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Building the Narrow Gauge from Denver to Pueblo

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In 1870 Denver saw the fulfillment of its dreams for railroad communication when it was linked with the Union Pacific at Cheyenne through the Denver Pacific and when the Kansas Pacific from Kansas City was completed. The superintendent of construction, at one time or another for both roads, was William Jackson Palmer, the first builder of Colorado railroads.

At the head of the Kansas Pacific engineering party which visited Colorado in 1867, Palmer became very much interested in the route surveyed. It led up the valley of the Arkansas River through Pueblo, Canon City and the Royal Gorge, across the mountains into the San Luis Valley, south to the thirty-fifth parallel, and thence to the Pacific Coast. While on this surveying trip Palmer conceived the idea of a north and south railroad from Denver to Mexico City along the base of the mountains. The first step, of course, would be to connect Denver with the towns in the southern part of the territory.

Palmer supervised the construction of the Denver Pacific in 1870, and later that year he organized the Denver and Rio Grande Railway to carry out his idea of a north and south line. The Colorado men on the board of directors were Palmer and A. C. Hunt, a former governor of Colorado Territory. The others were Easterners or Englishmen. Plans for beginning the construction of the new narrow gauge line took shape rapidly.

Early in 1871 the *Rocky Mountain News* reported that the engineers of the road were working actively in laying the location of the grade up the valley of the Platte. Colonel W. H. Greenwood had charge of the work.[1] On January 29 of the same year the *News* stated that the work was going on very quietly, but that the iron for forty miles of the road had been ordered to be in (to Denver) by the first of April. The general route of the line was given as being from Denver to El Paso, Texas, via the Arkansas Canon, San Luis Park, and the Rio Grande Valley.[2] Before the middle of February the work of surveying the road to the Foun-

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[1] *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, January 6, 1871.

[2] *Ibid.*, January 21, 1871.

taine-qui-Bouille at the present site of Colorado Springs was completed. The work of grading, it was reported, would start soon.

On April 26 the *News* carried an item to the effect that the work of grading the roadbed for the Rio Grande was being pushed with commendable vigor. Although no iron for the railroad had arrived at that time, it was expected by June 1. Orders for locomotives and cars had been placed with Eastern firms.[3] On July 14 a dispatch from Philadelphia stated that, "Yesterday the first narrow gauge passenger engine ever built in America, 'The Montezuma,' was shipped from this city to its place of labor beneath the shadows of Pikes Peak.'"[4] That locomotive, together with two others, reached Denver about the end of July. Starting on the 26th of that month carloads of rails for the new railroad began to arrive in Denver. As the grade had been nearly completed and the bridges were ready for several miles, preparations were made to begin the actual laying of the track.

On July 28, 1871, the first spike was driven. A large crowd of people was drawn to witness the act and listen to the speeches attendant to the beginning of Colorado's own road. The first spike was driven by Colonel W. H. Greenwood, general manager of construction of the Denver and Rio Grande. Samuel E. Browne, solicitor of the company, was then introduced. He remarked that "today the attention of the whole country is fixed on this enterprise and the railway men of the nation are learning that they have been building too broad a gauge. In twenty years the Denver and Kansas Pacific roads will be as much a curiosity as the three-foot gauge is today."[5] He drove the second spike.

The second speaker was W. A. Pile, who had just resigned as governor of New Mexico to accept a diplomatic position abroad. He said that the road would be welcomed in New Mexico, where it would be of great help in the development of the resources of that territory. He congratulated the Rio Grande on the soundness of their financial basis and the excellent manner in which they had conducted their operations. He then drove a spike.[6]

After several other spikes had been driven, the crowd went to view the new equipment of the road. The new locomotives and cars were objects of great interest to the citizens of Denver. It was suggested by one author[7] that the largest part of the crowd was attracted by the novelty of the new equipment rather than the ceremonies connected with the laying of the first rails.

[3] *Ibid.*, April 26, 1871.
[4] *Ibid.*, July 14, 1871.
[5] *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, July 29, 1871.
[6] *Ibid.*, July 29, 1871.
[7] Hall, *History of Colorado*, I, 506.

About August 1 track laying began in earnest. As fast as the rails arrived they were laid. By September 1 twenty-three miles had been completed.

From the beginning the Rio Grande was a popular road. As soon as three miles had been completed, a number of guests of the railroad were run out that far in one of the new coaches, attached to one of the new engines. Some days later the mayor of Denver, the councilmen, and certain other guests were taken to the end of the track. They reported that they were very much pleased with the trip.

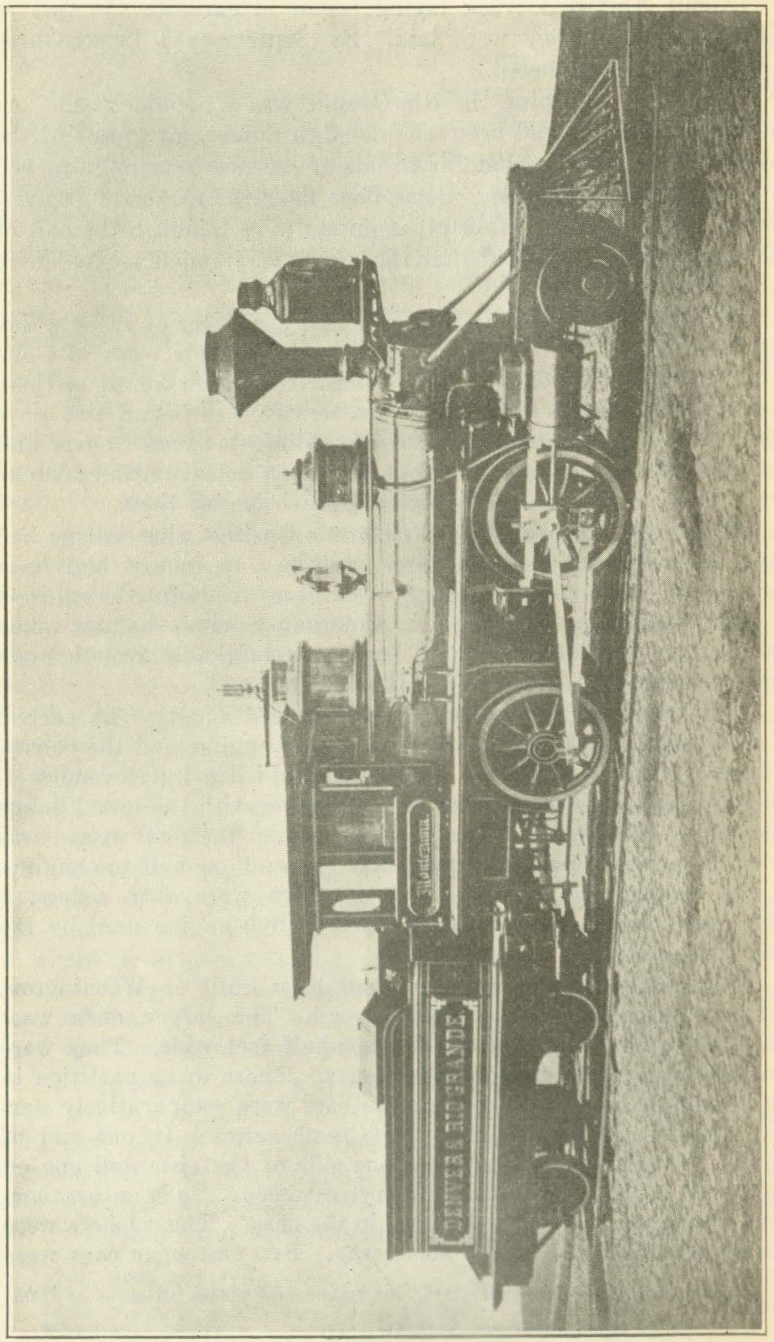
By laying from a mile to a mile and a quarter of track a day the construction crews were able to complete their work to Colorado Springs by October 21, thus completing the first unit of Colorado's own railroad. Regular train service was begun two days later. There were as yet no station buildings between Denver and Colorado Springs, but side tracks had been constructed and telegraph instruments had been placed at each one of these.

When the railroad reached Colorado Springs, that village had been in existence less than three months. In fact it had been founded by Palmer in an attempt to build up trade for the railroad in that sparsely settled region. Colorado Springs having taken root in two months and a half, began a remarkable growth upon the arrival of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad.

The beginnings of the road were indeed small. The arrival of two locomotives—the Cortez, a passenger engine, and the Ouray, a freight—had brought the total number to five by November 1. These engines were small even in comparison with the broad gauge locomotives of that day. Including the tender the total weight was twenty tons as compared with the fifty-two and one-half ton engines of the Pennsylvania Central. Since there were only a few of them and the cars were light, the first switch engine used by the road was a mule.[8]

Two sizes of passenger cars had been built at Wilmington, Delaware, for the narrow gauge road. The larger ones were thirty-three feet long and six and one-half feet wide. They were designed to carry thirty-four passengers. There was a partition in the middle of each of these. As the cars were comparatively narrow, there was room for only three seats across. In one end of the car two seats were placed on one side of the aisle and one on the other; in the other end it was just reversed. Such an arrangement was made to keep the balance in the cars.[9] The smokers were shorter but arranged in the same way. Six passenger cars were

[8] Arthur Ridgway, "Transportation," in Baker and Hafen, *History of Colorado*, II, 822.
[9] *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, April 26, 1871.



THE FIRST LOCOMOTIVE USED ON THE DENVER AND RIO GRANDE RAILROAD

ordered for the first delivery. An order for one hundred freight cars was placed at the same time.

Several years later sleeping cars were added to the equipment. They were like the broad gauge cars except that they had single berths on each side of the aisle instead of the standard double berths.

Shortly after the railroad was opened to Colorado Springs, the passenger and freight rates together with an estimate of the revenue for the first year of the road were published in the *Denver Times*. Ten cents a mile was the rate charged for passengers. Freight rates were fixed at sixty cents per hundred on first class freight between Denver and Colorado Springs, with other classes somewhat lower. Coal in the carload was to be carried for $4.50 per ton. Timber in lots of not less than 4,000 feet was carried for $6.00 per thousand.[10]

The first time card, which appeared in the handwriting of the superintendent, allowed five hours for the trip to Colorado Springs and the same time for the return trip. Trains left Denver at 7:30 A. M. and arrived at Colorado Springs at 12:30 P. M. The northbound train left Colorado Springs at 1:30 P. M., arriving in Denver at 6:30 P. M.[11] Today the same trip is made in slightly over two hours.

The newspaper reports of that period show how small and light was the equipment in comparison with the equipment today. Occasional reports told of encounters with stock on the track. Invariably these resulted fatally for the animal, and at times the trains were delayed several hours by being derailed. During the first few seasons, too, there were occasional snow blockades which lasted for several days. They occurred near Divide (Palmer Lake). One newspaper account of December, 1879, tells of a special train being lifted bodily off the tracks just south of Palmer Lake by a strong wind.[12] Fortunately on this occasion no one was injured.

The first unit of the Rio Grande immediately became popular as a route for excursions, surpassing other routes even in a time when all rail excursions were popular. One of the first was a publicity stunt. Representatives of the press from all parts of Northern Colorado were given a complimentary two-day excursion from Denver to Colorado Springs. The newspaper men were taken in carriages from Colorado Springs to Villa La Font (Manitou) where they spent the night.[13] The trip was given much publicity by the guests.

The new road made it possible for tourists coming to Colorado

[10] *Denver Times*, Oct. 30, 1871.
[11] *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, Oct. 21, 1871.
[12] *Denver Times*, Dec. 28, 1879.
[13] *Denver Tribune*, Feb. 28, 1872.

to visit Manitou, which even at that date was widely advertised as a summer resort. People going to Colorado Springs to make their homes also contributed to the passenger traffic.

The first articles carried by freight were mainly lumber and supplies for Colorado Springs. Traffic in these articles almost immediately became greater than even the most ardent promoters of the road had hoped. An article in the *Denver Tribune* for November 3, 1871, stated that twelve carloads of merchandise had been forwarded to Colorado Springs the day before and there was still much in storage at the depot; rolling stock, which was supposed to have been adequate had proved itself in one week inadequate. Orders, it went on, had been sent East for more engines and cars.[14]

When the Denver and Rio Grande was first projected there was some question as to where the railroad would cross the mountains into the valley of the Rio Grande del Norte. One route lay up the valley of the Arkansas River and across the mountains over Poncha Pass. This was the one which was shown on the map published before the railroad was actually begun. It was undoubtedly the one which Palmer had in mind. A second possible route would take the railroad across the Arkansas at Pueblo and south some fifty miles, before turning west to cross the mountains at La Veta Pass. The third route would take the line some thirty or thirty-five miles south of the point where the second turned west and over the mountains on Raton Pass. Only one of these routes would have left Pueblo off the main line of the railroad, but it was the one originally projected.

As early as 1869 the people of Pueblo had begun agitating for a railroad. The Union Pacific was approached to build a road to that place but could not be interested. Attention was directed to the Rio Grande in January, 1871. The *Colorado Chieftain* of Pueblo set forth the arguments as to why a railroad in the Pueblo region would be a paying venture. It was shown that Pueblo was the chief distributing and commercial center of Southern Colorado.[15]

Agents of the Rio Grande soon visited Pueblo and stated that if Pueblo County would vote bonds to aid the railroad the line would be changed to include Pueblo. It is improbable that the Rio Grande would have built directly across from Colorado Springs to Canon City as the engineering difficulties would have been serious, but it was an excellent argument to persuade Pueblo to vote bonds for the narrow gauge.

[14] *Ibid.*, Nov. 3, 1871.
[15] Milo L. Whittaker, *Pathbreakers and Pioneers of the Pueblo Region* (Philadelphia, 1917), 104, 105.

At one of the mass meetings held early in the year 1871, representatives of the Kansas Pacific made a definite proposal to extend their railroad to Pueblo. This complicated matters but the people of the southern city were inclined to doubt the ability of the Kansas Pacific to build their line to Pueblo. Therefore the citizens petitioned the county commissioners to hold a special election to vote $100,000 in bonds to aid the Rio Grande. These were to be exchanged for a corresponding amount of stock of the company.[16] At the election held June 9 the overwhelming majority of the voters favored the issuing of the bonds.

It had been the intention of the railroad company to stop work for the season as soon as the line had been completed to Colorado Springs. The action of Pueblo County and the report that sufficient bonds had been sold in Europe to pay for the extension to Pueblo resulted in contracts being let immediately for the grading and for the iron.

The reports in the *Rocky Mountain News* during November and December, 1871, and the first six months of 1872 indicate the progress of the road. Snow during November prevented work and resulted in several blockades to the new road. Shortly after the first of the year it was reported that twenty-five miles of grade had been completed. About March 1, the grade was completed to Pueblo, and there was talk of an extension to the coal banks in Fremont County and another one from Pueblo south.

The work of laying the rails was pushed rapidly and the track was completed into Pueblo on June 19, 1872. The first train was run in the same day. Many Puebloans were on hand to greet it. The *News* reporter stated that a number of Mexicans who were in the crowd became frightened at the sight of the puffing monster and hid themselves. However, they were soon reassured and came out into the open again.[17]

Trains were soon running into Pueblo on regular schedule. The train left Denver at 7:00 A. M., arriving at the southern city at 3:30 P. M. The northbound train left Pueblo at 11:00 A. M. Stopovers were allowed in Colorado Springs. The *News* reported that many people were passing over the "baby road" for mere curiosity.[18]

On July 2, an excursion was run from Denver to celebrate the opening of the new unit of the road. The special train bearing one hundred and ten guests arrived in Pueblo at one o'clock. The guests were escorted in carriages to the court house where a banquet was given them. Speeches were made by a number of Pueblo

[16] Whittaker, *op. cit.*, 186.
[17] *Rocky Mountain News*, June 12, 1872.
[18] *Ibid.*, June 23, 1872.

citizens and some of the visitors, after which the excursionists were taken to view the points of interest. The celebration ended with a grand ball at the court house.[19]

A number of the excursionists not being able to attend the ball made the trip home that evening. The *Times* was very jubilant over the fact that on the return journey the narrow gauge train attained the speed of over forty-five miles an hour and averaged over twenty-five miles an hour between Colorado Springs and Denver. This, it said, successfully disproved the claims that fast time could not be made on the narrow gauge.[20]

In commenting on the excursion the *Rocky Mountain News* stated that the event was of common interest and mutual benefit to both cities.

"Each is a leader in its valley," it went on. "They will both be benefited by the connection. The extension to Pueblo denotes the success of the narrow gauge system. The railroad will not stop there; it will go onward to the base of the Ratons; onward to the valley of the Rio Grande; to El Paso and Mexico City. Rolling southward with its track will go capital, new industries, and an increased prosperity whose wealth will redound to the benefit of this city and its continued commercial power."[21]

The evidences of the benefit of the new railroad were more noticeable in Pueblo than in Denver. Even before the coming of the railroad the town had begun to take on new life. Building went on at a rapid rate. A correspondent who visited there in September remarked that it had changed greatly since the railroad had come. Santa Fe Avenue was beginning to take on the appearance of a business street.[22]

Pueblo almost doubled in population in 1871. In 1872 even more of a boom was in evidence. One hundred and seventeen buildings were erected in 1871 at a cost of $215,750 while in 1872 one hundred and eighty-five were erected at a cost of $621,700.[23]

Thus Pueblo, in particular, was benefited by the narrow gauge line, which gave promise of immediate extension to the south. However, despite this prospect and the rosy predictions of the *Rocky Mountain News*, Pueblo remained the southern terminus of the Rio Grande for four years, although to the west an extension was made to Canon City and the nearby coal mines.

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[19]Whittaker, *op. cit.*, 107, 108.
[20]*Denver Times*, July 3, 1872.
[21]*Rocky Mountain News*, July 3, 1872.
[22]*Ibid.*, Sept. 25, 1872.
[23]Whittaker, *op. cit.*, 108.

Furs and Forts of the Rocky Mountain West

A. J. FYNN*

"The westward moving frontier of the American people is beyond all doubt the most interesting subject that American history presents. Here is written the fullness of American energy, its daring resourcefulness and ambition; here the rate of national growth registers itself in more telling figures than mere statistics of population; here, with rifle, axe and plough; with canoe, bullskin boat, and pack-horse, the man of backwoods and plain shapes the national dream of empire into the sturdy stuff of trading-post and ranch and farm."[1]

Whether one would readily accede to the statement above in its entirety, or whether one would choose to make modifications in the way of either strengthening or weakening it, is something worthy of reflection; but there can be no doubt in the mind of any student of our country's history that the elements necessary to be crowded into the great western picture of North American nation-making, to give it completeness, are far more numerous and of greater import than a casual observer would suspect. In the great Book of Time, the story of the United States comprises only a page, but on that page a proportionally large space must be given to the unparalleled flood-tide of humanity sweeping westward in a moment of time, so to speak, from the most famous river of the North American continent to the world's greatest ocean.

The first fifty years of the nineteenth century witnessed the great migratory movement over the Appalachians. Like the Helvetians of old, the cis-Alleghenians felt their territories to be too narrow. On the other side of the mountains was an immense region seemingly calling across its borders to the restless and ambitious colonizers to push westward the formidable natives, to build homes, to utilize the watercourses, to found cities and to establish states. To this wide strip of frontier land came the enterprising longshoremen from the western Atlantic. Within those outlying forests wandered, hunted, fought, settled, and labored the Boones, Clarks, Logans, Robertsons, and Lincolns. The whole movement was rapid. Like the great Roman, these men "came, saw, and conquered." The Mississippi River was reached and crossed. The bottom lands along its western bank became changed like magic. Then the grasses of the rich prairie beyond beckoned the settler and his family.

*Among the papers left by the late Dr. Fynn was this article, one of the last written by him. Dr. Fynn had served faithfully and with distinction upon the Board of Directors of the State Historical Society for a number of years preceding his death on Dec. 30, 1930.—Ed.

[1]E. C. Semple, *American History and Its Geographic Conditions*, 178.

It may not be easy at first to observe, in this great rapidity of action and unavoidable turmoil of migration, a kind of pause here in the movement, or, at least, a change in the sort of activity, in this continent-crossing; but it was nevertheless a potent reality. The kind of life and manner of settling, which had been brought over the Eastern mountains, was not so different in character from that which had been going on since the days of John Smith on the James or the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Such migration, inland, from the seaboard to the Missouri River, resembled the sweeping tide of an ocean, reaching momentarily farther and farther; but, in character remaining simply an extension of a homogeneous mass. At the eastern borderline of the plains the settler paused, looking toward the setting sun into the unattractive westland, but the dangers to settlements in those hostile regions and the doubtfulness of success upon those uninviting lands held back him and his kindred, for which reason the advancing civilization of the fifty former years was halted.

So, between the rich prairie land of the Mississippi-Missouri country and the distant rectilinear coast of the Pacific, was a zone, continental in size, destined for an exceptional future.

Let it not be supposed that the plains, mountains, plateaus, parks and river valleys were entirely unenlivened by sound of man or beast, during those long pre-settlement years. Everywhere the wilderness had resounded with barbaric human outcries and unrestricted turbulent animal discordance. The call of the wild was constantly on the air.

The Louisiana Purchase territory, from the very first, was a source of much discussion by everybody, from presidents to plebeians. Its eastern portion, as already noticed, was sought and settled in days immediately following the land transfer, but its western part, an irregular division reaching over plains to mountain peaks, stood barren of settlements and was but slightly known. The old frontier stood back on the prairies and bottomlands along the two great southward flowing rivers. New frontiers were destined to be established, but not simply to consist of a pushing forward of old frontiers. They were to have their origins in isolated districts on the Pacific and along the Rockies.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition had a tremendous influence in leading to a better understanding of the mountain regions. It was very instrumental in creating upon the western wilds an industry which for many years was pursued with no lack of interest, and characterized by a body of human beings, diversified and unrivaled elsewhere on the continent.

The fur industry had been pushed by Frenchmen and Englishmen northward to Hudson Bay, westward overland to the Pacific, and southward on the Mississippi; and, as is well known, St. Louis became the incomparable mart for the transaction of big business extending far away into the Rocky Mountain region.

A string of traders reached from this frontier commercial center westward to the sources of the largest rivers and interwinding streams, along which the solitary trapper pursued his lonely and dangerous way. While congress was everlastingly discussing the nature and resources of the Purchase, its relation to slavery and kindred subjects; while Texas was passing through its various vicissitudes; while the great hosts of settlers were spreading over the Mississippi lowlands and moving onward upon the gently ascending prairies; the trappers and hunters of the Rockies were gaining knowledge of those wild lands—first-hand knowledge, destined to be of inestimable value to the builders of highways and railroads, to miners, engineers, scientists, and travelers of the approaching years.

The fur trade has been called the oldest industry in the world, extending back to the days of the cave man, who, among the cliffs and ledges, found a ready-made home but not ready-made clothing. The little quadrupeds of North America, especially the beavers, drew huntsmen and trappers up the banks of the St. Lawrence to the Great Lakes, from them to the source waters of the Mississippi, and on, on, over flat lands, valleys and mountains from the Father of Waters to the father of oceans.

Several hundred years ago, in the wild buccaneer pre-Columbian days, Europe had begun to send out her fur-trading expeditions into the unsettled, animal-abounding regions of the Old World, and to establish fur-trading centers in many of the larger towns. Companies were formed, agencies were established, and fairs were held to promote the industry. Royalty and aristocracy displayed wonderfully handsome and costly robes, and fashions in the wearing of this or that animal skin tyrannized society.

Transferred to American soil as soon as the northern nations became established, the business grew to immense proportions. Supply and demand in this New World played leapfrog to gratify the votaries of fashion in the Old. On the northern part of the continent little trading stations grew up like magic; and many an important city, as, for instance, Albany or St. Louis, owes its origin and early prosperity to this business. Bargainings on a large scale were consummated with skins as a medium of exchange. The Indian was always an important factor in every branch of the industry, from trap to trading vessel.

In 1670 the famous Hudson's Bay Company came into existence. Its employes overran thousands of square miles of northern lands bordering on the oceans and smaller water bodies. On its

semi-isolated, far-extended, frozen territory its comparatively scanty and widely-scattered population established laws, imposed penalties, built forts, held in possession ships and other agencies of transportation, with that independence which naturally grows up under exceptional physical conditions in detached and uninviting regions. The whole enterprise was of a strikingly monopolistic nature. There were, however, numerous conflicts with the French, especially on the southern rim of this vast area. The disputed intervening strips of territory, after scores of years of contentions between the rival nations, became undisputed possessions of the British, following the Treaty of Utrecht, in 1713. For the fifty following years, to the end of the French and Indian War, when the English came into possession of all Canada, the great Company moved along in peace and prosperity. Its output was large, numbering thirty or forty thousand skins annually; and the dividends were immense.

Such prosperity must naturally invite contestation. Individuals and small business organizations entered the fields here and there. The Northwest Fur Company, organized and holding possession of lands on the western coasts whose rivers poured into the northern Pacific, became a bitter rival for about thirty years, but was finally merged with its more powerful opponent. The interesting and enterprising Mackinaw Company held the trade of the Great Lakes.

In 1808 John Jacob Astor established the American Fur Company (subsequently changed to the Pacific Fur Company) in the Oregon country, with the intention of forming a line of fur posts across the continent, with a settlement at the mouth of the Columbia as a shipping point for vessels, to and from China and Japan. In the midst of very flattering prospects, Astor's resident partner on the coast rashly sold out the business to the Northwest Company, on the ground that the British, with whom the United States was then at war (1813), would immediately take possession of it. Astor, from that time on, confined his extensive fur business principally to cis-Rocky Mountain territory.

The adaptability of that great plain and mountain country for the success of such activity was self-evident. The idea could naturally be an inheritance from the East. The settlers along the Atlantic seaboard, from the first, carried on a fur trade as long as there were animals enough to make it profitable. The Jamestown Colony did an important business in that line along the Potomac and Susquehanna. In the very beginning of Dutch colonization it received paramount attention on the Hudson. Northward, on the New England streams, it has continually flourished, proportional, of course, to the limited area. In Canada, as is well known, it was the chief contributor to the Frenchman's livelihood.

Abandoning the profitless over-trapped coast streams in due time, the fur-hunters pushed upward along the interior watercourses. Ever on the lookout for favorable fields, they passed farther and farther toward the setting sun. Out upon the newly acquired Louisiana Territory they spread, where fur-gathering became the all-prevailing pursuit.[2] There, at the sources of the Mississippi, Missouri, Platte, Arkansas, and scores of important lesser streams, with their network of fur-abounding branches, altogether interlacing thousands of square miles of territory; and down on the plains, with their millions of wild bisons, peltries and hides were obtained, tied into bundles, carried to the waterways, placed in boats, and floated down streams to their destination.

Aside from the abundance of animals of all kinds, from mink and beaver to bear and buffalo, offering to the fortune-hunter every degree of profit, excitement, and danger, the surface of the land, unimpeded for travel upon the major portion of the region, favored the advent and efforts of such individuals as trappers and hunters.

It was not a country of jungles and swamps. There were elevations, forests, and fordable streams. To climb over the elevations was laborious, but the difficulties were greatly mitigated because traveling, in a general way, was along the streams flowing through the smoother canyons, valleys, and passes. There were some entangling bushes along the brooks; but the trees on the uplands were generally conifers, and, except in a few richly wooded places, were thinly scattered, resembling groves rather than typical forests. The streams could usually be crossed without great difficulty. The beds, as noted elsewhere, were dry in many places at certain times of year. In high-water seasons the rivers were inestimably useful as means of transportation.

These streams and rivers east of the Great Divide, along which the hunters and trappers pursued their lonely and dangerous ways, not only flowed out over the lands toward almost every point of the compass, but, what is of special significance, converged to an exceedingly important vantage point in the Mississippi Valley. Here St. Louis was established, just before the Revolutionary War. Men and nature united to make it a fur center. The founders were Frenchmen, adepts in fur business.

[2]Long after the United States acquired Louisiana, three-fourths of its population were hunters and boatmen, while all derived their livelihood from the trade in furs.—J. B. McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States*, IV, 470.

The site was remarkably favorable for such an enterprise. Rivers for more than a thousand miles in length, from mouth to mountains, flowing over a gentle incline with considerable celerity on account of starting from a mile-high elevation even east of the foothills, carried, simply by force of gravitation, great cargoes of delicate furs and heavy hides down to this unrivaled mart of the midwest. From here river boats and ocean vessels bore the raw goods to tanneries and garment-makers scattered over a very extended country on two continents. Business was brisk. Good prices created heavy demands. The streams alive with cargoes fascinated and captured swarms of traders and trappers who pushed upward along the waters of the Osage, Kansas, Arkansas, Red, and then overland to the more remote and rugged regions of the Missouri and Yellowstone.

The great Hudson's Bay, the Northwest, and the Pacific fur companies, as we have seen, covered the great snow-abounding lands of the farther north. Along with the increase of western fur activities smaller organizations sprang up here and there, which added very much to the general business. The central place of interest, however, continued to be St. Louis. It became the Montreal of the Mississippi. Back in 1805, before the organization of the Astor Company, in that city the Missouri Fur Company had been created; and from that neighborhood a picturesque heterogeneity of hunter, trapper, trader, agent, courier, boatman, and nondescript had spread out toward the northern Rocky Mountains.

Along the many watercourses, varying in size from the great Missouri down to the intermittent rivulets, those nomads with rifle and axe broke the silence of the solitudes and aroused the curiosity, and, in later times, the anger of the ever-watchful natives.

Some three years after the organization of the Missouri Fur Company, a branch office of Astor's famous company—immortalized by Washington Irving—was established, as already referred to, and threw its lines of business into the northlands, especially those inclosing the wild streams whose waters find their way into the Missouri. Contemporaneously with this, the American Fur Company, in which Colorado people might be especially interested, began that tremendous business which demanded the establishment of trading posts over a large, almost indefinable area.

As a matter of historical interest in this connection, it should be noticed that the Missouri Fur Company was a name almost synonymous with that of Manuel Lisa, and recognition is due him among the other great traders of the West, if for no other reason

than because he was a Spaniard whose people, as history has reiterated and reiterated, were not attracted to the fur trade as were the French. Back before the beginning of the nineteenth century, while his people still held possession of Louisiana, he had become interested in the fur business, and secured the exclusive right of trade with the Osage Indians on their river. His blood doubtless helped him to gain that privilege, and also gave him notable advantages in dealing with those western tribes. He went up the Missouri, in 1807, built a post on the Bighorn, returned to St. Louis, spent several years in organizing and reorganizing the industry, and in closely supervising this great pioneer project, extending finally into the great Northwest.

For a score of years this notable man, whom Chittenden classes as "the most active and indefatigable trader that St. Louis ever produced,"[3] passed up and down the streams, endured countless hardships; succeeded remarkably in keeping the Indians peaceable during the War of 1812, when British agents were busy trying to incite the various tribes to insurrections; made a notable attempt to reach William Price Hunt of the Astorian Company on Hunt's famous overland journey, that the fur business in the West might be better conducted; built a fortification, Fort Lisa, on almost the exact present site of Omaha; was constantly engaged in bitter embroilments with other traders jealous of his success; endured the hardships of traveling up and down the rough Missouri at least a dozen times; and, according to Chittenden, made through those hostile lands, journeys which combined would reach farther than the distance around the earth. The erection of a line of forts and permanent headquarters was inestimably valuable in making exploration safe and convenient in those danger-abounding regions. The energies of this man contributed incalculably to more intelligent information regarding the character and conditions of lands along the northern and eastern sections of the present state of Colorado.

Space is lacking, and the purpose of this article does not demand a minute and extensive presentation of that half century of semi-barbaric life in those trans-Mississippian wilds. The organization, reorganization, and disorganization of almost innumerable fur companies, large and small, stable and unstable, constituted an important part in the great program of events, but only a glance can expediently be given to those multiform agencies that contributed so generously to the great work of preparing for a civilization in the solitudes of the far West.

There had been from the first years of the century a few estrays and wanderers of a nondescript nature who had traveled

[3] H. M. Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, I, 129.

through these Rocky Mountain regions with their eyes on the natural fur-bearing animals of the region, but it was not until about the year 1820, when the Long expedition had passed over the country, that the trappers and traders became an important and more or less permanent factor in the region now comprising the State of Colorado. Trails leading from the northeast up the Platte River to its extended and widely separated source streams among the mountains, up the Arkansas from the southeast to its numerous fountain tributaries fed by the eternal snows of the Great Divide, up the Rio Grande from the south (after the establishment of the Santa Fe Trail had awakened the hardy, enterprising adventurers of that region to the possibilities of fruitful far lands to the north), leading through enticing nature-made passageways—all converged within what is now Colorado. From very remote and widely separated regions came that heterogeneity of human species which was destined, in the years to come, to play such an important part in giving to this region that prestige which, afterwards, it was to gain as a fur-producing district.

The experiences of William H. Ashley and Jedediah S. Smith in their great work of exploration, 1822-1829, and the discovery of a great central route to the Pacific were of special significance, not only on account of the geographical knowledge obtained but because their passage extended through the northeastern portion of Colorado. The whole enterprise was associated with men whose names were famous in early Colorado history. These leaders were not only explorers but noted fur traders. Ashley, with Andrew Henry, another distinguished trader, was the founder of what became the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. With these men were united, in one capacity or another, many others of their kind—men who were indispensable factors of the Colorado history of those times.

Ashley was a Virginian by birth, a resident of St. Louis, governor of Missouri in 1820, and in 1822 head of a fur company. In his first expedition, near Ft. Osage, he lost a keelboat and a cargo of furs worth ten thousand dollars. But reverses, hardships, and dangers never discouraged him. Andrew Henry, his partner, was from Pennsylvania, had joined the Missouri Company in 1809, was attacked by the Blackfeet and defeated at Three Forks of the Missouri. Undaunted by adversity, he crossed the Divide, built a post and was the first American trader to carry the fur business over to the Pacific side of the Range. He amassed wealth, but lost it by becoming surety for defaulting debtors. He died a poor but highly honored citizen.

Smith was a New Yorker, and "was one of the most remarkable men that ever engaged in the American fur trade. He was

like that distinguished character of later years, Stonewall Jackson, in combining with the most ardent belief in, and practice of, the Christian religion, an undaunted courage, fierce and impetuous nature, and untiring energy."[4] After many almost miraculous escapes from Indians and grizzly bears, in various parts of the country from the Mississippi River to the Pacific coast, "this Christian hero of the wilderness met an untimely death on the banks of the thirsty Cimarron,"[5] in 1831. He was killed by stealthy Comanches, while digging for water in the dry bed of the stream.

Ashley, in 1826, had sold his fur interests to three of his associates, who carried on the business under the firm name of Smith, Jackson, and Sublette. After the death of Smith, the firm —the Rocky Mountain Fur Company—consisted of Fitzpatrick, Sublette, Bridger, Fraeb and Gervais, names very familiar in Colorado history, and names attached to objects of interest in the Rocky Mountain region.

There were four Sublette brothers all interested in the fur trade, of whom Milton and William were best known. A disease in the leg, after two amputations, caused the death of Milton at Ft. Laramie in 1836. William, the most distinguished of all the brothers, was a brave mountaineer and successful trader. The brothers were Kentuckians, and their grandfather was claimed to be the slayer of the celebrated chieftain, Tecumseh, at the battle of the Thames.

Jackson was one of the noted traders and frontiersmen of his day, from whom the charming valley in Wyoming derives its unclassical name, Jackson's Hole.

Thomas Fitzpatrick, a prominent member of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, appears on the horizon as fur trader, government agent, and noted guide. He had many engagements with the Indians, who bestowed upon him the sobriquet, Broken Hand.[6]

James Bridger, another noted Virginian, was one of the ablest of hunters, mountaineers, and guides of the Great West. His family migrated from Richmond to St. Louis in the early part of the nineteenth century, and James, at the age of thirteen, was apprenticed to a blacksmith. In 1822 he was with Andrew Henry exploring the Rocky Mountains. He is the first white man known to have seen Great Salt Lake. Becoming a partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, he explored the country and led expeditions out in every direction, constantly fighting with the In-

[4] *Ibid.*, 252.
[5] *Ibid.*, 552.
[6] Hafen and Ghent, *Broken Hand, the Life Story of Thomas Fitzpatrick, Chief of the Mountain Men.*

dians, carrying an arrowhead in his back for three years until it was extracted by the missionary of Oregon fame, Dr. Whitman. After the disbanding of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, he entered the service of the American Fur Company, with which he was associated until in the forties, when the fur trade was losing most of its prestige. In 1843 he built Fort Bridger on the Green River in southwestern Wyoming, and it became one of the most important establishments of its kind in the great western country. For many years afterward he was constantly in demand by the government and other agencies as guide and leader in all sorts of hazardous undertakings. Probably next to Kit Carson he is the best known of the Rocky Mountain scouts.

Of all representatives of that type of man, however, the first place of honor must be accorded to Kit (Christopher) Carson, whose name stands out as a symbol of the best and bravest of the far western frontiersmen of the nineteenth century. Born in Madison County, Kentucky, in 1809—the birth-state and the birth-year of Abraham Lincoln—Carson, at one year of age, was removed with the other members of the family to Missouri. His father having died on account of an accident in a timber forest a few years before, Kit at fifteen was apprenticed by his mother to a saddler living in Franklin, the chief frontier settlement of the state. Various fur companies were carrying on a lively business in the Northwest, as already noticed, and the names of the various traders and trappers became familiar to the ear of young Carson. During those boyhood days the child had seen the constant stream of men, interested in the fur trade, traveling on the Missouri River. By steamboat and keelboat, on horseback and on foot, the motley line of human beings pushed along, up the river and down the river, with manufactured articles, foodstuffs, weapons, and peltries.

The well established Missouri River Trail and the then lesser known Santa Fe Trail joined at Franklin, and a rivalry of interests reached out to the northwest and to the southwest. The saddler's trade did not appeal to Carson, and since the forests of Missouri had offered him opportunities for outdoor activities, this boy of seventeen, already an expert with the rifle and a lover of frontier experiences, joined a caravan in 1826 en route to Santa Fe. This undersized, sandy-complexioned, freckle-faced, soft-voiced, Scotch-Irish lad took his place among the experienced companions of the party with that modesty which ever characterized him even when he became, in after years, a nationally known figure. This initiatory journey of seven hundred and eighty miles, through the wild lands of Missouri, Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico, was typical of the overland traveling of

the day, and served to bring out those unusual characteristics of the man, and establish that reputation which added to itself honors upon honors until the day of his death, in 1868. Fascinating as is the career of this hero of the West, full of notable deeds and remarkable vicissitudes, all these must be passed over to give the attention of the moment to the subject directly at hand.

In 1831 Carson enrolled his name with the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. For five years he had served in various capacities and had accompanied, during that short time, many expeditions throughout this whole great western country; and his keen intellect, notable powers of observation, bravery, sobriety, and unrivaled self-possession had placed him high among his contemporaries.

In the early thirties, when he began to throw his energies into the trapping industry, the fur trade of the mountain and foothill regions was at its flood. The bluffs and passes were criss-crossed by trails of white and red trappers. From the scattered trading posts of the piedmont regions of the eastern plains, winding paths intersected like nerves, joining to one another ganglionic centers. Along the Arkansas River and its upper tributaries for a hundred miles among the mountains, even to the Great Divide, well beaten paths with thousands of less traceable branches prevailed.

The fur trade has been looked upon by many as a short-lived incidental subordinate activity in connection with western history and the early-day annals of the state. The widespread field upon which the business was conducted, the transactions of prominent traders in adjoining regions as well as in Colorado territory thus dissipating the attention of chronologists, the pre-eminence of the state as a great gold-producing district in later times, and the rapid rise of other industries in still more recent years have had a natural tendency to minimize the importance of the western fur-trading era and bedim the eye to the magnitude and significance of the whole activity, strange and half-barbaric as it was, during almost a half century.

The time, however, is not very remote when the fur trade was the leading and practically the only business west of the Mississippi River, and the unrivaled branch of commerce on the North American continent. It was not a spectacular business and was accompanied with not only great dangers but tremendous losses. Competition among companies and individuals was often bitter, resulting in deep animosities and deadly conflicts. Many valuable bundles and cargoes of furs were lost by theft or accident in the transportation. Horses were killed or stolen by the Indians. Foolish bargains were made by the pelt-gatherers, unused as they were to business as transacted in the marts of

more civilized communities. In these transactions alcohol played its own regrettable part, in befogging the brains of the unsophisticated mountain men at the mercy of worldly-wise purchasers.

Posterity has derived numberless benefits bestowed upon the Rocky Mountain West by the intrepid trapper and hunter, the true pathfinders of danger-abounding localities, destined soon after to become the cultivated lands and business centers of a new people.

Unusual and diversified was the personnel of the transactors of this many-sided traffic. The enterprise was conducted on a stage, barbaric on the one hand and civilized on the other; hence both groups and individuals conducting it were naturally of greatly varying characteristics.

Noticing the several persons into whose hands the business of the fur trade fell, and omitting the merchants and capitalists like Astor and others who resided in the far east away from the chief agents in the business, we first encounter the important individual known as the trader. He was usually the representative of an individual or a firm back on the Mississippi River or beyond. At some post, fort, or other covert, he established himself and carried on his transactions with whomever he found having the sort of goods he wished. He usually dealt in anything the customer had to offer, from the large, coarse, heavy peltries of the buffalo to the small, more valuable skins of beaver and mink. The business was carried on either by simple barter or by the use of money. The place of business was stocked with those necessaries or expedients which are usually in demand on the part of hunter and trapper: the customary rougher articles of clothing, weapons, and ammunition, and the more common accessories —smoked meat, liquor, and tobacco—which generally are found in the ordinary frontier cabin. The visitors were heterogeneous. Stray Mexicans, Canadians, and Indians from various tribes, with small parties of regular trappers and hunters, augmented occasionally by many other vagrants, with something to buy or sell, constituted the multiform concourse of humanity, always coming and going.

Passing to the trappers themselves, one finds, as in society generally, a great variety among them as a class, from the cruel, intemperate, and malicious type at one end of the procession to the sober, gentlemanly, and trustworthy kind at the other. The average representative, however, stands out as a semi-nomad, and, especially in the mountain districts, a pedestrian rather than an equestrian. He was hardy, rough, illiterate, and courageous. He was extravagant in speech and dress. He loved adventure, and

courted danger more than he shrank from it. He was inured to privation, and stoically faced adversity. He often suffered keenly for the very necessities of life. He took things as they came, and gave but little thought to the future. Being constantly in the midst of tragedies, the very pronounced uncertainty of his being alive on the morrow contributed notably to his indifference regarding what a day might bring forth.

Hardly less than the Indian himself, he reflected the influence of his environment. Nature, in all her various moods, was his constant companion; and the wilderness of the mountains and plains constituted for him a rough but effective training school. Safety compelled him to become instinctively alert, and the very character of his occupation made him an exceptional marksman. The very freedom of speech and action to which he was accustomed in the wilderness unfitted him for transacting business successfully in the marts of civilization. Falling into the temptations of semi-civilized frontier society, he was constantly losing his hard-earned acquisitions. On the moment of his coming into the vicinity of trade centers, sharps and swindlers were dogging at his heels.

In general activities, what was true of the trapper was also true of the hunter. Each could take up the general pursuit of the other without any apparent discord. The hunter could not long remain oblivious to the enticing opportunities about him, so on the tiptoe of expectancy he sets his traps, thus modifying the nature of his occupation; the trapper, finding himself in the midst of dangerous human enemies and wild beasts, realized the constant necessity of a valuable weapon, and the ability to use it effectively.

From the standpoint of business relationship, there were two classes of trappers. The members of one worked in groups for a company. They lived in the wilderness and after accumulating a bundle of peltries brought it to the place of sale and turned it in at a regulated price. Having disposed of his goods, the trapper was too often likely to spend his hard-earned money in a wild orgy, and to run into debt before finishing his carousal. In this way the fur dealer held his customer, year after year, in bondage.

The other class came to be known as the free trappers. They were well exemplified by such a man as Kit Carson. They were not held in service by any company. Of the two classes they bore the better reputation. They were bold, prided themselves on their independence, and did business with the traders in free and easy fashion. They went to the most convenient trading point, and, if prices were unsatisfactory, they sought other markets, going often as far as St. Louis. As a means of better protection to

themselves and property, they usually went about in small congenial groups. Like trappers in general, they were very susceptible to the temptations of trading circles and city society, and many of them left the financial results of a year's hardships and dangers in gambling houses and tippling places.

A very large proportion of these men had Indian wives, and these were a very valuable asset in their fur-gathering occupations. Such alliances threw them into friendly relationships with the Indians in general; for, after all, the natives were the bone and sinew of the western fur trade, especially in the Rocky Mountain country. They guided the white man into the beaver-abounding recesses, helped him build or carry his traps, and convey the peltries for hundreds of miles over dangerous and bewildering paths. These Indians hunted and trapped in their own peculiar way, bore enormous loads of peltries to white trappers, hunters, or traders, and disposed of them generally at ridiculously low prices. "By far the larger part of the fur was taken by the Indians and came into the possession of the traders only by exchange, and it was in this traffic that the white man first made his acquaintance with the tribes."[7] It is particularly unpleasant to recall the unfortunate use of liquor in connection with the trade relationship between the white man and the red in our western country. Concerning this phase of the business, Sabin writes: "But there was no dearth, in 1832, or for half a century thereafter, of liquor for the Indian trade upon the plains and in the mountains, whither it was transported at first in the flat kegs on back of mule and horse, and later in wagons."[8] The effect upon both races is expressed in the following emphatic words: "Smallpox and alcohol were the gifts of the white man to the red; and the latter gift was the worst, for while it scorched the heart of the receiver it withered also the soul of the donor. If the Indian would stop at no sacrifice to obtain his dram, the white man would stay at no meanness to supply it. Consequently, by the eagerness on both sides arose those well known practices: the gradual dilution of the keg until the drunken Indian was trading for only water; the false measuring, by inserting thumb or finger into the gill, or covering the bottom of the tin cup with a layer of paraffin; the adulteration by tobacco and pepper, that the dose might poison sooner; all those wretched deceits by which the weak second party should be cheated the more roundly. Truly the beaver and the buffalo had their revenge."[9]

(To be continued)

[7]Chittenden, *op. cit.*, 10.
[8]E. L. Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, 106.
[9]*Ibid.*, 107.

The First Graves in La Junta, Colorado

C. T. Balch*

On the Arkansas River in Colorado in 1876 was a new and wild town called La Junta. Two large warehouses—owned by Otero, Sellers & Co. and Chick Brown & Co.—had been moved on flat cars from Granada to this place. All freight for New Mexico was shipped via wagon trains from La Junta south, some freight going to Silver City and as far as Tucson, Arizona. Sometimes there were as many as fifteen trains here at one time. At night it made a great sight with their campfires. Each outfit formed its wagons into a corral and after feeding the mules corn, the stock was turned out on the prairie to feed. The freighters would then make campfires in the center of their wagon corrals.

La Junta was a lively town at this time. The saloons and dance halls were working overtime. When one of these places was opened the boss would go down to the river and throw away the key, then come back and treat the town. The one hotel, kept by Joe Perry, did a land office business, as the boys from the warehouses had their eats there. Should some tenderfoot stop off and show a dime he would draw a crowd, as this was an unknown coin, for "two bits" was the price of drinks, cigars, etc. On a side track were some fifteen box cars, fitted up for "sleeps."

The only thing needed in the town was a graveyard, which was started in March by the death of a fiddler in the Bronco Dance Hall, who died with "con" (consumption). His name was John B. Chambers. He was buried on a knoll the other side of the road from the dance hall. The body was later moved to the present cemetery and the city of La Junta has recently erected a marble headstone and marked the grave as that of the first man buried in La Junta.[1]

The boys thought Chambers' grave looked lonesome and wondered how long he would have to wait for company. To this date there had been plenty of shooting, but no killing.

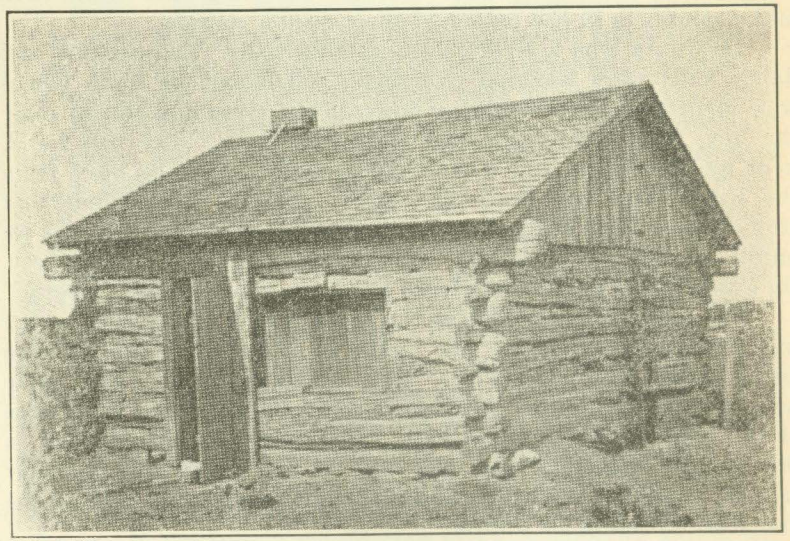
One night at a poker game in Ed Silk's saloon, Tim Shea, a gambler from Dodge City, was sitting in when Rufe Edwards left the game to see about a rumpus in his dance hall next door. Tim reached over and took a "stack of blues" from Edwards' chips and placed them in front of himself. When Edwards re-

*Mr. Balch, widely known as "Cherokee Charlie," is a colorful western pioneer who now lives at Woodhaven, Long Island. During May and June of the present year he revisited the scenes of some of his early adventures in the Arkansas Valley and at Denver.—Ed.

[1]The original headboard on the grave carried this stanza:

Remember me as you pass by,
As you are now so once was I.
As I now am you soon will be,
As you pass by remember me.

turned he asked: "Who has them blues?" thinking it a joke. No one answered. Then Rufe "got mad" and looking at the gambler from Dodge he espied what was missing and remarked: "Them's them." Here the game broke up and Tim Shea went next door gunning for Rufe. Coming back to Silk's place he asked all hands to have a drink, but they refused. He whipped out his gun and demanded a drink for himself. As John Mead, manager of the saloon, was in the dance hall next door, Shea spotted a kid who had been playing pin pool, started to shoot at his feet and said: "Get behind that bar and give me that drink." The boy shouted, "If you spoil my boots it will cost you thirty-five dollars." "Shut up," was the reply.



THE FIRST SCHOOL HOUSE IN LA JUNTA

The boy went behind the bar, placing the bottle and glass before the gambler. Shea laid his gun on the bar and started to pour. The boy grabbed the gun and told Shea if he drank it it would be his last. Gun gone, Shea was as meek as a lamb. Then the boy had Shea go to Joe Perry's to bed.

In the morning Shea came looking for his gun. Seeing the boy, he said: "Give me that gun; I am going to kill Rufe Edwards and then light out for Deadwood, a he-man town." The boy's hand was on Shea's arm. Bang! bang! and they both rolled off the boardwalk in the sand. Shea had been shot by Edwards and the boy thought his own right side had been blown

away. They tore off the boy's clothes, but found him unhurt.[2] They held a coroner's inquest and Mexican Joe, a saloon roustabout, was on the jury. Joe was already wearing Shea's overcoat, which was much too big for him and hung almost to the ground. The jury's verdict was "killed in self-defense." Thus the first man killed in La Junta was Tim Shea. A grave was dug alongside of Chambers', but Tim was not buried there, as a woman from West Las Animas claimed the body and took it away.

One day George Harrington and I were looking in the open grave and George said, "Why, that grave would have been too short for Tim Shea. It would fit you or me."

A few weeks later a boy named John Streeter came into Billy Patterson's saloon and demanded a drink, which was refused him on account of his age. The boy got abusive and George Harrington, who was the bartender, threw him out. The boy jumped up, shot through the door and killed Harrington. Harrington was buried in the grave dug for Tim Shea. The boy was sent to the state penitentiary.

[2]The boy was "Cherokee Charlie."—Ed.

To the Pike's Peak Country in 1859 and Cannibalism on the Smoky Hill Route

HENRY VILLARD*

It was some four weeks ago that I entrusted my bodily self to one of the coaches of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company, and bid farewell for some months to the pleasures as well as vexations of civilized life. The prospect of being freed once more from the drudgery and mechanism of a reportorial existence was so elevating to me that it was with feelings of impatience that I had awaited the day of my launch upon the broad prairies of the Far West. And when the driver's whip

*Mr. Villard was a young newspaper correspondent who joined the Pike's Peak gold rush early in 1859. The article here presented was his first story to his paper, the Cincinnati *Daily Commercial*, and appeared June 3, 1859. It was dated "Denver City, Mouth of Cherry Creek, May 17, 1859." Copies of Villard's correspondence, appearing in the *Daily Commercial* of June 3, 18, 23, 24, July 9, 12, 14, and 21 were secured by the State Historical Society of Colorado through the kindness of Mary R. Cochran of the Cincinnati Public Library.

In 1853, at the age of eighteen, Ferdinand Heinrich Gustav Hilgard (who later changed his name to Henry Villard) had come to the United States from his home in Germany. He worked at various jobs in the Middle West, learned English, and became a newspaper correspondent. After returning from the Pike's Peak country in the fall of 1859 he wrote an interesting book, *The Past and Present of the Pike's Peak Gold Region*. (St. Louis, 1860.) This rare volume is to be re-published shortly. Some years after his visit to the Pike's Peak country Villard experienced a spectacular rise to fame and fortune, becoming president of the Northern Pacific Railroad and a person of power in the financial world. He died Nov. 12, 1900.—Ed.

gave forth its first cracking, and the wheels commenced to revolve, no "liquid signs of weakness" coursed down my cheeks, but I felt as though I was to burst into a shout of delight at the severance of the ties that had, up to that moment, prevented me from enjoying the invigorating freshness of border life.

From Leavenworth to Junction City the route of the Express Company follows the old military road to Fort Riley. It leads over undulating prairies that occasionally change into hilly elevations; are traversed by many streams of water, and combinedly form landscapes whose claims to beauty are as well founded as that of any other section of the West. Many towns are springing up on the banks of the various creeks that course across the country toward the Kaw River, among which Easton on the Stranger, Ozawkee on the Ozawkee, and Manhattan on the Big Blue, and Junction City, a short distance from the Republican, are the most prominent. The high, well timbered bluffs of the Kaw River began to serve as a background to the scenery as we approached Manhattan, and heightened its attractions to a considerable extent.

A short distance this side of Fort Riley we came upon the ruins of Pawnee and Riley cities, consisting of two or three storehouses on both banks of the Kaw, which were considered but a few years ago as the beginning of surely great cities. It was here that Gov. Reeder wanted to locate the state capital, for the purpose of subserving the land interest he owned in this vicinity. But in this, as is well known, he signally failed, and the aforementioned edifices will stand as monuments of a speculation that overleaped itself.

Fort Riley is the best built military post I have seen upon my extensive travels through the West. Officers' quarters, sutlers' establishments, stables, etc., all have an appearance of solidity and cleanliness which differ greatly, and pleasingly to the eye, from the rudely constructed cabins of which the towns we had passed consisted.

At Junction City, which is a combination of about two dozen frame and log houses, which derives its name from being at the Junction of the Kaw and Republican rivers, and is situated 140 miles west of Leavenworth, I fell in with some officers from the Fort who were celebrating their Easter Sunday in a manner that was truly military, but by no means in conformity with the sacredness of the day. Wicked as you know me to be, I was easily induced to join in their peculiar mode of observance, and had what I thought the very last spree for some time to come, for the thorough enjoyment of which the laying over of the coaches till next morning gave me ample opportunity.

During my stay at Junction City I paid a visit to the "Sentinel" office, the most westerly located newspaper establishment of eastern Kansas. Its office is a most original institution. It serves the purposes of a printing house, law office, land agency, and tailor shop, and the followers of these different avocations appear to live, and sometimes to starve together in unbroken harmony.

From Leavenworth to Junction City, which represents Station No. 7, the express route is in the very best working order. I came through in 22 riding hours, which is better time than even the oldest stage lines are able to make, and fared as well on the way as though I was making a pleasure excursion along a highway of eastern travel.

After leaving Junction City we at once entered upon the unmodified wilderness of the seemingly endless prairies that intervene between the waters of the Missouri and the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. Having no company but a speechless mail bag the first few days of my journey were rather dull and found me in anything but good humor. The arrivals at the different stations, however, the meeting of numberless trains of emigrants, with which I never failed to have a chat, the sight of herds of buffalo, antelopes, and other game, the frequent intercourse with roaming bands of aborigines of various tribes, soon contributed to the diversification of the trip, and every sensation of mental weariness disappeared entirely.

The express route keeps along the divide of the Republican and Solomon's Fork of Kansas River, crossing the heads of the tributaries of the latter named fork for some distance, then bearing a little northward, crossing the heads of Prairie Dog, Sappa and Cranmer creeks, tributaries of the Republican, and striking that river between the 101 and 102 degrees of western longitude, it follows the south side of the Republican to a point near its source; thence striking due west it crosses the heads of Beaver, Bijou and Kiowa creeks, tributaries of the Platte, passing through a beautiful pine country for sixty miles, and striking Cherry Creek and the Santa Fe Trail twenty miles below [above] the former's mouth, and running alongside of it to Denver City, its western terminus.

From Junction City to the last mentioned place the route is divided into four divisions of five stations each, so that Denver City figures as Station No. 27. The distance between the several stations averages 25 miles. Care has been taken to locate the stations on creeks, in order to furnish the necessary supply of wood and water. From 18 to 24 mules, under the charge of a station-keeper, his assistant and four drivers, are kept at each of

them, to furnish relays for the coaches from the East as well as the West. From two to three stages are made a day by the latter. Passengers obtain three meals a day and plenty of sleep in tents, which will soon give way to log and frame houses.

The road is an excellent one. It was surveyed expressly for the Company by a party of engineers of large experience on the plains. Water, grass and timber, the indispensable necessities of the navigators of the former, are plentiful throughout with the exception of the valley of the Republican, the extremely sandy character of which renders it destitute of timber. For the 125 miles that the road follows its course, grass and water is, however, ample. The existence of grass on the sandy desert I ascribe to the strong pregnation with alkali and plentiful natural irrigation of the river valley.

ON THE ROAD TO PIKE'S PEAK
Copied from a Wood Engraving Which Appeared in *Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, May 21, 1859.

It is a very common notion to suppose that the country between the Missouri and Rocky Mountains is a dead level, without the slightest undulations of the surface. Although I did not fully entertain that opinion, I yet supposed to find few ups and downs. I was, however, surprised to find myself riding over a succession of steadily rising, rolling prairies, the altitude of which often approached that of respectable hills. Ravines intervene between most ridges, revealing the washing of transient courses of water. When reaching the divide between the waters of the Republican and those of the South Platte, the traveler finds himself several thousand feet above the level of the ocean.

Many objects of interest will be discovered by those that will follow the route of the Express Company. Among these I would mention extensive beds of iron ore between stations 8 and 9; a curious elevation with a rocky cap, between 13 and 14; hundreds of prairie dog villages and plenty of game all along the road; the sudden sinking of the Republican between 21 and 22 into a dry bed of sand, under which it continues its course subterraneously to its sources; beautiful pine groves from 24 up to 27, and last, but not least, a full aspect of the veritable snow-browed Pikes Peak, which becomes already visible at station 13—a distance of 100 miles. It first looks like a cloud, but, as one comes nearer, assumes clearer and greater dimensions, and when arriving on the last ridge before running down into the Cherry Creek valley, its eastern front is completely revealed to the eye, together with a long chain of peaks, partly covered with snow and partly with pine, and extending in a northward direction as far as Long's Peak. I have seen the Alps of Switzerland and Tyrol, the Pyrenees and Appenines, yet their attractions appear to dwindle into nothing when compared with the at once grotesque and sublime beauty of the mountain scenery upon which my eyes feasted before descending into the valley above referred to.

After striking the Santa Fe tract the road appears as well traveled as any country road in Ohio, and enables the different kind of vehicles to make good speed for the common point of destination.

DENVER CITY AND AURARIA

My expectations as to the outward appearance of these two towns, which, as it is undoubtedly well known by your readers, are situated immediately opposite to each other, on both banks and right at the mouth of Cherry Creek and the South Platte, not being very high flung, I felt no disappointment when the clusters of log cabins, intermixed at intervals with frame structures and Indian lodges, rose upon my vision. Were it not for the beauty of the location and the surrounding country, these two much talked of towns would, indeed, be sorry places. Each of them numbers from 100 to 150 structures of the already described kind, at least one-half of which are, however, at the present moment either half finished or vacated. They are, almost without exception, floor, ceiling, windowless. Lumber is so very high ($100 per 1,000 feet) that but few can afford the luxury of a regular floor. The absence of the ceiling is explained by the same reason, and the window glass has reached this quarter of

the world in but insignificant quantities. In its stead canvas is used, which renders it necessary to keep the doors open during daytime in order to procure a sufficiency of light. Canvas and dirt are generally used for roofing purposes.

Both Denver City and Auraria are regularly laid out. Rectangular streets and squares form their respective areas. The former place is located partly on a bluff-like ridge, extending from the right bank of Cherry Creek in a northeasterly direction, and partly in the bottom bordered by the same ridge. The site of Auraria, on the contrary, consists of nothing but bottomland. The western city boundary is the South Platte, the eastern Cherry Creek. The former runs towards the latter in a northeastern direction, thereby giving the northern part of the city area an angular appearance.

Both towns contain a number of one-horse stores, the aggregate stocks of which would hardly fill a third-class Western Row grocery; one or two abortive hotels, whose guests are obliged to repose on the bare ground, a number of whiskey dens that strongly indicate a precocity, as far as the spiritual wants of the inhabitants are concerned; and the inevitable appendages of border towns in the shape of legal, medical and land offices. In one of my succeeding letters I will endeavor to give you the results of my peepings into the inner life of these original localities. For the present I shall confine myself to generalities.

The population of the towns is made up of elements of the most heterogeneous character. Indians of several tribes, Mexicans, mountaineers in buckskin, gold-hunters in flannel, blacklegs with stove-pipes, can be seen about here. The number of actual residents has, however, become greatly reduced, in consequence of causes that I will mention hereafter.

The most attractive feature in this and adjoining town is the beautiful mountain scenery, which one has constantly in view. When the eye becomes weary with the wretched appearance of the improvements in both towns, it needs but turn upon the towering peaks, their eternal snows and dark green pine dress, and new life will at once be felt. From Cherry Creek to the foot of the mountains, it is but a few miles of a mountain tour, is spoken of by all as paying for the journey across the plains alone.

THE IMMIGRATION

When I left the Missouri River at least ten thousand had already left and were about leaving from the various river towns for this reputed Eldorado. I supposed myself justified in the belief that upon arriving here I could find many thousands of people breathing in and about these two towns. But on the day

I made my advent I am satisfied there were not over five hundred individuals to be found within the limits of both places. On the one hand, the gold washing on Cherry Creek—which I am strongly inclined to believe was never carried on except in the letters of some interested newspaper correspondents—was no longer thought of, and everybody that had the means to go had struck for the mountains; and on the other, a good many gold-hunters that had arrived here with the expectation of making an instantaneous plunge into a rich harvest out of the Cherry Creek, easily found themselves most refreshingly mistaken, had become chopfallen and taken the back track towards the States after a stay of but a few days. I am reliably informed that several hundred of that class have become guilty of such folly, and also that they succeeded in producing a panic among those that they met on their way back moving hitherwards, in consequence of which thousands are returning without having seen the "elephant."

Much misery has been and is experienced by many in crossing the plains, and upon coming here. The hand-cart and footing gentry had and have to pass through indescribable sufferings. Most of them started with an entirely insufficient stock of provisions, and if not starved before arriving, found themselves without the least particle of food upon coming in sight of the land and water of hope. As money is also a scarce article among most of them, starvation is their lot, from which to escape they resort to all possible means. Every morning the rapidly articulating voice of a backwoods auctioneer may be heard exerting his eloquence to the utmost in the attempt to find buyers for articles of outfit belonging to fundless gold-hunters. Whole and tattered garments, picks, shovels, hand-carts, etc., can be bought in any quantities, at mere nominal prices. Thus I was offered a good steel pick and shovel for twenty-five cents this morning. A hand-cart was sold in my presence for thirty-five cents. As a general thing everything, with the exception of provisions, can be bought at half the money it would cost in the States. A number are building skiffs to go down the Platte, which is at present very high and swift, in consequence of the melting of the mountain snows. This is, however, a rather perilous undertaking. A good many poor devils that landed here without anything either to eat or sell, are at present hanging about the doors of those who are better provided with the necessaries of life, begging in the most pitiful terms for something to subsist on.

What it takes to live on in this section of the country you may conceive an idea of when I tell you that bacon sells at 50 to 75 cents a pound, coffee and sugar at 50c, flour at from 15c to 18c, New Mexico onions 25c apiece, molasses $5 per gallon, and

everything else in proportion. Fresh meat, however, particularly game, is cheaper here than in the States. Any quantity of antelope, mountain sheep and elk can be bought from white and copper-skinned hunters at very reasonable rates. The provisions now here have mostly been brought from New Mexico. Some domestic animals, such as a few grunters and majestic Shanghais, have also been imported from that latitude. Several milch cows have lately arrived from the States.

To give your readers an idea of what gold-hunters have been subjected to while crossing the great plains, I subjoin the following blood-congealing narrative of the adventures of two individuals. The statement of Mr. Blue is authenticated by Mr. B. D. Williams, the Superintendent of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company, who went back where the Indians had found him and found and buried whatever was left of the body of the brother that died last.

Statement of Daniel Blue, late of Clyde Township, Whiteside Co. Ill., made on the 12th day of May, 1859, at the office of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company, in the city of Denver.

"On the 22nd day of February last I left my home in company with my two brothers, Alexander Blue and Charles Blue, two other residents of the same county, John Campbell and Thomas Stevenson, for the Pike's Peak gold regions. We arrived at and left Kansas City on the 6th of March, taking the Smoky Hill route. In the neighborhood of Topeka we fell in with nine others, also bound for Western Kansas. The company had one horse, which belonged to the original Blue party, and was to carry their provisions. The rest were footmen, carrying their provisions on their backs. We journeyed together for 16 or 17 days on said Smoky Hill route. Myself and eight others then continued our journey, while the rest remained behind for the purpose of hunting buffalo. Three or four days elapsed after the separation, when we lost our packhorse. Our stock of provisions was then very much reduced, and we packed whatever we had left and pushed onward. After having traveled eight more days, two other members of the company left us. Upon their leaving our provisions became exhausted, and for ten days we laid still, endeavoring to kill a sufficient amount of game for our subsistence. A few hares, ravens and other small game was, however, all that came within our reach. Our only firearm was a shotgun, all other arms having been thrown away in consequence of the weakness of their owners. At about the same time three others parted with us, with the intention of making for the nearest settlement for the purpose of securing relief to the remaining

ones—leaving but the three brothers Blue and one man by the name of Soleg, from Cleveland, Ohio—all of the party being very weak and nearly exhausted. After a short effort to continue our journey we were again compelled to lay up, and the next day Soleg died from exhaustion and want of food. Before he breathed his last, he authorized and requested us to make use of his mortal remains in the way of nourishment. We, from necessity, did so, although it went very hard against our feelings. We lived on his body for about eight days. We then were, as I afterwards learned, on Beaver Creek, which empties into the Bijou, one of the tributaries of the South Platte, and about 75 miles east of Denver City. After the consumption of Soleg's body, Alexander, my eldest brother, died, and, at his own last request, we used a portion of his body as food on the spot, and with the balance resumed our journey towards the gold regions. We succeeded in traveling but ten miles, when my youngest brother, Charles, gave out, and we were obliged to stop. For ten days we subsisted on what remained of our brother's body, when Charles expired from the same causes as the others. I also consumed the greater portion of his remains, when I was found by an Arapahoe Indian, and carried to his lodge, treated with great kindness, and a day and a half thereafter (that is, on Wednesday, the 4th day of May) brought to the encampment of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company's train, en route for Denver City, under the charge of Mr. Superintendent B. D. Williams, where I was received and taken care of, and left at station 25 to recover sufficient strength for the continuation of my journey. By direction of Mr. Williams, the second coaches that came along took me up and brought me safely to this point free of charge.

The above statement I make freely, voluntarily, and without compulsion. Knowing that it will reach the eye of the public at large, I wish to give expression to the sincere gratitude I entertain towards the employees of the L. and P. P. Express Company in general, and Mr. Williams in special, for the truly humane treatment received at their hands. DANIEL BLUE.

Denver City, May 12, 1859.
Subscribed in the presence of
J. Heywood, Sacramento, Cal.;
Wm. T. Carlyle, Saline County, Mo.;
M. K. Lane, Leavenworth City, K. T.;
Jo. M. Fox, Gen'l Agent L. & P. P. Ex. Co."

Mr. Blue came up to this place on the same coaches that I did. He looked like a skeleton, and could hardly use his limbs, and his sight was impaired.

THE GOLD PROSPECTS

In opening this chapter—probably the most interesting to your readers—I will say that I shall not presume to express any ultimate opinion as to the true character of the gold washing of this country. I shall perform the part of a faithful reporter of what I have seen (not heard) and nothing further. I am aware of the responsibility of my position, and shall convey no information to the readers of the *Commercial* that I know not to rest on facts.

In the first place, I wish to remark that in calling this the Pike's Peak gold region a vast radical misnomer is made use of. From here to that much-mentioned glacier the distance comes not much short of seventy miles, and in but a single locality between the two points gold washing is carried on. Whatever digging and washing is now going on is north of this place, and the mines that are reported to be best paying are some thirty miles off in the same direction.

On Cherry Creek, as already stated, nothing in the way of washing is going on at present. It does not pay. Any shovel full of sand on the bottom between the South Platte and Cherry Creek will give one the color, but the most diminutive substance of gold, and the idea of turning those all but invisible particles to account has been abandoned. On the South Platte, about six miles south of this, a company from Georgia has dug a ditch; is busily at work, and doing well. I visited their claim myself, and found them doing well. They take out dust at the rate of from $5 to $7 per day each, six individuals.

All other mining operations are at present taking place at the headwaters of the northwestern tributaries of the South Platte in the mountains. Of the various diggings along and in the latter I know but by hearsay, and will, therefore, speak of such of their yieldings as have come within my immediate observation. In a few days I shall start upon a mountain tour, for the purpose of a personal inspection of them, and lay the result in due season before your readers.

The Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company has shipped during the last week about a thousand dollars worth of scale gold. It was bought from a number of individuals that had brought it mostly from the mountains.

Wm. Fisher, a merchant from Denver City, has in his possession three hundred dollars worth of dust (seen by me) which he had received in different quantities in exchange for goods. Similar amounts are in the hands of three more tradesmen.

Yesterday morning I assisted Mr. Joe Heywood, formerly a well known Cincinnatian, but now of California, who came here on a prospecting tour, in weighing six ounces of scale gold which he bought of two men who had taken it out of Plum Creek in six days.

Mr. Gregory came down from the north fork of Vasquez Creek with thirty-seven dollars worth of gold dust, which he had washed out of forty pans of sand. He also had several specimens of quartz and shot gold, the result of his explorations at various points.

In strolling over town in the course of the same day I saw dust varying from 18 to 62 dollars worth, all of which had arrived from the mountains for the purpose of buying a new stock of provisions. The quantities appear insignificant when compared with the discoveries in California. But this smallness can be easily explained, first by the fact that the mountains have become accessible but two or three weeks ago, and that from the inability of most miners, on account of a want of means, to lay in a supply of provisions for any considerable length of time, which circumstance renders their return to town, after a few days' work, imperative.

From all appearances it is, however, clear that this summer will have to be devoted almost entirely to prospecting, the result of which will finally settle the question of the paying character of mining operations in this latitude.

Great depression of mind prevailed here at the time I arrived, with regard to the diggings. The favorable returns of the last few days have, however, brightened up the countenances of all, and a general rush for the mountains is imminent.

VARIOUS ITEMS OF NEWS

The loose state of society and the large influx of lawless individuals has already made resort to the lynch law necessary in this part of the country. About four weeks since a German by the name of John Stuffer, formerly of Louisville, was suspended by the neck for the murder of his brother-in-law.

On the morning of Sunday last, Judge Lynch again convened his Court, for the purpose of trying an alleged horse thief. The whole town had turned out to witness the spectacle, which was truly an original one. The meeting was called to order, and a President and Secretary elected. A jury was then summoned by these officers; a prosecutor and counsel for the defense appointed, and the trial proceeded with. The evidence not being sufficient to convict, the accused was acquitted although six stolen animals had been found in his possession. He received warning

to leave the town at once, which he did. He returned, however, in the course of the evening, was caught once more and swung up, for the purpose of frightening him, when he confessed the theft, and revealed the existence of a regularly organized band of thieves. He gave the names and whereabouts of his confederates, and regulators are now after them.

Some ten days ago thousands of Indians were encamped all along Cherry Creek. These were the peacable Keota and Arapahoes, and the warlike Cheyennes, Apaches and Comanches. Since then most of them have, however, started for a buffalo hunt. No depredations were committed, except by the Apaches, who drove off 150 head of cattle.

Mr. Davidson, the special correspondent of the New York Tribune and St. Louis Democrat, became tired of the country after a six weeks' exploration of the same, and undertook to go down the Platte in a skiff, on his way home. But thirty miles east of this, his means of river navigation was wrecked, and he and his companions very narrowly escaped drowning. All of his property, valued at over $1,000, and including some valuable mineral and botanical collections he had made on his tours through the mountains were lost. He returned to this place, whence he embarked eastward in the express coaches on Sunday morning last.

At Otis, Colorado, in Early Years

WILLIAM A. CLUTE*

As a boy of sixteen I accompanied a party of buffalo hunters into eastern Colorado in the early seventies. The great hunting grounds of that day were the upper Republican and Arikaree valleys. Five years before this trip the Battle of Beecher Island had been fought, Roman Nose attacking Forsyth and his troops of the regular army from Fort Wallace, Kansas. The island still showed evidences of the struggle, with broken camp equipage of various kinds strewn about. On this trip I conceived the idea of again visiting this beautiful country at a later day, which I did in 1884.

At this latter time the iron horse of the Burlington Railway —built into Colorado in 1882—made its regular trips, carrying thousands of homeseekers to their new homes. The covered wagon, too, came in as a close second in bringing in the land hunters from the various states of the East to the almost boundless acres of the West. The vanishing Indian had just gone, the

*Mr. Clute lives at El Reno, Oklahoma, today.—Ed.

vast buffalo herds had been practically exterminated. The last fleeing buffalo the writer ever saw on the plains was in 1884 and consisted of three head crossing the railroad just west of the town of Yuma and heading south. Of antelope and wild horses there were many, though their numbers were depleted much below that of previous years.

From 1884 to 1887 by various methods and from different headquarters my time and energy were spent in locating settlers on Government land in the Denver Land District. While in this work I induced my brother, Andrew Clute, a Nebraska newspaperman, to come to Otis, Colorado, and with me establish a newspaper, the *Colorado Clipper*. Combined with this paper we added the government land locating business, and handled the townsite business of Otis for the Lincoln Land Company and the Farm Loan agency.

These were the days when newspapers secured a large income from the publication of Final Proof notices of persons making final proof on their homesteads, preemptions, and timber claims before the United States land office at Denver. The *Clipper*, a Democratic paper of general circulation nearest the land, justly secured these legal publications under the provisions of the law and the rule and practice of the time in such matters. Similar enterprising publications were issued at Akron, Sterling City, Yuma and other prominent towns. It is needless to say that these papers secured large subscription lists and thousands of copies were sent to people throughout the United States. They carried news of the great West and the wonderful advantages and resources of the country they represented.