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Trinidad and Its Environs

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Trinidad, the county seat of Las Animas County, Colorado, today a modern little city of about fifteen thousand inhabitants, is one of the oldest settlements within the limits of the State. Its recorded history, in fact, antedates by many years that of the State itself.

The part of the State in which Trinidad is situated, though rich in the charm and romance of early-day history, legend and tradition, is, so far as written recital is concerned, a sort of "No Man's Land." That is, it has been sadly neglected by students and writers of the history of this great Southwest. This is probably due to the fact that writers dealing with the fascinating period of the Spanish occupation of the Southwest have generally conducted their researches, secured their information and written their tales with Santa Fe, New Mexico, as the source and inspiration of their efforts. They have naturally confined their investigation and their writing to the territory embraced within the present limits of the State of New Mexico. They have usually overlooked or disregarded the fact that the Dominion of Spain (with intervals of more or less serious dispute as to its exact boundaries) extended northerly to the Arkansas River. When the history of Colorado came to be written, the historian interested in that subject either limited his investigation to the period initiated by the gold discoveries in the so-called Pike's Peak region in 1858, or looked to the records and archives dealing with the French occupation of the territory north of the Arkansas for his material. This naturally left the rectangular strip of land in southeastern Colorado bounded on the east by the present State line, on the north by the Arkansas River, on the west by the crest of the Sangre de Cristo range and on the south by the boundary between Colorado and New Mexico, in the position of receiving but cursory mention in the compilations of the history of either Colorado or New Mexico.

*Judge McHendrie, a prominent attorney of Trinidad and a student of the history of the Southwest, is already known to our readers, having previously contributed two valuable articles to our Magazine: "Origin of the Name of the Purgatoire River" (Feb., 1928) and "The Hatcher Ditch, the Oldest Colorado Irrigation Ditch now in use" (June, 1928).—Ed.

However, Trinidad is and for generations has been the center of population for that neglected area and a complete tale of its tremendously interesting life would challenge the patient industry and highest literary skill of the most able historian.

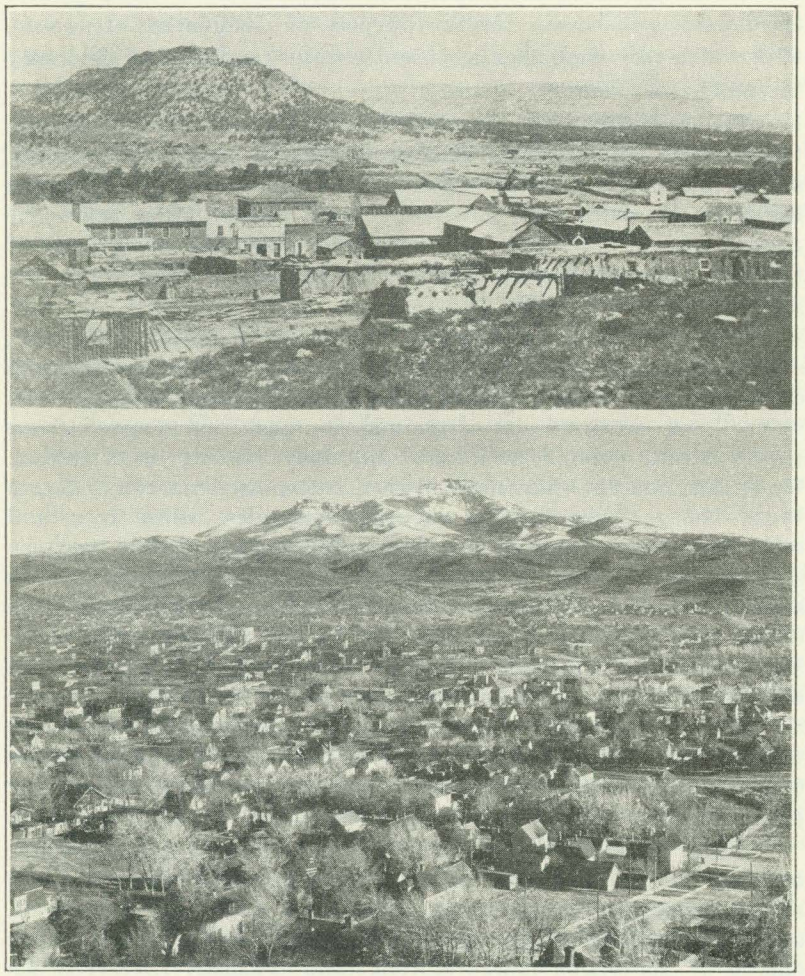
Like most of the early settlements of the Southwest, Trinidad owes its birth to its location upon a thoroughfare between still older settlements, that is, the Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail. It is situated upon the banks of the principal stream in that whole region above referred to, the river with the sonorous Spanish name, El Rio de Las Animas Perdidas en Purgatorio, now generally called the "Picketwire." This picturesque and perhaps significant name may identify this portion of the country, and perhaps the very site of the town itself, with events which transpired upon its banks somewhere between 1594 and 1596.[1]

Just above the present city limits of Trinidad, Raton Creek empties into the Purgatoire. It is the confluence of those two streams that is probably responsible for Trinidad's existence. Raton Creek has its source almost at the summit of the famous Raton Pass, and up this stream to this summit there ran the old original Indian trail which afterwards became known as the Mountain, and later as the Military, Branch of the Santa Fe Trail. This most westerly branch of the Santa Fe Trail, running from the Arkansas River south to Taos and Santa Fe, is the oldest of the several branches of that famous thoroughfare. Originally it was established and used by the Plains Indians in their commerce with the Pueblo Indians at Taos and to the south. It was probably in existence long before the discovery of America, and was a well known trail at the time of the Spanish conquests. Where Trinidad is now located the trail ran up the south bank of the Purgatoire River westerly to the junction with Raton Creek and thence up the latter creek and over Raton Pass. The earliest recorded trip over this trail is one made in 1739, unless we accept as authenticated the possibility that the ill-fated expedition of Leyba and Humaña may have passed to the Arkansas River over this trail in 1594 or 1595; or the more persuasive probability that Captain Salvidar, of Oñate's expedition, passed over it in the fall of 1598 at the time of his discovery of the remains of Humaña's expedition referred to in footnote 1, above.

In any event, from the advent of the first trappers and traders into the region drained by the Arkansas River, in the latter part of the Eighteenth Century, this trail was used by these gentry and it was the route in general use up to the opening of the Cimarron Branch of the Santa Fe Trail for merchants' caravans in 1822.

[1]See the *Colorado Magazine* of February, 1928, pp. 18-23.

In 1828 the Bent brothers and St. Vrain established Bent's Fort on the Arkansas and used this trail in their communications between the Fort and Taos, and their stock ranches in northern New Mexico. Up until the use of this trail was begun by the Bent



TRINIDAD, COLORADO
Upper: View in 1868-72. Lower: modern view.

and St. Vrain Company it was traveled only by saddle and pack horses. Some writers maintain that there was no vehicular traffic thereon until the supply wagons and artillery of Kearny's Army of the West passed over it in August, 1846. However, there is evidence

extant that the wagon trains of the Bent and St. Vrain Company traversed this trail for some years prior to the military expedition above referred to. In fact, General Kearny's expedition was accompanied and piloted by traders who had been engaged in the Santa Fe trade for some years. The wagon trains of these traders accompanied the army for the purpose of designating the route, with which they were then apparently quite familiar and obviously theretofore accustomed to use.

The military map prepared by Lieutenant W. H. Emory, Chief of the Topographical Engineers with the Army of the West, shows that the expedition crossed the Purgatoire River from the north to the south side at a point about twenty miles below the present city of Trinidad, and came west along the south bank of the river and camped just above the present site of the town on the night of August 5, 1846.

The next morning, Captain Waldomar Fischer, a German, educated as an artillery officer in the Prussian Army, in command of Company B, of Major Clark's Battery of Artillery, was deceived by the apparent proximity of the majestic peak that towered above their camping ground, as it now does above the city of Trinidad. Up to that time the eminence had been known as Cimarron or Raton Peak. Not realizing that he was some ten miles distant from and some five or six thousand feet below the summit of this peak, he signified his intention of ascending the peak before breakfast. He started without breakfast and did not return until about the middle of the next day. He announced that he had said he would climb the peak before breakfast; that he had climbed it and had not had his breakfast. In commemoration of his tenacity of purpose the commanding officers instructed Lieutenant Emory to mark the peak on the military map "Fischer's Peak." It so appears on the original map. Later the German spelling was dropped and the peak has since been known as "Fisher's Peak."

After the military occupation of New Mexico, the commerce between the Missouri River and Santa Fe and Taos was carried on almost entirely over this route, now known as the Military Trail, and the Cimarron route was practically abandoned. Those in charge of the wagon trains at that time evidently preferred the better-watered, though somewhat rougher and longer trip over the mountain pass, to the long, waterless stretches of the Cimarron route. During the latter '40s and early '50s the road generally used ran along the south bank of the river. This roadway later became the main street of the village of Trinidad. In the latter '50s and early '60s the road generally taken followed up the north bank of the river to a camping place in a large grove of trees on the

north bank of the river where the Santa Fe Railway station and Harvey House in Trinidad are now located. This camping place became a great favorite. In those days this tract was covered with giant cottonwoods, thickets of willow, tall and luxurious grass; with nearby ponds and sloughs usually filled with wild ducks and geese and the stream itself teeming with trout. The shade and verdure must have seemed a veritable Garden of Eden to the travel-worn, trail-weary wagoners after their long journey over the plains. It became a sort of an established custom for these expeditions to camp for several days on this spot to recuperate their tired livestock and vary the monotony of a diet of buffalo meat by banquets of wild duck and geese, with the fish course taken from the sparkling waters of the River of Lost Souls.

This latter branch of the old trail crossed the river from the camping ground at a ford almost exactly where the bridge on Commercial Street in Trinidad is now located, and thence wound its devious way southerly to join the older trail at about the present corner of Main and Commercial Streets. In other words, both Main and Commercial Streets of Trinidad, the two principal business streets, were actually made by the caravans which made the old Santa Fe Trail at this point. Today Trinidad's business houses are built upon the very ground which was formerly occupied by trading posts, stage stations, feed corrals, and camp sites established alongside these trails. This town was born and the years of its early history were lived on both sides of the old trails, which were then and still are its principal streets. Its pioneer settlers came over and made their homes by the side of this famous route. The meanderings of the long teams of oxen and mules attached to heavily laden wagons outlined and permanently fixed the course of those streets. These narrow and winding avenues of commerce may not be especially adapted to modern auto traffic, but as a permanent monument to that great epoch in the development of civilization in the West they are not without the lingering charm of those romantic days.

While there was no attempt at permanent settlement on the present site of Trinidad until the summer of 1859, nevertheless there was a frequent, although more or less temporary, occupation of this site by trappers, hunters, traders and wagon trains for many years preceding that date. Lewis H. Garrard, in his *Wah-To-Yah and the Taos Trail,* tells of encountering a group of rather famous pioneers camped at this place in April of 1847. Lieutenant Abert, in his military report of Kearny's expedition, speaks of meeting, in January of 1847, a considerable body of men who had established their winter camp at this place. Kit Carson,

R. L. Wootton of Raton Toll Gate fame, Lucien B. Maxwell, John Hatcher, George Simpson, Calvin Jones and many others famed in story and legend of those days, made this spot a resting place and rendezvous on their trips between Bent's Fort and Taos. Some of them, notably "Uncle Dick" Wootton, George Simpson, and Calvin Jones, when advancing civilization forced them out of their life work as trappers and scouts, selected their old favorite camping ground as their permanent abode and spent the last years of their lives in the town which had grown up about it.

George Simpson created a permanent memorial of one of his thrilling experiences which occurred at this spot. Simpson was an able and gifted man, unusually well educated for that period, whose adventurous life and dramatic achievements have been rather neglected by historians. On one of his solitary trapping expeditions, while encamped on the bank of the Purgatoire within the present limits of the city of Trinidad, he was attacked by a band of hostile Indians. He took refuge in the caves found in the face of the sandstone cliffs of the peak which rises above Trinidad on the north, now known as "Simpson's Rest," and remained in hiding there for several days. He felt that he owed his life to this mountain, and after a settlement had sprung up under the shadows of this rugged sanctuary, he made his home there until his death in September of 1885.

In commemoration of the experience which he had had there, and as a mark of his gratitude, he provided by his will that he should be buried in a grave hewn from the solid rock at the top of this peak under a lone pine tree which was then a conspicuous land mark. He also provided that a monument should be there erected; and for an epitaph to be carved thereon, he wrote some verses in commemoration of his early experience. These instructions were carried out. Upon his death a grave was drilled into the solid sandstone which capped this peak; his coffin was carried there on the shoulders of his friends, an arduous two days' task; a plain sandstone monument was erected, which has since largely succumbed to the ravages of the elements and the even more destructive tendencies of the souvenir hunter. Upon the monument his verses were chiselled. These verses demonstrate rather more literary ability and poetic feeling than one would expect from a man whose life, from boyhood to middle age, had been spent in the hazardous and toilsome activities of the frontiersman. They read as follows:

"Lay me to rest on yon towering height
Where the silent cloud-shadows glide,
Where solitude holds its slumbrous reign,
Far away from the human tide.

"I fain would sleep near the old pine tree
That looks down on the valley below,
Like a soldier guarding a comrade's grave,
Or a sentinel watching a foe.

" 'Twas a refuge once, in the bygone time,
When a pitiful fate was near,
When my days were young and full of love
For a life I held too dear.

"Through all the long years that have passed away
Since that night of storm and dread,
I've prayed that the boughs that sheltered me then
Might wave over my dust when dead.

"Delve deep my grave in the stern gray rock;
In its rigid embrace let me rest;
With naught but my name on the stone at my head,
And the symbol of faith on my breast."

The first effort at permanent settlement of Trinidad was in the early summer of 1859. At that time one Gabriel Guiterrez and his nephew Juan N. Guiterrez, came up from Mora County, New Mexico, looking for a location for an extension of the sheep growing industry then being carried on by them in New Mexico. They built a cabin on the south bank of the Purgatoire River, near where the Carnegie Library is now located. Later in that summer Albert W. Archibald and his brother Ebenezer, both young men, erected a cabin on a little hill rising above the old camp ground grove, which cabin they occupied until the fall of the year, when Ebenezer went back to Kansas and Albert went down to Maxwell's Ranch on the Cimarron where he spent the winter of '59 and '60 engaged as a clerk for Maxwell in accompanying and checking the freight carried by Maxwell's wagons in their trips from Maxwell's Ranch to Pueblo, hauling grain and hay to the military post and bringing back merchandise. Either late in the year 1859 or early in the year 1860 one William Frazier and one Riley Dunton built a cabin on the north side of the river and became permanent resi-

dents of this vicinity. In the spring of 1860 the Guiterrez family moved their sheep from New Mexico into this region and located permanently just a little above the present site of Trinidad, where they engaged in the sheep business for many years.

In the latter part of 1860 and early part of 1861 there was a considerable migration from New Mexico to Trinidad and its vicinity. Domacio and Tomas Gurule, Antonio Lopez, Felipe Baca and several other prominent and well-to-do Mexicans located here at this time, each bringing with him quite a retinue of relatives and peons. In 1861 there were three irrigation ditches built, each diverting water from the Purgatoire River and irrigating tracts of land largely within the present limits of the city of Trinidad. Gurule built the first ditch, beginning work on May 31, 1861; Antonio Lopez and his associates built the second a little farther up the stream, beginning November 1, 1861; Felipe Baca and two Frenchmen, one named Charles Romonde, built the third ditch, which was the most elaborate effort, beginning November 30, 1861. Practically all of the land irrigated by this ditch, amounting to about four hundred acres, was located within the present limits of the city.

During the next several years the population of this vicinity came largely from New Mexico. These pioneers settled along the banks of the river and engaged in farming by irrigation from small ditches, and undertook quite extensive sheep and cattle growing.

Trinidad was named after a daughter of Felipe Baca, one Trinidad Baca. Trinidad is the Spanish word for Trinity, and quite a common feminine name among the Mexicans.

At the close of the Civil War there came quite an influx of settlers from the eastern portion of the United States. Many of the men then coming in had been soldiers in either the Federal or Confederate Army and returning from the war were disinclined to settle down to the prosaic pursuits of the more settled communities and sought more adventurous lives on the frontier. Soon there was quite an extensive colony located at this point and crude business establishments were built along the winding Santa Fe Trail, or more properly speaking trails, as hereinabove indicated. The original settlers held their land by squatters' rights only, as the survey establishing government corners was not made until about 1870.

During the early occupation of Trinidad there was more or less trouble with hostile Indians. The last battle of any consequence occurred in the summer of 1867. The settlers were attacked by a large band of Utes and took refuge in an adobe building which had a feed corral with adobe walls adjacent. Upon the first alarm

they sent a courier to Fort Lyon to seek aid from the military forces at that post. The settlers stood off the Indians all day and all night. The courier reached Fort Lyon, on the Arkansas, distant about one hundred and twenty miles, late in the evening. A troop of cavalry was immediately dispatched which made the famous night ride from Fort Lyon to Trinidad in one night, arriving at Trinidad just at sunrise. The Indians, catching the gleam of the rising sun on the metal equipment of the cavalrymen, fled without offering further battle.

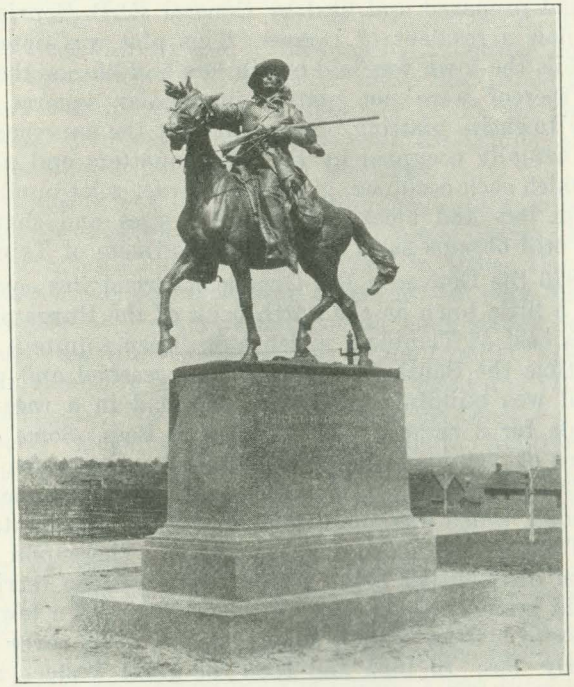
From the creation of the Territory of New Mexico in 1850 until the passing of the Enabling Act which created the Territory of Colorado in 1861, Trinidad and its surrounding territory, up to the 38th parallel, was a part of New Mexico, with Taos as its county seat or center of government.

By 1877 quite a town had grown up and a town organization was formed by the election of a Board of Trustees. An application was then made to the United States Government for a townsite patent, which was issued on August 7, 1877, to T. E. Owens, President of the Board. Prior to that time a survey of the lots, blocks, streets and alleys had been made, and a plat of the town of Trinidad prepared and filed by General E. B. Sopris, still living and now a resident of Denver. This plat was dated July 2, 1877. While the town was laid out in lots and blocks, the occupied portions thereof were not platted in regular squares, usual to latter-day townsite platting. It is said that the surveyor took the premises actually occupied by the then squatters and platted the ground which each occupied, giving each tract a lot number, which resulted in lots and blocks of irregular sizes and shapes. This condition still obtains as to the original townsite of Trinidad.

In 1876 the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad was completed to El Moro, a little town on the north bank of the Purgatoire, about four miles east of Trinidad, which soon became quite a rival. In the meantime the Santa Fe Railroad had reached and passed La Junta and was building on toward Trinidad in a race with the Rio Grande for a right-of-way over Raton Pass. Some enterprising citizens of Trinidad organized a Railroad Company, procured a right-of-way, and built an extension of the Rio Grande Railroad into Trinidad, which was completed about 1879. The Santa Fe road reached Trinidad at about the same time. Thereupon Trinidad became the distributing point for the southwestern territory and had a rapid growth from a little Mexican village of a few hundred inhabitants to a town with a population of about three thousand by the early '80s. In 1885 and 1886 the great western migration set in and Trinidad and all eastern Colorado participated in the

boom. Practically all the government land in Las Animas County, which then extended to the eastern line of the State, was taken up by settlers, and by 1889 Trinidad had grown to be a city of eight or nine thousand people. The boom burst in 1889 and there followed a period of great financial depression, contributed to by the panic of 1893. Trinidad lost in population until it was again a town of perhaps four or five thousand inhabitants. In 1895 there began an upward movement which has continued since that time in healthy growth to Trinidad's present population of about fifteen thousand people.

The early industrial activities of Trinidad began with its first settlement in the '60s. The whole region was a great stock growing country. The Mexican population devoted itself largely to sheep rearing, with small farms along the Valley of the Purgatoire and its tributaries, irrigated by acequias or small ditches. In the early '70s cattlemen began to come in. The entire region was open range, and the range cattle industry thrived. Trinidad became the headquarters for a number of very large and well known cattle outfits. D. L. Taylor, running the famous "V O X" brand, Sam Doss running the "D D" brand, the "J J" syndicate, and numerous



KIT CARSON MONUMENT AT TRINIDAD

other large range cattle growers operated from Trinidad. Each of these outfits had numbers of thousands of cattle on the range. The influx of settlers and homesteaders on the open range in the latter '80s sounded the death knell of the range cattle business and these cattle barons either sold out or were forced out of business.

During this period Trinidad numbered among its citizens at various times numerous men who have achieved considerable fame or notoriety as typical western gunmen. Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp, Doc. Holliday, Clay Allison, and numerous others, famed in song and story, were among the then prominent citizens of this town.

In the meantime the coal industry was developing. From the early settlement of Trinidad the town had been supplied with coal from small openings in its immediate vicinity from which the coal was hauled in wagons. The first coal mining operations on an extensive scale began when the Rio Grande Railroad reached El Moro in 1876. At that time the Colorado Coal and Iron Company, predecessor of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, opened up a mine at Engleville, about two and one-half miles southeast of Trinidad, establishing coke ovens near El Moro, and began quite extensive operations, which resulted in an output of approximately two hundred thousand tons for the year 1881.

When the Santa Fe Railroad reached Trinidad it opened coal mines upon railroad land near Starkville, about four miles southwest of Trinidad on the old Santa Fe Trail over the Pass. The first opening was made in 1878 and from that time production increased until Starkville became one of the large coal mining centers of this region. From year to year thereafter and particularly following the revival of business activities after the panic of 1893, the coal mining industry developed very rapidly. The C. F. & I. Company acquired an immense acreage of coal land in various parts of the county and developed it on a large scale. The Victor Coal Company, predecessor of the present Victor-American Coal Company, began in the latter '80s by opening up a mine at Grey Creek and in the early '90s another mine at Hastings, and became a large producer. The American Smelting & Refining Company began its coal mining and coke making activities about 1900.

Many other corporations and individuals entered into the industry until Las Animas County became the largest coal producing county of the State. The entire mountain region, lying to the west of a line drawn north and south through Trinidad from the southern boundary of the State to the northern boundary of the county is underlaid with vast coal measures, much of which is peculiarly adapted to making coke. For many years, beginning with 1877

and continuing for about forty years, there was a gradual extension of coke burning. Many hundreds of coke ovens were constructed and a tremendous output of coke was manufactured. In recent years, however, the C. F. & I. Company has established by-product coke ovens at Pueblo, and as the development of this industry has demonstrated that the by-products in the manufacture of coke are probably more valuable than the coke itself, the old time coke manufacturing plants have been largely abandoned.

The first permanent irrigation in Colorado was begun on the Purgatoire River near Trinidad. This was by the construction of the Hatcher Ditch, built by the Bent and St. Vrain Company in the fall of 1846, which ditch is still in operation.[2] From the small irrigation enterprises initiated by the early Mexican settlers, there has been a gradual development in agriculture by irrigation, and in recent years by the construction of storage reservoirs, until the valley of the Purgatoire River adjacent to Trinidad has become quite extensively irrigated. The largest of these enterprises is that of the Model Land and Irrigation Company, which maintains its headquarters in Trinidad and has a reservoir and canal system irrigating a tract of about twenty thousand acres east of Trinidad.

Originally, all the cattle grown in this vicinity were beef cattle, range stock, generally of the White Face or Hereford breed. The growing of this class of cattle is still extensively carried on. The mountain ranges adjacent to Trinidad are utilized for summer pasture, and cattle are brought down to the irrigated regions for winter feeding. Within the last few years, however, dairy cattle and dairy products have been quite extensively produced upon the cultivated areas now under irrigation.

From the earliest days of the wagon trains, down to the present time, Trinidad has been the center for the distribution of merchandise to the territory to the south and southwest, and large wholesale mercantile establishments have been operated at Trinidad to supply this territory from 1876 to the present time.

Though today a bustling, active, modern city, there still lingers over and about Trinidad an atmosphere reminiscent of the quaint, adobe, frontier village of almost forgotten pioneer days. To those of us who like to reconstruct that thrilling period, and live in imaginary retrospection those adventurous days, Trinidad is an almost inexhaustible source of pleasure and inspiration.

[2]See the *Colorado Magazine* of June, 1928, pp. 81-95.

Freighting and Merchandising in Early Denver

Henry M. Porter*

In the early part of July, 1862, I completed loading ten ox wagons with merchandise and started for Denver with the train, on a horse I had ridden over parts of Missouri buying oxen for the trip. Having been out in camp for several years, during the time I was building telegraph lines, I was used to it, and I would ride away from the train, turn my horse loose, roll up in my blankets, my saddle for a pillow, and sleep soundly all night, and find my horse near me in the morning ready for another day. We landed in Denver the last of August, 1862. I ran across J. S. Brown, an Atchison man, who introduced me to the man who was selling his goods, Hiram Burton, commission merchant. I unloaded at his store on Blake Street a well assorted stock of goods, most of which were soon sold out at a good profit.

After selling off a lot of my first trainload of goods in Denver, I took a trip by coach to Central City and Black Hawk among the mines. I found a great many small stamp mills running, some by steam and some by water power, and great activity among all classes. Some were prospecting for mines, others working out the ore and hauling it to the mills to be crushed and the gold extracted. The currency of the country at that time was gold dust; all used it and for all purposes, to pay both large and small bills. If a man bought his dinner, a drink, or a cigar, he pulled out his buckskin bag and paid for it in dust. Finally, a good deal of adulteration took place, brass filings were mixed to such an extent with the gold dust that each man would keep a bottle of acid near his scale to test for brass in the dust. Soon after came a fractional currency issued by the United States in 5, 10, 25, and 50-cent pieces, which took the place of gold dust as the circulating medium of exchange, and no more dust was seen.

I concluded that Colorado was a good venture and that I would "set my stakes" here. I started the teams back to Omaha to reload that same year and went back myself to Atchison and purchased twenty more wagons at Jackson, Michigan, and sent to Booneville and bought eighty unbroken mules. I had the mules sent to Atchison, where I hired a stage driver by the name of Chris

*Mr. Porter is one of the outstanding business men and pioneers of Colorado and of the West. As early as 1858 he began building telegraph lines in Missouri. In 1860 he built the line from Kansas City to Omaha and the following year worked the extension westward to Julesburg. His long and highly successful career in Colorado is so well known that it need not be detailed here. He lives in Denver today, and though in his ninety-first year is well preserved and active, and is prominent in many important enterprises. The article presented here is but a short extract from his biographical writing.—Ed.

Haynes to act as wagon boss. He would tie a mule up beside the blacksmith shop and shoe him. When he had four shod he would hitch them into an old stage, get up behind them, give them a scare and start out on a dead run a mile out to the race track, the stage filled with drivers who enjoyed the fun. He would run the mules around until they were brought down to a walk and were gentle and easily managed. He then put them in charge of a driver who would hitch them into a wagon and drive them out around the track. This would continue until he had five teams broke, when he would start them for Denver loaded with merchandise.

Each week he would start a train of five teams. The last one he took himself for part of the way, returning on the first of our wagons he might meet and thus we kept them going for several years. In this way we kept Burton stocked up with a well assorted lot of goods and he soon had a great increase in his business. We had a consignment of a large stock of goods shipped from Buffalo to our warehouse at Atchison which we shipped to Burton the same season of 1862. This also increased his business, compelling him to build a new warehouse.

I spent the winter in Denver trying to learn something about merchandising, formerly not having any knowledge of it. During the winter I purchased the store owned and occupied by William Kiskadden, who was at the time the largest merchant in Denver and who wanted to move on to new fields and lodge somewhere in Montana.

I was to move my merchandise into his store May first but a fire broke out and burned up the business part of Denver in April, 1863. This store was burned before he entirely moved out and I had to rebuild a one story store house, which delayed me some in getting into our own store. But we finally got into our own store, and kept our teams hauling our own goods and thus maintained a good assortment in stock all the time. Our wagon bosses were instructed to give us a list of the teams coming to Denver and what they were loaded with. If any articles were getting scarce we loaded with these and thus we had the goods most in demand. We bought many goods out of trains coming in.

I secured from our Atchison house a Scotchman by the name of McDonald, a good merchant, whom we put in charge of the store and I attended the general business, buying out of wagons, in the east, and looking after the trains that were now becoming more numerous. At the end of the year we found on taking stock that we had sold over $300,000 in goods and made $75,000, which to my mind, inexperienced as I was, seemed marvelous. Meantime my partner, Mr. Stebbins, was and had been for several years,

traveling in Europe. We increased our ox teams (four yoke to each wagon) to 100, and we ran twenty-five teams in a train. Each driver carried a 16 shooter Winchester rifle.

In 1864 Montana was on a boom. We knew there would be a big demand by people going from Colorado for small teams and groceries to load. Early in the spring I sent Mr. Chapman to the River to buy one hundred two-horse wagons, 100 yoke of fine, well broke cattle, and told him to come back with the wagons loaded with groceries. Each driver was to care for two wagons, and to tie up and feed his oxen in a box behind each team. Each wagon was to carry 2,500 pounds of groceries and some feed for the oxen. They arrived in Denver in April and it was the wonder of the town, to see so many brand new wagons, all alike, come in at once. We sold all the teams and their loads. They went like "hot cakes" and we cleared on the venture some $16,000 net.

Army Life at Fort Sedgwick, Colorado[1]

Emily Boynton O'Brien[2]

I was born in New York City in 1847, and spent my early years in New York and in Iowa. On November 7, 1865, I was married to Captain Nicholas J. O'Brien at McGregor, Iowa. Soon thereafter we went to Omaha where we were met by General Wheaton and officers of his staff. At the Herndon Hotel, the leading hotel of the city, we were tendered a reception. Elaborate refreshments were served and many toasts were drunk to the prosperity and happiness of the newly wedded pair. At that time the excitement on the subject of the construction of the Union Pacific railroad was at its height and everything was gay and festive. Many brilliant functions were given by the citizens of Omaha in honor of the railroad officials.

My husband started for Julesburg and Fort Sedgwick, Colorado, as ordered by the Department of the Platte. I remained in Omaha with my brother-in-law, General George M. O'Brien and family until it was thought safe for me to go on to Fort Sedgwick, for the Indians were bad at that time.

On the 16th day of May, 1867, I started west with my brother-

[1]Fort Sedgwick was established in 1864 (first being known as Camp Rankin) and was abandoned in 1871. It was located on the south side of the South Platte River, opposite the present town of Ovid, Sedgwick County, Colorado. It was a United States military post guarding the mail and the emigrant and freight trains during the years of trouble with the Plains Indians.—Ed.

[2]Mrs. O'Brien has written out a number of her experiences in the West during the sixties and has presented the manuscript to the State Historical Society. Her husband, Capt. O'Brien, was the founder of Fort Sedgwick and was in command of the post during the Indian hostilities. Mrs. O'Brien lives in Denver today.—Ed.

in-law. He was in command at Fort McPherson, or Cottonwood Springs. We would stop at ranches or stage stations for our meals. At Fort Kearny we stopped one day and were entertained most royally by the affable and courteous plainsmen. They were surprised that I would undertake the journey to Fort Sedgwick.

The stop at Morrow's ranch was a little eventful in my young married life—an occasion which I always remembered. Jack Morrow was a whole-hearted soul, and a perfect gentleman in every sense of the word. When they expected the coach there was always a crowd—cowboys, traders and ranchmen—who came down for mail. There were also quite a number of Indians here waiting for the coach. When we drove up to the door the men asked: "Who's aboard?" And seeing a young woman alone they were quite surprised. "Whose wife? Why?" When they learned that I was the wife of the captain at Fort Sedgwick, Mr. Morrow came out and introduced himself and I think I must have looked a little frightened to see the Indians. He said not to be alarmed, that there was no danger whatever. So I went in to the store with him and Mrs. Morrow and there saw four large, fine looking Indians (all of whom I afterwards knew). They were dressed in war paint, their breasts and bare legs all painted in stripes of many colors. Mr. Morrow wanted me to go up and shake hands with them, so I did. But when I came to the one that was so much befeathered and painted, he grunted: "No shake hands white squaw, bad luck to Indian." And he deliberately walked up and took my veil off my hat—a long blue tissue veil, and put it around his neck. I wore long curls when I was a girl, and he took one in his hand very gently and at the same time motioned to one of the other Indians.

After dinner I intended to continue my journey in the coach, but Mrs. Morrow took me aside and told me that the large Indian asked the clerk whose squaw I was, and he had told him Bad Heart's, or in Sioux "Ozake Tunker." She said that the Indians did not like my husband. So Jack Morrow telegraphed my husband at Fort Sedgwick to come down and bring conveyance and escort. In three days my husband came with an ambulance and four men, and when the Indians saw them drive up to the door some of them went behind the ranch, but the others just stood their ground with a defiant look.

My husband's language was not at all flowery when he saw Jack Morrow, but after an explanation, everything was satisfactory, and Jack Morrow being a convivial, jolly fellow, refreshments were served and all went merry afterward. The clerk was not aware that nothing should have been said to the Indians as to who I was, and he apologized in the most gracious manner.

Jack Morrow's ranch was twelve miles from Fort McPherson. The ranch was a three story house with plenty of out buildings. Adjacent was a fine large barn for stock and the entire ranch was surrounded by a stockade of cedar poles, palisades set deep in the ground and projecting ten or twelve feet above the surface. The inside of the house was commodious, being above the standard in many respects of the average ranch house.

We remained all night and from our window were seen a number of fire arrows shot up from Sioux Lookout, a short distance from the ranch. We started at six o'clock in the morning. It was a perfect morning, the ambulance moving along slowly. We could breathe the cool mountain air which came down from the slopes, so refreshing and stimulating to the mind as well as to the body. Occasionally we would scare up a jack rabbit or a sage hen. Antelope and deer were in sight several times. Several times the antelope were so near the men would have liked to have brought down one, but my husband said: "Not on your life; you would bring destruction on us all to fire a single shot."

Our next stop was at Beauvais, a small hay ranch three miles below us. It was burned to the ground by Indians who thought there were people living there. All day the men kept a sharp lookout. The next day my husband, with the aid of his field glasses, could see some mounted Indians on a divide, evidently watching the movements of the ambulance. They were supposed to be outrunners of some hostile tribe. We arrived at Valentine's ranch for that night. The men did not rest very much that night, the wolves were howling so—at least it sounded like wolves.

The last stop for the night was at Murphy's ranch, and after a very cordial greeting and a bountiful repast, we retired for the night. As usual, our start was early the next morning. We did not see sign of Indians, but the men kept a vigilant watch, at every ravine and defile watching the horses' ears for signal of danger.

At last we saw Fort Sedgwick in the distance, and how those horses did go on the gallop. As we were coming in sight two or three officers and their wives came down on horseback to meet us. When we arrived at the fort what a supper we did have, and how they did compliment me for my bravery. It was in the "wee sma" hours when we retired at our different quarters. The Indians all night long fired punk across the river. The stream at Fort Sedgwick was very wide and a most treacherous river.

There were fifteen ladies at the fort, with their husbands, and also there were a number of old bachelors. Everything went as merry as could be. The ladies would assemble on their horses at dress parade in the afternoon, and the visiting military officers would compliment us on our fine appearance. We all took our

canter early in the morning not daring to go far from the fort. I owned two fine greyhounds and they always went with me. Some traveling artist would have had a fine picture for his studio if he had been along with his camera.

One afternoon the ladies and their husbands started for a short ride on the plains, all of the officers having their orderlies and we had two Pawnee Indians along. They were stationed at the Fort as scouts. We were riding along leisurely, as it was a delightful afternoon, the birds all singing and trying to keep up with the party as they flew upward and all around us. The trail we were following was by the margin of the river. All at once a rumbling and muffled sound was heard. It could not be thunder as there was not a cloud to be seen. One of the Pawnee Indians said: "Buffalo stampeding." It was thought best to return to the post; there might be trouble. We soon could see the dark looking mass of rapidly moving animals. After seeing the ladies back to the Fort the men started back. My husband took his fine greyhounds with him and one was trampled to pieces, having rushed right in among the stampeding buffalo. But what a sight! You really cannot describe it.

We never could procure any kind of vegetables at the Fort. They could not be shipped in as the distance was so great. The government issued what was termed desiccated vegetables—onions, cabbage, beets, turnips, and green peppers, which had been steamed, pressed, and dried. These were in the form of leaves pressed together after they were dry. They were made into cakes twelve inches square and one inch thick, and were pressed so hard that they weighed as much as wood, and came sealed in cans a foot square. They were used for soups, mostly, but they could be made very nutritious in several ways. They were very convenient for the men on a scout as they could put a piece in their saddle bags to carry wherever they went.

Scurvy broke out among the troops. The doctor of the post had the men that were not sick gather a bushel of the hunch of the prickly pear. They scraped the bristles and prickles off, cut them up and made a variety of apple sauce. They ate plenty of it and the result was that they were entirely cured. It was indeed very seldom that you ever heard of any illness, except by accident or wounds, those also being very few.

The ladies at Fort Sedgwick were very fortunate in having a fine, large skating pond made for their favorite pastime. The pond was flooded from the Platte River. Many a skating party was formed, and pleasant days would find a large portion of the officers, when off duty, enjoying their morning exercise before breakfast.

One beautiful morning the writer went down to enjoy an early skate. But lo and behold, a huge buffalo was lapping the ice, and had succeeded in breaking a large hole. He gave one of his "basso profundo" bellows, and skates and owner beat a double quick for home. Captain O'Brien mounted his buffalo pony, which his company had given him, and let the monster have one shot. The fellow started after the captain, and the latter brought him close to the house. The citizens hearing the shot, came to his assistance. The captain gave the buffalo his fatal shot, and the animal fell and expired.

The buffalo was in his prime, fat, round and sleek. His horns looked as if they had been polished. They were finely curved, with not a scratch on their shining surface, nor a splinter to mar their beauty. The sweeping black beard was long and full, and the thick curls upon the hump and massive shoulders were soft and deep, while the short hair on sides and hips was smooth as the coat of a horse. The captain thought he would turn the scales at quite two thousand pounds. The buffalo robe we sent to Henry M. Stanley, the African explorer, at that time a reporter on the *New York Herald*. Mr. Stanley wrote a very interesting account of the beauty of the robe, and complimented the donor. He had the robe on exhibition in his sanctum in New York, and it attracted quite a number of prominent people who greatly admired its quality and size. The large head was mounted and we had it erected on a pole in front of our door. Many a horse nearly threw his rider when he caught sight of it.

One day John Dillon, the actor, was passing through on the stagecoach. He was coming from the West. The telegraph operator notified the operator at the Fort. Captain O'Brien knew Dillon personally, and as they were fellow Irishmen it was but natural that the captain should warmly greet him. Some of the officers went with the captain and the result was that they persuaded Dillon to stop over. They fixed an addition to the hospital so as to make it twenty by forty. They got everyone out of the hospital, hung up blankets at the end, and we had as good an entertainment from John Dillon as we had ever listened to anywhere. Dillon had been playing in Denver and was on his way to the States. We organized him a house, fifty cents admission. We had no chairs, nor anything to sit on, so the front row sat on the floor and formed a semi-circle about five feet from Dillon. Then the next row sat on cracker boxes; the entrance was through a window. We were packed like herrings in a box. When the show was over they all played poker until breakfast.

My husband and I had thirteen beautiful greyhounds, which went with us frequently out on the plains and down the road to different ranches. The origin of the greyhounds was as follows:

An Englishman by the name of Sir George Gore came to this country to hunt big game. He stopped at Fort Sedgwick and hunted. My husband showed him attention and instructed him how to be successful in hunting buffalo. Major Wood and my husband and several officers went on the hunt. Large herds were over in the hills south of the post, so at noon they went to look for the buffalo, but were charged to be careful, because the Indians from the West might be following the buffalo. But they never saw an Indian. They went out with nothing but Colt's revolvers. They had a very exciting afternoon.

The bulls would stay together in large herds, off on one of the wings of the moving herd. They were the most exciting game; they were savage, and often put up a good fight. The horses were very much frightened and were hard to manage. During the afternoon, although they killed several buffalo, it is a fact that the buffalo chased them as much as they chased the buffalo. Captain O'Brien had a very ornamental McClellan cap, embroidered with a gold corps badge and crossed sabres. On the inside of it, in the top, was a piece of red patent leather. The captain picked out the biggest buffalo bull of the herd as they were going and managed to get near enough to hit the buffalo and slightly wound him. The buffalo started after the captain and his horse became frantic.

In the jolting the captain's cap fell off, and the red top showed up and attracted the eye of the buffalo. He got down on his front elbows and bored his horn right through the cap, and pranced off with it on his left horn. The captain was unable with the revolver to bring him down. They cut out the tongues of those they killed and brought them back after sunset. Packs of wolves were seen running in every direction, hanging on the flanks of the buffalo herd.

When Gore left he gave us his greyhounds. My husband often took them out to stir up the game. Wolves and jack rabbits were plentiful. The dogs gave some fine runs after antelope, but the antelope having much the start, were able to outrun the dogs. Here we found out for the first time that the jack rabbit was swifter than the antelope. A pilgrim on the road who was watching the dogs run, told us that if we wanted to have good fun, we must get a stag hound to go with the greyhounds, because, he said, the greyhounds course by sight and often miss the game. But the stag hound goes by scent and will keep the track and recover the pursuit. Finally we succeeded in purchasing a fine stag hound from a passing train, and named him Bugler, from his loud, sonorous voice. With the three we had successful hunts, many a time being lucky in bagging both antelope and jack rabbits.

Reminiscences of Kit Carson, Jr.*

An Interview and Notes by A. B. Sanford

Of all the men who traversed the old West from the thirties to the sixties, hunting, trapping, exploring, or fighting Indians, none surpassed Kit Carson in the character and extent of service to his fellow men and the government. His place is definitely fixed in American history and the stories of his life will ever be of absorbing interest.

In July, 1924, Kit Carson, Jr., was induced to come to Denver through the efforts of his son-in-law, Ray R. Waddell of this city. One of the places that first attracted his attention was the State Museum, where many things relating to his father's history are exhibited. One of these is the old buckskin hunting coat his father owned and which was used by McMonnies in his conception of the pioneer scout topping the bronze monument in Denver's Civic Center. This coat was worn by Kit Jr. in posing for some photographs. Mr. Carson bears a striking resemblance to his illustrious father, and like him is rather slow of speech. He has a good memory of places, dates and individuals. Of his parents he said:

"Father was living at Taos, New Mexico, when he was married to my mother. Her maiden name was Josefa Jaramillo. Her father was Francisco Jaramillo, who came over from Spain and settled in the Taos Valley, marrying into the Vigil family."

There were born from this marriage three sons: William, Kit, Jr., and Charles, and four daughters, Teresina, Rebecca, Estella and Josephine, the last but fifteen days old when the mother died.

About the first thing Mr. Carson remembers was the hurried departure of the family from Taos. General Sibley at the head of some 3,000 Confederate troops was marching north up the Rio Grande. Kit Carson had organized a regiment of native New Mexican volunteers who were loyal to the Union and was then its commander. Sibley's mission was to capture the federal army posts, occupy the territory and later to continue into Colorado. His defeat at Glorietta and Apache Canon by Major Chivington and the Colorado Volunteers is another story. After Sibley's remnant of an army had started its retreat down the Rio Grande, Colonel Carson at once arranged for his family's return. Of this Mr. Carson says:

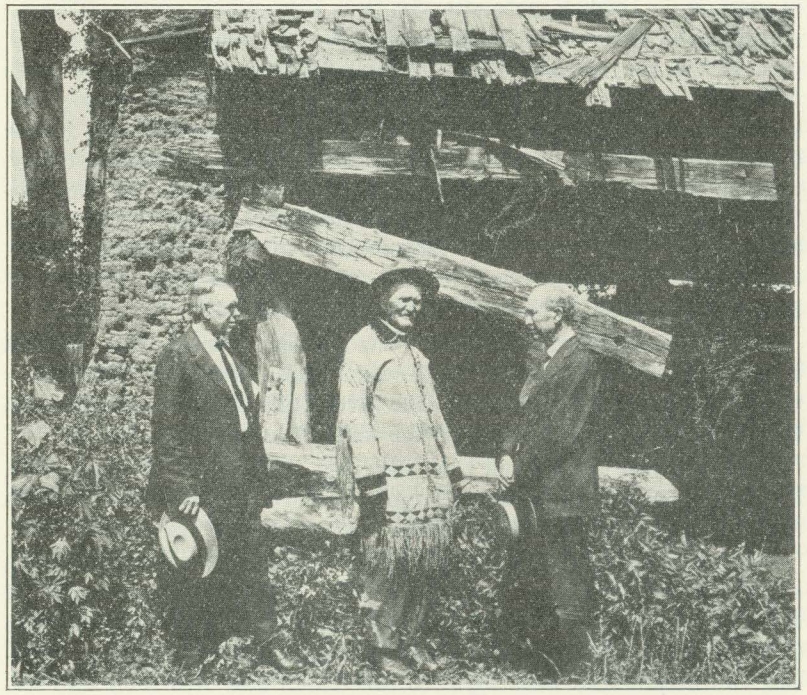
"My mother had a considerable amount of money and some valuable jewels. Father was not with the party when we started,

*The home of Kit Carson, Jr., was at La Junta, Colorado. He died there on January 9, 1929.—Ed.

although he joined us before reaching Taos. My mother still fearing the possibility of meeting some of Sibley's stragglers and believing in such an event that she would be the main object of a search, concealed her valuables in the garments of a faithful Navajo girl servant she had raised from babyhood.

"The trip of three days was made without incident and, as I have said, my father caught up with us before reaching home, but at once returned to Fort Union to join his regiment."

An incident showing the motherly character of Mrs. Carson occurred one day in Taos. Mr. Carson relates: "A party of Utes



FRANK S. BYERS, KIT CARSON, JR., GOV. E. M. AMMONS
Photograph taken in July, 1924, in front of the cabin of John McBroom, on Bear Creek near Denver. It was at this cabin that Kit Carson was entertained by McBroom in 1860.

came along from a fight with Navajos. A three-year-old boy of that tribe had been captured. The Ute chief told mother that the boy was a bother to them and they intended to kill him. She knew an appeal for his life would be useless so she asked what they would sell him for. A horse was named as the price, which mother immediately gave them and took the boy into our home. Later father adopted him and gave him the name of Juan Carson.

He lived to young manhood, married a Mexican girl, but not long afterward died. I have his picture." (This picture was copied for the State Historical Society.)

"After the close of the war, father was ordered to Fort Garland in the San Luis Valley, where he was placed in command. We moved from Taos with him. The Utes were ugly and the whole country was unsafe for travelers. Not long after we arrived, word came of an attack by these Indians on the settlement of Trinidad, which was composed of mixed population, Mexican and Americans, who had lost several of their number, and two white women had been carried away. The report further stated that they had left in a direction that would take them over the Culebra range. Father, of course, knew the pass they would probably use and immediately started south with a strong detachment of troopers. Somewhere in Culebra Creek above the old plaza of San Luis and about twenty miles south and east of the post, he met them. He told them of the report and that unless they came to Garland and agreed to peace they would be punished. To this they finally agreed and with the head chiefs and some fifteen warriors they followed him. They surrendered one white woman but denied having another.

"After some time in a 'big talk' the Utes promised father they would be peaceable and would not further war on the whites. He then ordered a feast to be given the whole bunch. It was during this that my sister Teresina was helping serve the food and noticed an Indian wearing a pair of white woman's shoes and asked him where he got them. In reply he boldly said 'Me kill white squaw and take shoes.' Horrified, she told him he could not have more food, which so angered him that he struck her with a quirt, a small heavy rawhide whip. Father happened to be in the adjoining room, heard her cry, and when told of the attack rushed at the fellow and would have punished him severely and perhaps have killed him then and there, but mother seemed to realize what the result would be and begged father to let it go. The band stayed around for another day, when they left to join the tribe on the Culebra.

"One chief, Cassadore, was taken very sick and on father's promise to care for him he and his squaw remained. With the post surgeon's efforts and other good care he recovered. Their gratitude was shown as I will tell later on.

"At that time the whole country around the fort was covered with roving bands of Utes. Frequently they would camp near by and some of them came in to trade with the soldiers or more often to beg tobacco, sugar, biscuit, and especially whisky. To give or sell this to them was positively against orders, but sometimes they

got a supply and enjoyed a regular white man's drunk. It was on such an occasion that a soldier, either intentionally or otherwise, fixed up a dose for one of the beggars, with the result that he started off in evident distress. He was 'heap sick.'

"A day or so later we children were playing just outside the fort, when we saw a lot of Indians coming. All were mounted and in war paint and feathers. We ran to father's quarters and reported. When he came out they were inside the sentry line and were greatly excited. The chief said that one of his braves had been found dead not far from the post, and that he had been poisoned. He demanded the soldier responsible for the act. In reply to father's question as to where the body was, the chief pointed in the direction and asked him to go with him and see for himself. Father got a horse from one of the braves and went to the place pointed out, and sure enough, a dead Indian was found. It looked like a serious situation, so father invited the chief and some of the braves to come in for a 'pow wow' to settle for the damage.

"At that time Captain Pfeiffer was next in command, and not until later did we know how promptly and quietly he acted. The room was soon filled and father found the chief, Cassadore, who had not yet left the post, close to him on one side and his squaw on the other, where they stayed during the meeting. Afterward they showed father that each carried a long sharp knife and declared they had agreed to defend him with their lives if trouble started. During this time mother had taken us into one of the rooms and I knew she was greatly worried. Captain Pfeiffer came in, told her not to be frightened and said: 'I have every soldier fully armed and ready to act the moment trouble starts and now the Indians know it.' Pretty soon they all came out and we knew a settlement had been arranged. It was $100 in money and a good horse for some one.

"For some reason the payment was put off for a week to be paid on the Saguache in the northern part of the valley. On the day appointed, father with forty troopers met them. The Indians now demanded more money. Father said he had brought the amount agreed upon, but would not make it more. He had dismounted and was standing, when one Indian advanced with a heavy rawhide rope and threatened to strike him. Turning to his men who had their carbines ready, he said: 'If he does I will kill him, then we will fight if we all have to die together.' He surely 'called their bluff.' They knew he never failed to keep a promise, whether it be a reward or punishment to the death. After a little further parley they accepted the original amount, renewed their promise to be good and father's party went back to Fort Garland.

"I am quite sure this was the last time father had any trouble with Indians, for then followed a period of about two years of comparative rest. The fort was well armed and fully provisioned. The Utes knew of this and of father's position with the government. Settlers began to locate in the San Luis Valley and many travelers passed to and from the great San Juan mineral districts."

Kit Carson Jr. remembers when General Sherman visited Fort Garland for several days. Ouray and other Ute chiefs had come in to take part in a council and to pay their respects to the "great war chief of the whites." Kit Jr. tells a rather amusing incident: "Juan, our Navajo Indian boy had been missed by mother, who was searching the grounds for him. Finally in passing the assembly room she saw him quite comfortably seated in General Sherman's lap. She signalled for him to come out and tried to explain the offense of entering the room and disturbing the deliberations."

One of Carson's historians mentions Sherman's interest in the Carson children, so we may believe the intrusion of the youngster was not offensive, for we read: "Sherman advised his old friend to arrange for the children's education and later gave William, the oldest son, a scholarship in Notre Dame University."

"Then came the time," Mr. Carson continued, "when father wanted to move over on the Purgotoire in the Arkansas Valley, where mother had interests in a Spanish land grant. So about July, 1867, he resigned from the army and we left Fort Garland for our new home. Early in 1868 father received word that he was needed at a peace conference between the government and the Utes, to be held in Washington. He was far from being well, for an old wound from an accident during a campaign against the Navajos had been giving him much trouble, but he felt it was just another call to duty and so went by coach to the railroad and then on East."

Ouray with several other prominent chiefs had met Governor Hunt, Major Head, Col. Boone, Major Oakes, Agent Curtis, and Judge Bennet in Denver and had gone to Cheyenne by stage, then by rail to Washington. Carson performed his last great public service in the nation's capital in arranging details for the Indians' removal to reservations. All except Bennet returned to Denver, where Carson was confined to his room in the Planter's House most of the three days he remained. Then, as nearly as can now be determined, Major Oakes took him in charge and they started for Carson's home. They went by team and a camp was made some twenty-five miles to the south of Denver, near what is now called Wild Cat Point. Here it is said Kit Carson made his last camp fire, and here the Territorial Daughters of Colorado have marked the spot with a plain granite monument.

Mr. Carson says: "Our little sister Josephine was born during

father's absence and mother was still confined to her bed when father returned. It was not until then, I believe, that father realized how far gone he was and was forced to go to bed. This was in April. From that time father failed rapidly. He was taken to Fort Lyon, where the surgeons and doctors worked to save his life, but on May 24, 1868, he followed our mother. Both were buried near the home in Boggsville, and Tom Boggs was named administrator. Later, according to father's will, both bodies were taken up and carried by wagon over the Raton Pass to Taos. The Masons put up a monument at father's grave and Brother Charley and I had a suitable stone placed as a memorial to our mother."

The Explorations of Gunnison and Beckwith in Colorado and Utah, 1853[1]

LELAND HARGRAVE CREER*

By authority of the tenth and eleventh sections of the Military Appropriation Act of March 3, 1853,[2] directing such explorations and surveys as to ascertain the most practical route for a railroad to the Pacific Ocean, Captain John W. Gunnison[3] was appointed by the War Department to conduct "a survey through the Rocky Mountains in the vicinity of the Rio del Norte, by way of the Huerfano River and Coo-che-to-pa or some other eligible pass, into the region of the Grand and Green Rivers, and westwardly to the Vegas de Santa Clara and Nicollet Rivers of the Great Basin, and thence northward in the vicinity of Salt Lake on a return route, to explore the most valuable passes and canyons of the Wasatch Range and South Pass to Fort Laramie."[4] The consideration that prompted the survey of this route was its central position geographically since it was about midway between the northern and southern boundaries of the United States, on a line with both San Francisco and St. Louis. "It was hoped that this route would afford the shortest road between San Francisco and the navigable waters of the Mississippi."[5]

Gunnison had as assistants: Lieutenant E. G. Beckwith; R. H. Kern, topographical artist; Sheppard Homans, astronomer; Dr. James Schiel, surgeon and geologist; F. Creutzfeldt, botanist; J. A. Snyder, assistant topographer; and Charles Taplin, wagon master. The outfitting camp and point of departure was five miles from Westport on the western border of the State of Missouri, just below the mouth of the Kansas River.

The party left camp June 23, following the Santa Fe road through fine level country between the Osage and Kansas Rivers. About thirty miles west of Westport, Gunnison and a few men traversed the Kansas River and Smoky Hill Route, going by way of Uniontown and Fort Riley.[6] From this post the party proceeded southwesterly to Walnut Creek, where it joined Beckwith's forces, July 12. Beckwith had followed a parallel route about thirty miles south of that of Gunnison along the Santa Fe road.

On July 13, the combined parties continued along the Arkansas to a camp on Pawnee's Fork. On July 16, the party arrived at Fort Atkinson, where they were visited by throngs of Comanche,[7] anxious to trade for horses. Opposite the camp on the south bank of the Arkansas, a band of Kiowa women and children were encamped, the bucks of the tribe having joined the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Jacarilla, Apache, and Comanche to wipe out the Pawnee.

Continuing along the Santa Fe road north of the Arkansas, on July 27, the party passed two or three log houses, occupied by William Bent as a trading station during the preceding winter but now left vacant. Two days later they arrived at Bent's Fort, which had been abandoned previously. "Here beyond all question," says Beckwith, "would be one of the most favorable points for a military post which is anywhere presented on the Plains. There is an abundance of pasturage, fuel, and building material in the neighborhood for the use and building of the fort. It is of easy access from its central position, from the east, from Santa Fe, from

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[1]My account has been taken from the report of these reconnoissances kept by Lieutenant E. G. Beckwith, assistant to Gunnison, supplemented by the official reports of Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis, and A. A. Humphreys, Captain Topographical Engineers. The Beckwith report is found in *Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, Vol. II, Part I.*

[2]The amendments to the Army Appropriation Bill which were passed by Congress and incorporated in the Military Appropriation Act of March 3, 1853, and which provided for the magnificent surveys across the continent, were introduced by Senator Gwin of California in December, 1852. They provided (1) for the appropriation of $150,000 to defray the expense of such explorations and surveys; (2) the organization of as many district topographical corps of engineers as there were routes to be explored, and (3) the presentation of the several reports before Congress on or before the first Monday in January, 1854. See Gwin, William M., *Memoirs on the History of the United States, Mexico and California,* 100-101.

[3]John Williams Gunnison was born in New Hampshire in 1812. In 1838, he was commissioned Second Lieutenant, Topographical Engineers; in 1846, First Lieutenant; and in 1853, Captain. He served with distinction in the Florida Indian War, 1837-1839. For ten years he was employed by the Government in surveying and reconnoitering the lakes and forests of the Northwest. During the years, 1849-1851, he assisted Captain Howard Stansbury in his thorough reconnoissance of Great Salt Lake and in the preparation of valuable maps of the Great Basin. On October 26, 1853, Gunnison was killed by Indians near Sevier Lake, Utah.

[4]*Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean.* II, Part I, 10.

[5]Jefferson Davis. *Report on the Several Pacific Railroad Explorations.* 21.

[6]Fort Riley, then in the course of construction, was situated at the junction of the Pawnee River with the Kansas.

[7]Beckwith says the Comanches were "anxiously awaiting the arrival of Major Fitzpatrick, Indian Agent, from whom they expected large presents, after having made a treaty." *Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean,* II, Part I, 25.

Taos through the Sangre de Cristo Pass, and from Fort Laramie. It is on an emigrant road from southern Missouri and Arkansas, either by the North Park or Coo-che-to-pa Pass; and it is in the heart of an Indian country, accessible to the resorts of the Comanches, Arapahoes, Kiowas, some bands of Apaches, and even occasionally of the Utahs of New Mexico."[8]

Following a course along the north bank of the Arkansas, on August 6, the party came to a wagon trail leading from Raton Pass to Pueblo on the Arkansas and Fort Laramie on the Platte. This was followed to the Cuchara, which was forty feet wide and two feet deep where the party crossed it. Two miles above the ford Captain Gunnison ascended a neighboring butte and thus describes the view: "Pike's Peak to the north, Spanish Peak to the south, the Sierra Mojada to the west, and the plains from the Arkansas—undulating hills, along the route we have come, but sweeping up in a gentle rise where we should have come—with the valleys of the Cuchara and Huerfano, make the finest prospect it has ever fallen to my lot to have seen."[9]

On this same day, Beckwith, accompanied by five men, left in search of the Greenhorn settlement, "on a stream of the same name rising in a range of mountains to the east of the Wet River Valley."[10] Striking west-northwest from the Cuchara directly toward the Wet Mountains, the party crossed a broad tableland which descended gradually to Huerfano Valley. Following a short distance up the Huerfano River, the party came to Apache Creek, along whose borders grew densely "willow, plum, thorn, and cherry bushes, with a few cottonwood trees." Beyond this creek, the explorers entered upon a wide open valley of weeds, prickly pear and sand, and struck a trail leading from Taos direct to Greenhorn Valley. Here the party found six New Mexican families utilizing the waters of Greenhorn Creek, a stream two feet wide and only four inches deep. "They plant a few acres of corn and wheat, of beans and watermelons—in all, an area equal to that of a small farm of an eastern farmer who cultivates his own field. Two hundred fanegas of wheat and fifty of corn, with the requisite amount of beans and melons, constitute the largest total crop of the valley. They have a few cattle and horses—the latter very poor. The houses are built of adobe or sun dried brick, without windows or other openings than a single door, in entering which a man six feet in stature must bow very low. In front of each house is enclosed a small space of ground, twenty yards in width, by poles planted in the earth and lashed to horizontal strips of rawhide

[8] *Ibid.*, 28.
[9] *Ibid.*, 33.
[10] *Ibid.*, 34

thong. These picketed yards are intended as a protection against Indians—the Utahs having killed some of their cattle last year, destroyed their grain, and stolen their horses."[11] Beckwith secured the services of an excellent guide, a Spaniard by the name of Massalino,[12] and returned the following day to the main camp on the Cuchara.

Beckwith having rejoined Gunnison, the united party began the ascent of Huerfano River on August 8 and a few days later crossed the dividing ridge at Sangre de Cristo Pass. In places the route had been exceedingly difficult; wagons had been held by hand ropes to prevent their being overturned and the labor was the more arduous because of the rarefied atmosphere at so great an elevation. The descent into San Luis Valley was made by following a circuitous route along the Sangre de Cristo Creek almost to Fort Massachusetts.

From this point, Gunnison determined to secure more experienced guides for the difficult country ahead. Accordingly he sent Beckwith to Taos, "the headquarters of many of the most reliable and experienced of these mountain men."[13]

Upon reaching the Culebra (Snake) River Beckwith records: "There is a small settlement five miles to the east of the point where we crossed this stream, near the mountains; but without visiting it we continued our journey, and arrived a little after dark, after a ride of sixty-five miles, at the Costilla, a stream similar to the last, on which a new settlement is opened and a few fields are already covered with crops of corn, wheat, oats, and the other usual crops of a New Mexican farm."[14] Continuing southward, Beckwith reached Taos, where he secured the services of Antoine Leroux to act as guide, and with him he rejoined Gunnison's party in the San Luis Valley on August 19.

On August 23, the party left Fort Massachusetts following a route to the north and west. Gunnison made a reconnoissance of Robidoux Pass to determine, if possible, a more direct route from the Huerfano River. The pass, however, was found to be impracticable for a railroad and little better for a wagon route, its elevation being 9,772 feet with an average ascent of 450 feet a mile for three miles.

Both Gunnison and Beckwith examined Williams' Pass on

[11] Report of Beckwith, *ibid.*, 34-35.
[12] "He is about forty-five years of age, and having spent it entire in the wild life of a mountaineer—by turns a hunter, a trapper, a trader, a voyageur, a fighter, and a guide, he is familiar with the country westward to the Pacific. Last year he lived at this place (Greenhorn Settlement) with his Pawnee squaw, but his losses by the Utahs were considerable, and he removed to Pueblo on the Arkansas, where he is with his family the sole occupant of the place." *Ibid.*, 35.
[13] *Ibid.*, 39.
[14] These settlements in present Costilla County were the first permanent settlements in Colorado.—Ed.

August 25. It was found to be even more impracticable than Robidoux Pass for a railroad or wagon route. The western approach to the pass from San Luis Valley was blocked by a series of gigantic sand hills, extending from eight to ten miles in length and four or five miles in width, lying along the base of the mountains. "These hills," says Beckwith, "are so steep and smooth on the side toward the creek that the smallest pebbles started at their summit roll uninterruptedly into the creek, leaving their paths distinctly marked from the summits to the bases. High up on the sides are seen, at half a dozen points, single bushes of artemisia—the only vegetation seen upon them, and the only change discoverable since they were visited by Captain Pike fifty years ago, when they were entirely destitute of vegetation, and appeared exactly like the sea in a storm, except in color."[15]

On the 29th, Gunnison directed the party to follow a course leading almost directly westward through San Luis Valley to Cochetopa Pass. "This valley is one of the finest in New Mexico," writes Beckwith, "although it contains so large a proportion of worthless land—worthless because destitute of water to such an extent where irrigation alone can produce a crop, and because of the ingredients of the soil in those parts where salts effloresce upon the surface. Its lower portion is adapted to the cultivation of grain, and if its upper part should prove too cold for cereals, its fine fields of grass on and above the Rio Grande del Norte, must make it valuable for grazing."[16]

On August 29, Captain Gunnison and Mr. Homans, the astronomer, accompanied by a guide and four or five men, left the main party to reconnoiter a small park, in the upper end of the valley, which Gunnison named Homans' Park. "In it," writes the captain, "much hay could be cut and fine grazing farms opened and it is probable that wheat and flax and perhaps other grains could be raised." [17]

Gunnison rejoined his party on Saguache Creek near the mouth of Cochetopa Pass. The ascent from the San Luis Valley was made following the windings of the Saguache until the summit of this pass, 10,032 feet in elevation, was reached. For railroad construction, it was adjudged necessary "to pass the summit with a grade of 124 feet to the mile, which would require a tunnel, including a deep approach from the west of not less than two miles in length, entering the hill three-fourths of a mile from the summit

[15] *Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean*, II, Part 1, 43.
[16] *Ibid.*, 44.
[17] *Ibid.*, 45.

on the east, . . . diminishing the elevation to be overcome by 490 feet."[18]

Gunnison made several thorough reconnoissances of the canyons diverting from the summit of the pass. Of the two most available for railroad construction, he says of the first: "It would require blasting one-third of the distance for the construction of a road, and solid masonry with many arches for culverts on the whole line—a stupendous work for an engineer."[19] The second he adjudged scarcely less formidable for along the bottoms of it the river arose in places to a depth of eight feet and from a neighboring hill, he esteemed the country about this canyon to be "the roughest, most hilly, and most cut up he had ever seen. Hills with flat tops, hills with round tops, and hills with knife edges and points, and deep chasms are on every side."[20]

The descent on the western slope of Cochetopa Pass was made by way of Pass Creek and the Cochetopa to the Gunnison River. After crossing this the route extended over rocky, irregular hills to Uncompahgre Valley. Here the Salt and Abajo Peaks were seen to the southwest, the former being directly on the Old Spanish Trail leading from California to Abiquiu, and noted as a favorite rendezvous of the Utah and Navajo Indians for trade.[21] From the Uncompahgre the route led through the valley of the Gunnison (called the Grand by the captain) which enters the Valley of the Colorado (called by him the Blue River).[22]

The route now lay three miles from the base of the Roan Mountains,[23] extending westward seventy miles to Green River Crossing. "Except three or four small cottonwood trees," says Gunnison, "there is not a tree to be seen by the unassisted eye on any part of the horizon. The plain lying between us and the Wasatch Range, 100 miles to the west, is a series of rocky, parallel chasms and fantastic sandstone ridges. On the north, Roan Mountains, ten miles from us, present bare masses of sandstone and on the higher ridges, twenty miles back, a few scattering cedars may

[18] *Ibid.*, 48.
[19] *Ibid.*, 51.
[20] *Idem.*
[21] The Gunnison party visited several Indian lodges in Uncompahgre Valley. Beckwith inserts the following interesting description of two Indian women encountered in this locality: "They bear unmistakable evidence of having seen the snows of a hundred winters pass away. They are of small stature and bent forward with years. . . . Their features are dried and shrunken to a mummy-like appearance, with blurred eyes and sunken lips covering teeth worn to the gums. The joints of some of their fingers are stiff and distorted, and all are enlarged to ugliness. These poor objects of humanity are clothed in ragged, filthy deer skins, and, on learning that their lives were not in danger, sang and jumped with joy at their escape from what they had supposed inevitable death. Presents were given to these people by Captain Gunnison." *Ibid.*, 55.
[22] See George L. Albright, *Official Explorations for Pacific Railroads, 1853-1855*, pp. 91-92.
[23] "Roan Mountain, which derives its name from the color of its sides of red, gray, white and blue clay, in horizontal strata, destitute of vegetation and washed into many deep gorges and fanciful forms, sweeps round to the west, following a course some miles from the river." *Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean*, II, Part I, 57.

be distinguished with the glass. . . . The surface around us is whitened with fields of alkali, precisely resembling fields of snow.''[24]

Crossing the Green River, October 1, the party continued west for a few miles over the Spanish Trail, then left it going northwest, skirting along the edge of rocky and broken hills, thence along the bed of Dry Creek, to the divide between the waters of Green and White Rivers. From here the route led northwestward by way of Clover Creek to the divide between White and San Rafael Rivers. Sixteen miles beyond, the explorers met the Old Spanish Trail again. The trail, though but seldom used, was still very distinct here. Beckwith counted as many as twenty parallel trails of the ordinary size of horse paths in a space barely fifty feet in width.[25]

The eastern base of the Wasatch Mountains was reached, October 12, from whence the party crossed the mountains through Wasatch Pass, at an elevation of 7,820 feet.[26] The party traveled north and west from this point, descending to the west through Salt Creek. On October 17, the survey had reached Sevier Valley. ''On reaching this plain,'' declared Gunnison, ''a stage is attained which I have so long desired to accomplish: the great mountains have been passed and a new wagon route opened across the continent—a work which was almost unanimously pronounced impossible by the men who know the mountains and this route over them. The result is a new mail and military road to Taos in New Mexico by way of Fort Massachusetts; which with a little work on Gunnison's Creek and a hill near Taos, will be very direct and easy, with excellent feed and water all the way; (2) a road for the southern states to California, and for emigrants who are late in starting for the states; (3) a military road to, and in command of, the Utah country, passing into the center of the territory of that people at Grande River, from whence radiate trails to all points of the compass; (4) it is demonstrated that, for a railroad route, it is far inferior to the Middle Central, by Medicine Bow River and Laramie Plains. It passes some thousands of feet higher and also lower, and is much longer from St. Louis.''[27]

Continuing down the river valley, the main party struck the Emigrant Trail, leading from Salt Lake to California by way of Fillmore and Parawan, the Vegas de Santa Clara, and Walker's Pass. They followed this trail for some distance, encamping on October 21 at Cedar Springs, ten miles from Fillmore. On October 25, Gunnison left with Kern, Creutzfeldt, Potter, Bellows, a corporal and six men to explore Sevier Lake, eighteen miles west of Cedar Springs. He continued down the valley, feeling reasonably safe, although he had learned of the trouble between the Utahs and the emigrants.[28] On the afternoon of October 25, he had encamped in a well protected nook, in a river bottom near the present site of Gunnison, Utah. At the break of day, October 26, all had risen in preparation to remove camp. Most of the party were breakfasting when they were surprised by the sound of savage yells from Pah-Utah Indians, followed by a volley of rifles and a shower of arrows. Gunnison stepped forth and attempted to stay the massacre, but in vain, for he was shot down and pierced with fifteen arrows.

[24] *Ibid.*, 61.
[25] *Ibid.*, 65.
[26] *Ibid.*, 69.
[27] *Ibid.*, 70.

Upon learning of the disaster, Beckwith immediately dispatched a rescue party under Captain Morris, but they arrived too late. On the morning of the 27th, they found the bodies of Captain Gunnison and seven of his companions, so horribly mutilated, that it was not deemed possible to carry them away. Later, however, when Governor Young of Utah learned of the disaster, he dispatched a corporal with ten men from Salt Lake City who properly buried the remains of the unfortunate explorers.[29]

Public opinion charged the Mormons[30] with the disaster and W. W. Drummond, federal district judge for Utah Territory, persisted in the accusation.[31] Beckwith, however, discredited these charges. He writes thus: ''The statement which has from time to time appeared (or been copied) in various newspapers of the country since the occurrence of these sad events, charging the Mormons or Mormon authorities with instigating the Indians to, if not actually, aiding them in, the murder of Captain Gunnison and his associates, is, I believe, not only entirely false, but there is no accidental circumstance connected with it affording the slightest foundation for such a charge.[32]

[28] Gunnison had been warned of the danger of an Indian attack by Anson Call, a Mormon Church authority at Fillmore. *Utah Sketches, MS.*, 163-168; Wells, *Narrative*, 15-19.

[29] ''They arrive at the scene of the massacre ten days after the slaughter. The bodies of the unfortunate were found destitute of flesh, the same having been devoured by wild animals of the plain. A common grave on the bank of the Sevier River was dug and into it were buried all but two of the bodies of the slain. The remains of Captain Gunnison and Potter, the Mormon guide, were gathered up and carried to Fillmore where they were buried in the cemetery of that place.'' *Utah Sktches, MS.*, 168 (Bancroft Library, University of California).

[30] ''Here we have a fair specimen of the hundreds of defamatory stories which have been told about the Mormons from the beginning. In this instance, not only is there no valid truth against them, but there are many circumstances pointing to the opposite direction, one of them being that among the slain was a Mormon guide.'' Bancroft, *History of Utah*, 470.

[31] Drummond claimed that ''the whole affair was a deep and maturely laid plan to murder the whole party of engineers, or surveyors, and charge the murder upon the Indians.'' He asserted that the Indian warrior, Eneis, who so terribly mutilated the body of Captain Gunnison, was the property of Brigham Young and had left Salt Lake under his orders. Letter of Judge Drummond to Mrs. J. W. Gunnison, April 27, 1857, published in full in Gunnison, Lieut. John W., *The Mormons*, pp. VIII to XIV, inclusive.

[32] *Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean*, II, part I, 74.

Through the friendly efforts of Anson Call and Willard Richards, Mormon church authorities at Fillmore, Beckwith was able to recover all the notes, most of the surveying instruments and several of the lost arms.[33] At Fillmore, Chief Kanosh delivered Gunnison's horse and expressed regret and indignation for the unfortunate disater. He attributed the attack to the instigation of two boys, who sought vengeance for the murder of their father, which had been committed but a few days before by an emigrant party.[34]

On October 31, Beckwith set out from Fillmore for Salt Lake City, following the California emigrant road. Beckwith took Gunnison's papers and wrote up the report.

The route explored was pronounced impracticable by government officials[35] for the construction of a transcontinental railroad; nevertheless, the reconnoissance was valuable in that it opened a new route to the Great Basin, gave valuable information relative to the nature of the country, its valleys, passes, rivers and resources and, by means of data, scientifically collected, placed the railroad question in a clearer light by presenting the nature and extent of the difficulties of construction and, in a limited way, the means of surmounting them.

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[33]Call obtained from the Indians the books, papers and instruments of the party by exchanging for them a few bright calico shirts and some blankets. *Utah Sketches, MS.,* 169.

[34]The Indians who murdered Captain Gunnison and party were tried by Judge Kinney in the Second Judicial Court at Nephi. The jury brought a verdict of manslaughter against three of the savages, who were sentenced to three years' imprisonment in the penitentiary. *History of Brigham Young, MS., (1855),* p. 24.

[35]Davis recommended the route along the 32nd parallel as the most practicable and economical. "This is the shortest route and not only is its estimated cost less by one-third than any other line but the character of the work required is such that it could be executed in a vastly shorter period." Davis, *Report on the Several Pacific Railroad Explorations,* 37. His conclusions were confirmed by Captain A. A. Humphreys, Captain Topographical Engineers, who made a careful study of the various reports of the different routes explored. See, "An Examination of the Reports and Explorations for Railroad Routes from the Mississippi to the Pacific" in *Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean,* I, 37-111.

My First Buffalo Hunt

Eugene Williams*

I think it was in the spring of 1873 that buffalo were reported to be very plentiful down the Platte River from our home ranch and as none of us had ever seen them on the range, my father rigged up an outfit and took my mother, a young lady friend named Miss Hancock, and myself, then eleven years old, and we went down to J. L. Brush's ranch, which was located a few miles east of where the town of Sterling is now.

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The next morning, father, mother and Miss Hancock, with Mr. Kempton, Mr. Brush's ranch foreman, took horses and rode out in the hills where they saw buffalo by the thousand. A Greeley man named Chamberlain, who happened to be at the ranch, started out on foot with me on our first buffalo hunt.

After getting out in the hills some distance, we saw a bunch of buffalo on their way to the river for water, and from the lay of the land we thought we could get a good shot at them if we could get to a certain point before the buffalo did. We walked for some distance, then crawled some distance farther until I began to realize we were getting pretty close to the herd. We could hear them and see the dust from their feet. Here I began to get cold feet. I hung back and told Chamberlain we were close enough. My reason for this was an incident which had occurred a few months previously.

A Mr. Merchant, who owned a ranch several miles farther east, had gone out to get some meat and seeing a herd of buffalo coming to water (just as Chamberlain and I were doing) had gone to where, as they came up out of a low place, he could get a good shot. As they came over the hill he shot at the leader, an old bull, and wounded him. Instead of running away as they usually did, the bull charged Mr. Merchant, caught him on his horns and ran with him until he came to a steep bank, when stopping suddenly, Mr. Merchant was torn loose and fell into the washout. Next day the boys from the ranch found him and he was taken to Denver. (He recovered but spent the rest of his life in a wheeled chair.)

Chamberlain and I had agreed that I should shoot at the leader and he would take the next one. So when we thought the position was right, we both shot and the buffalo all ran away. We were so tired and disappointed that we started for the ranch and on the way we ran across Kempton and his party and told them of our failure. Kempton told us that he had seen a small bunch about a mile from where we were. He told us to wait and he would run that bunch over close to us and we could get another shot. He rode away and we soon saw him coming our way, running a yearling buffalo. As he came close he called, "Gene, you get him" and as he passed by us I shot and killed my first buffalo. I killed many buffalo after that but never got the same thrill that I did from killing that one.