

# THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

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## The Founding of Salida, Colorado<sup>1</sup>

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A party of Denver and Rio Grande Railroad engineers, working under the supervision of Gov. Alexander C. Hunt, surveyed the townsite of South Arkansas (Salida) late in April, 1880. William Van Every, Governor Hunt's agent, made additional surveys early in May. The original plat, which was not filed in the office of the County Clerk until 10:30 a. m., September 21, 1880, included the following area: Front Street to Fifth Street and from D Street to L Street.

The town was located, not as a result of the growth of early settlements, but in the same manner and for the same purposes as Colorado Springs, South Pueblo, and later, Durango. Land constituting South Arkansas, as it was primarily laid off, was homesteaded by Luther Baker and Josiah Hulbert, their dates of entry being February 16 and 18, 1880. Baker and Hulbert subsequently sold their homesteads to Governor Hunt, each receiving \$500. Other land was homesteaded later and several additions were made to the town, which included the two Van Every homesteads, or the Eddy Addition on the upper mesa; George W. Haskell's homestead and addition; and D. E. Kelsey's homestead and addition. R. N. Scott homesteaded the land constituting the Babcock addition in 1879.

One century prior to the founding of South Arkansas, or in 1779, Juan Bautista de Anza, Governor of New Mexico, visited this region. He was leading a punitive expedition against some Comanches, who, under their leader, Green Horn (Cuerno Verde), had been murdering Spanish settlers. He led a force of 645 soldiers and about 200 friendly Yutas (Utes) and Apaches into the San Luis Valley and across the mountains to the Arkansas near the site of Salida.

The next important advent of white men into this region was the expedition of Captain Pike. Marching through Trout Creek

<sup>1</sup>The material for this article was gathered from the records in the County Courthouse, City Clerk's office, early files of the *Mountain Mail*, from Mr. Arthur Ridgway, Chief Engineer of the D. & R. G. W. Railroad, and from pioneers of the Salida region.

\*Mr. Carroll of Salida prepared this article recently while working on the State Historical Society's C. W. A. Project.—Ed.

Pass and down the stream, he and his men reached the Arkansas, just below where Buena Vista is now located, on December 18, 1806. Christmas was spent in the vicinity of what is now the Sneddon Ranch, a few miles north of Salida. The half-starved explorers succeeded in killing eight buffaloes near Brown's Canon. The region was visited on numerous occasions by trappers during the next half century, but they left little record.

In 1839 a small group of emigrants bound for Oregon, instead of following the usual route, traveled up the Arkansas to its source, crossed the divide and went down the Blue River. Between 1841 and 1843 Rufus Sage, trader and trapper, visited this region. In 1845 Fremont passed down Trout Creek to the Arkansas and then followed that stream or a tributary to Tennessee Pass. Captain Gunnison explored Poncha Pass in 1853 and named it Gunnison Pass. In August, 1855, Colonel Fauntleroy, with four companies of soldiers, crossed over Poncha Pass to the Arkansas in pursuit of a band of refractory Utes led by Blanco. About twenty miles from Poncha Pass—where the Ute Trail meets the Arkansas, according to Mr. Arthur Hutchinson—the soldiers discovered the Indians' encampment, and in the surprise attack which followed completely routed them, killing forty and wounding many others.

This region was the home and hunting grounds of the Utes, though visited occasionally by Arapahoes, Cheyennes, and probably other tribes. The Utes, under the leadership of Shavano, Colorow, and Ouray, were on friendly terms with the settlers in the upper Arkansas Valley. Their existence was a roving one, and after the advent of the settlers they usually passed through the valley twice yearly en route to and from South Park and the plains on hunting trips or war expeditions against their traditional enemies, the Arapahoes and Cheyennes. On these trips they usually sojourned in the valley for a month or so, their favorite camping grounds being at Poncha, on the Arkansas, just above where Salida is now located, and on Brown's Creek.

Then came the "Pikes Peak" excitement with its host of eager gold-hunters. The inevitable overflow occurred in 1859 and 1860, with prospectors scattering to the mountains. Some of these pioneer prospectors tramped through South Park, crossed Park Range, and discovered placers in the northern section of what is now Chaffee county.

The first placer claim to be located and worked was discovered by Dr. Earl and his party at Kelly's Bar, four miles below Cache Creek (Granite) in the early spring of 1860. (Historian Hall claims that this discovery was made late in the fall of 1859 but not reported until the following spring.) In April, 1860, the Tabors,

accompanied by Nathaniel Maxey and S. P. Kellogg, located placer claims at the mouth of Cache Creek. They found considerable gold—and black sand; having no quicksilver, they could not separate the two. (These claims later proved to be among the best paying in the state.) Discouraged, and lured by tales emanating from California Gulch, they departed for that location, having spent less than a month at Cache Creek.

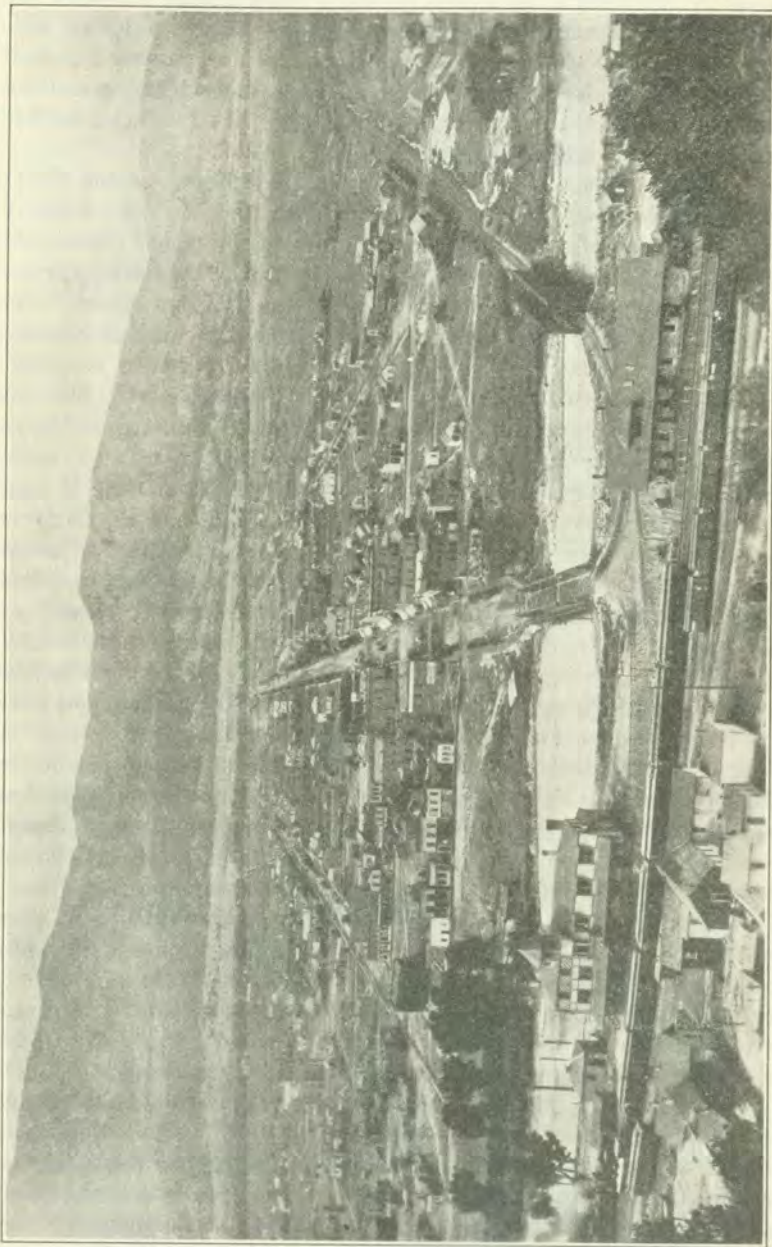
The first prospecting for mineral in the vicinity of the South Arkansas River was in the year 1863, when Nat Rich led a party of Georgia miners to Weldon Gulch on Mount Shavano. Some gold was found, and the excitement spread. By fall there were approximately 1,000 people prospecting in or near Weldon Gulch. No paying mines were discovered, however, and the camp was abandoned.

Many of the prospectors were formerly tillers of the soil, so, disappointed in their mining ventures, they instinctively began looking about for homesteads. The first rancher in the upper Arkansas Valley was Frank Mayol, who settled at what is now known as Riverside in 1863. Mayol packed seed potatoes in from Castle Rock to plant his first crop, which he sold in the adjacent mining camps at 50 cents per pound. That same year the first settler located on the South Arkansas. He was John Tanassee, an Italian, who homesteaded 160 acres, and took the first water for irrigation out of the river. He also brought in the first cattle. Tanassee's ranch later became the property of Noah Baer, and part of it is now known as the Swallow Ranch.

The next settlers were Nat Rich and Bob Hendricks, who, in 1865, built a cabin on the site of the present town of Poncha; John Burnett settled on the river above them the same year. Judge Elias F. Dyer settled on what was later known as the Boon Ranch. (Judge Dyer was assassinated at Granite, presumably by a vigilance committee, on July 3, 1875.) Charles Peterson and John McCalmont located in Adobe Park in 1865, followed by the Spragues, Spauldings, and Nolan. The Webers came in 1866, located on the Tanassee ranch for a year, then homesteaded a ranch on a bench above John Burnett's ranch. Brown's, Gas, and Chalk Creeks were settled contemporaneously.

In 1865 John McPherson settled on a tract of land—about where the state reformatory is now located—and the following year established the first postoffice in this part of the country, naming it Helena. With his influence another postoffice was established on the South Arkansas in 1868, with Ira King as postmaster.

Captain Meriam located the Hortense Mine on Mt. Princeton in 1870 or 1871, which was probably the first silver producing mine



SALIDA IN 1887

in Chaffee county. A year or so later the Murphy group of mines was discovered in the same district by Abe Wright. In 1878 N. D. Creede, grubstaked and directed by Hugh Boon and a brother, discovered mineral in paying quantities, and located the Monarch and Little Charm mines. Discoveries were then made at Whitepine, followed by a mining boom throughout the region. Towns sprang into being, including Chaffee City (Monarch), Garfield, Maysville, Shavano, and Whitepine.

The rapid influx of people into Leadville and the upper part of old Lake county and the constantly increasing business following the rich mineral discoveries there, made a division of the county almost imperative. This was done on February 8, 1879, and the newly created county was named Lake; while the upper, or northern, section of the original county of Lake was named Carbonate county. This did not prove to be satisfactory, however, so two days later Carbonate was renamed Lake, and the new county, Chaffee, in honor of Senator Jerome B. Chaffee. The seat of old Lake county was at Granite, and so it remained as such for the new county, while the seat of Lake county was located at Leadville. The area of Chaffee county, as first created, was 1,189 square miles—some changes have been made since—and it was, and is, bounded on the east by Park and Fremont, on the south by Fremont and Saguache, and on the west by Gunnison county.

In the fall of 1878 a party of Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe engineers, anticipating the construction of their railroad through the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas, laid off a town about one mile below the confluence of the Arkansas and South Arkansas rivers, and named it Cleora, in honor of the daughter of William Bales, the owner of Bales' Tavern and stage station. The town flourished in 1879, and by the spring of 1880 had a population of about 600. Cleora seemed to be advantageously situated as it was a point from which the whole interior of the state might easily be reached.

Then the Denver & Rio Grande won the right to extend its railroad through the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas, and began building to reach Leadville, the San Juan country, the San Luis Valley, and the western part of the state. In the spring of 1880 the railroad reached Cleora, which began to boom; but about the same time the town's populace began to hear disquieting rumors that Cleora was not to be made the division point, and that a new town was to be founded further up the river. Thereupon a delegation set off posthaste for Colorado Springs to interview the promoters of the railroad to ascertain the truth. When Governor Hunt was asked why he didn't favor Cleora as a townsite, he replied, "God Almighty makes a townsite, not men!" Realizing

the truth of this statement, the delegation returned to Cleora as fast as it came, and the town commenced to move, bodily and en masse, to South Arkansas.

Once the newly founded town became an established and known fact the rush to it began. There seems to be some doubt and argument as to what was the first building erected in South Arkansas; some aver it was Van Every's building, while others are positive it was a saloon building, which was erected in the following manner:

Freighters, en route to Leadville, were encamped on the site of the new town. With them was Joe King, who, desirous of engaging in the liquor dispensing trade, was seeking a location. One of the "mule skimmers" suggested that, inasmuch as there was a town laid off there, it should be as good a location as any. King agreed, but at the same time confessed that he had no material with which to erect a building, nor a stock of liquor. This did not deter the enterprising "skimmers," for they promptly halted some freight wagons loaded with lumber for Leadville, and forcibly took enough lumber to erect a small shack; and then secured two barrels of whisky in the same manner. Someone donated a tin cup, and King was soon behind his bar, such as it was, doing a brisk business. The shack thus erected was a clapboard affair, about twelve feet square, located on the second lot on the east corner of F and Sackett Streets, and facing F. It was either torn or burnt down soon after.

The railroad was completed to South Arkansas on May 1st, and the station—a box car—was opened for business May 20th.

The first merchants were Webb and Corbin, who moved up from Cleora and located on the west side of lower F Street. Their first place of business was a tent, boarded up; later they erected a substantial frame building. The Hawkins House and Grand View Hotels were moved up from Cleora, as were various other buildings. Other early comers were G. F. Bateman, who moved from Buena Vista and located a hardware store on West First Street; and G. D. Moll, who opened a tobacco shop. The Chaffee County Bank, W. E. Robertson, president, issued its first draft on June 1st; and the Bank of South Arkansas—Dewitt, Hartzell & Co.—opened for business June 10th. The two banks consolidated in April, 1881. The first brick building in Salida was erected on F Street in the summer of 1880 by the Chaffee County Bank. There was soon a laundry, too—operated by Sing Lee, the only Chinese to locate in Salida during the early days.

On May 28th a printing press was moved from Cleora and assembled while the carpenters began to erect a building over it.

Under very trying and adverse circumstances the first paper was set up and made ready for print, excepting the banner, or heading, which had failed to arrive from Chicago. George Smith, a merchant, solved the problem, however, by drafting the letters on to a pine board for a heading. Thus the town's first newspaper, the *Mountain Mail*, was published on June 5, 1880. The editor was M. R. Moore, the publisher, H. C. Olney. The *Mountain Mail* was a well set up, two sheet, seven column weekly, published on Saturday; the rates were 10 cents per copy, or three dollars per year—in advance.

Included in the advertising of the first issue were the following cards: McIntire & Bean, Feed Merchants; Roller & Twitchell, Furniture & Undertakers; Peter Mulvany, Wholesaler; Smith's Clothing & Dry Goods Store; G. F. Bateman, Hardware; J. J. Harris and W. E. Wilson, Grocers; Henry Mack, Lumberman; M. M. French, Drugs; Rowe & Thompson, Club Room; Richard Devereaux, Saloon; also two hotels, two barber shops, and another furniture store, and lumber dealer. Professional cards included: R. S. Hallock and R. F. Parsons, Physicians and Surgeons; W. S. Smyth, and Baker and Simmonds, Attorneys; Hugh Moore, Notary Public and Real Estate Agent; J. R. Kissler, Architect; and H. Fielding, Contractor. The Boon brothers were advertising for 150 men to work on the construction of the Monarch toll road.

The Denver & Rio Grande advertised two daily trains each way with Pullman Palace Sleeping Cars, Horton Reclining Chair Cars, and Observation Cars, and daylight trains through the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas. This service was east of South Arkansas as the railroad did not reach Buena Vista until June 5th.

There was an article on mining terms, for the benefit of the tenderfoot, in which it was mentioned that a ton of gold was worth \$602,875 and a ton of silver, \$37,709.57; a story of the mining strike in Leadville was given; and several columns of local and personal news were included. In an article concerning the activities of the town, the following facts were given:

In the first week of the town company's—so called—founding Van Every and Fisher, agents, sold lots to the amount of \$10,000, the second week, \$9,000, and the third week, \$12,000, receiving \$200 for the inside lots and \$800 for the corners; there were forty-five buildings completed or under construction, and work was to be started the following week on many more; a number of residences were to be constructed at once (J. H. Hardy's was the first completed); an irrigation ditch from the South Arkansas had been dug to bring water to every lot within the city's limits; a bridge was badly needed and would soon be constructed, across

the Arkansas at the foot of F Street—the first bridge being at the foot of K Street; and it was further stated that South Arkansas was the liveliest town in Colorado.

Early in June Barlow and Sanderson moved their stage offices to town, and Bales' Tavern and stage station were subsequently closed. Captain John T. Blake, Cleora's postmaster, made arrangements to send the mail up every evening, after the arrival of the trains, to W. W. Roller, who distributed it at his store. A few days later Captain Blake began the erection of a postoffice and store building on the upper west corner of First and F Streets; and on June 19th the Cleora postoffice was transferred to the new town. The postal authorities then named the new postoffice Arkansas—a postoffice near Poncha had the title of South Arkansas—which brought forth a howl of protest from the inhabitants.

The following month Governor Hunt suggested "Salida" as a fitting and appropriate name, which, he explained, was Spanish for gateway. He emphasized that the correct and more musical pronunciation was "Sah-lee-dah." The name was adopted; but his wishes, as far as pronunciation was concerned, were little heeded. For a year following, or until the postal and railroad authorities recognized the new name, there was much confusion, as the postoffice was called Arkansas; the railroad station, South Arkansas; while the citizens proudly referred to the town as Salida.

Though there was much agitation about the installation of a municipal water system during the first year of Salida's birth, wells supplied water for domestic use—the first being located in the square near the corner of First and G Streets—until September, 1882, when the water works was completed at a cost of \$17,500. The spring which supplied the water, and is yet the source of Salida's water supply, is located on what was then known as Ira King's ranch, about three miles above town. The completion of the water system was an occasion of which the citizens of Salida were rightfully proud; and the achievement was flaunted before the citizens of Buena Vista, who had contemptuously referred to Salida as "the little town on the sand bar."

During the very first month of Salida's existence there was serious discussion about incorporating the town, and on July 22nd there was a petition for this purpose, signed by forty-six Salida citizens, filed with the county judge. The election was held on August 23rd, when the incorporation was defeated by the sporting element, 92 to 64. The substantial citizens of the town were not to be deterred, however, for on October 4th ballots were again cast, the result being 72 to 0 for incorporation.

The first municipal election was held at Roller's real estate office on October 25th. A light vote was cast, and a straight "People's" ticket was elected: For mayor, J. E. McIntire won from W. W. Wightman; for recorder, R. B. Hallock defeated W. P. Moore; and O. V. Wilson, W. F. Galbraith, R. Wyman, and R. Devereaux were elected trustees. Their first meeting was held on Saturday, October 28th, when the primal ordinances were framed, and the following appointments made: W. A. Hawkins, police magistrate; L. W. Craig, treasurer; S. L. Ryan, attorney; and Jim Meadows, marshal, the latter to receive sixty dollars per month. An appropriation of \$260 was made for the erection of a calaboose. A volunteer fire department was organized one year later and the city made an allowance of \$300 for equipment.

An intense rivalry existed between Buena Vista and Salida, with other towns taking sides according to their locations. Buena Vista watched the growth of the town on the South Arkansas with ill-concealed and growing alarm, while she openly poked fun at it. The editors of the newspapers boasted of their own town's superiority and derided the other. A vote to determine the location of the county seat was included in the general election on November 2, 1880, which complicated the situation. Salida accused Buena Vista of irregularities in the printing of the ballots, and of preparing to have 500 illegal votes cast. Election day came and with it victory for Buena Vista, with a total of 1,100 votes polled in her favor. Salida received but 147; Nathrop, 800; Granite, 67; miscellaneous, 13; total, 2,137. (It must be remembered that women had not the right to vote.) The election was declared unconstitutional, but the Supreme Court decided in favor of Buena Vista.

On August 3, 1881, a mass meeting convened in Governor Hunt's building for the purpose of taking action towards locating the state capital at Salida; and a delegation was sent to the Canon City convention the following month. Captain Blake was the foremost man in this movement and contended that Salida had the best water available, the most agreeable climate, and was the geographical center, and would soon be the railroad center of the state. To strengthen its cause, Salida agreed to donate 160 acres of land; as much of it as necessary to be used for the capitol site, and the remainder to be sold and the proceeds used to aid in paying for the erection of the building. Salida, though supported by Leadville and other towns in the vicinity, never had a chance. After the overwhelming defeat the *Mountain Mail* came out with the statement "We didn't want the capitol anyway; just the advertising and publicity!"

Though the *Mountain Mail* failed to mention it, school was first held in a rough, clapboard storeroom located on First Street about one block from the present railroad crossing. There were about forty pupils, ranging from six-year-old children to young men and women, and the term lasted two months. On April 18, 1881, a school was started for a term of three months in Hallock's building with Miss Jennie Smith as teacher. Governor Hunt's headquarters building on lower E Street was also used as a school-room. This building was the first two-storied one in town. On October 15, 1881, Governor Hunt donated half a block at the corner of Third and D Streets for a school site. The new schoolhouse was completed at a cost of \$3,000 the following October and school immediately commenced therein with ninety-five pupils in attendance. The following year there were 225.

The first religious services were conducted by the Reverend James Peterson, a Presbyterian minister, in Van Every's Hotel on Sunday, June 20, 1880. Services were later held twice a month by the Reverend J. L. Merritt in Governor Hunt's building. In November Governor Hunt donated two lots on the corner of Third and F Streets for the Presbyterian church site, and a contract was given to Bower and Davis for the erection of a frame structure twenty-six by forty feet, which was completed on Saturday, June 22, 1881. Services were conducted there the following day. Reverend R. M. Whaling was the first regular minister. Governor Hunt later gave sites to other churches at the corners of Fourth and D Streets, and construction of the Methodist church was begun soon after.

The first child born in Salida was Bert Ohmert, on July 26, 1880, the son of Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Ohmert, and the grandson of Jessie W. Ohmert, pioneer miner and rancher. Jessie Ohmert was the first to manufacture bricks in Salida, while his son, W. S. Ohmert, was the earliest to engage in the ice business.

The first wedding also occurred in July. On the fourteenth Miss Pearl Fry, daughter of the proprietress of a local millinery store, was married to A. H. Vernon of Maysville, Judge Pickney officiating.

On July 30th W. W. Cole's circus, "mammoth and stupendous," which required three special trains to transport it to Salida—according to the advertisements—gave a performance for one dollar, with almost everyone in the region in attendance.

The first social function was a dancing party at the Ramsdell residence early in July with twenty couples present. In September the Hutchinson family gave a concert, and a dancing party was

held at Bales' ranch. A ladies' church society was formed and met in October at Mrs. Moore's home; later a social was held at the home of J. P. Smith. The Salida dancing club was organized in December, and a Christmas ball staged at the Hawkins House. Construction of the Dickman opera house, at the east corner of Second and F Streets, was begun in November, 1881, and completed a few months later at a cost of \$8,000. It was Salida's first show house and finest building at that time. The opera house was a two-story structure, forty by eighty feet, and was the scene of many gay festivities. The first performance was a home talent affair, followed later in the season by "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

The continuation of Salida's growth and prosperity through its first summer and early fall was due to the fact that it was the forwarding point for the Gunnison, San Luis, and San Juan districts. Though officials of the railroad reassured anxious citizens that Salida was to be a division point, no further preparations or construction was carried on there as all efforts were being expended on completion of the railroad to Leadville.

Then about September 1st work was commenced to span the Arkansas River at Salida. The bridge was completed, and the first rail laid on the Marshall Pass route on September 20th. About the same time work was started on the roundhouse and the stone depot. The stone for the depot was quarried near Nathrop, and the building was completed in October. An addition to the depot was erected the following year, and another in 1882, which made it "an elegant and substantial depot, the best in the state." That winter (1880-1881) work was begun on the filling in and enlarging of the yards, also coal chutes and trainmaster's residence were built. The railroad hospital was located in Salida in 1882 and that fall erection of the shops was begun. The Monte Cristo Hotel, which succeeded Gray's Hotel as the official railroad hostelry, was completed and furnished, at a total cost of \$38,000, in May, 1883.

Salida citizens were greatly excited over reports of a short line to be built from Denver through Platte Canon to South Park, and down Ute Trail to Salida. Survey of the route was begun on Ute Trail in February, 1881, and work started at Hecla Junction in June, which was completed to the Calumet iron mines, where ended Salida's hopes of being on a direct rail route to Denver.

Prices in the newly founded town were moderate, with native lumber selling at \$32 per thousand feet, best Denver flour \$4.25 per hundred pounds; butter, 30, and ham, 14 cents a pound, and eggs 30 cents per dozen. Nor was the town "wild and woolly"

during its first year. Such a period did occur in 1883. Though Marshal Meadows was wounded in his first "roundup" of undesirables, there was not a fatal shooting until almost a year after the birth of the town, when, on April 11th, Charlie Roth killed John Elliott in an altercation over a woman.

Salida's growth was not phenomenal by any means, yet it was steady and substantial, excepting for a short depressing period during its first winter, which started when the rails reached Poncha. Then the construction crews were moved to Poncha and that town was made the forwarding point. The editor of the *Mountain Mail* admitted that Poncha was experiencing a wild boom; and though Salida was the most quiet town in the state, it was still the "boss" of that vicinity. The editor of the *Chaffee County Times* at Buena Vista was joyously positive that Salida was "played out." He was mistaken. Before spring many people were bidding Poncha adieux and returning to Salida, which began to thrive again. Once more the *Mountain Mail* enumerated the town's growth and merits. It also mentioned the fact that Salida was surrounded by rapidly developing mining camps, which included the Orient, Kirber, Whitepine, Monarch, and Calumet districts, also placer mining on the Arkansas.

Governor Hunt, because of his extensive real estate interests, "pushed" the town, and established his headquarters there in August. He announced that a company would begin to lay pipe for the purpose of bringing the waters of Poncha's hot springs to town, and that he would donate lots worth \$6,000 to anyone who would agree to erect a \$50,000 hotel thereon. Neither one of these worthy ideas ever materialized. Governor Hunt also promised to donate shade trees to the town upon its incorporation. Whether or not he actually did is not recorded, but quite a number of trees were set out in 1881.

On June 1, 1880, the town's population was 353, increasing to 750 by the first of the year, and amounting to 1,500 in 1882. (None of these figures included the floating element.) Local railroad receipts for the month of July, 1880, were 6,000 passenger and \$49,000 freight; the local tonnage for the year totaled 4,693 tons forwarded and 19,382 tons received. For the year of 1881 the receipts were 2,537 tons forwarded and 9,929 tons received; freight receipts were \$64,620.98 and passenger receipts were \$59,340.91. (The decrease in tonnage of almost 50 per cent was due to the fact that Salida was no longer the forwarding point.) Postal receipts for that year were: Stamps sold, \$1,786.53; stamps cancelled, \$1,699.25. There were twenty-two business structures, 24 resi-

dences, and 20 tenements—for railroad workers—completed, and twenty-five other buildings under construction in 1881.

So we find Salida, before the close of its second year, not built "on a sand bar," but substantially founded, with the roots of commercial and social progress deeply embedded and its future assured.

## Freighting in the San Luis Valley

As Told by "UNCLE" JOHN BLADES to C. E. GIBSON, JR.\*

I used to freight all over this country back in the early days. On my first trip, in 1876, I brought a load all the way from Pueblo. The next year the railroad reached Garland City, east of Fort Garland, and we hauled from there. The freight roads in those days were pretty tough going. In the spring we couldn't get over Stony Pass to Silverton and used to unload at Grassy Hill, where there was a postoffice and Watson had a wholesale house. From there stuff was packed into Silverton on burros or mules.

Si Campbell, Albert Greenfield and I took the first loads of barreled whisky into Silverton. We each had two yoke of oxen on our wagons. It was customary to snub the wagons down the other side of Stony Pass, which was mighty steep, but luckily the road was dry and by locking our wheels the heavy oxen were able to hold the wagons. Coming back it took our six yoke to bring one empty wagon up the steep grade.

When Garland City moved over to Alamosa we had to ford the river before the railroad bridge was built. If you could keep going it wasn't bad, but if your teams stopped you were stuck. There was a kind of quicksand bottom and the wagon would sink right in.

There was a lot of freighting from both Garland City and Alamosa to Santa Fe. I kept away from that trip, too much sand and too hard going. Nearly all of the freighting south was done by Mexicans with big bull outfits.

The road to Animas City, over Cumbres Pass, was a mean one, too, in the early days. In one place the hillside which the road went around was so steep that I used to take my hind wheel on the up side and change with the front wheel on the down side, so as to have two big wheels on the lower side to help even up the slant. You either had to do that or put a pole through the wagon

\*Mr. Gibson of Alamosa obtained this interview while working on the C. W. A. Project of the State Historical Society.—Ed.



and get someone to ride the uphill end to keep your wagon from tipping over. There was one mighty steep place on this road about 200 yards long and straight down. We used to lock all four wheels and chain some logs or a tree on behind as a drag to keep the wagon from running over the teams.

A man named Lowe and Si Campbell had some big freighting outfits—used seven yoke of oxen on each wagon and trailer and hauled up to 16,000 pounds or more. Most freighters used six mules, or three yoke of bulls, as we called the oxen, and used a trailer.



FREIGHTING OUTFITS AT DEL NORTE IN 1877

I freighted into Saguache some. The road turned north thirteen miles east of Del Norte. On one trip there was a fellow from Texas along who had a load from Alamosa for Otto Mears. We got into Saguache and I was unloading and watering my teams when I saw this little Texan come down the street and go over to my wagon. He took my gun out of the jockey box where I always carried it and hurried back up the street. I tied my mules and hot-footed after him to Mears' store. Mears claimed some of the freight was damaged and refused to pay all the charges. Well, that little Texan stuck my gun in Mear's belly and says, "Now, damn you, I want my money." Mears just laughed and said,

"All right, son, this ain't the first time I've been called," and he handed over the cash.

Trouble on the road was not uncommon. One time when going to Ouray with several other outfits a fifth chain broke on one fellow's heavily loaded wagon, just as he had almost reached the top of a long, steep grade. That is the chain the teams are hitched to and when it broke it turned his wagon loose. Down the hill it went, hit a big rock and the whole thing, wagon, freight and all, was smashed and scattered all over the place. A freighter was responsible for his load until it was delivered. Well, that fellow took one look at the wreck and started with his mules for parts unknown.

Most of the roads improved from year to year. I took a 3,000-pound load of barreled whisky all the way to Animas City with four mules. Had to block the wheels and slide down some of the hills, but didn't get stuck any place. I discovered one day that a half-barrel of rock-and-rye in the load had sprung a leak and was trickling a trail along behind me. I got out my tin cup and filled and emptied it a couple of times and then turned the barrel over so the leak was on top. When we made camp that night I poured a couple of buckets of water in the barrel to make up for the leakage. That load was billed to a Jew in Animas City and I knew he'd weigh the barrels. I didn't intend to pay for two buckets of rock-and-rye.

John Jackson did a lot of freighting around the valley. He brought his big bull outfits here from Salt Lake over the same trail the Mormons used some years later.

There were plenty of Indians in the country then, especially around Pagosa Springs. The bucks were lazy devils and never did any work, leaving everything in that line to the squaws. Why, I've known an Indian to kill a deer a mile from camp, walk back to camp and send his squaw out to bring the deer in.

I never freighted over the government road that the soldiers built connecting Fort Garland and the fort at Pagosa, but my wife and I came over it in a spring wagon in 1879, when it was just about finished. That road went up Cat Creek on this side, over to the Alamosa River and up that to the top and down the San Juan on the other side.

The vigilantes were pretty active when I was freighting through this country years ago. I was invited to attend several of their hanging parties, but never did. One morning as I came into Alamosa from the east there were two fellows hanging to a cottonwood tree right by the railroad bridge. I was in Del Norte the night they hanged the crippled old man and the boy who had held

up the stage above Antelope Springs. I didn't take it in, as hangings didn't appeal to me.

One night the vigilantes had quite a time in Del Norte. There were two fellows in jail who had been stealing cattle, and those two knew the vigilantes were coming to get them. They took off their shoes and their coats so as to be free for action, and each got a piece of stove wood. When the jail door was opened those fellows took the crowd by surprise. They jumped right in among them, laid about with their clubs, and then ran. Well, you never heard such yelling and shooting in your life. Those vigilantes went crazy, riding up and down the streets and alleys all over town hunting those fellows and shooting at anything. They finally killed one of their own men before they got cooled down. The cow thieves got clear away.

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## Experiences and Observations in Prowers County\*

GEORGE A. H. BAXTER

I was born near Madison, Indiana, on June 16, 1871. My father, A. H. H. Baxter, was a member of a family of seven sons, known as the "Fighting Baxters," six of whom have Civil War service records varying from about two years to the entire period of the war. He came to Colorado in 1870 and took up a homestead in T. 23, R. 45 W., about two miles north and two miles west of the present site of Carlton. He brought his family to this claim in 1872. In 1874 he commuted this homestead claim to a cash entry and moved five miles east of the site of "Old" Granada, where he entered a pre-emption claim and a timber culture claim of 160 acres each (in 1874). These were adjacent tracts (T. 22 S., R. 43 W.). It was on these claims that he reared his family.

In 1887, when I was sixteen years old, we moved to the new town of Granada, which had been started in the spring of 1886. This town project was promoted by Thomas Doak, M. F. Dickinson, and Mimms & Keeps. In 1886 Doak established the first bank in Prowers county, which became the First National Bank of Granada some years later. Mimms & Keeps founded the People's Bank in 1887. The town grew rapidly, the population reaching the 1,200 mark by 1888. There were six saloons, three large livery barns (Harris Brothers, Upman & Sons, and Farmer Brothers), four hotels, three large hardware stores, three general stores, two dry

goods stores, a harness shop, two shoemakers' shops, three large lumber yards (Prairie Lumber Co., Hall & Coffin, and Doak & Davis), several restaurants, and two drug stores. Doak and Davis ran a coal yard in connection with their lumber yard. These do not quite complete the list of business firms. The boom period of the town lasted from 1886 to 1889. During this time much of the non-irrigated land in this area was taken up. After 1889 Granada declined rather rapidly, due chiefly to crop failures in the agricultural area served by the town. The 160-acre homesteads were too small to admit of a livelihood under the circumstances, and probably about 80 per cent of them were abandoned in this period of scanty crops.

Some of the pioneers of the Granada area in the late sixties and the seventies were T. B. Nolan and Dennis Foley (since 1871, when they controlled about 20,000 acres of land); H. S. Holly, who established the SS ranch in 1870, consisting of about 50,000 acres of bottom land, extending from the Granada bridge to the state line; James Martin Graham, who established the UF ranch in 1871, consisting of about 5,000 acres, located south of the Arkansas between the Granada bridge and Carlton; Antone Hulenger, a nester, who settled on the south side of the Arkansas north of the present town of Granada in 1873; a Mr. McMillan, who settled on the south side of the river one and one-half miles west of Carlton in 1878 and established the ML ranch (on his arrival he entered a pre-emption claim and a timber claim); A. R. Black, a cattleman, who settled at the site of Blackwell (the town that was moved to the present site of Lamar in 1886) and controlled about 20,000 acres of land (this land passed first into the hands of the Prowers County Land and Irrigating Company in the late eighties and to the ABS in 1905); John W. Prowers, who established a ranch in the area of Prowers Station in 1868, after he had been in Colorado a number of years (Prowers controlled here about 15,000 acres of land that is now the property of the Holly Sugar Corporation); Abe Peterson, a nester, who settled on the south side of the river above the Prowers ranch in 1872; John Malloy and Felix Cain, nesters (incidentally, brothers-in-law), who settled immediately west of the Prowers ranch in 1869 and lived here for a good many years after their homestead claims were proved; A. D. Hudnall, a cattleman, who controlled a cattle range south of the river in the Smith Canon and Cedar country and who married a daughter of John W. Prowers; Major Towers, who came to Fort Lyon in 1870 and established a range business in partnership with Gudgell; Lane and Murray, who established a range business in the Butte Creek area in 1874; Luke Cahill, who came to what is now Bent county in 1869

\*This article was obtained from Mr. Baxter by Prof. J. O. Van Hook of the University of Colorado in 1932.—Ed.

and engaged in horse raising on the range; "Jake" Stover, who homesteaded on land adjoining that of A. H. H. Baxter on the west in 1873; the Robinson brothers (Frank and George), who homesteaded land adjoining that of Baxter and Stover in 1874; and "Buck" Woods, who homesteaded in the Baxter neighborhood in 1871.

The cattlemen of this area were very antagonistic toward the homesteaders and pre-emptors, whom they called "nesters," and tried to drive them out. However, the "nesters" continued to come in and crowd out the cattlemen who had no title to the land. In the early eighties, the federal government ordered the cattlemen to take down their fences from around land which they did not own and from this time the homesteaders clearly had the upper hand. My father took a very active part in the removal of the ranch fences on the public domain. The SS ranch inclosed an area twenty miles square, north of the river, extending westward from the state line. It included the present site of Holly. This fenced area abounded in natural hay (buffalo grass, gramma grass, and blue stem grass). The land now belongs to the Holly Sugar Company. The SS fence was taken down in 1885.

The homesteaders endeavored to protect their crop and hay lands by erecting barbed wire fences. In the earlier days they used cottonwood and hackberry posts, but later they went to the hill country south of the river for native cedar posts. These barbed wire fences date from the early eighties. It was this gradual fencing of land by the "nesters" that sounded the doom of the range business in this part of Colorado.

I do not know the number of cattle owned by the cattle companies of this area, but can make a reasonably correct estimate. I should say that H. S. Holly probably transferred upwards of 15,000 cattle to the English company (managed by a Mr. Broomfield) about 1880. The English company employed about forty "cow punchers" the year around. Blooded bulls were imported, and the herd was improved and increased in numbers. A. R. Black was, next to Holly, the largest owner of cattle in what is now Prowers county. His herd averaged about 5,000. The Mc-Millan ranch and the Graham brothers' (UF) ranch each grazed upwards of a thousand cattle. There were not many large ranches in the Granada end of Old Bent county. Bates and Beal came into the Granada area in 1872 and established a ranch north of the river and east of the old town of Granada.

In the late eighties the cattle business began the transition from what was known as the "range" business on the public lands

to a business that was confined to smaller fenced areas on land that actually belonged to the owners of the cattle. In other words, it became an auxiliary of the farming business, or one might say that the cattle business was combined, by degrees, with the business of farming. The idea was the production of a smaller number of improved breed by individual farmers. This change was taking place in my boyhood days and youth. I was employed on the A. R. Black ranch in my early 'teens, and later on the XY ranch. I remember well when the Prairie Cattle Company came in and took over the JJ ranch on the Purgatoire. This company owned all the water south of the Arkansas along Butte Creek and the Purgatoire, and their vast range extended into Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.

My father did non-irrigated farming at first, depending chiefly on natural hay. He did enough cultivating to satisfy the requirements of the law. Some of the "nesters" could get water from the river for irrigation purposes without much effort. Others banded together for a partnership ditch. My father and "Jake" Stover completed a ditch in 1880, now known as the Sisson ditch. Stover had constructed part of this ditch prior to 1874, when my father took up his claim on the adjoining land. I think it was started in 1872. It was completed in 1880. The Arkansas River ran bankfull of water all the time in those years. It was easy to get a headgate for a small canal that would conduct water from the river to irrigate individual ranches. Crops were purely for home consumption. Hardly more than a garden patch was planted. A few oats were grown for horse feed. The remainder of the crop was "garden truck," such as beans, watermelons, and "roasting ears."

Very little land beyond the bottom belt, in the present dry farming area, was taken up before 1886. In the period 1886 to 1889 fine crops of corn and wheat were grown in the dry farming area. The planted acreage was not large, because farming was by means of plows and teams. Some feed crops were grown for the farmer's stock; but such crops were not grown to much extent until the second boom period following the passage of the "Enlarged Homestead" act of 1909. I feel that the dry land area will not be abandoned again as it was about 1889-1890. Many of the dry land farmers are better off this year (1932) than the farmers under irrigation, including myself. Their principal reliance now is upon wheat, corn, broom corn, and such feed crops as kaffir corn, milo maize and other maizes, and cane. Not much millet is grown, and feterita has about played out. Pretty good crops of barley are grown.

A word should be said about the towns that have sprung up from time to time in this area. In the period 1885 to 1890 fifteen towns sprang up in the dry farming area south of Granada, in what is now Prowers and Baca counties. These were Minneapolis (on Bear Creek, 1886), Vilas (between Bear Creek and Horse Creek), Stonington (also between Horse Creek and Bear Creek, south of Springfield), Springfield, Albany (on Butte Creek), Mulvane (on Butte Creek), Brookfield (on Butte Creek), Atlanta (at the forks of Freeze Out and Butte creeks), Wild (about four miles west of the Two Butte Mountains), Boston (at the head of Smith Canyon), Troy (on the Cariso), Higbee, and two towns across the New Mexican border. Only Springfield, Stonington, Vilas, and Higbee remain. In the period 1914 to 1930 the following towns have appeared in the southern part of the county and just over the line in Baca county: Lycan, about ten years ago; Webb; Two Buttes, just over the line in Baca county; and Walsh, some miles from the county line.

I helped with the construction of the older part of the Amity ditch in the eighties, and later with the construction of the Lamar canal. My own land is under the Lamar canal. The original survey extended to Butte Creek, but at present it carries water only three miles east of Granada. I could say a great deal about the building of canals in this area, but there are official records of that.

Old Granada was at the end of the Santa Fe Railroad from 1873 to 1875. Its inhabitants were railroad employees and their families, gamblers, freighters, and buffalo hunters. At one time it contained about 1,500 people. It was a freight terminal for traffic between Santa Fe and Granada. Practically everything was freighted by ox teams. Three freight wagons could transport a carload. About sixteen oxen were hitched to the same wagon as a rule. Prices were high. Flour cost five dollars per fifty-pound sack when we came to Granada area. Coffee was a dollar a pound. Bacon was about fifty cents per pound.

Old Granada never had a bank. It had two fine wholesale houses (Chick, Browne & Co. and Otero, Sellars & Co.) and a few small business houses. Most of the town moved on with the advancing railroad in 1875-1876, but the life of the town was not terminated until New Granada was founded in 1886. There were, of course, plenty of saloons in the old town. The railroad bridge was also a toll bridge, and was so used until the late eighties.

## The First Two Decades of Central City Theatricals

LYNN PERRIGO\*

The first theatre of the mountain mining camps of Colorado was opened in May, 1860, by Madame Wakeley, who brought a troupe from Apollo Hall in Denver and "set up her budget of histrionics" in a two-story log building at Mountain City (later incorporated into Central City).<sup>1</sup> This troupe in reality consisted only of Mrs. Wakeley's three daughters, mediocre actresses, who were supported by whatever local men could be enlisted. One of the trio was, however, sufficiently attractive to assume a French name and achieve considerable popularity in this male society. A pioneer, who later became editor of the local newspaper, wrote that "Mlle Haidee, the prettiest woman on the frontier, was the chief attraction and next to draw poker, drew out the greatest piles of gold dust and black sand at \$2.50 per head." A "gambler" disrupted this troupe by marrying the star, and a new troupe that appeared in October was also wrecked by the elopement of a leading actress. The second troupe had played in an upstairs hall at the Veranda Hotel, and this theatre, which was known as the *Varieties*, was reopened in the spring of 1861 by Langrishe and Dougherty. Langrishe won instant favor as an actor. He played the leading part in a variety of plays, but, because of his capability for ludicrous facial expression, he was at his best in the role of comedian. Later that season this company moved to the Peoples' Theatre on Main Street, and its small band advertised the plays to be presented there. The music-makers rode up and down the streets in a one-horse wagon and stopped for drinks at every saloon. Langrishe's popular troupe then left this stand to play a circuit of the other mining camps.

The theatre filled a need and was popular in the mining camp. As the town became established and society began to take shape, the theatre became even more firmly rooted, reaching its early zenith in the last years of the Civil War.

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<sup>1</sup>Concerning the two years prior to the founding of a continuing newspaper in Central City, we have an article entitled "Colorado Theatricals," probably written by Frank Hall, in the *Daily Central City Register*, Feb. 8, 1876, and a later one by Hal Sayre, "Early Central City Theatricals and Other Reminiscences," in *The Colorado Magazine*, VI, 47-51.

After July, 1862, the local newspaper provided a contemporary record, and the various names of this publication are abbreviated in the footnotes of this article, as follows:

*Tri-Weekly Miners Register* (1862-3), *T. M. R.*; *Daily Miners Register* (1863-8), *D. M. R.*; *Daily Central City Register* (1868-76), *D. C. C. R.*; *Central City Weekly Register* (1876-7), *C. C. W. R.*; *The Daily Register* (1878), *D. R.*; *The Evening Call* (1878), *E. C.*; and *Daily Register-Call* (1878-82), *D. R. C.* The writer has endeavored to reproduce all quotations in the exact form of the originals, without the use of *sic* to indicate questionable spelling or punctuation.

In July of 1862 Swit's Varieties were playing at the Peoples' Theatre. This troupe was "unrivalled . . . for mirth, music, posturing and feats of strength." They went to Santa Fe from Central, and on the eve of their departure Harrison's troupe was opening an engagement at his National Theatre.<sup>2</sup> The large wooden structure<sup>3</sup> would hardly accommodate the crowds that came to see "Robbers of the Forest of Bohemia," "A Day in Paris," "The Drunkard," "Love's Sacrifice," "Conjugal Lesson," "The Marble Heart," "The Hunchback," or "The Loan of a Lover."<sup>4</sup> On one occasion it was reported that one thousand witnessed the performance and over one hundred were turned away.<sup>5</sup> Harrison closed down temporarily to remodel the building. Two hundred gallery seats were added, some more orchestra seats were put in, the stage was enlarged, and the scenery repainted.<sup>6</sup> After Harrison's reopening the Langrishe troupe filled an engagement at the Peoples' Theatre with "several distinguished actors from the states . . . and attractions surpassing anything ever before seen in this country."<sup>7</sup> At first Harrison had refrained from playing on Sunday<sup>8</sup> but later deviation from this policy led to his arrest for violation of the territorial licensing law.<sup>9</sup> That was not all. Chas. Switz was threatening to murder Harrison so the latter retaliated by shooting Switz. In trial Harrison was freed from punishment for both the statutory and criminal offenses, but he sold the theatre and moved to Denver.<sup>10</sup>

Langrishe and Dougherty opened the season of 1863 in April with an "ordinary bill but an overwhelming house." The old National Theatre, which had been rechristened the *Montana*,<sup>11</sup> offered dramas featuring George Parden, T. M. Tyrrell and Maria Irwin. This group was reenforced by a "new troupe of celebrities from Europe" in July of that year. George Pauncefote, Mlle. Ada Laurant, Mr. and Mrs. John Dillon and Miss M. Thompson were the widely heralded new additions to the cast.<sup>12</sup> Some of the plays presented that summer were "Married Life," "Our American Cousin," "The Gambler's Fate," "The Sea of Ice," "The Life and Trials of a Factory Girl," "Black Eyed Susan," and "Macbeth."<sup>13</sup> In August the *Register* complained of interruptions due to a boisterous gallery audience and in spite of the "provost

<sup>2</sup>Locals, *T. M. R.*, July 28, 1862.

<sup>3</sup>See below for a description.

<sup>4</sup>Locals, *T. M. R.*, Aug. 1 to 20, 1862.

<sup>5</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Aug. 11, 1862.

<sup>6</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Sept. 5, 1862.

<sup>7</sup>Locals, *T. M. R.*, Sept. 29, 1862.

<sup>8</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Aug. 4, 1862.

<sup>9</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Oct. 6, 1862.

<sup>10</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Oct. 15, 1862; *ibid.*, Dec. 22, 1862; also recalled in "Re-Built Central," *D. C. C. R.*, Dec. 5, 1874.

<sup>11</sup>Editorial, *T. M. R.*, Apr. 14, 1863.

<sup>12</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, July 16, 1863.

<sup>13</sup>Editorial, *T. M. R.*, Apr. 14, 1863; locals, *ibid.*, Aug. 1 to 20, 1863.

guard,"<sup>14</sup> but a week later it reported that "more general quiet . . . [was] preserved among the audience at the Theatre."<sup>15</sup> By October the theatrical troupe had gone to Denver for the winter,<sup>16</sup> and the only other performance that fall was the one presented for a few days by "Wm. Baker, the Red Man of Agar, his son and his trained dog."<sup>17</sup> The Peoples' Theatre must have been abandoned during the season of 1863, for, although still listed in the newspaper directory, there was no mention of programs there.<sup>18</sup> By January 1 its name disappeared even from the directory.<sup>19</sup>

The Montana Theatre was dark during the winter of 1863-64,<sup>20</sup> but in March it was reopened for the presentation of a "Terpsichorean Festival" by the Denver pupils of Mlle. Hernandez.<sup>21</sup> Her class of forty young ladies also closed the season with a two-day show in December, and in the interim the Langrishe and Dougherty troupe returned for five months<sup>22</sup> to present, among other plays, "The Maid of Croisey," "Serious Family," "Omnibus," and the "Giant of Saint Michael."<sup>23</sup> One evening in December Madame Gruenwald, a "prima Donna of notoriety in operatic circles, both in this continent and in Europe," entertained with operatic selections.<sup>24</sup>

The Montana Theatre was purchased by Langrishe and Barnes in 1865<sup>25</sup> and Langrishe's troupe played there each season until 1871. The performances were well attended in 1865,<sup>26</sup> but in 1866 the crowds dwindled away after the big opening in April. The flagging interest was blamed on "depression and stagnation in mining circles."<sup>27</sup> The troupe went to Denver in September after playing "the latest and most popular eastern dramas."<sup>28</sup>

In 1867 Langrishe returned for only two weeks,<sup>29</sup> and the next fairly successful season was in 1869. "Cardinal Richelieu," "The Pearl of Savoy," "Mathilde," "The Foster Sisters," "The Swiss Cottage," "Enoch Arden," "Under the Gaslight," and "Romeo and Juliet" were played before fair audiences.<sup>30</sup> At this time the Montana was described as the "old rheumatic theatre."

<sup>14</sup>Locals, *D. M. R.*, Aug. 20, 1863.

<sup>15</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Aug. 28, 1863.

<sup>16</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Sept. 25, 1863.

<sup>17</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Oct. 29, 1863.

<sup>18</sup>Directory, *ibid.*, Nov. 7, 1863.

<sup>19</sup>Directory, *ibid.*, Jan. 1, 1864.

<sup>20</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Feb. 6, 1864.

<sup>21</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, March 22, 1864.

<sup>22</sup>Locals, *D. M. R.*, Mar. 30, 1864; *ibid.* Sept. 6, 1864.

<sup>23</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, April 28; *ibid.*, Sept. 7, 1864.

<sup>24</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Dec. 14, 1864.

<sup>25</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, May 3, 1865.

<sup>26</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, June 25, 1865.

<sup>27</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, May 3, 1866; *ibid.*, June 9, 1866.

<sup>28</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Sept. 16, 1866.

<sup>29</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Apr. 7, 1867.

<sup>30</sup>Locals, *D. C. C. R.*, Apr. 1, 1869; *ibid.*, Apr. 20, 23, and 25, 1869; *ibid.*, May 2 and 7, 1869.

The interior finish was whitewash, and the drop displayed pictures of "thick headed Dutchmen and women." A portrait "that must have been meant for Shakespeare [looked] sadly up from its place near the saw-log that [held] the curtain down." The benches were hard and stiff, but when the tinkling of the manager's bell signalled the rise of the curtain, the people forgot their discomforts and were lost in the "mimic allurements" before them.<sup>31</sup> When "Romeo and Juliet" was presented "the superb wardrobes seemed out of place amidst such poverty-stricken surroundings."<sup>32</sup> "Officer McGraw presided over the performances in the gallery. . . . The applause came in properly as a general thing," but a "want of enthusiasm" was noticeable.<sup>33</sup>

In the days of Harrison and Langrishe benefits were "all the rage" at the Montana. A group of theatre-going enthusiasts would publish a letter proclaiming the "exalted merits" of a certain actor or actress and announcing the date of the benefit. When the night arrived a representative from the audience presented a gift to the immediate object of admiration, and the latter person was expected to respond appropriately. That was the early procedure, and, if there were later variations, the *Register* failed to describe the changes.<sup>34</sup> They even had a benefit for Ed Shapter, the machinist, in 1864, for to him was "to be attributed all the mechanical ingenuity required to produce unlooked for incidents, grand tableaux, disappearances, ghostly illusions, etc."<sup>35</sup>

Other troupes than Langrishe's appeared before Central City audiences from 1867 on. The Phelps, Leslie, and Wilson troupe from Golden City and the Colorado Minstrels each played at the Montana for a short time in 1867.<sup>36</sup> The next year "Mad. Forrester, the renowned Contortionist," performed at the museum and ladies were informed that they need not fear anything that would "offend the most fastidious."<sup>37</sup> A large crowd applauded the San Francisco opera company that opened at the Montana with "Le Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein" in 1869, but the company stayed only two weeks.<sup>38</sup> "Satsuma's Royal Japanese Troup of Aerobats, Jugglers, and Equilibrists of both sexes" presented their "three hundred different acts" at the Montana Theatre in May of 1870,<sup>39</sup> and in July Miss Nash and company offered an assortment of

<sup>31</sup>"Just as when Charley Harrison controlled the place," locals, *D. C. C. R.*, Apr. 20, 1869.

<sup>32</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, May 2, 1869.

<sup>33</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Apr. 23, 1869.

<sup>34</sup>Communication, *T. M. R.*, Oct. 10, 1862; communication, *D. M. R.*, Sept. 9, 1863; locals, *ibid.*, Oct. 27, 1864; *ibid.*, Sept. 21, 1865; *ibid.*, June 9, 1866; *ibid.*, Aug. 26, 1866; *et passim*.

<sup>35</sup>Locals, *D. M. R.*, Oct. 27, 1864.

<sup>36</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Mar. 8, 1867; *ibid.*, June 7, 1867.

<sup>37</sup>Locals, *D. C. C. R.*, Oct. 15, 1868.

<sup>38</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, July 6, 1869.

<sup>39</sup>Adv., *ibid.*, May 14, 1870.

comedies, recitations, and concertina solos for two nights, but the audience was small.<sup>40</sup>

The mid-winter opening of January, 1871, was the innovation of Langrishe and Waldron. Only a fair audience witnessed the first play, "Master of St. Tropez."<sup>41</sup> To see this cost \$1 for a seat in the "dress circle," and 50c for one in the gallery.<sup>42</sup> "Miss Hinkley of New York Theatre and G. W. Thompson, noted actor," joined the cast just before the presentation of "The Persecuted Dutchman."<sup>43</sup> This winter trial ended in late February. Although the performances were good the show had not been "peculiarly successful."<sup>44</sup>

Langrishe came back in March with a new star, M'lle Ravel, for the "revival not only of the pantomime and the tight rope, but the ballet. What at one time was not only an indelicate but licentious exhibition of almost semi-nudity, is, in her hands, but a model representation of exquisite art to which the most prudish of the prudes could not object."<sup>45</sup>

A large crowd witnessed "The French Spy" and "M'lle Ravel was the great attraction. . . . She [had] an admirable physique, and was admirably adapted to the parts she play[ed]."<sup>46</sup> Langrishe finished this engagement by the end of March and then returned for four days in April with a new find, Miss Kitty Blanchard.<sup>47</sup> After June 15 Miss Annette Ince and cast played a few weeks at the Montana, and a Japanese troupe closed the season in November with a "wonderful exhibition of perfection in innumerable balancing feats."<sup>48</sup>

Langrishe failed to return in the spring of '72, so some other troupes tried to get response from Central audiences. Miss Fanny Morgan Phelps and company played "East Lynne," "Child of the Regiment," and "Andy Blake" to fair houses early in May, but by the end of the month they retired in favor of Allen's Star Dramatic Company.<sup>49</sup> Among the plays presented by them in June and July were: "Sea of Ice," "The Lady and the Devil," "Nobody's Daughter," "Macbeth," "Lucretia Borgia," "Po-ca-hontas," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Rip Van Winkle," "Rosedale," "Enoch Arden," "Our American Cousin," and "Buffalo Bill."<sup>50</sup> Allen met with some encouragement at first, although at times "the

<sup>40</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, July 14, 1870.

<sup>41</sup>Locals, *D. C. C. R.*, Jan. 7, 1871.

<sup>42</sup>Adv., *ibid.*, Jan. 8, 1871.

<sup>43</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Jan. 20, 1871.

<sup>44</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Feb. 22, 1871.

<sup>45</sup>Denver *Tribune* cited in locals, *ibid.*, Mar. 12, 1871.

<sup>46</sup>Locals, *D. C. C. R.*, Mar. 15, 1871.

<sup>47</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Mar. 26, 1871; *ibid.*, Apr. 9, 1871.

<sup>48</sup>Locals, *D. C. C. R.*, June 15, 1871; *ibid.*, Nov. 2, 1871.

<sup>49</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, May 5 to 30, 1872.

<sup>50</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, May 27 to 31, 1872; *ibid.*, June 8, 1872; *ibid.*, July 2, 7, 14, 18 and 21, 1872.



applause of the audience was so boisterous as to interrupt the play . . . and some parties seated at the back kept up a by-play of conversation not appreciated by those seated in their vicinity."<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, Allen leased the Montana Theatre for one year and closed early in June to remodel the house.<sup>52</sup> He built a new stage, replaced some of the benches with "sixteen dozen handsome, easy chairs," and had M. de la Harpe repaint the scenery.<sup>53</sup> By the end of June the "New Olympic Theatre" was ready, but the opening was "hardly well attended." Besides, "not one of the characters could speak his lines" and the property man "left the forest wings in the drawing room scenes."<sup>54</sup> By the middle of July part of the troupe had left for Denver. "Many unpropitious circumstances attended this last season. . . . Some poor actors spoiled the rest."<sup>55</sup> Those of the cast who remained in Central played "The Marble Heart," "Fanchon the Cricket," and "Wept of the Wish-ton-wish" in September,<sup>56</sup> but in October and November the theatre was reopened only for an occasional lecture, and its old name, *Montana*, was revived.<sup>57</sup>

In the course of 1872 a railroad had been completed from Denver as far as Black Hawk, one mile from Central City, and enterprising citizens of the latter place had erected the large Teller House. These and other local improvements, by creating a hopeful atmosphere and releasing the depressed spirits of Centralites, could be expected to result in a reawakening of latent interests.

The year 1873 marked the beginning of extensive local talent performances in Central, but not to the exclusion of traveling companies. Local amateurs presented a "Greate Concerte of Ye Old Folks," or sacred music of the preceding century, on June 4.<sup>58</sup> Then the Turnverein (German gymnastic society) promoted an exhibition starring local gymnasts, accompanied by an orchestra.<sup>59</sup> Later the Amateur Dramatic Company was organized to present "Mrs. Jarley's waxworks" for the benefit of the Episcopal Church building fund. This "elegant and dramatic" production yielded a profit of \$250, so the amateurs repeated with "Miserere" and the "Anvil Chorus" from "Il Trovatore," followed by a short comedy.<sup>60</sup>

Meanwhile the professional companies were having a rather successful season, too. The theatre was packed for a few nights in June, not to see legitimate drama, but burlesque. The

<sup>51</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, May 31, 1872.

<sup>52</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, June 5, 1872.

<sup>53</sup>Locals, *D. C. C. R.*, June 28, 1872.

<sup>54</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, June 30, 1872.

<sup>55</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, July 21, 1872.

<sup>56</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Sept. 12 and 14, 1872.

<sup>57</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Oct. 15, 1872; *ibid.*, Nov. 9, 1872.

<sup>58</sup>Locals, *D. C. C. R.*, June 4, 1873.

<sup>59</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Aug. 13, 1873.

<sup>60</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Nov. 1 and Dec. 15, 1873.

*Register* correspondent considered it "pleasant chaos without form, and void of sense . . . [and he asked], will the time ever come when this sort of thing can be trimmed of its coarseness?"<sup>61</sup> In July the Stevens Company, fresh from a tour of the East, found light comedy to be popular in Central, and in September Waldron returned for a revival of the drama. His company played "Hazard" to a poor house, but a more favorable reception was accorded "Narcisse the Vagabond" and "Under the Spell."<sup>62</sup> Finally, "Smith's Swiss Bell Ringers and Ladies' cornet band" appeared for a concert.<sup>63</sup> But Central City had awakened to its own potentialities, and the local editor, feeling "a deep pride that our little city, perched among the mountains, . . . could boast of two such singers as Miss Harrington and Mrs. Young," warned all outside troupes that it would be difficult to eclipse local talent.<sup>64</sup>

The next season opened happily and ended tragically. J. B. Waldron came up from Denver in March to produce "Daughter of the Regiment," "St. Patrick's Eve," "Sketches in India," "New York Newsboy," and "Old Hurricane." This company was greeted by a full gallery and a nearly filled dress circle at 50c and \$1.00, even in that period of national depression.<sup>65</sup> Then the amateurs were enthusiastically received in an "entertainment embodying the grand spectacular, the musical and the farcical . . . [There was] a crush of people. . . . The stage was covered with elegantly costumed ladies and gentlemen. . . . All performed their parts without a single *faux pas* from the opening *salon* to the close of the measured but intricate dance. . . . The enthusiasm showed that our Central City audiences have come to thoroughly enjoy operatic and classical music when properly sung."<sup>66</sup>

Waldron's troupe returned on May 21 only to see the Montana Theatre burned to the ground in the disastrous fire which devoured Central that day.<sup>67</sup> The spirit of the mountain city was not broken, however, for within a month Mrs. Young and her group were joyously singing their parts in the cantata, "Flower Queen," but the only available hall was an old auditorium with poor acoustics and a six-foot stage.<sup>68</sup> By December it was apparent that Central City was recovering from its fire, so the Rickards Troupe went from Denver to Central to offer their trapeze stunts and musical numbers in Turner Hall.<sup>69</sup>

In the summer of 1875 H. M. Teller and Judge Hahn financed the construction of a brick building, of which the second floor was

<sup>61</sup>Locals, *D. C. C. R.*, June 17, 22, 27 and 28, 1873.

<sup>62</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, July 4, 10, 12 and Sept. 2, 4, 5 and 6, 1873.

<sup>63</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Dec. 15, 1873.

<sup>64</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Dec. 16, 1873.

<sup>65</sup>Adv. and locals, *D. C. C. R.*, Mar. 16, 20, 21 and 24, 1874.

<sup>66</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, May 13, 1874.

<sup>67</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, May 18 and 21, 1874.

<sup>68</sup>News item, *ibid.*, June 20, 1874.

<sup>69</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Dec. 28, 1874.

planned for theatrical use. The hall, measuring 40 feet by 55 feet, was equipped with plain oak chairs, a stage, and seven sets of scenery. The new theatre was christened the *Belvidere*.<sup>70</sup> It was to be expected that the revival of the theatre would have a dual manifestation, that of local talent and of dramatic companies, for the fire had merely interrupted such a trend.

The troupes which played in Central during the next three years either improved or they found a more appreciative audience, and they contributed some of the enthusiasm which led to the building of the Opera House. The Lingard, Ware and Snowy Range companies each played a few days in Central to small houses in 1875,<sup>71</sup> and early in the next spring the Langrishes returned after a long absence. Their playing of "Honeymoon," "Divorced," and "Lady of Lyons" was well received, so they proceeded to Denver to attempt the organization of a good circuit in the valley and mountain towns.<sup>72</sup> They returned in May to present "Pique," "Two Orphans" and "Trodden Down," and the revival of the drama was fairly launched.<sup>73</sup> There were concerts or plays offered by five other groups that season, the most noteworthy being the vocal and instrumental entertainment of the Denver Maennerchor in July.<sup>74</sup>

The Forrester Company won immediate popularity when they first appeared at Central in "Frou Frou" in February of 1877,<sup>75</sup> but the company did not return that season. Of the Crystal Minstrels, which were presented in June, the *Register* correspondent wrote:

"The songs and ballads were all finely, and often exquisitely given, the chorus could not be excelled in the western country, and the local hits were good enough to bring down the house every time. . . . The attendance was drawn very largely from the best classes of people, who were highly appreciative of the programme."<sup>76</sup>

Then came the Richings-Bernard Troupe, which rendered "Il Trovatore," "Maritana," and "Martha" to "very well filled" houses.<sup>77</sup>

Madame Rentz' Female Minstrels attracted a large male audience in January of 1878, while in February the "celebrated Hungarian songstress, Md'lle Ilma de Murska" was greeted by a "select and critical audience."<sup>78</sup> In the same early months the Forresters

<sup>70</sup>Editorial, *D. C. C. R.*, Aug. 14, 1875.

<sup>71</sup>Adv. and locals, *ibid.*, Sept. 16 and 22, Nov. 12 and 23, 1875.

<sup>72</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Mar. 14, 17 and 20, 1876.

<sup>73</sup>Locals, *D. C. C. R.*, May 25 and 27, 1876.

<sup>74</sup>Locals and adv., *ibid.*, June 3, July 3 and 7, and Aug. 29, 1876; locals, *C. C. W. R.*, Nov. 21, 1876.

<sup>75</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Feb. 3, 1877.

<sup>76</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, June 9, 1877.

<sup>77</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, July 23, 1877.

<sup>78</sup>Locals, *D. R.*, Jan. 18 and Feb. 21, 1878.

had returned. They played "Our Girls," "The Danicheff's" and "The Gilded Age" to fair and then larger audiences, and finally they had full houses for "Our Boys," "Pique," and "Miss Mul-ton."<sup>79</sup> In the meantime the construction of an Opera House had been undertaken and that development should be preceded by a consideration of the other and principal contributing factor.

Local talent productions had increased in popularity rapidly from 1875 to 1878. Turnverein members executed "daring gymnastics and beautiful pyramids," with musical accompaniment, at the *Belvidere* in September, 1875.<sup>80</sup> Later the amateur company combined a pantomime of "Little Red Riding Hood," a comedy, and music by a five-piece orchestra in one evening's program.<sup>81</sup> In April of the next year Wm. Rule directed the production of the cantata, "Haymakers," of which a critic said, "Of course it was not perfect, still none looked for perfection."<sup>82</sup> In 1877 the local school publicized its talent by preparing two short plays for the school exhibition at the *Belvidere* in April.<sup>83</sup> Then Mr. and Mrs. Frank Young were present at a rendition of "The Bohemian Girl" in Chicago and returned to Central determined to reproduce the opera there with local talent. The coming attraction was advertised in neighboring towns, so when the night arrived there were people in attendance from Denver, Boulder, and Golden. A Denver reporter wrote: "No town or city in Colorado can compare with Central in the line of musical and dramatic talent."<sup>84</sup> The production was so well received that it was repeated a week later. After it was over, the critical *Register* correspondent described the good and weak points of each actor and actress. Of some he was unstinted in his praise; for others he offered alibis, but one man was guilty of "a gross breach of stage as well as opera etiquette in the use of a pipe and a book. . . . [Also, it was] entirely wrong for any player to turn his back on the audience."<sup>85</sup>

Although the steadily increasing patronage of the theatre after the interruption in 1874 was partly responsible for the urge to build an appropriate opera house, it was the enthusiasm instilled by the success of "The Bohemian Girl" that served as the immediate stimulus to such a climactic manifestation. Early in May, 1877, interested persons met at the Teller House to discuss the plans and probable cost of an opera house. A committee was named to solicit subscriptions of twelve or thirteen thousand dollars to build "an attractive and elegant affair" of brick and stone. Its

<sup>79</sup>Adv. and locals, *ibid.*, Jan. 29, Feb. 5 and 9, 1878.

<sup>80</sup>Locals, *D. C. C. R.*, Sept. 8, 1875.

<sup>81</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Oct. 4, 1875.

<sup>82</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Apr. 19, 1876.

<sup>83</sup>Locals, *C. C. W. R.*, Apr. 7, 1877.

<sup>84</sup>News item, *C. C. W. R.*, Apr. 21, 1877.

<sup>85</sup>News item, *ibid.*, Apr. 28, 1877.

dimensions were to be 60 feet and 135 feet and its probable seating capacity about 500, which was a rather pretentious objective for a city of about 3,000 people.<sup>86</sup> By September \$12,000 was subscribed, but the project had been elaborated until \$6,000 more was needed. A second mortgage was successfully negotiated to provide the difference, and, with completion then assured, local dramatists and musicians began rehearsing the opera "Martha" for the grand opening on or before Christmas.<sup>87</sup>

The building was not completed in December, but by February of 1878 it was possible to plan definitely for a dedication early in March. The local chorus resumed rehearsals, not of "Martha," but of thirty-two compositions selected from a number of operas.<sup>88</sup> The house was sold out in advance, so it was decided that "to expedite things . . . persons holding tickets with even numbers should enter at the left hand door, . . . and those with odd . . . the right hand one."<sup>89</sup> On the evening of March 4, 1878, the Teller Opera House, built at a cost of \$22,000, was proudly accepted by the people of Central City and environs.<sup>90</sup> One attendant wrote:

"It was filled with one of the most fashionable audiences that ever assembled in Central or Colorado, to witness the exercises rendered by the *home* talent of Central."<sup>91</sup>

Another said:

"The beautiful fresco work, brought out in bold relief by the scintillations of one hundred gas jets, the handsome drop curtain, and the house filled to its utmost capacity, with fair women in rich and costly dresses, and brave men, was a sight seldom seen and certainly not soon to be forgotten in these mountains."<sup>92</sup>

After the completion of the Opera House Central City theatricals resumed their dual phase, but with different trends than before. Of course, the bringing of dramatic companies to the new show-house was immediately promoted to the limit; however, the quality of productions and the local interest seemed to decline towards the end of a five-year period.

In 1878 the Forrester's filled an engagement in March and another in November. Their dramas were "well put upon the boards," and "free from . . . broad indelicacy."<sup>93</sup> Six other troupes played there that season, including one burlesque com-

<sup>86</sup>Locals, *C. C. W. R.*, May 5, 1877. The population of Gilpin County was only 6,489 in 1880, U. S., *Tenth Census Compendium*, I, 17 (Washington, 1882).

<sup>87</sup>Locals, *C. C. W. R.*, Nov. 10, 1877

<sup>88</sup>Locals, *D. R.*, Feb. 14, 1878.

<sup>89</sup>Locals, *D. R.*, Mar. 4, 1878.

<sup>90</sup>The original cost was estimated at \$22,000 in locals, *D. R. C.*, Dec. 13, 1881; but Hal Sayre was of the opinion that the Tellers invested nearly \$80,000 in the structure. Sayre, *op. cit.*, 51.

<sup>91</sup>News item, *D. R.*, Mar. 5, 1878.

<sup>92</sup>News item, *E. C.*, Mar. 5, 1878.

<sup>93</sup>Locals, *D. R.*, Mar. 19, 20, 23, and 26, 1878; locals, *D. R.-C.*, Nov. 5 and 6, 1878.

pany.<sup>94</sup> In 1879 Central City was included in the regular circuit of the companies which came from east and west to play at the Forrester Opera House in Denver. This meant one or two nights of entertainment in Central at intervals averaging three weeks throughout the summer and autumn.<sup>95</sup>

The year 1880 brought an assortment of good and bad. Twelve different companies came up to Central, and one, the Plunketts' troupe, was sufficiently popular to return twice during the season.<sup>96</sup> The number of productions decreased in 1881, and those that were engaged were still of mixed quality.<sup>97</sup> Two of the first three were burlesques, so Haverly's Minstrels with their "new gags, new stage business, new songs and a perfect absence of anything stale or flat," were "perfectly charming."<sup>98</sup> These were followed by some more minstrels and even some rather capable attempts at "Richard III," "Louis XI," and "Macbeth;"<sup>99</sup> but the old theatregoers seemed to have other things to interest them, and the *Register-Call* printed only paid announcements and occasional brief comments. The amateur phase of theatricals in Central also weakened after the building of the Opera House, which seems to be a mere repetition of the old story that there is more joy in the getting than in the having.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the Teller Opera House was beyond redemption as a commercial enterprise. Because of its failure to pay expenses, it was offered for sale by the owners.<sup>101</sup>

The county commissioners planned to buy the new theatre building for conversion into a court house.<sup>102</sup> At first the populace acquiesced, because it was understood that the theatre proper would be preserved for amusements. The county did buy it, but the commissioners harbored conscientious scruples concerning the propriety of the county's owning and operating a place of amusement. Besides, they needed more than the basement rooms, so plans were drawn for remodeling the entire interior.<sup>103</sup> Disappointed citizens, spurred by the editors of the *Register-Call*, protested this heartless procedure.<sup>104</sup> The commissioners weakened and announced that they would sell their controversial burden for \$8,000.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>94</sup>Locals, *D. R.*, Mar. 28 and 30, Apr. 13, 1878; adv. and locals, *D. R. C.*, June 19 and Dec. 17, 1878.

<sup>95</sup>Locals and adv., *D. R.-C.*, Mar. 10, 11, 12, 15 and 25, Apr. 16, June 3, 4, 5 and 12, July 3 and 28, Nov. 12 and 15, and Dec. 12, 19 and 20, 1879.

<sup>96</sup>Locals and adv., *D. R.-C.*, Jan. 3, 8, 9, 27, 29 and 31, Apr. 20, May 1, 12 and 20, June 14, 17 and 26, July 6, 7, 9, 12, 16 and 19, Aug. 28, Oct. 19, and Dec. 29 and 30, 1880.

<sup>97</sup>Locals and adv., *ibid.*, Feb. 28, Apr. 12, 14, 22 and 26, May 26 and 27, July 8, 9, 20, 22, 23 and 24, Oct. 1, 3, 25 and 27, and Dec. 13, 1881.

<sup>98</sup>Locals, *D. R.-C.*, May 26, 1881.

<sup>99</sup>Adv., *ibid.*, June 9 and 20, 1881.

<sup>100</sup>News item, *D. R.*, Mar. 5, 1878. See also locals, *D. R.-C.*, Feb. 26, 1879; *ibid.*, Feb. 18, 1880; *ibid.*, Feb. 20, 1882.

<sup>101</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Dec. 13, 1881.

<sup>102</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Dec. 13, 1881.

<sup>103</sup>Locals and news item, *D. R.-C.*, Jan. 14 and 19, 1882.

<sup>104</sup>Communications and interviews, *ibid.*, Jan. 19, 20 and 21, 1882.

<sup>105</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Jan. 21, 1882.

Accepting the challenge, citizens circulated a subscription paper, and a small group met to plan a financial campaign.<sup>106</sup> It was December before they were able to close the deal, whereupon the county officials deeded the property to the Gilpin County Opera House Association. The 59 members held 670 shares in the company, and Principal H. M. Hale, a heavy stockholder, accepted a manager's lease from D. C. Collier, president of the association's board of directors.<sup>107</sup> Throughout this period of uncertainty the Opera House had not been closed, so the new manager merely assumed responsibility for its continued operation and with considerable success, as the next five years were brilliant ones in the history of the Opera House.<sup>108</sup> The mutilation of this landmark had been prevented by the concerted and persistent efforts of a few loyal citizens, who consequently deserved, as one person significantly suggested, "the gratitude of the future people of Gilpin."<sup>109</sup>

In conclusion, the inception of the theatre in Central City was but a natural consequence of the social deficiency existing in the early mining camps. As organized society came into existence it incorporated the theatre into its institutional complex, but the relative popularity of this particular institution became a cyclical phenomenon. During Civil War prosperity the theatre reached its early zenith, only to decline when post-war readjustment brought temporary depression to the mining towns. After the arrival of the railroad in 1872 Central's future appeared more promising. Thenceforth not only could the town be reached more easily by traveling companies but local people found time to organize and cultivate home talent. This revival, checked temporarily by the local disaster of 1874, eventually reached a culmination in the building of the Opera House. The natural reaction and apparent satiation, which followed, ultimately brought the community's remarkable recreation center to the verge of disaster. Finally, the timely intervention of a few stalwarts preserved the Opera House intact, not only to the benefit of the succeeding generation but for the retrospective reopening of 1932.

<sup>106</sup>Locals, *ibid.*, Jan. 26 and 31, 1882.

<sup>107</sup>News item, *D. R.-C.*, Dec. 16, 1882.

<sup>108</sup>A semblance of the usual circuit schedule had been maintained throughout 1882; locals, *ibid.*, Jan. 4 and May 19, Sept. 4 and 7, Oct. 2, 9, 23 and 27, and Nov. 21 and 24, 1882. First performance under the new management, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," adv., *ibid.*, Dec. 21, 1882; *ibid.*, *passim*, 1882-7.

<sup>109</sup>Communication, *ibid.*, Jan. 31, 1882.

## Experiences in the Bear River Country in the Seventies

JOSEPH S. COLLOM\*

I was born in Wokhampton, England, in 1851. My uncle, John Collom, was living in America when my parents died, leaving me, two brothers and a sister, orphans. Uncle John was working in the Comstock mines at Montezuma and we joined him. I was sixteen years old, big enough to work.

My first job was hauling quartz at Georgetown. I freighted ahead of the railroad on Clear Creek. We lived in that country seven years. By that time my sister had married and she and her husband and we boys decided to come to the western slope. I don't remember whether we came through Middle Park or around by Laramie, but I know we put in the summer of 1874 driving around Bear River Valley. We were looking for homes—a place where we could run some cattle. We had two light wagons and four yoke of oxen. Joe Morgan had a sutler's store at the mouth of Elk Head and traded with the Indians. There was hardly anybody in the country.

I remember Jim Baker. People said he and Major Oakes had surveyed White River by tying a red rag on a buggy wheel. They measured distances by counting the rag every time the wheel turned.

When our family arrived on Bear River we had only ten dollars between us. There was a settlement at Hahn's Peak and we went there. Then we crossed the divide to Snake River and worked for Old Man Reed on his ranch close to where Baggs is now. That was the first job I had in this country. We earned enough to buy our winter's grub and built a cabin on the north bank of Snake River just east of the Muddy. After it started to snow we did not see anybody until spring.

Bob Dixon had a ranch on Snake River west of the Muddy and when the break-up came we felled a cottonwood across the Muddy for a bridge and went to his house and told him that we were up against it. Our grub was gone and our clothes were all worn out. He had no work for us but we made a deal with him to grub sagebrush at \$2 an acre and board.

I remember the first time I went to White River. Joe Rankin freighted from Rawlins to the Indian Agency with a four-mule

\*This story of Mr. Collom of Axial, Colorado, was obtained as an interview by Mr. James Monaghan, C. W. A. Field Worker for the Historical Society in Moffat County during the past winter.—Ed.

outfit. He got stuck once and I took a thousand pounds of his load on my light wagon and went to the agency with him. The old agency was located above the mouth of Coal Creek—just below where White River comes out of the canon. We delivered the goods to Agent Littlefield and loaded back with beaver.

Perkins had a sutler's store on Snake River where Dixon is now. He had the mail contract between Rawlins and Meeker. Jerry Hoff carried the mail on horseback once a month. I carried the mail for Perkins after Hoff quit. I made the trip every two weeks; had a pack horse and camped where each night overtook me. If the young fellows nowadays had to go through the things we did in those days I don't know what they'd do.

There were a few settlers coming into the country all the time but not many. Hulett and Torrence were on Bear River and so was Tom Iles. It kept me busy most of the time with the mail and I didn't see them often. I put the mail through on time all the first winter and was proud of my record, but along in March the snow got deep. On my way to White River, when I got to the mouth of Fortification, I couldn't go any farther with my horse. Dick Clements was postmaster and loaned me some snowshoes. I went fifty miles to the agency on them.

Danforth and Littlefield were both agents at White River before Meeker. Indian affairs were getting worse all the time. We settlers knew that there was trouble coming at the agency. When Meeker came he had a lot of big ideas. Danforth had hauled wheat from Fort Steele for the Indians. Meeker wanted to save money and make the Utes raise their own wheat. That didn't suit the Indians. Next he moved the agency to Powell Park. The Indians said, "No move him. That winter range for horses." Meeker did everything he could to make the Indians mad. Once a four-horse load of flour for the Indians was unloaded on Bear River. The Utes asked Meeker to get it for them. Meeker said, "I can't touch it until it is delivered here at the agency." The Indians didn't understand things like that and started to act up.

They gave me a scare once. My mail route came down Fortification; I had a canoe at the mouth of William's Fork, put my pack into it and swam my horses behind my canoe; went over Iles Mountain and dropped off the bluff where Iles' house is now; then up Milk Creek and over Yellow Jacket Pass to Meeker. This time I'm telling you about I got as far as the big flat south of Iles' house when I saw some Indians. They watched me for a minute, then came for me lickety-split. They had on their war paint and my first thought was to run. A man thinks quick in a time like that and I knew their horses were faster than mine, so I stopped and

faced them. They came up to me and Kannucky Johnson's horse hit me. He bumped me hard, made my head jolt. "Johnson," I said, "let me tell you something. Don't you ever run at a white man that way again. If I'd brought my six-shooter on this trip I'd have killed you sure as the world. Then there would have been trouble for everybody. Remember that. A white man will shoot when he sees Indians coming like you were and" (I stuck my finger in his naked belly) "the first place he'd shoot would be right there." They rode off and left me.

When Perkin's mail contract ran out, my brother John and I went to work at the agency. John got to be an interpreter. The Indians called him "Toro Comeence." Meeker's wife and daughter arrived at Rawlins the latter part of June. I took a government team and drove them from the Union Pacific to the agency. Winfield Scott Fullerton, a Greeleyite, was their escort. I remember we camped one night at a spring by Fortification Rocks, twenty-five miles north of Bear River. I didn't tell the women that the rocks were a rattlesnake den, as that would have upset them. They didn't have a tent and slept on the ground.

White men weren't allowed on the reservation and while I was working for Meeker he heard of a trespasser. Meeker told me, "Go find out that man's business."

I took an Indian woman named Jane and her husband, Pah-veets, and a pack horse. Pah-veets rode ahead and he never took his eyes off that man's track. Jane rode behind and never took her eyes off the hills. We rode on a trot, up hill and down. Finally the track went into a little wash and Jane said, "There he is! There he is! Across the wash! What we do now?"

"Let's ride up to him," I said, "and have a talk."

He was nothing but a new settler riding around to see if he could sell some butter and eggs and such stuff.

That squaw, Jane Pah-veets, was called Red Jacket Jane. They say she was helping Mrs. Meeker in the kitchen, heard Mr. Meeker say that the soldiers were coming and told the Indians about it. That made the Indians so mad they killed all the men at the agency. Jane could talk good English and had lived with the white people and she told me she would rather live with Indians than with whites and be called a "squaw."

The White River Indians had horses and sheep. They didn't have cattle. The government had six or seven hundred head of cattle branded I D (Indian Department) that they ran for the Utes. These belonged to the Indians, I guess, but the government took charge of them.

I remember an Indian once named Jenkins shot another Indian, a medicine man, right at the agency. Jenkin's wife had died and he killed the medicine man for not saving her. The medicine man lived for two days after he was hit.

In 1878 I took up a ranch on Collom Creek and cut a hundred tons of hay on the meadows. Next summer I cut the hay again. There was no market for this hay.

In the late summer of 1879 a big party of Utes went north on a buffalo hunt. They had guns and lots of ammunition, and met Major Thornburg north of Bear River coming with the soldiers. They told him, "If you want to see Meeker, go ahead, but camp them soldiers outside the reservation."

"I can't do that," said Thornburg. "I'm ordered to take the soldiers to White River and I will have to do it." The buffalo hunters all turned back to the reservation.

At this time Perkins had a sutler's tent on Spring Creek, where Axial is now. It was a summer store on the edge of the reservation. He carried a stock of guns, ammunition, beads, paint and butcher knives. Mike Sweet was tending store for him and Black Wilson was packing the mail from Rawlins to Meeker. Black always stopped at the tent as he went by. I knew it was mail time and rode to the sutler's tent to get the news from the outside. Black Wilson told us Major Thornburg was coming with some soldiers. "Why don't you sell him that hay you've got piled up on Collom Crick?"

"That's an idea," I said. "You're a better talker than I am and more used to that kind of thing. You see him for me, will you?"

The soldiers were coming along what we called the "old government road" and Black went to meet them. They had traveled faster than he figured and he saw by their tracks that they had gone by. He followed them and came to some Indians who knew Black, rode up to him and said, "Go back!" Black Wilson understood Indians and knew they meant it.

"There's going to be a fight," he said when he got back to the tent. "What had we better do?"

Mike Sweet had been digging a cellar beside the tent and we decided to bury the guns under the loose earth. We no more than had them covered when some Indians come in sight. They rode up and said, "We want guns, bullets."

"All gone," says Sweet. "Me send 'em back to Snake River."

The Indians rode around the store in a little circle and came back. "Heep lie. No wagon tracks. We want 'em guns."

Sweet thought fast. "Me send 'em with pack horses." The three of us were sitting on the guns when he said it. The Indians rode off.

At twelve o'clock that night we dug up the guns, loaded the trinkets in a wagon and set out for Bear River. We got to the crossing where Duffy's ranch is by morning. Here we met the Morgan boys with a bunch of horses. They were getting them out of the country as fast as they could. We decided to camp and let our stock eat. Black Wilson said, "You boys stay here and I'll ride on to Snake River and see what Perkins wants us to do."

After he'd gone I walked up on a hill to look around. Then I came back to camp and said, "Boys, I can smell smoke. They're having a fight." It doesn't sound reasonable that you could smell powder fifteen miles away but I did.

Joe Rankin has told me about the fight. The soldiers started up Milk Creek where it runs north from Yellow Jacket Pass. The main road went up the bottom of the gulch. There was another road I used sometimes when I carried the mail that went up the ridge east of the creek. The officers and the light wagons went up that road. The heavy wagons and most of the soldiers went up the bottom of the gulch. The Indians got between the officers and the men and all around them, too, lying on their bellies in the oak brush. Rankin said to Thornburg, "My God, Major! Cut loose on them. Can't you see what they are up to?"

"My orders are to let the Indians shoot first," said Thornburg.

The Indians did and after that it was too late for the soldiers to do anything.

When we smelled the smoke on Bear River we didn't wait to hear from Perkins but pulled out with his stuff and delivered it to him on Snake River. We hadn't been there but a couple of days when General Merritt came along with a lot of soldiers.

Wilbur Hugus made a business of following soldiers with a sutler's outfit. Wilbur was a brother of the Judge Hugus who ran a chain of stores in this country ten and twenty years later. When Merritt's soldiers piled in on White River Wilbur Hugus followed them. He wanted to get his goods moved to the new fort. I had a team of oxen that could walk as fast as horses and got the job. On the way to White River we camped one night on the battleground. The dead were not buried very deep. Soldiers came back later and moved them. The grass had been burned and my oxen quit us in the night. Next morning I left Wilbur Hugus in camp and set out to find them. I rode all that day. They had gone home

to my place on Collum Creek. I found them in the meadow and started back after dark.

I went by the way of Mountain Meadows. Captain Henry was camped there with the White Horse cavalry. He kept me prisoner all night and when I went to the battleground next day my load was gone. I thought it was stolen but found out later that Wilbur Hugus had walked twenty-five miles to Meeker and sent a man back for it.

There was a big camp of soldiers where Meeker is now and they were busy cutting down cottonwood trees. The man who had the contract to furnish these soldiers with beef did not show up, so two other fellows got a new contract. They furnished the soldiers with beef all winter—bought four steers from Baggs, the cattleman, to do it with. Nobody could prove anything but we figured they must have butchered I D cattle to fill that contract.

There was a lot of that kind of thing going on. You can figure this: If there was a white man around an Indian agency or any army camp he wasn't there for his health. I know for a fact that rations were shipped to White River, condemned, bought, and sold back to the soldiers. Things got so bad United States Deputy Marshal MacGarger was sent to Meeker to make some arrests.

MacGarger was a corker, whiskey controlled him. I recollect he deputized me and some other boys to help him make an arrest. We rode 250 miles, bedrocking three horses, and when we caught our man the marshal decided not to arrest him.

I sold my ranch on Collom Creek a good many years ago to Gossard, the corset man. I spend my winters now with my daughter in California. This isn't an old man's country.