which they are well supplied.²⁵

Others, in the meantime, were wintering in Taos awaiting a spring entry to the mines,²⁶ while some had been to see for themselves already. H. C. Justice, heading toward Baker's diggings, stopped at Abiquiú on November 25 and met two of his former acquaintances among the sluice boxes, Eaton and Thomas, who "had been with Baker during all his explorations."²⁷ Eaton and Thomas reported to Justice that the main field was in Baker's Park (now the site of Silverton) and its environs, where eleven districts, each containing two hundred claims, were organized. Justice was urged to buy any of the claims, though they themselves had found nothing yet that would pay working. The ambitious group also had laid out three or four towns and had claimed the trail from Baker's Park to Abiquiú for a toll road.²⁸ Eaton and Thomas were leaving for Arizona for the winter, while Justice also eschewed the mountains to return to Denver. He concluded that better diggings would be

²⁴ Ibid., December 10, 1860, p. 2.

²⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, December 4, 1860, p. 2.

²⁶ Ibid., December 18, 1860, p. 2. See also *Canon City Times*, January 12, 1861, p. 5.

²⁷ *Rocky Mountain News*, January 30, 1861, p. 2. In this same story it was rumored that before leaving California Gulch the Baker group had sworn themselves to secrecy about any discoveries.

²⁸ The New Mexico State Archives has no record of this toll road company.

²² Quoted in *Rocky Mountain News*, January 21, 1861, p. 2.

²³ Ibid., October 15, 1860, p. 3; October 22, 1860, p. 3; October 29, 1860, p. 3; November 1, 1860, p. 2.

found in the spring and that Baker was honest, although his reports had been "grossly exaggerated."

By December the *Rocky Mountain News* recognized the dangers of a rush to the San Juan with winter at hand, but the enthusiasm was not to be dampened and other regional news sheets carried the banner for Baker.²⁹ The new El Dorado had so captured the region's attention that the governor of the abortive Jefferson Territory urged the immediate incorporation of the San Juan Mountains as well as the abrogation of Indian title to lands being settled.³⁰ In fact, more than one member of the legislature of this extralegal governmental body was preparing at the moment to depart for the San Juan country.

This pilgrimage, which often is referred to as the Baker Expedition, left Denver on December 14, 1860. The courage, confidence, and sheer audacity of this group with women and children, setting off for those remote mines in the onset of winter, remain, a century later, astonishing. But if the group had seen news reports which came into Denver in the following weeks, they might have canceled the journey. For on December 31 a writer with the initials "C.W." from Abiquiú sent a letter saying that a large group had gone to Baker's diggings to check them. They found a number of prospect holes, staked claims, a saw pit, and a "large hole" with a hundred-foot drainage ditch. This particular hole was reputed to have produced assays ranging from two dollars and a half down to thirty-five cents, but the investigators had had no success at all in prospecting. "C.W." also asserted that most of the men, including Sopris, who had been in "Animus City" had left, convinced that Baker himself was either deceived "or the most outrageous deceiver that ever lived."³¹ Shortly thereafter it was rumored, falsely as events proved, that Baker had been hanged by indignant followers.³²

In February a C. Wiltse, possibly the "C.W." of the earlier report, described an exploratory trip in the company of Alfred Sayre, Isaac Morse, Samuel Bosworth, and C. B. Black, Black being called a financial backer of Baker's original enterprise. Wiltse summed up their conclusions: "The San Juan is a humbug."³³ But simple fraud was only one hazard which faced the oncoming throng of gold seekers; for by that time of the winter



A rugged
mountain trail
near Baker's Park.

the mountains were buried in two feet of snow and Indians were showing evidence of imminent trouble.³⁴

Apparently as oblivious to these unpleasant forebodings as were the members of the Baker Expedition of December 14, promoters and suppliers continued to tout the San Juan. Express shipments to Abiquiú commenced from St. Vrain and Company's store in Denver,³⁵ while Hinkley and Company also promised express service.³⁶ The *Canon City Times*, meanwhile, reflected that town's hopes of becoming a jumping-off point and eagerly reported the progress on road building from Taos to the San Juan throughout the winter of 1861.³⁷ This two-hundred-mile piece of construction, claimed to have been undertaken by St. Vrain and Company,³⁸ seems to indicate that Baker's efforts for a toll road may have been abetted or taken over by others.

Despite the abundance of editorializing about the San Juan prospects, few reports of the Baker Expedition's progress came in. The Kellogg-Pollock account, written some years after the event, is therefore the most reliable source on what occurred:

In the fall Kellogg went to the states for his family and returned to Denver with them in November. On the fourteenth of December . . . they left Denver to join Baker, accompanied and followed by others; their party ranging at times from one hundred to three hundred persons. Among them were S. B. Kellogg, Henry Allen, Thomas Pollock, F. R. Rice, F. A. Nye, Mr. Heywood, Mr. Cunningham, and their families; Andrew Pee-dee, B. H. Eaton, Charles L. Hall, Mr. Arnold, Abner French, William Williams, and many others whose names are forgotten.³⁹

²⁹ See, for example, J. C. Remington's report in *Western Mountaineer*, December 13, 1860, p. 4. Remington claimed to have joined Baker's party in Taos and to have prospected Baker's diggings with a yield of one to fifteen cents of gold per pan.

³⁰ *Rocky Mountain News*, November 15, 1860, p. 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, January 17, 1861, p. 2.

³² *Ibid.*, January 29, 1861, p. 3.

³³ *Ibid.*, February 9, 1861, p. 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, February 24, 1861, p. 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, January 7, 1861, p. 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, January 10, 1861, p. 3.

³⁷ *Canon City Times*, February 2, 1861, p. 6; February 26, 1861, p. 2; April 5, 1861, p. 2. See also Wolfe Londoner, "Western Experiences and Colorado Mining Camps," *The Colorado Magazine*, VI (March 1929), p. 68.

³⁸ *Rocky Mountain News*, February 13, 1861, p. 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, November 11, 1877, p. 4.

E. H. Cooper, not identified as a member in this account, described later the journey as one of its members and added the name of J. C. Turner, as well as his own, to the roster.⁴⁰ Of this group many represented the relatively solid citizenry of Colorado's pioneers. Especially the name of Henry Allen and also that of Kellogg appear frequently in the town company records of Auraria and Denver City. And several of the argonauts were to become San Juan settlers in the 1870s—for example, French, Cunningham, Turner, Kellogg, and Pollock.

Eaton, who may have been the same individual encountered earlier in Abiquiú, was to become "the plodding father of irrigation"⁴¹ in Weld County and a governor of Colorado. He had come to Colorado in 1859 from Ohio.

Tom Pollock, a more colorful figure, arrived in Denver from New Mexico in 1859 and advertised in the first issue of the *Rocky Mountain News* two barrels of whiskey for sale and his services as blacksmith, cabinetmaker, carpenter, and undertaker.⁴² Denver's first executioner, conveniently, also was "Noisy Tom" Pollock; and he was city marshal and incorporator of some of the early Denver ditch companies. Shortly before the departure of the expedition to the San Juan country in December, Tom married Sarah Chivington, daughter of the Reverend John M. Chivington, the nuptials being announced in the obituaries by the jocular editor of a territorial newspaper.⁴³

F. A. or "Nate" Nye, his wife Mary Melissa, and their children originally were from New York State. Little else is known about Nye, although one can imagine a rather dramatic conclusion to his marriage with Mary Melissa by reading between the lines in her family's "memoirs" and in the romantic rescue of Charles L. Hall during the San Juan expedition,⁴⁴ a tale which shall be related shortly. At any rate, Hall was to become the owner of the Salt Works Ranch in South Park and a partner in the operation of the salt works itself. He also was to become a prominent Leadville and Denver businessman, with Mary Melissa as his wife.

Despite latter-day comforts enjoyed by some, the hardships experienced by the members of this expedition in 1861 earned all of them the title of adventurer. After passing Colorado City

at the foot of Pikes Peak and the village of Pueblo, they continued south to cross Sangre de Cristo Pass, where they had to build roads in weather so severe that the only feed for stock was obtained by cutting trees. This crossing took two weeks.⁴⁵ Tom Pollock, who had left Denver with eleven wagons of provisions and one hundred oxen, horses, and mules, lost twelve yoke of oxen.⁴⁶

After stopping at Fort Garland, the group followed the road southwest along Trinchera Creek to the Rio Grande. In this section they encountered a severe wind and snow which scattered all of their stock. They forded the Rio Grande at or near Stewart's Crossing near La Sauses and then followed Conejos Creek up to the old Conejos Plaza, where Mexican social life and comforts awaited them. From Conejos they had a "well-worn road" to Ojo Caliente, where they were joined by "the rest of the Baker party."⁴⁷ Here some abandoned the venture and straggled back into Denver during March.⁴⁸

The remaining party, following the route of Rivera and Escalante, then moved north up the Chama River, past old Chama and Abiquiú, through the Piedra Lumbre country, the red and white Chama Canyon cliffs, and past Tierra Amarilla, then only two or three years old. Where the town of Chama now stands, they left the Escalante route and followed the Spanish Trail, which turned east, paralleling the D&RG route, for a few miles and then north to Pagosa Springs.

"The cavalcade arrived on the east bank of the Animas river, opposite the Pinkerton Hot Springs, about the middle of March, 1861, and a strong bridge of logs was thrown across the stream"—a bridge strong enough that it remained in use until 1911 when a flood took it out. "Pioneer mining had proven a failure, therefore, the whole party crossed the Animas and proceeded northward toward Baker's Park. Most of the company, however, only got as far as Castle Rock near Cascade Creek, where a halt was made and the ladies [were] made as comfortable as possible. The camp was christened 'Camp Pleasant.'"⁴⁹

Because of the rugged canyon of the Animas just above the site of the bridge mentioned, the group had moved up across the hills past the five Cliff Lakes under the Hermosa ("beautiful") Cliffs. Logically, Camp Pleasant would have been located in an ample, sunny spot with a good spring, and such a location is

⁴⁰ Quoted in Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 166-67.

⁴¹ Robert E. Geiger, "Benjamin Harrison Eaton," *Rocky Mountain News*, March 24, 1929, p. 2, magazine section.

⁴² *Ibid.*, April 23, 1859, p. 3.

⁴³ Stanley W. Zamonski and Teddy Keller, *The Fifty-Niners* (Denver: Sage Books, 1961), p. 160.

⁴⁴ See Minnie Hall Murphy, "Pike's Peak or Bust: The Colorado Pioneers of Fifty-Eight and Fifty-Nine" (unpublished MS in State Historical Society of Colorado Library, n.d.), pp. 217-24.

⁴⁵ *Rocky Mountain News*, November 11, 1877, p. 4.

⁴⁶ *Canon City Times*, March 9, 1860, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 167, quoting E. H. Cooper.

⁴⁸ See the *Rocky Mountain News* during late winter 1861.

⁴⁹ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 167, quoting E. H. Cooper.

Castle Rock
and the Hotter
Brothers Ranch.



found at the Castle Rock Spring, which is part of the Hotter Brothers Ranch today.⁵⁰

The Kellogg-Pollock account reports:

On April 1 they reached Cascade creek, . . . where they went into camp. Kellogg [with D. H. Heywood⁵¹] and several others went in search of Baker and found him and his party in Baker's park. . . . They were living in brush shanties and had so wintered. Their diggings were nine miles up the river where is now Eureka. They had cut out lumber with whip saws and made some sluices, but had collected very little gold. A thorough trial for weeks after proved that the works would not prove for working, the best returns never exceeding fifty cents a day to the man. Men passed back and forth constantly between the camp at Cascade Creek and Baker's Park.⁵²

After a month the group staying at Camp Pleasant moved down to the bridge—by now christened Baker's Bridge—where they built several cabins at Animas City, some being to the northwest of the bridge, but most being below it on the east side.⁵³ It was a fine location for planting a few crops, and the nearby hot springs added to its comfort.⁵⁴

At about this time there occurred Charles Hall's brush with death from which he was to emerge into the tender ministrations of Mary Melissa Nye. With two companions, named Harris

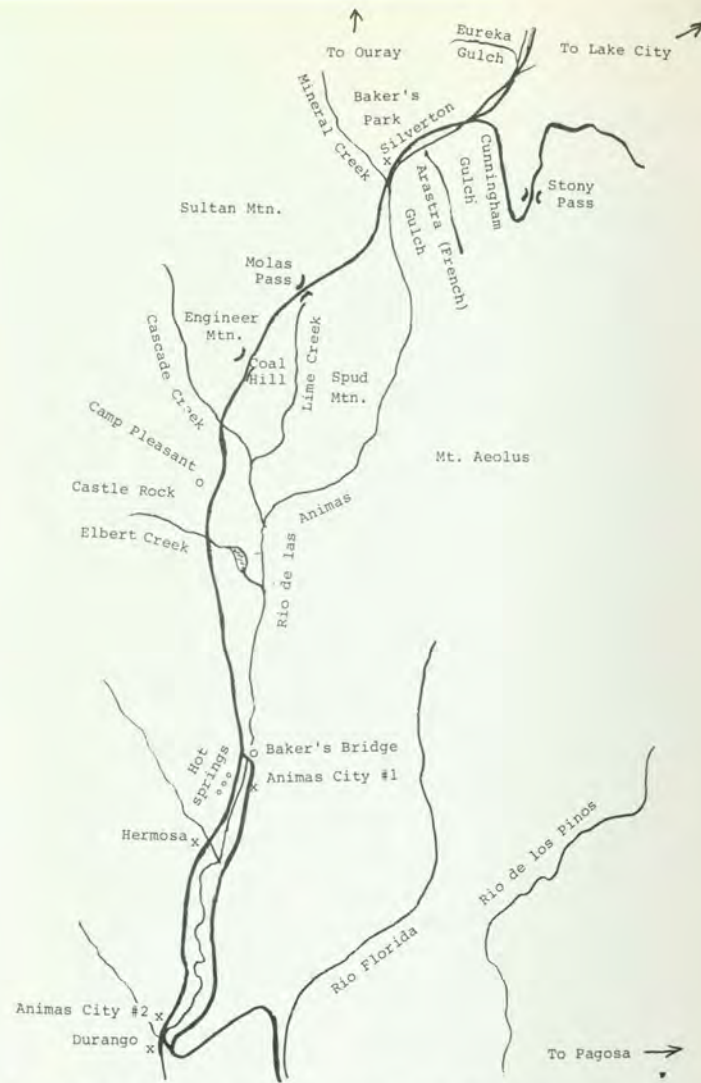
⁵⁰ Joe Hotter, in an interview on June 5, 1968, said that a log house by the spring was once a station on the toll road between Silverton and Durango. The location was at "the summit of Cascade hill (22 miles south of Silverton; 26 miles north of Durango)." Geo. A. Crofutt, *Crofutt's Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado* (1885; reprint ed., Denver: Cubar, 1966), II, 73.

⁵¹ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 167, quoting E. H. Cooper.

⁵² *Rocky Mountain News*, November 11, 1877, p. 4.

⁵³ Interview with Mrs. E. H. Painter of Baker's Bridge, June 6, 1968.

⁵⁴ The second Animas City, one and a half miles north of Durango, was settled in the 1870s.



and O'Neill,⁵⁵ Hall was prospecting the Uncompahgre River when they ran out of provisions. In an attempt to reach Baker's Park, they struggled through snow for days, subsisting on boiled leather and ants. Hall heard Harris and O'Neill plotting to kill him for food and, consequently, struck out alone. When he was rescued by Eaton and others, he weighed only forty-eight pounds. Mary Melissa, whose husband deserted her later, cared for Hall. They were married in the following year.

Although the enthusiasm of the *Canon City Times* died hard, with continued reports of successful roadbuilding to the San

⁵⁵ John J. Lipsey, *The Salt Works in Colorado's South Park*, (Colorado Springs: privately printed, 1959), p. 4, quoting the biographies of Hall in Wilbur Fiske Stone's *History of Colorado* and O. L. Baskin's *History of the Arkansas Valley*.

Juan, as late as June Baker had been in Canon City and was en route to New Mexico "to appoint deputy marshals to take the census,"⁵⁶ his followers had become thoroughly dissatisfied. George Gregory reported to the *Rocky Mountain News* that "Baker was as near a maniac as anything I can compare him to, insisting on his friends to go into the country where there was nothing, and as I believe, to lead people over the Toll Road which he is interested in, and build up the towns they have located. Not one of which, except Animas City, has a house, and that has but twenty log cabins. Provisions are very high. . . . Many have not a cent to buy with."⁵⁷ Bad feeling became so intense that Baker's life again was in jeopardy, but for the second time cooler heads prevailed and he escaped hanging.

To relieve the serious shortage of supplies, Pollock went to Santa Fe to obtain provisions. His original goods from Denver had been dispensed to members of the company without payment when gold strikes failed to materialize. Also, he had used some of his provisions to pay off Indians who threatened trouble and to buy four young Navajo hostages from the Utes.⁵⁸ While Pollock was gone, the situation in the San Juan mines deteriorated further due to news of the Civil War in the States. Divided loyalties within the group may even have been an additional reason for the threats against Baker's life. In any case, by the time that Pollock returned to Animas City, he found that his companions had given up the venture and all but his wife and one invalid had departed. Cooper's account states that when the expedition broke up, D. H. Heywood led a group with all of the women and children back to Denver.⁵⁹ Some of the men then joined the Colorado Volunteers. A second party from the San Juan went to prospect the Gila River area in Arizona.⁶⁰ Others went south by way of Santa Fe to join the Confederates. Contrary to some historical reports which claim that many died after leaving the San Juan, no records of actual deaths have been found.

With Baker, Peedee and a few others remained in Eureka Gulch until fall. Baker, it is generally agreed, left there to join the Confederates.⁶¹ Archival research has failed to produce evidence that he served with forces from Georgia, Virginia, or Missouri. However, for several months in 1862 a Charles H. Baker

appears on the rolls of Waul's Legion, Company B, from Texas. His rank was second lieutenant briefly and then first lieutenant. One muster roll shows his age to be thirty-three, his birthplace to be Harris County, Ohio, and his status married.⁶² Although there is no Harris County in Ohio, a search of the census records of Harrison County produced a Charles H. Baker in Washington Township in 1830, this man being in the age group of thirty to thirty-nine at that time. No females were listed in his household.⁶³ Thus, the identity of Captain Baker is not solved entirely.

What became of Baker after the war is another story of mystery. H. H. Bancroft claimed that Baker lived to become a "wealthy cattle owner and organized an expedition to explore grand canon,"⁶⁴ a description far removed from fact. On the contrary, one finds no record of Baker from 1862 until 1867 when he reappeared, headed once more for the San Juan.

In January 1868 C. C. Parry, botanist with the Kansas Pacific survey, was assigned by William Jackson Palmer to interview James White, the sole survivor of the 1867 expedition. This interview and others, together with a letter allegedly written by White to a brother in Wisconsin, presented a detailed and frequently contradictory account of the events of the trip.⁶⁵ White's reports also have been the focal point for subsequent debates, right up to the present years, about the authenticity of White's adventures.⁶⁶

According to White, a party with Baker in charge and with White, Joe Goodfellow, and George Strole (or Strobe) left Fort Dodge in April 1867 for the mines. A contemporary interview in the *Arizona Miner* added White's comment that Baker and Strobe (sic) both were from St. Louis.⁶⁷ White learned little else about Baker, though, as the latter did not discuss himself.

At Colorado City they outfitted for their expedition, and Goodfellow left them there, according to the Parry version.⁶⁸

⁶² Military record, Charles Baker, Co. B, Waul's Texas Legion, CSA, National Archives.

⁶³ Washington Township, Harrison County, Ohio, 1830 U.S. Census Report, p. 233, information supplied through the Ohio State Library, Columbus.

⁶⁴ Bancroft, *History of Nevada, Colorado, and Wyoming*, p. 497.

⁶⁵ C. C. Parry, "Passage of the Great Canon of the Colorado by James White, the Prospector" in William A. Bell, *New Tracks in North America* (1870; reprint ed., Albuquerque: Horn and Wallace, Publishers, 1965), pp. 435-53; Thomas F. Dawson, *The Grand Canyon* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1917), pp. 33-43; James White, letter to Joshua H. White, September 26, 1867, in Bancroft Library, microfilm P-D114; *Arizona Miner* (Prescott), September 14, 1867, p. 2, quoting William J. Beggs.

⁶⁶ Robert Brewster Stanton, *Colorado River Controversies*, ed. James M. Chalfant (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1932); Richard E. Lingenfelter, *First Through the Grand Canyon* (Los Angeles: Dawson, 1958); O. Dock Marston, "The Points of Embarkation of James White in 1857 [sic]," *Los Angeles West-erners' Branding Iron* (reprint, December 1965).

⁶⁷ *Arizona Miner*, September 14, 1867, p. 2.

⁶⁸ Parry, "Passage of the Great Canon," p. 437.

⁵⁶ *Canon City Times*, June 10, 1861, p. 2.

⁵⁷ *Rocky Mountain News*, May 15, 1861, p. 2.

⁵⁸ The Kellogg-Pollock account of the expedition outlines the fate of the four children. See *Rocky Mountain News*, November 11, 1877, p. 4.

⁵⁹ Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, 167, quoting E. H. Cooper.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* See also *Rocky Mountain News*, May 15, 1861, p. 2.

⁶¹ *Rocky Mountain News*, November 11, 1877, p. 4.

As reported by White and an eyewitness to Thomas Dawson in later years, the group with Goodfellow proceeded to Brown's Creek near Salida, where weather forced them to remain some days in a log schoolhouse. In an argument several shots were fired and Goodfellow was wounded. Consequently, Goodfellow was left in that area at the Sprague residence when the other three departed.⁶⁹

They prospected the Animas River without great success and then headed for the Colorado by way of the San Juan River, prospecting as they went. Near the Colorado River, "above the junction with the Green,"⁷⁰ they were attacked by Indians, who, according to White, killed Baker. While Baker's body was being mutilated, White and Strole had the opportunity to escape. They built a raft and launched it upon the Colorado. Subsequently Strole drowned, but White emerged rather the worse for wear below Grand Canyon, five hundred miles downstream from his point of embarkation, in fourteen days. There are numerous discrepancies in White's stories which he told when rescued at Callville, when interviewed soon afterward, and when interviewed in later years when he lived at Trinidad, Colorado. These contradictions, together with the implausible distance and time involved, have led some to discredit White's story.

Of course, this public interest in White was not caused by his association with Baker but by the fact that his claim would have made him the first man on record to survive a run through the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. Railroad builders and other commercial developers were interested in proving that the stream was navigable. And latter-day Colorado historians hoped to upstage Powell by proving that a resident of our state had preceded the major in his famous exploits.

Concerning Baker, the White incident provides alternatives, not a final answer. Either White was confused but honest and Indians killed Baker, or White lied and presumably was the murderer of Baker. The latter case seems to be true, in part because of the strong evidence that White could not have conquered the Grand Canyon in the manner which he claimed. The other evidence which would incriminate White is Baker himself—a man who repeatedly had drawn controversy and animosity unto himself. The best that one can say is that he lacked the charisma of a natural leader. We know that on two occasions



Baker's Park in the early 1870s.

during his San Juan activities his death was deemed a just penalty when he could not produce what he had promised. Those who had followed him into severe hardships turned against him when he proved to know little about mining. He was merely a promoter, though, ironically, it was some of his own followers of 1860-61 who ultimately could unearth the rich ores of the San Juan in the 1870s. The humbug was not the San Juan but Baker himself, and he probably paid with his life for his error.

VIRGINIA McCONNELL, associate editor of The Colorado Magazine, presented this paper at the State Historical Society's September 1970 meeting.

⁶⁹ Letter from T. J. Ehrhart, November 22, 1916, quoted in Dawson, *The Grand Canyon*, pp. 50-51.

⁷⁰ In Dawson, *The Grand Canyon*, p. 58, White claimed that they were below the junction.