

Vigilantes

BY CALVIN W. GOWER

Friends of James Gordon said he was a quiet, well-mannered man, but on a July night in 1860 he went berserk in the frontier mining town of Denver, which at that time was part of Kansas Territory. Like thousands of others, Gordon, who was twenty-three years old, had been lured from his Iowa home by tales of boundless gold deposits in the Cherry Creek area at the foot of the Rocky Mountains. On that fateful summer night in 1860 he committed a horrible murder and set in motion a series of events which included a manhunt covering hundreds of miles, a terrifying riot in Leavenworth, Kansas, and a "vigilante trial" in Denver. Both the riot and the vigilante trial occurred because the regular officials of the Territory of Kansas seemingly were unable to provide adequate rules for the gold region. As in the past in American history, a formally constituted government encountered difficulties in its attempts to bring law and order to a frontier settlement.

Gordon's act of murder came after three days of drinking and carousing. On Wednesday, July 18, he had begun his spree by drinking heavily and then had gone to a brothel where he became angry and shot the bartender twice, wounding him severely. The following day, drunk again, he fired his pistol wildly several times. Friday, July 20, the day he committed his murder, Gordon had been imbibing freely again. That evening he entered a saloon and soon accosted a man named John Gantz, a German who had come to the gold region from Leavenworth, Kansas. For no apparent reason Gordon became very angry with Gantz, knocked him down and struck him savagely several times around the head and face, and, holding him tightly, placed a revolver at the stunned man's head. Then in a few agonizing seconds Gordon pulled the trigger four times with no shots resulting as the hammer fell on empty chambers. However, the

fifth tug on the trigger sent a bullet crashing through Gantz's head.¹

The murderer hid somewhere in Denver during the night following his crime and hastily left the town early the following morning, reportedly headed in a southeasterly direction. Gordon's murderous act received attention not only in the Denver papers, the *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Rocky Mountain Herald*, but also in the Leavenworth, Kansas, *Daily Times* which noted that Gantz, the murdered man, had formerly lived in Leavenworth where a substantial number of German immigrants had settled in the 1850's.² Eventually fate took Gordon to this town and the results were disastrous.

The Denver *Rocky Mountain News* described Gordon in the following manner:

James A. Gordon, is a young man of prepossessing [sic] appearance. He formerly lived at Crescent City, Iowa, but came to this country among the first who arrived in the fall of '58. He is classed among the sporting men, and is one of the proprietors of the Cibola Saloon.

Concerning his motives in the killing, the *News* stated:

He has never to our knowledge, manifested a particularly evil disposition until his spree of the last few days. Of the shooting of Gantz no object or reason is, or can be advocated, in justification or palliation. Gantz was a total stranger, and there was no altercation whatever.

The editor of the *News* concluded that Gordon acted as he did because he was drunk and for that reason had no control over his actions. Of Gantz the newspaper declared, "He had resided here for over a year, and all who knew him speak of his character in the highest terms." Concerning his burial, the *News* stated, "His remains were followed to the grave by the Turnvereins and most of the German citizens."³

When the crime occurred, the sheriff of Arapahoe County, Kansas Territory, which was the commonly accepted governmental name for the gold region, was William H. Middaugh, a former wagonmaker in Pennsylvania, who had come to Denver in 1859. At first Middaugh could not discover exactly where Gordon had gone in his flight from Denver, but early in August a letter from the fugitive to friends in Denver fell into the sheriff's hands. This missive indicated that the murderer was in eastern Kansas. Middaugh hurried by stagecoach across the vast prairies of Kansas and upon reaching the eastern portions



Leavenworth, Kansas, c. 1859

of that territory enlisted the aid of several other "lawmen" and tracked down Gordon. Within eight days from the time Middaugh had left Denver and after a trip of over seven hundred miles, he captured Gordon with little difficulty.⁴ In an era when communication and transportation facilities were so limited, the sheriff's success was amazing; he had found his man after a comparatively short passage of time without the benefits of modern police techniques.

Middaugh prepared to return to Denver with his prisoner, but the authorities in eastern Kansas had other ideas on the matter. In 1860 most of the Pike's Peak gold region fell within the borders of the Territory of Kansas, because, even though the eastern, northern, and southern boundaries of that territory were the same as those of the present-day state of Kansas, the western boundary was the crest of the Rocky Mountains, and much of present-day eastern Colorado was until 1861 in Kansas Territory.⁵ Therefore, the Kansas territorial government supposedly extended over the gold seekers, and one of the territorial judges decided that Gordon should be placed in a jail in Leavenworth and given a trial in that town.⁶ Undoubtedly this decision resulted in part from the belief that such a step was the proper

¹ *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), July 25, 1860; *Rocky Mountain Herald* (Denver), July 28, 1860. See also Francis S. Williams, "Trials and Judgments of the People's Courts of Denver," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXVII (October, 1950), 298-300.

² *Daily Times* (Leavenworth), July 31, 1860.

³ *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), July 25, 1860.

⁴ *Emporia News*, August 25, 1860.

⁵ U. S., *Statutes at Large*, X, 283.

⁶ *Daily Times* (Leavenworth), August 21, 1860.

one, in accordance with the laws of the territory. However, another reason for the move was probably the feeling on the part of some eastern Kansans that the young man would not receive a fair trial in Denver. Subsequent events showed that the murderer was as unpopular in Leavenworth as in Denver.

The reason some eastern Kansans believed Gordon would not be treated fairly in the gold region was the realization that many of the Denver people were "sick and tired" of the violence which gripped their community in 1860. This town seemed to be infested with hoodlums and desperadoes, and in 1860 a series of acts of violence had occurred. The leader of the lawless element was Charles Harrison, a professional gambler, who boasted of having killed eleven men and three women. On July 12, 1860, Harrison killed another man, a Negro named Stark. Other acts of violence rocked Denver in the summer of 1860 and brought cries of protest from the peaceable element in the town.⁷ The editor of the *Rocky Mountain News* led this group and without doubt voiced its alarm when he stated that steps must be taken to throttle the lawless individuals. The *News* editor declared on August 1, 1860, that the town would have a greater feeling of security if Gordon had been arrested immediately after the killing and executed the following morning. Such a viewpoint seemed to indicate that the young man might be subjected to summary justice if he was taken back to Denver for trial. Gordon's act had been particularly senseless and indications were that some of the Denver residents would react sharply against him and other criminals in the future.

After a delay of several days, Kansas Territorial Judge John Pettit, who was assigned to a judicial district which included both Leavenworth County and far-flung Arapahoe County (according to a statute of the 1860 Kansas legislature), announced that Gordon would be given a preliminary hearing in Leavenworth on September 17. Pettit delayed the hearing for four weeks (Gordon was placed in jail in Leavenworth on August 20) to allow time for both the prisoner and the government to obtain witnesses.⁸

As a result of Pettit's decision, Sheriff Middaugh had to take the tiring trip back to Denver, round up witnesses, and return with them to Leavenworth. The round trip covered about thirteen hundred miles. Before he left for Denver, Mid-

daugh received an appointment as a United States Deputy Marshal so that he could secure witnesses by subpoena.

Middaugh arrived in Denver on August 29 and began his task of obtaining witnesses. The *Rocky Mountain News* noted the sheriff's arrival and launched into an attack upon the actions of Kansas territorial officials. The editor of the *News* declared that Gordon's trial should be held in Denver, because "if Kansas U. S. officials claim that we are under the jurisdiction of Kansas laws, they should come here and hold their courts." Although the editor of the *News* criticized the steps taken by Judge Pettit, he hastened to make clear that his criticisms extended in no way to Sheriff Middaugh. In the opinion of the editor, Middaugh had done excellent work and was merely a victim of circumstances. However, the territorial officials should have permitted the sheriff to bring the prisoner back to the gold region for trial, saving much time, money, and effort.⁹

Soon a development occurred which seemed to justify the stand taken by Kansas officials. Reportedly several of Gordon's friends in Denver had received abuse because they gave indications of supporting the young man in the hearing. According to reports received by the *Leavenworth Daily Times*, one of Gordon's friends, A. C. Ford, started the trip from Denver to Leavenworth, but was seized and forcibly detained. The *Daily Times* declared, "The whole matter speaks for itself, and fully proves that the mountaineers will not stop at anything which will have the effect of depriving the unfortunate young man of a fair trial before the only legalized court having jurisdiction in the matter."¹⁰

Tension mounted as the date set for the preliminary hearing neared. Many of the Kansas officials were convinced that Gordon could receive a fair trial only in Leavenworth, while interested persons in Denver were certain that only in their town could such a trial occur. Neither of these groups apparently recognized the existence of a third set of persons who proved to be so important in determining the murderer's fate. These people were some of the Germans of Leavenworth who had known and liked John Gantz, the murdered man. These Germans soon made their presence known in a startling manner.

By mid-September Sheriff Middaugh (or Deputy Marshal Middaugh) had arrived in Leavenworth with seven witnesses. September 17, on the exact day set by Pettit earlier, the judge

⁷ Jerome C. Smiley (ed.), *History of Denver, with Outlines of the Earlier History of the Rocky Mountain Country* (Denver: The Denver Times, The Times-Sun Publishing Co., 1901), p. 242.

⁸ *Western Journal of Commerce* (Kansas City), August 23, 1860.

⁹ *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), August 30, 1860.

¹⁰ *Daily Times* (Leavenworth), September 13, 1860.

held the preliminary hearing of James Gordon. After hearing the testimony of several witnesses, Pettit announced that he would first have to make a decision as an examining magistrate; he would have to decide whether or not he had jurisdiction in the case. Therefore, the important question which had to be answered was, where was the crime committed? Pettit called upon the witnesses, both those for the defense and those for the government, to give an answer to this question, and all of them except one stated the crime occurred in the town of Denver, in Arapahoe County, in the Territory of Kansas. One witness declared that the crime happened in Montana County, not Arapahoe, and this statement cast the spotlight on the confusion which had existed for two years concerning the local government of the gold region. This confusion resulted from the failure of Kansas Territory to give the gold fields any effective county government. Two different approaches had been tried: (1) the establishment of a large county, Arapahoe, and (2) the setting up of five small counties, one of which was called Montana County. Neither of these approaches was successful, but despite these failures the territorial legislature had never taken steps to clarify the local governmental situation in the gold region. Judge Pettit decided that the uncertainty was too great and that as a result there was really no legally constituted court which had jurisdiction in the Gordon case. The judge without doubt hid behind a technicality, for Gordon had unquestionably murdered a man. However, the judge said that since no legally established court existed to try the murderer, he must be released. Pettit's decision proved to be extremely unpopular.¹¹

Leavenworth, Kansas, where the preliminary hearing took place, contained a sizeable number of Germans. John Gantz, the man Gordon had murdered, was a German who had lived in Leavenworth before going to Denver. In addition, Charley Fisher, one of the witnesses at the preliminary hearing, said he had seen Gordon only a few minutes after he had killed Gantz and, according to Fisher, the young man had remarked upon hearing that Gantz was dead, "I know it, and am glad I killed the damned Dutchman—I will kill a thousand of them."¹² Since "Dutchman" was a slang expression for "German" at that time, this testimony indicated a possible anti-German attitude on Gordon's part and tended to stir up the Germans in Leaven-

worth even more. Former acquaintances of Gantz and other Leavenworth citizens were outraged upon hearing Pettit's decision, and a mob quickly gathered outside the courthouse. These people were furious because of the realization that a known murderer of a former Leavenworth citizen of German descent was going to be released on a mere technicality. The Leavenworth authorities, upon seeing the crowd milling around in front of the courthouse, decided to place Gordon in jail for a time to protect him until the mob had dispersed. With some difficulty the authorities led the murderer through the angered group of people and placed him in jail.

This move did not have the desired results, because the mob became increasingly restive and ugly. The members of this unruly crowd knew that when they broke up and left the scene Gordon would secure his release. This knowledge infuriated some people in the mob who refused to cease their agitation. Finally, the mayor of Leavenworth promised the group that if it dispersed Gordon would later be turned over to Sheriff Middaugh and taken back to Denver for a trial. However, since there would be no stagecoach leaving Leavenworth for a time, the prisoner would remain in jail until shortly before the coach left town. Although the crowd of angered men did not immediately break up and go elsewhere, the mayor assumed that his promise was sufficient to bring about this result and he left to attend to other affairs.

Shortly after the mayor's departure, and not in accordance with his plans, one of the authorities suggested that Gordon be brought out of his cell and placed in Middaugh's custody with the crowd witnessing the move. His reasoning must have been: show "good faith" by actually turning Gordon over to Middaugh before the eyes of the crowd, and then it would dissolve itself, satisfied that the sheriff would take the man back to Denver and see that "justice" was done. The desired result could not have been much farther from the actual happening, because when the people in the crowd saw Gordon outside the jail, they rushed forward to seize him and a desperate battle ensued between the mob and the authorities over possession of him.

The struggle started at about eight o'clock in the evening and the darkness must have heightened the terribleness of the scene. Several officers, including Sheriff Middaugh, heroically fought off the would-be lynchers. Several times the mob managed to throw a knotted rope around Gordon's neck, but each time an officer cut the noose. A reporter for the *Leavenworth Daily*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, September 18, 1860.

¹² *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), September 26, 1860.



Planter's Hotel, Leavenworth, Kansas

Times who witnessed the occurrence stated, "The din, howl and confusion was now worse than pandemonium, the prisoner begging to be hung, killed, or anything to take him out of such agony. By this time, every stitch of clothing was torn off of him, and he had nothing on his body but his clanking chains." Meanwhile the mayor had returned to the scene, and he organized a small group of citizens who with a desperate effort helped the officers place Gordon behind bars again. He was badly cut and bruised as were several other people including Sheriff Middaugh. The crowd finally became tired and left the field of action.¹³

"Should Leavenworth put herself in a state of anarchy to punish crimes perpetrated at Pike's Peak?" This question was asked by the *Daily Times* on the day following the riot. The newspaper called for an end of the violence and a restoration of order. However, now no sympathy was shown for Gordon, and Leavenworth's officials were absolved of further responsibility for him. The editor of the *Daily Times* believed that

¹³ *Daily Times* (Leavenworth), September 15, 1860.

Middaugh should be permitted to take the prisoner back to Denver for a trial by the people in the mining area.¹⁴

On September 20, three days after the preliminary hearing and the riot had occurred, Sheriff Middaugh, accompanied by a posse of three men, started back to Denver with Gordon in custody. Middaugh's troubles were not over yet, however, because in Kinnekuk, a small town a short distance north of Leavenworth, he was again forced to hand Gordon over to eastern Kansas officers, this time on a charge of stealing a horse from a Shawnee Indian previous to his capture by Middaugh over a month before. It was quickly apparent that the horse stealing charge could not be readily proved and within a day Middaugh again had his prisoner. September 22 the sheriff and Gordon were on board a stagecoach heading for Denver, but one last setback for the sheriff occurred when the posse of three men was forced to stay in Kinnekuk because of lack of provisions for the payment of their fares to the stagecoach company. The sheriff found himself on a six day journey with sole responsibility for the prisoner, but finally, on the morning of September 28, Middaugh arrived in Denver.¹⁵ He had acquitted himself very well and in the face of extreme difficulties had persevered and brought the murderer back for trial. It seemed rather ironical that the sheriff had worked so diligently and sacrificed so much to protect Gordon in order that he could be brought back to Denver to face almost certain death.

The Denver authorities at first set the trial for the afternoon of September 28, the day of Middaugh's arrival in town, but the opening activities were postponed for a day to allow more time for the collection of evidence. The *Rocky Mountain News* on September 28 called for a fair trial and a prompt carrying-out of the decision, and the editor urged the business men of the town to be on hand to see that the trial was properly conducted.

September 29, 1860, a crowd of from six to eight hundred people assembled in the open air and chose from their numbers a presiding judge and two associate judges. Then twelve jurymen were selected and the "vigilante" trial began. In the afternoon of that day a terrible windstorm arose and filled the air with dust, forcing the judges to move the trial into a nearby building which was vacant.¹⁶ The long effort to convict Gordon was momentarily delayed again.

Various witnesses for the prosecution stated in the trial that

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), September 28, 1860.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, September 29, 1860, and October 3, 1860.

Gordon had killed John Gantz in the Louisiana Saloon in Denver in July, 1860. He had held a pistol against Gantz's head and pulled the trigger four times with only harmless clicks resulting, but with the fifth tug on the trigger Gordon had murdered Gantz. Reportedly the chamber of the revolver was almost empty because the defendant had shot four times at a dog only a few minutes before he killed Gantz. One witness, Godfrey Kuster, said he was in the Louisiana Saloon on the night of the murder and had heard Gordon say, "I killed a damned Dutchman and don't care a damn, but would like to kill more of the damned Dutch." Another witness, John Crowley, stated he had helped "lay out" Gantz after the shooting and had discovered that he had been unarmed.

Witnesses for the defense said that Gordon was from Iowa and had been a respected young man there. The defense disclosed that Gordon had been thrown from a horse recently and maintained that the fall may have adversely affected his mind. In addition, the fact that the young man was intoxicated on the night of the murder was emphasized. The defense implied that the defendant may not have known what he was doing on the horrible night because of the recent shaking up he had received in the fall from the horse and because of his excessive consumption of alcohol.

Gordon himself was probably the most appealing witness for the defense. He was described as a straight, strongly built young man about 5' 11" tall, with an honest face featuring blue eyes and a straight high forehead. He told the court that there had been no premeditation in his murdering of Gantz, and that the crime occurred because of liquor. Gordon asked the court not to sentence him to death so that he would have the opportunity to show that he could live a "good life." He noted that Judge Pettit had said in Leavenworth that neither his court nor any other court had any jurisdiction in the Gordon case. The defendant concluded his remarks by saying that if he were to be executed, he would prefer some means other than hanging.¹⁷

The court refused to show any leniency and sentenced Gordon to death by hanging, with the prisoner allowed six days to wind up his business and prepare for death. The *Rocky Mountain News* asserted on October 1, 1860, that the court had carried on the trial in the best order, with a jury of respectable persons selected by the sheriff. The newspaper stressed the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, September 26, 1860, October 1, 2, and 3, 1860.

fairness of the trial by noting that the delay of execution granted to the prisoner was unusual in the mountainous area and cautioned Gordon's guards to be extremely careful to prevent escape during the six day period.

Some Denver residents circulated petitions during that time asking for a reprieve for the convicted man. The *Rocky Mountain News* noted these petitions, and declared sympathy for Gordon, but maintained that justice demanded an execution. The newspaper cited other acts of the prisoner prior to the murder, claiming he had badly cut up a man with a bowie knife before coming to the gold fields and then had shot and crippled a young man in the gold region two days before killing Gantz. The editor of the *News* stated that Gordon deserved death after all these acts of violence, and his release would encourage lawlessness while his execution would serve as an example to the community.

On the afternoon of October 6, 1860, a crowd estimated at several thousand gathered in Denver to witness the execution. Gordon was given time for prayer and then was asked if he had any last words. He requested that the rope be fixed so that

During the trial Gordon was confined on the second floor of the building that later became the American Forge Works.



it would break his neck quickly. He also again stated that he would have preferred shooting to hanging but declared that he was ready to be executed in the manner prescribed by the court. Within a few minutes he was dead, and the *Rocky Mountain News* told its readers that evening that others should "take warning by his fate, and reform before it is *too late*."¹⁸

The Gordon case seemed to be closed conclusively when Sheriff Middaugh left the gold fields on October 11, going back East for a time. However, two years later, Middaugh was killed near Julesburg, Colorado Territory. The sheriff's son, Asa Middaugh, in an interview many years later, asserted that his father was shot dead by a man named John Robinson, who, according to Asa Middaugh, was a former friend of James Gordon and killed Sheriff Middaugh only to avenge the young man's hanging. The sheriff's son declared that Robinson had never been harmed in any way by the sheriff, but had nursed a grudge against the lawman because of the execution of Gordon.¹⁹ If this report were true, the Gordon incident, after causing Middaugh so much trouble in 1860, had literally plagued him until his death. Gordon had wrecked not only his own life in that night of terror in July, 1860, but also had deprived Gantz of his and probably had started in motion the events which would bring about the death of Middaugh.

The Gordon case has significance because it involved such broad issues as prejudice against Germans in mid-nineteenth century America, the inability of a Territorial government properly to rule its western portions, and the operation of a "vigilante court." All of these developments were important features of life in the United States in the mid-1800's.

CALVIN W. GOWER, who comes from Grand Junction, is associate professor of history at St. Cloud State College in Minnesota. His dissertation at the University of Kansas was concerned with the Pike's Peak Gold Rush.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, October 5 and 6, 1860.

¹⁹ Interview of Asa F. Middaugh by Thomas F. Dawson, May 18, 1923. Manuscript in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado, Denver.

THE FAR WESTERN MINING FRONTIER: TRENDS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

BY THOMAS GRAY THOMPSON

While precious metal mining in the United States has not been limited to the Far West, the gold and silver resources of that region were particularly significant as the magnet which drew prospectors and settlers into areas which, because they were not attractive to agricultural development, would otherwise have been slowly and sparsely occupied. The lure of gold and silver provided not only the incentive for migration into the Far West, but an economic basis for the rapid development of new states.

An awakening interest in the historical interpretation of the far western mining frontier coupled with an abundance of source materials has in the past decade produced an increasing number of books and articles on this subject. While these studies generally escape the preoccupation with the sensational incident, obscurantist detail, and romantic portrayal which has characterized too much "Western History," they do leave important questions unanswered, while providing valuable insights into certain aspects of the topic.

During the past decade, historians of the American West have devoted considerable attention to the economic interests which acted to promote the development of gold and silver mining in the Far West. From these examinations, the picture emerges of a region, rich in mineral resources, which attracted economic exploitation both from within and from outside. Within the region, Harwood Hinton has clearly linked the prospectors with efforts to reap speculative profits from mining lands. According to Hinton, prospectors did not customarily work individually with their burro, pick, and pan to develop mining claims. Instead, it was more common for them to combine to open a new mining area, and then collectively endeavor to

control the organization of the district and adopt mining regulations to protect and enhance the value of their holdings for resale purposes. Hinton found an excellent example of this practice in the Walker mining districts of central Arizona. There, the Joseph Reddeford Walker prospecting party was eminently successful in controlling the area for speculative purposes for nearly a year before an influx of new prospectors and a new territorial government diminished the influence of the Walker party. Still, during the time the group retained control, their actions provided evidence to support "the idea that prospectors collectively erected mining districts and enacted codes primarily for speculative purposes" in new mining areas.¹

Speculators outside the Far West also participated in the effort to secure a profit from the mining frontier. Recent research leaves little doubt that the extraction of gold and silver from complex subsurface ores necessitated large scale mining operations which regional capital could not finance. A decade ago, Alfred P. Tischendorf reported that British investors supplied a part of this need in some Colorado mines.² Since the appearance of this article, other historians have done much to complete the picture of Great Britain's financial role on the far western mining frontier.

Although the agrarian elements in the West were generally bitterly hostile toward British capitalism and ways of life, Roger V. Clements has shown that western mining interests encouraged and welcomed British investment.³ Clark C. Spence

provided a more complete analysis of the interaction between western mining and British capital in his book, *British Investments and the American Mining Frontier, 1860-1901*.⁴ Spence demonstrated that after 1870, when the first large investments in western mining were made, the mining states, particularly Colorado, sought to attract foreign investment in every possible way and to resist the attempts of agrarian groups to prohibit foreign speculation. Indeed, so intense was the desire to secure British capital, that special promotional bureaus were established to interest foreign buyers in mining securities.⁵ Capital was also transmitted to the mining regions by immigrants, investment trust and banking houses, and by the sale on the London market of stock in American mining corporations or British companies formed to exploit western American resources.⁶ Thus, until declining profits and the opening of more promising opportunities for speculative venture, British capital played a significant role in developing the far western mining frontier.

Concurrent with the examination of the Far West as a field for speculative investment, Rodman W. Paul has contributed significantly to an understanding of the technological aspects of far western mining. At the annual meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association of 1959, Paul delivered a paper which demonstrated the role of Colorado in perfecting new metallurgical and chemical processes. These enabled Colorado smelters to process lower grade ores profitably. This in large part explains the recovery of Colorado mining from a decline in 1863-64. Examining other mining states, Paul has analyzed the contribution of each of the major mining states to the technological development of the industry. His findings are thoughtfully presented in his *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-80*,⁷ which is also the first volume of a series devoted to

¹ Harwood Hinton, "Frontier Speculation: A Study of the Walker Mining Districts," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXIX (August, 1960), 245-255. Other works which include useful materials on the establishment of mining districts include: Charles H. Shinn, *Land Laws of Mining Districts* ("Johns Hopkins Studies in History and Political Science"; 2nd Ser., Vol. II, No. 12; Baltimore: N. Murray, 1884); and *Mining Camps, A Study in American Frontier Government* (1st Borzoi Ed.; New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948); Thomas M. Marshall, "The Miners' Laws of Colorado," *American Historical Review*, XXV (April, 1920), 426-439; Lynn I. Ferrigo, "Law and Order in Early Colorado Camps," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXVIII (June, 1941), 41-62; Clark C. Spence, "The Territorial Officers of Montana, 1864-1889," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXX (May, 1961), 123-136; and Merle W. Wells, "Territorial Government in the Inland Empire," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, XLIV (April, 1953), 8-87. Descriptive material on the Walker prospecting party is contained in: Daniel E. Connor, *Joseph Reddeford Walker and the Arizona Adventure*, ed. Donald J. Berthrong and Odessa Davenport (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956).

² Alfred P. Tischendorf, "British Investment in Colorado Mines," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXX (October, 1953), 241-246.

³ Roger V. Clements, "British Controlled Enterprise in the West Between 1870 and 1900, and Some Agrarian Reactions," *Agricultural History*, XXVII (October, 1953), 132-140; "British Investments and American Legislative Restrictions in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1880-1900," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLI (September, 1955), 207-228; "The Farmers' Attitude Toward British Investment in American Industry," *Journal of Economic History*, XV (Summer, 1955), 151-159; and "British Investment in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1870-

1914. Its Encouragement, and the Metal Mining Interests," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXIX (August, 1960), 245-256.

⁴ (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1958.)

⁵ Clark C. Spence, "The British and Colorado Mining Bureau," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXXIII (April, 1956), 81-92.

⁶ W. Turrentine Jackson, "The Infamous Emma Mine: A British Interest in the Little Cottonwood District, Utah Territory," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XXIII (October, 1955), 339-362; Clark C. Spence, "British Investment and Oregon Mining, 1860-1900," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, LVIII (June, 1957), 101-112; "The Montana Company, Limited: Case Study of an Anglo-American Mining Investment," *Business History Review*, XXXIII (Summer, 1959), 190-203; and "Colorado's Terrible Mine: A Study in British Investment," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXIV, (January, 1957), 48-61.

⁷ (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.) Technological developments are also discussed in: Thomas A. Rickard, *A History of American Mining* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1932); and Rodman W. Paul, "Colorado as a Pioneer of Science in the Mining West," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLVII (June, 1960), 34-50.

the American Frontier under the general editorship of Ray A. Billington.

While the work of Paul, Spence, Clements and others has emphasized the importance of foreign capital and technological progress in the development of the precious metals industry, important questions remain concerning the economic processes which acted on this frontier. Between the speculator outside the Far West, and the prospector or small mine developer in the region, a number of financial middlemen performed an indispensable function as purveyors of developmental capital. Sometimes, local merchants performed this service by granting credit to smaller mines and endeavoring to link them with financial sources outside the region.⁸ In other cases, men devoted their full energies toward channeling Eastern and foreign money into the development of the mining frontier.⁹ Before the picture of the economic aspects of the development of the mining frontier is complete, further studies of these financial middlemen must be added to the recent works of W. Turrentine Jackson and Rodman Paul.

In emphasizing the economic and technological facets of the far western mining frontier, professional historians have, with one very recent exception, tended to neglect the social and cultural aspects of this frontier. William S. Greever has gone far toward providing a basis for future research in this area in his book, *The Bonanza West*.¹⁰ Appealingly written, the book describes the social and institutional character of the mining frontier insofar as this can be done from existing secondary sources. The mining West that emerges from Greever's book is not a small frontier. It was both geographically extensive and populous. Settlement naturally tended to concentrate in those areas where mineral resources were most abundant, and towns emerged from the wilderness, many of which later became cities. Thus, the mining frontier was simul-

taneously an urban frontier. The comparative analysis of the mining regions as an urban frontier is yet to be done. Yet, such an analysis is essential to the full understanding of this frontier, and should provide valuable information on the westward movement in America.

Potentially rewarding in this regard would be the detailed analysis and comparison of frontier mining towns in terms of class and power structure, processes of institutional development, and the problems met and overcome by these urban settlements. Inquiries into other problems, such as the moral and religious values of the townspeople, their political and social ideas, and the sources of these attitudes should provide material to evaluate the mining frontier in terms of the modifications it produced in existing American cultural patterns and values.

Fortunately, source materials for such studies are abundant in state and local libraries and historical societies. Newspapers, diaries, town records, and reminiscences are useful reporters of mining town life. The published reminiscences of those who lived on the mining frontier are also invaluable, and abundant.¹¹ Utilizing these sources, some historical writers have presented worthwhile insights into limited aspects of urban life on the far western mining frontier.¹²

In these towns, speculative and mining profits created and sustained a group of frontier "aristocrats," men who after all did "strike it rich." The existence of these men is unquestioned, yet historians have been slow to evaluate this group in terms of their ideas, values, objectives, and influence. The professions on the mining frontier have fared somewhat better, and hesitant beginnings have been made to evaluate their role and influence in the mining areas. Merritt Brown examined the doctors who went west with the Colorado Gold Rush in 1859-60,¹³ and Harold Kirker has evaluated the contributions of eastern architects

⁸ Rodman W. Paul, *California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947).

⁹ W. Turrentine Jackson, "Lewis Richard Price, British Mining Entrepreneur and Traveler in California," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXIX (November, 1960), 331-348. For earlier material on this subject, the following are useful: Grant H. Smith, *The History of the Comstock Lode, 1850-1920* ("University of Nevada Bulletin"; Vol. XXXVII, No. 3, "Geology and Mining Series," No. 37; Reno: Nevada State Bureau of Mines and the Mackay School of Mines, 1943). Marshall Sprague, *Money Mountain: The Story of Cripple Creek Gold* (Boston: Little Brown, 1953). Mabel B. Lee, *Cripple Creek Days* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1958). LeRoy Hafen, "Otto Mears, Pathfinder of the San Juan," *The Colorado Magazine*, IX (March, 1932), 71-74.

¹⁰ *The Bonanza West: The Story of the Western Mining Rushes, 1848-1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963). This volume contains an excellent bibliography of secondary works on the topic.

¹¹ See for example: Ivan C. Crawford, "School Days in Leadville," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXXVI (July, 1959), 223-230; Charles M. Leonard, "Forty Years in Colorado Mining Camps," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXXVII (July, 1960), 161-184; William W. Wardell, "Cripple Creek Memories," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXXVII (January, 1960), 28-38; and Lois Borland, "Ouray Remembered," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXXVII (July, 1960), 188-192.

¹² Eleanor Young, "Saint Nick in the Colorado Gold Camps," *Montana, The Magazine of Western History*, IX (January, 1959), 20-25. Dan Cushman, "Cordova Lode Comstock," *Montana, The Magazine of Western History*, IX (October, 1959), 12-21. Jack Goodman, "The Shining Mountains: The Quirrh Range," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XXVII (July, 1959), 285-295.

¹³ Merritt Brown, "Digging Doctors," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXXVI (October, 1959), 241-248. This study is limited to doctors who came to Colorado in 1859-60. See also Caroline Bancroft, "Pioneer Doctor—F. J. Bancroft," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXXIX (July, 1962), 195-202.

who went to California during the Gold Rush of 1848-49.¹⁴ These historians viewed their subjects only in the initial stages of frontier town formation, but the research of Brown and Kirker does suggest a potentially valuable inquiry into the professional groups on the mining frontier.

National groups, particularly the Chinese, continue to receive some attention from historians. David DuFault traced the development of a strong Chinese minority group in the gold camps of California. By 1852 this group found ready employment in the mines of California, and it became the largest non-American mining group in the state by 1865. DuFault concludes that the prejudice against Orientals developed from moral and economic conflicts and became apparent only during the decade following the Civil War. This prejudice finally motivated attacks by organized labor and restrictive measures against the Orientals in California.¹⁵

No similar analysis of the Chinese or other foreign groups during the past decade has added significantly to an appraisal of the influence of organized labor in precious metal mining in the West. Indeed, except for a monograph by Robert W. Smith, published in 1961,¹⁶ little interest has been demonstrated by historians in the development, successes, and failures of organized labor on the far western mining frontier.

Thus, the historical literature of the past decade dealing with the far western mining region reflects an important concern with the technological and economic aspects of this frontier, and a significant interest in selected aspects of frontier culture and minority problems. If important questions have been answered, other problems remain for the historian of the far western mining frontier.

THOMAS GRAY THOMPSON, who teaches history at the University of Missouri, contributed an article on Lake City in the April, 1963, issue of CM.

¹⁴ Harold Kirker, "Eldorado Gothic, Gold Rush Architects and Architecture," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, XXXVIII (March, 1959), 31-46.

¹⁵ David V. DuFault, "The Chinese in the Mining Camps of California, 1848-1870," *Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly*, XLI (June, 1959), 155-170. See also: Patricia K. Ouranda, "The Chinese in Colorado," *The Colorado Magazine*, XXIX (October, 1954), 273-283.

¹⁶ Robert Wayne Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892: A Case Study of an Industrial Dispute* ("Oregon State Monographs in History," No. 2; Corvallis, Oregon: Oregon State College, 1961).

GANTT'S FORT AND BENT'S PICKET POST

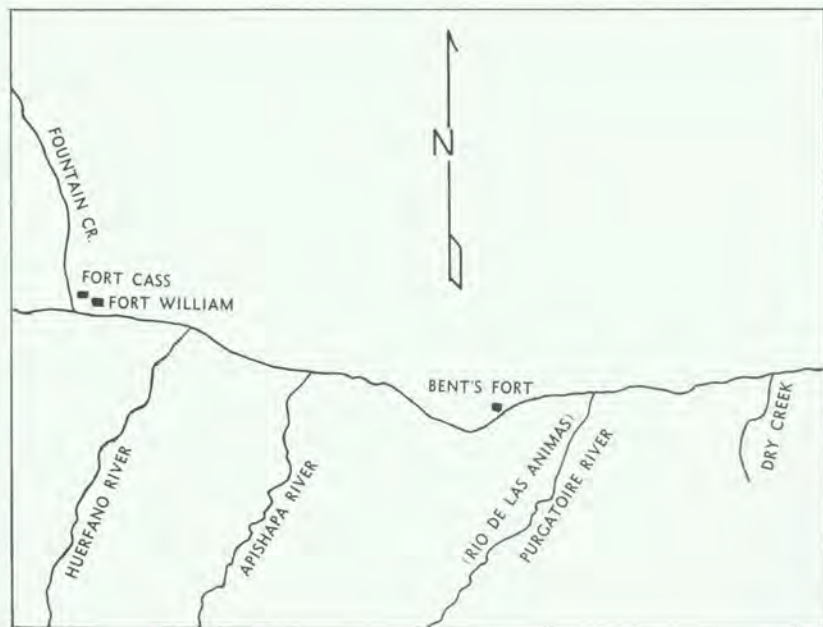
BY JANET LECOMPTE

Between 1832 and 1835, four trading posts were built on the north side of the Arkansas River within the present limits of Colorado. Two were located near the mouth of the Fountain, two near the mouth of the Purgatory; two were built of logs, two of adobe; two belonged to John Gantt, the other two to William Bent. By the spring of 1835 three of these posts had been abandoned because the fourth, the famous Bent's Fort, had put them out of business. The site of Bent's Fort has been preserved and marked, but there is no use sifting the Arkansas bottom for the sites of the other three. The picket posts disappeared rapidly in travellers' camp fires; the adobe post stood in ruins for twenty-five years and then it, too, was flooded out, ploughed over and eradicated. All that remains of these posts is a few contemporary records, by means of which this paper will try to breathe a little life into them.

John Gantt may have had no idea of locating on the Arkansas River when he first came west. On April 5, 1831, Gantt and his partner Jefferson Blackwell were issued a three-year license to trade at various locations on the Snake and other waters of the Columbia, and on the Big Horn, a branch of the Yellowstone River in present Wyoming.¹ The fact that the Arkansas was not included in the trading locations is insignificant, however, for locations on the license did not indicate where Gantt went or even intended to go. His intentions were not to trade with the Indians for furs, as the license authorized him to do, but to bypass those greedy middlemen and send his own men to catch beaver.²

¹ Abstract of Licenses, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs from the St. Louis Superintendency, National Archives Microfilm Publication, Washington, D. C. Cited hereafter as St. Louis Superintendency Records.

² John Gantt was born in Queen Anne, Maryland, in 1790, youngest of fifteen children of the Reverend Edward Gantt and Ann Sloss Gantt.



The journey out was nearly a disaster. Gantt and his sixty-one men³ went up the Missouri, the Kansas, the Republican and the Platte, through country devoid of game, facing starvation much of the time and subsisting upon their horses. In August they arrived on the Laramie river where Blackwell turned back to St. Louis. He was to come west again next summer, bringing trade goods, provisions and more men, but he was to come by the Arkansas River route instead of the Platte. Was his change of route because he feared the Platte

In 1817 John Gantt entered the U. S. army as a second lieutenant, rose to the rank of captain, and was dismissed in 1829 on a charge of lying about pay checks. After several years as a trader on the Arkansas, Gantt served as guide for Col. Dodge's dragoons in the summer of 1835. In 1838-39 he was agent for the Pottawatomie Indians at Council Bluffs. In 1843 he guided emigrants to Oregon as far as Fort Hall, then went to California. Gantt married Virginia McClanahan in 1827 and had three children by her, only one of whom survived infancy. Gantt died in the Napa Valley, California, in 1849. See the Cragin Collection, Pioneer Museum, Colorado Springs, Colorado; *Niles Register*, May 23, 1829, pp. 204-05, and July 11, 1829, pp. 325-26; U.S., Congress, House, *Persons Employed in the Indian Department, 1838*, 25th Cong., 3rd Sess., Serial No. 346, House Doc. 103, p. 9; Papers of William Clark, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, VIII, 6; Alice B. Maloney, "John Gantt, 'Borderer,'" *California Historical Society Quarterly*, XVI (March, 1937), Part I, pp. 48-60.

³ Passport issued by William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, St. Louis, May 5, 1831. Ritch Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

valley, or because he and Gantt had already decided to operate on the Arkansas? The records do not say.⁴

Gantt's trapping venture was dogged with misfortune. He divided his men into three sections to trap tributaries of the Platte and meet in December on the Laramie. At the end of December only two of the three sections had returned, and one of them had lost all its horses.⁵ On Christmas day Gantt left his men in winter camp on the Snake and went south with five men and the season's beaver catch to buy mules in New Mexico.⁶

The notion of a trading post on the Arkansas had occurred to Gantt before he arrived at Taos on January 29, 1832. Perhaps he and Blackwell had planned it before Blackwell returned to St. Louis; perhaps Gantt met a band of Arapahoes in their hunting grounds between the South Platte and the Arkansas who suggested that he trade with them. At any rate, Gantt expressed his intentions of trading on the Arkansas to the Governor of New Mexico in a letter written just before he left Taos with the mules:

San Fernando de Taos, February 20, 1832

To His Excellency the Political Chief of New Mexico
Sir

At the time of my arrival at this place (January 29), with so much to do and illness besides, I could not make a visit to the capital, but nevertheless I sent Mr. Barkley to announce our arrival in the Mexican country, after having first notified the Alcalde of Taos.

I left my camp at the junction of the Snake and Bear rivers (where we are wintering) on December 25. The sole object of my visit to New Mexico is the purchase of mules to facilitate the prosecution of the expedition on which I have embarked.

I have twenty-two men on the North branch of the Platte, eleven more on the South branch of the same river, twenty-five more on the Snake river to the west of the Rocky Mountains, and five in this place, having in all sixty-three besides nine natives of this country. I will have (in the month of July) in addition to these, forty more men who will come from St. Louis and join me on the Arkansas.

When I conclude my business in San Fernando which will be finished in ten days, I will return to the territory of the United States. With anxious anticipation I have hoped to see on the Arkansas a military establishment made by our government of the north, placed here by the president and composed of four companies of light cavalry, properly equipped, with two pieces of mounted artillery and a mortar five and a half inches in diameter which will be sufficient for the protection of our commercial communications with New Mexico.

⁴ Milo M. Quaife (ed.), *Narrative of the Adventures of Zenas Leonard* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1934), pp. 3-12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

⁶ Letter of John Gantt to Santiago Abreu, February 20, 1832. Ritch Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Author's translation.

Under the command of a discreet officer, efficient and entirely informed about the character of the Indians, their friendship could be looked to and cultivated. The subsistence of the fort would always be taken care of in the valley of Taos, and thus would be avoided the dangers that come about in the precarious custom of hunting buffalo.

Believing that the time for such an establishment is not very distant, we have determined to establish at the junction of the Purgatory and Arkansas rivers, and on the banks of the latter, a temporary fort and trading post to be finished the coming summer. The only difficulty I foresee is from the Comanche nation. This difficulty we will try to avoid by exemplary and consistent conduct in our relations with them. A part of these Gentiles live in Mexican territory, and another part in the United States, for which reason a decisive campaign has not been made against them, for the natural respect that exists between these nations does not permit violation of frontiers. The evil and stupid policy of our government with these Gentiles, treating them with so much leniency, is the cause of aggressions they have made on caravans from Missouri to New Mexico. Fear will control them when all other emotion is ineffectual. Power joined with compassion and discretion will be the most effective instrument for giving a firm and lasting peace to the frontiers of both countries.

Greed (after fear) is the most predominant passion of the Indians: Our trade with these Gentiles will be firm, for thus we will gain influence and government over them when carefully handled, and this trade being regulated by the general government, their necessities will be administered in conformity with its procedures—even neighboring nations would come under our great influence so far as to prohibit the sale of all the necessities of war to a hostile nation. This would have an effect on them only slightly less compelling than force.

With this you will receive my passport.

Permit me to solicit a passport for leaving here and returning when my business requires my return.

Your ideas with relation to the establishment that I propose to make on the Arkansas river, along with instructions as to the laws that govern the trade with Indians in this Republic, will be received by me with that respect that always characterizes all my movements in a foreign country.

I have the honor with much respect to remain your servant

John Gantt [rubric]

Mr. Barkley who will present this to you, will inform you of all that pertains to the case, and has full authority from me to do whatever is necessary in the business.

Translated—but badly, being a bad translator—LeGrand⁷

Gantt took the mules north to his trappers in March, 1832, only to find that twenty-two men he had left on the North

⁷ Alexander LeGrand had been in New Mexico off and on since before 1825, when he translated a letter from the governor of New Mexico to William Clark at St. Louis (November 1, 1825, St. Louis Superintendency Records). In 1834, during his survey of the Red, Arkansas, and Canadian Rivers, LeGrand was witness to a remarkable encounter on the Arkansas. Accounts of this affair give incidental evidence regarding the location of Gantt's Fort and Bent's picket post. See Herbert E. Bolton, *Guide to Materials for the History of the United States in the Principal Archives of Mexico* (Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Institution, 1913), p. 226; William Waldo, "Recollections of a Septuagenarian," *Missouri Historical Society Glimpses of the Past*, V (April-June, 1938), 88-90; and Raymond Estep, "The LeGrand Survey of the High Plains: Fact or Fancy," *New Mexico Historical Review*, XXIX (April, 1954), 81-96.

Platte under A. C. Stephens had deserted to Thomas Fitzpatrick.⁸ Gantt went to the Arkansas to meet Blackwell coming from the States with supplies, then returned to the mountains. After further misfortunes Gantt left the mountains in September with the remainder of the original party and some new men, including Kit Carson, having first written his lost trappers a letter stating his decision to establish a trading post among the Arapahoe Indians.⁹

Gantt left his men on the Arkansas and went again to New Mexico with the season's furs. Returning to the Arkansas in two months, or about the end of November, he and his men went into winter quarters,¹⁰ consisting probably of two or three log houses enclosed by a picket stockade, in the manner of all the trading posts on the waters of the Missouri and Columbia. The post may have been located at the mouth of the Purgatory, where Gantt had written the New Mexican Governor he meant to build it, but there is no further evidence to prove or disprove this location.

Buffalo were plentiful that winter of 1832-33 on the Arkansas (where usually they were scarce), and in spite of the great amount of snow, Gantt's men spent a pleasant winter, according to Kit Carson. In January the Crow Indians stole their horses and Carson and others went to recover them, an exploit described at length in Carson's autobiography.¹¹

In the spring of 1833 Gantt and his men left the post and started north on a trapping expedition, after caching their beaver on the Arkansas. At the south fork of the Platte, two men deserted and stole three of their best animals. Suspecting that the deserters were headed for the Arkansas to raise the cache, Gantt sent Kit Carson and another man in pursuit. When Carson arrived on the Arkansas, he discovered that the deserters had dug up the furs and taken them down the Arkansas in a canoe made the previous winter for crossing the river. Giving up the chase, Carson and his companion forted up in the temporary post, awaiting Blackwell from the States and Gantt from the north. Says Carson:

We took possession of one of the buildings that were built during the winter and made the necessary preparations for our defense—not having the remotest idea how long we should have to remain. Being by ourselves we never ventured very far from our fort, unless for the purpose of procuring meat. We kept our horses picketed

⁸ Quailfe, *Adventures of Zenas Leonard*, p. 46.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

¹⁰ Blanche C. Grant (ed.), *Kit Carson's Own Story of His Life* (Taos: Santa Fe New Mexican, 1926), pp. 21-22.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22-25.

near and, at night, slept in the house, always keeping a good lookout. . . .¹²

Carson's is the only description we have of Gantt's "temporary fort and trading post," and it tells us only that there was more than one building and no corral. A month later Blackwell arrived from the States with ten or fifteen men. Shortly afterwards, four trappers from Gantt's party arrived, and with them Carson and his friend left for Gantt's camp in South Park.¹³

Gantt was not at the rendezvous at Green River in the summer of 1833, as two contemporary letters indicate. One, written by B. L. E. Bonneville, dated Wind River, July 29, 1833, suggests that Gantt was already then on the Arkansas, conducting his trade:

Gantt came up in 1831 with about 50 men, mostly a foot, done little, then returned to the head waters of the Arkansas, where I understand he has opened a trade with the Comanche, the Arrepehoes, & Shians.¹⁴

The other letter was from Lucien Fontenelle to William Laidlaw, dated "Rendezvous on Green River R.M., July 31st 1833" and mentioned "ten or twelve trappers from Gaunt's party" who were selling furs to Bonneville's men. The reference does not make clear whether they were deserters from Gantt's employ, former employees who had been dismissed, or present agents acting for Gantt.¹⁵ It appears that by the end of July, Gantt had returned to the Arkansas, determined to give up trapping and devote himself to trading with the Indians.

Although Kit Carson did not mention that Gantt was trading with Indians during the winter of 1832-33 on the Arkansas, later references show that Gantt had begun his trade with the Arapahoes and Cheyennes in 1832. On April 14, 1837, Rev. Moses Merrill wrote in his diary:

. . . the Shiennes, a tribe of Indians on the Platte river, were wholly averse to drinking whisky but five years ago—now (through the influence of a trader, Captain Gant, who by sweetening the whisky induced them to drink the intoxicating draught) they are a tribe of drunkards.¹⁶

Warren Ferris, a trapper in the mountains until 1835, wrote:

The Arrappahoes . . . were for several years deadly enemies to the whites, but Capt. Ggant, whose firmness and liberality they have reason to remember long, has established a trading house among them on the Arkansas, four day's march from Taos, and

¹² *Ibid.*, 26-27.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁴ Washington Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, ed. Edgeley W. Todd (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 333.

¹⁵ Chouteau Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

¹⁶ "Extract from the Diary of Rev. Moses Merrill, a Missionary to the Ojib Indians from 1832 to 1840," *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society* (Lincoln: State Journal Co., 1892), IV, 181.

has succeeded in gaining their confidence and inculcating among them, an opinion of the whites, that will perhaps secure their lasting friendship.¹⁷

And Rufus Sage wrote in 1843, "About the year 1832, Capt. Grant succeeded in effecting a treaty with the Arapahos. . . ."¹⁸ Thus Gantt achieved his fame as the first Arapahoe trader on the Arkansas. It is probable, as the Rev. Merrill implies above, that Gantt was also the first Cheyenne trader on the Arkansas, although tradition usually assigns that honor to the second trader on the Arkansas, who was William Bent.

One of the enduring mysteries of Arkansas valley history is where and when William Bent first located on the Arkansas. Bent's half-breed son George has provided historians with a number of choices. At different times and to different researchers, George Bent said that William Bent's first picket post was located above Pueblo, at Pueblo (which is at the mouth of the Fountain), ten miles below Pueblo, twenty miles below Pueblo at the mouth of the Huerfano, seventy miles below Pueblo at the later site of Bent's Fort, and eighty-two miles below Pueblo at the mouth of the Purgatory river. His dates for the building of the post range from 1826 to 1829.¹⁹ Other sources are no more in agreement as to location of the post than George Bent. Two of the most commonly quoted are Charles W. Bowman who says the picket post was built at the later site of Bent's Fort, twelve miles above the mouth of the Purgatory, in 1826,²⁰ and Frank Hall, who says it was located west of the mouth of the Fountain, midway between Pueblo and Canon City in 1826.²¹

Some of the confusion can be explained. The early dates for the founding of the picket post are based on the proposition that it was in operation before Bent's Fort, and that Bent's Fort was begun in 1828 and completed in 1832. In a recent article Dr. LeRoy R. Hafen has satisfactorily shown that Bent's Fort was not begun before 1833.²² George Bent's many locations for the

¹⁷ W. A. Ferris, *Life in the Rocky Mountains*, ed. Paul C. Phillips (Denver: Old West Publishing Co., 1940), p. 312.

¹⁸ Rufus Sage, *Scenes in the Rocky Mountains* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1846), p. 298.

¹⁹ Letter of Bent to F. W. Cragin, Colony, Oklahoma, December 4, 1905, Cragin Collection, Pioneer Museum, Colorado Springs; George E. Hyde, "Life of George Bent," unpub. ms. in the Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, Chap. III; letter of Bent to George E. Hyde, April 10, 1905, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library; George B. Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), pp. 38-39, and George B. Grinnell, "Bent's Old Fort and Its Builders," *Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1919-1922* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1923), XV, 28-91.

²⁰ Charles W. Bowman, "History of Bent County," *History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado* (Chicago: O. L. Baskin & Co., 1881), p. 827.

²¹ Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado* (Chicago: Blakely Printing Co., 1889), I, 163.

picket post may sometimes refer to more than one post. The log house at the later site of Bent's Fort is described by George Bent as a storage building in use while the fort was being built,²³ and the one at the mouth of the Purgatory may have been Gantt's "temporary fort and trading post." George Bent says of Gantt's early post:

Capt. John Gantt built stockade . . . below Pueblo. Cheyennes call him "Tall Crane." He had child among Cheyennes. Cheyennes also speak of "Bald Head." I can not place him; but he was with Gantt. I think he was partner.²⁴

William Bent probably built his picket post in 1833. On January 10, 1834, William Laidlaw wrote Pierre Chouteau from Fort Pierre that:

Charles Bent has built a Fort upon the Arkansas for the purpose of trade with the different bands of Indians, that he may be able to draw about him, and if judiciously carried on cannot fail to be very injurious to the trade in this part of the Country. The Cheyennes have remained in that part of the Country depending I have no doubt on that very establishment and if kept up I have very little doubt but that a great many of the Sioux will follow their example.²⁵

The Cheyennes that Laidlaw speaks of lived north of the South Platte River, although since the beginning of the nineteenth century small parties of them had ventured to the Arkansas and beyond to trade horses with the Comanches or steal them from the Mexicans. In Cheyenne tradition, a large party of Yellow Wolf's Cheyennes on a visit to the Arkansas met the Bent brothers at their stockade post and told them that if they would move the post down the Arkansas into the buffalo range, the Yellow Wolf Cheyennes would move from the Platte and trade with them.²⁶ George Bent, or the historians who were prodding him, usually makes the date of this meeting 1826; David Lavender, in spite of masses of George Bent material at his elbow, fixes the building of the stockade and meeting with the Cheyennes as the winter of 1829-30—but he denies any authority in the matter and says his dates are merely "assumptions."²⁷ Dr. Hafen's article, "When Was Bent's Fort Built?" denies the existence of any Bent post on the Arkansas before 1833.²⁸ So does Gantt's reputation as the first trader with the

²² LeRoy R. Hafen, "When Was Bent's Fort Built?" *The Colorado Magazine*, XXXI (April, 1954), 105-19.

²³ Letter of George Bent to F. W. Cragin, Colony, Oklahoma, December 4, 1905, Cragin Collection, Pioneer Museum, Colorado Springs.

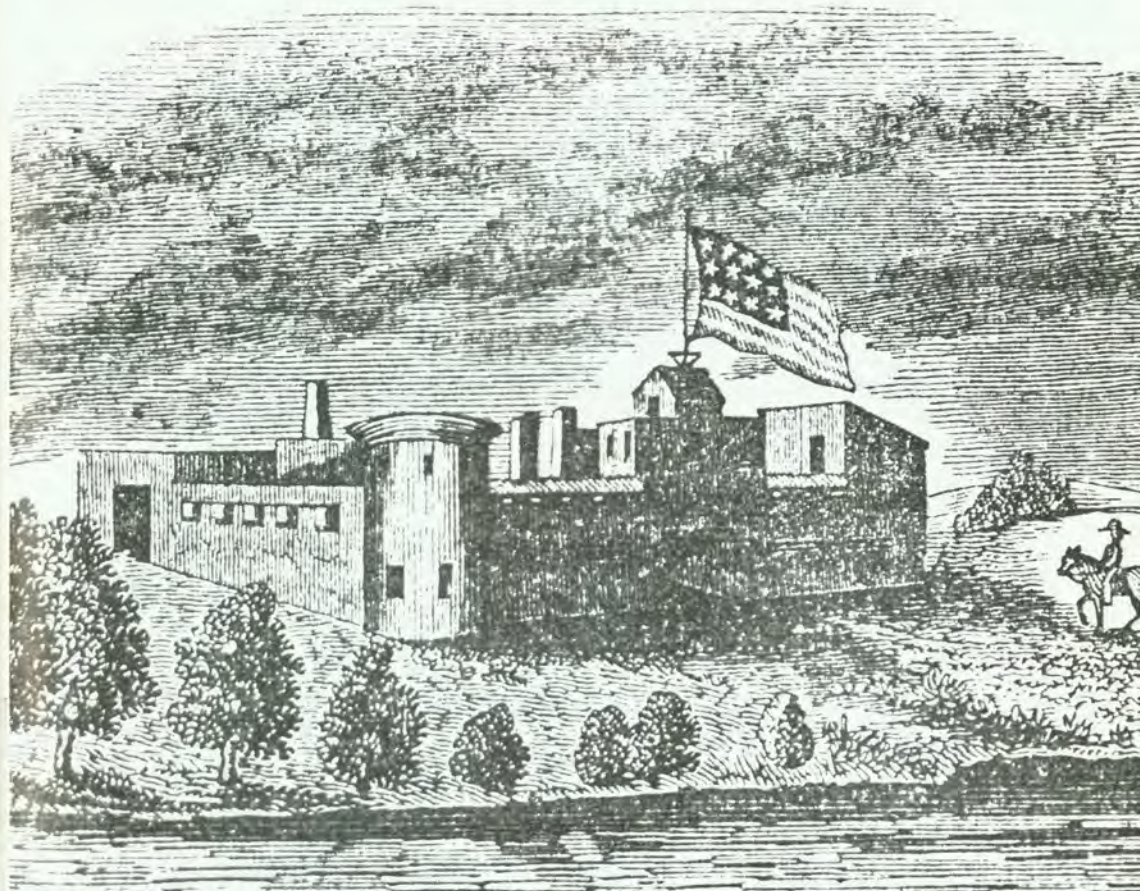
²⁴ *Ibid.*, September 23, 1905.

²⁵ Fort Pierre Letter Book, December 20, 1832, to August 25, 1835, p. 49. In the Chouteau Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

²⁶ Grinnell, "Bent's Old Fort," *Kansas Historical Society Collections*, XV, 4.

²⁷ David Lavender, *Bent's Fort* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1954), pp. 120, 381.

²⁸ Hafen, *Colorado Magazine*, XXXI, 119.



Bent's Fort, from Hughes, DONIPHAN'S EXPEDITION

Arapahoe (and the Cheyenne as well, unless we accept the absurd proposition that William Bent did not use whiskey in his trade and reject Rev. Merrill's statement that it was Gantt who corrupted the Cheyennes).

The site that William Bent chose for his stockade was, as will be shown presently, on the north bank of the Arkansas eight or nine miles below the mouth of the Fountain. We must imagine that he did a thriving trade that first year, and that by the spring of 1834 John Gantt's business was suffering from the competition. Gantt decided to move from the mouth of the Purgatory or wherever it was he had located, to within a few miles of Bent's picket post, in the manner of rival traders of that period (and rival gas stations of our own). In May, 1834, Gantt

began construction of a solid, permanent adobe post on the north side of the Arkansas six miles below the mouth of the Fountain.²⁹ The building of the post is described by Tom Autobees, son of Charles Autobees; Tom got the story not from his famous father but from his mother's brother, Guadalupe Avila. In the spring of 1834 (Tom Autobees says 1833, in error), Gantt's agent in Taos, one Jim Wilkes, hired Guadalupe Avila and Dominguez Madrild to come to the Arkansas and make all the adobes for Gantt's fort. They started making adobes at the site of the post in May. During the summer an incident occurred which has been described only by Avila and by another witness, probably because the incident did not reflect any credit upon William Bent and was thus not a part of George Bent's repertory:

While they were making the adobes a party of Shoshones (Snakes) came down the Fountain creek and camped near Gantt's fort. Bent had at that time a little log trading post about three miles below Gantt's fort (between Chico creek and Fort Gantt) and the Arapahoes and Cheyennes were trading then around Bent's post. A party of Arapahoes and Cheyennes went up to the Shoshone camp to steal their horses, which Bill Bent (who never did like the Comanches and Shoshones) had told them he would buy if they stole them. The Shoshones put up a fight to defend their horses; but the Shoshones got wiped out, all but three or four men, who got away, and two or three women whom the Cheyennes and Arapahoes took prisoners.³⁰

Guadalupe Avila's little story of the massacre of the Shoshones is confirmed in all but date, and William Bent's part in it made far more unpleasant, by a remarkable contemporary account of an eyewitness to the whole affair:³¹

²⁹ It is so located by Rufus Sage, who passed it in 1842 (*Scenes in the Rocky Mountains*, pp. 247-48) and by Grinnell, based on George Bent and Cheyenne tradition ("Bent's Old Fort," *Kansas Historical Society Collections*, XV, 62). Gantt had hardly vacated his post in 1835 when the Bents began using it as a trading location, which they described in their license of November 8, 1836, as "at Gant's old Fort, six miles below the mouth of the St. Charles River on the north side of the Arkansas." This is a confusing description, since the St. Charles joins the Arkansas from the south about six miles below and opposite the mouth of the Fountain—but the Bents were never very good at describing their trading locations. See the Abstract of Licenses, St. Louis Superintendency Records, H. M. Chittenden, in his *History of the American Fur Trade of the Far West* (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1902), p. 969, locates Gantt's Fort six miles above the mouth of the Fountain, giving no authority. He is followed by various other editors, such as W. F. Wagner in his *Adventures of Zenos Leonard, Fur Trader and Trapper, 1831-1836* (Cleveland: Burrows Bros., Co., 1904), 59 n., and Fred S. Perrine in his edition of "Hugh Evans' Journal," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XIV (September, 1927), 210. Perrine manipulates Col. Dodge's route to fit a location of Gantt's Fort above Pueblo, even though Col. Dodge's own map of his route shows plainly that he met the Arkansas below the mouth of Fountain Creek and then traveled directly east. See the map in the "Report on the Expedition of Dragoons, under Colonel Henry Dodge, to the Rocky Mountains in 1835," *American State Papers, Military Affairs* (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1861), VI, opp. p. 130.

³⁰ Tom Autobees to F. W. Cragin, Avondale, Colorado, November 8, 1907, Cragin Collection, Pioneer Museum, Colorado Springs.

³¹ This is included in the letter of Richard Cummins to William Clark, June 19, 1835, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs from the Upper Missouri Agency, National Archives Microfilm Publication.

On the 29th July 1834 a party of Eight Loges of Sho-sho-nies, or Snake Indians, visited Fort Cass on the Arkansas River for the purpose of Trade on their return from the Cummanchas. Mr. Wm. Bent (of St. Louis Mo. who was at that time trading on the Arkansas River for Messrs Bent & St. Vrain) with the following named men Viz: Robert Fisher, (American) Lucas Murray (Canadian) John Laws (American) Francis Brunet (Canadian) A Legrand (American) John Black (American) Geo. McCullack (Delaware) Black Stump (Delaware) Antoine Bushman (half-breed Potawatomi) Snap (a Delaware). William Bent persuaded the above named persons to assist him in attacking & defeating the Snakes. So soon as I discovered their intentions, I observed to Mr. Bent the step he was about to take was in my opinion an improper one & in all probability would not meet the views of Government. he Mr. Bent replied Damn the Government I do it now any how, & Lucas Murry one of his men shot down one of the Snakes standing within a few feet of me. The attack having commenced the Sho-sho-nies were soon defeated with a loss of three killed & one wounded, one Ararpaho Indian was also wounded by M. G. Carrico in a mistake for a Snake; after scalping &c of the Sho-sho-nies they took prisoners, two women, & about thirty seven horses & some guns & many other articles such as Kettles axes ropes &c. this plunder they divided out equally the following day 30 July by lottery.

The women were however given up to me & I sent them to their village the same day. The following persons was witnesses to the affair viz: John Gantt, John Poisell, Benjamin Bowerzin, Woodhouse Lawson, Peter I Blackie, Charles Cheine, & several others who could be named if necessary.

Some time in August or perhaps July the following Delaware Indians visited Fort Cass on the Arkansas after a return from a trapping expedition on the heads of the red river near Taos, New Mexico it would be moore proper to say the head of the north fork of the Canadian River. they brought with them seven mules & five horses with some saddles, bridles & bagage all Spanish or Mexican.

I purchased some of the mules. they told me they found them at the place as above stated, & that the Spaniards became alarmed & ran off & left them. I afterwards learned from Mexicans themselves, that two Mexicans were killed one however lived until he reached San Fernando of Taos, there names are Jim Shawnick (a Del) Bill Thomas (a Del) Fall Leaf (a Del) Leori (a Peoria) & one or two others.

The reason why Mr. Bent made an attack on the Sho-sho-nies was he said because they had stolen some mules from his brother near the Valley of Taos or some Indians whom he supposed to be Snakes.

As far as I am responsible as an individual witness you are at liberty to use my name

Majr Cummings signed [no signature]
Ind Agent
Cantonm. Levenworth Mo
20 May 1835.

The mysterious witness to Bent's attack on the Shoshones mentions only one fort, "Fort Cass." Guadalupe Avila mentions two, William Bent's picket post and Gantt's adobe fort. Which post was called "Fort Cass"?

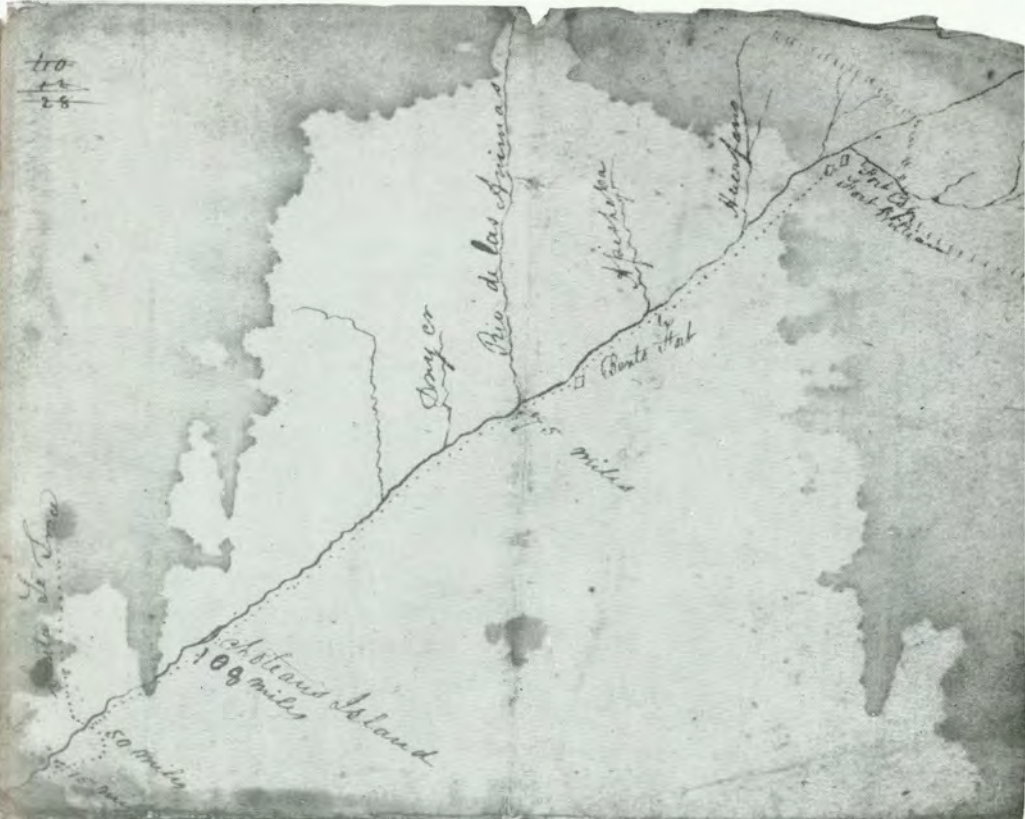
From Fort Cast to Rio de las Animas	Miles	
To Choteau's Island	108	
" Crossings (St. Louis)	50	
" Caches	15	
" Raccoon Creek	55	
" Pawnee Fork	10	
" Ash Creek	8	
" Walnut cr	15	
" Big Cow cr	39	
" Little Cow cr	4	
Little Arkansas	75	374
" Turkey Creek	30	
" Cottonwood Fork	20	439
" Diamond Spring	12	

" Came 15 miles	15	
" Came 27 miles	27	
" Came 25 miles	25	
" Came 15 miles	15	561
" Came 8 miles	6	
" Came 12 miles	12	589

439
57
53
584

Spotted
64

110
12
28



71
27
25
10
72
20
132
35
375

The answer is, Fort Cass had to be Gantt's, for Bent's picket post was called Fort William. On December 13, 1834, William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, granted to Charles Bent for two years, with twenty-nine men employed, a license to trade with the Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Kiowa and other Indians

at Fort William, on the north side of the Arkansas, about forty miles east of the Rocky Mountains, about twenty miles north of the Spanish Peaks, and about five miles below one of the principal forks of the Arkansas.³²

This is the first license to be issued to Bent, St. Vrain & Co., and it describes the site of a post about five miles below the mouth of the Fountain. For some reason, students have taken it for granted that this license describes the site of a big adobe post that became famous as Bent's Fort, perhaps because it was always taken for granted that the big adobe post was in existence by the date of issuance of the license. The assumption appears to be unwarranted.

The next license extant³³ for Bent, St. Vrain & Co. was issued on November 8, 1836, and the location of "Fort William" was different, as though someone had changed the numbers on the license without disturbing the place names:

. . . at Fort William on the north side of the Arkansas River 40 miles north of the Spanish Peaks, 120 east of the Rocky Mountains and 5 below one of the Principal Forks of the Arkansas. . . .³⁴

During the two years since the first license, the Spanish Peaks have dropped back twenty miles south and the Rocky Mountains have receded eighty miles to the west, but a principal fork of the Arkansas is still five miles above the post. Both the picket post and its adobe successor were called "Fort William," but only one could be five miles below a principal fork of the Arkansas, since Fountain creek is the only water-bearing tributary on the north side of the Arkansas from the mountains to the present state line. Therefore we must ascribe the errors in distances to a clerk in the Superintendent's office who was too lazy to write out a new license for the new Fort William. At the same time that the Bent people, or the lazy clerk, were at such a loss to describe the location of the adobe fort, the American Fur Company proved that it could be done. In 1836 that company took out a license to trade at the same location, which it pegged

neatly and almost accurately as "about ten miles above the junction of Purgatory creek with the Arkansas river, about fifty miles north-east of the Spanish Peaks. . . ."³⁵

By August of 1835, Gantt's fort and Bent's picket post were abandoned and Bent's was already reduced to its foundations, or at least to some elevation that was hardly noticeable to a passerby. On August 1, 1845, there were some passersby—a regiment of dragoons commanded by Col. Henry Dodge and guided by none other than John Gantt, who had joined the expedition at Fort Leavenworth at the end of May. After traveling up the Platte, the dragoons had turned south along the foot of the mountains. They met the Arkansas about a mile below the mouth of the Fountain, then marched about five miles and passed a deserted fort. Only two of the three published journals of the expedition mention seeing the fort. Col. Dodge's own report calls it "a deserted trading establishment."³⁶ Hugh Evans identifies it as "and [sic] old trading establishment formerly [sic] occupied by Capt. Gant."³⁷ The third published journal, that of Lemuel Ford, does not mention the post at all. Ford's original manuscript journal, however, contains a little sketch of the Arkansas River from the mouth of the Fountain to Bent's Fort (clearly marked opposite and above the mouth of the "Rio de las Animas" or Purgatory river). On the north side of the Arkansas, a few miles below the mouth of the Fountain, there is a little square labeled "Fort Cass"; just below or east of it there is another little square labeled "Fort William."³⁸

There you have them, located plainly on a contemporary map—Gantt's fort, marked "Fort Cass," and Bent's picket post, marked "Fort William"—side by side and already falling into ruin, both supplanted by the great adobe trading post down the river which was just beginning its sovereignty over the affairs of the upper Arkansas valley.

JANET LECOMPTE, housewife and historian, lives with her family in Colorado Springs. She wrote a series of articles on Charles Autobees in the 1957 and 1958 issues of CM.

³² Abstract of Licenses, St. Louis Superintendency Records.

³³ Licenses for 1835 were not printed in the government documents, nor are they a part of the St. Louis Superintendency Records in the National Archives. A license was granted to Bent & St. Vrain, however, on May 9, 1835, as the records show, although the license itself was not abstracted.

³⁴ Abstract of Licenses, St. Louis Superintendency Records.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ "Report on the Expedition of Dragoons under Colonel Henry Dodge," *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, VI, 140.

³⁷ Perrine, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XIV, 210.

³⁸ Nollie Mumey, *March of the First Dragoons to the Rocky Mountains in 1834: The Diaries and Maps of Lemuel Ford* (Denver: Eames Brothers Press, 1957), p. 56.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CUSTOMS PORT OF ENTRY

BY BERNARD AXELROD

It does seem strange that Denver, a city located at the foot of the Rockies a mile above sea level and a thousand miles from the ocean, is a United States customs port of entry. The very name "port of entry" conjures up visions of harbors crowded with shipping and all the vivid scenery of bustling seaports through which a nation's commerce flows. Denver certainly does not fit that picture, but it has been a port of entry for over eighty years.

The name of John Evans bulks large in Colorado's early history, and it was he who was the prime mover in having Denver declared a customs port. John Evans—Colorado's second territorial governor, western railroad builder, pioneer educator, and successful businessman—was both visionary and practical. Appointed territorial governor in 1862, Evans quickly perceived that the vast, unpopulated territory, with its untapped wealth, was strategically located at the heart of the Rocky Mountain region. He envisioned Denver as the hub of a railroad system traversing the entire western country, and as the region's center of commerce through which all trade must flow. John Evans anticipated that the city would soon become a great crossroads of the east-west railroads, as well as the pivot of rail lines cutting north and south across the continent.

His dream of Denver sitting astride the great transcontinental system evaporated when the Union Pacific, deterred by the forbidding western mountains, laid its rails through Cheyenne to the north. Through the hectic decade of the Civil War and into the seventies Evans continued his efforts to develop Denver as a commercial center. He still conceived of the city as the focus of a regional north-south railroad system operating across the lines of the powerful east-west carriers. He planned to build a Y-shaped railroad network linking the northwest

Pacific ports of Puget Sound and the northeast industrial centers of the Great Lakes, through Denver, with the southwest harbors of the Gulf of Mexico. In this way Evans hoped to funnel a great commerce through Denver—that of Asia, of Central and South America, and Europe—filling the city's warehouses with the goods from these places, and tapping the resources and markets of the huge region his projected railroad system was to cross.

To make his master plan feasible, Evans had to overcome the disadvantage of the city's inland location; Denver could not compete in the import and export business with such cities as New York and San Francisco. Evans, therefore, turned towards Congress, petitioning that body to have Denver declared a customs port of entry. If this request should be granted, merchandise arriving at any seaport—the original port of entry—would need no examination or appraisal there, but would be loaded in bonded railroad cars and transported directly to Denver. The collector of customs at the initial port of entry would then forward the shipping papers to the collector in Denver where final disposition would be made of the goods as though they had been landed there direct from the ship.

John Evans was not entirely unfamiliar with the workings of a port of entry. In 1852 he was elected to the Chicago City Council and appointed to the Committee of Wharves and Wharfing Privileges. There he acquired some understanding of the value of port facilities to the city's business interests.¹ Chicago, at that time, was an important part of the nation's water transportation system, and the city had built a very profitable trade with other pioneer developments on the Great Lakes.² Evans was closely associated with Paul Cornell, the organizer and director of Chicago's first dock company, who was very active in the city's water-borne commerce. He was also acquainted with John Wentworth,³ who was largely responsible for Chicago's being designated a port of entry to facilitate its own increasing trade.⁴ It may well have been one of

¹ John Evans Collection, Bancroft interview of 1889, microfilm in the Colorado State Archives, Denver.

² Bessie L. Pierce, *A History of Chicago* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), I, 79. John Evans noticed these commercial advantages at an early date. Chicago's *Daily Democratic Press*, January 12, 1855, summarized an Evans speech as follows: "The greatest cities of the world have been inland. Babylon, Ninevah, Pekin, Paris, St. Petersburg . . . were illustrations of the fact. Chicago, with her magnificent lake, giving an inlet from the ocean for the commerce of the World, her Canal and the Illinois River and her 20 Railroads, combined an inland with the advantages of a maritime position."

³ Pierce, *History of Chicago*, I, 387.

⁴ Evans had been associated with this event, although no other mention of such activity has been found. The Denver *Inter-Ocean*, June 10, 1882,

these associations which was responsible for Evans' later attempts to have Denver declared a port of entry.

Denver was officially designated a customs port by Congress in 1882, but there had been a steady movement toward securing this recognition for at least a decade. Many people were involved in the long process, and they must not be deprived of the credit due them. John Evans' contribution was his vigorous leadership; without this leadership the objective would not have been accomplished.

After Denver had secured its first railroad in 1870, Evans spoke of the necessity for a rail route to the sea.⁵ Inherent in the concept was his desire for facilities at both Denver and its future seaport which would be beneficial for trade. Although his immediate problem was to induce other railroads to build through Denver, he remained aware of the other problems that lay ahead. Evans had mentioned the advantages of having Denver selected as a port of entry at that time, but it was not until 1873 that his suggestion was adopted by the Denver Board of Trade as a resolution to be sent Congress. The resolution was transmitted, but was not introduced as a bill.⁶ Three more years were to elapse before any further action would be taken.

In October, 1876, action was initiated by the Denver Board of Trade to again try to establish Denver as a port of entry. John Evans offered the following preamble and resolutions which were passed unanimously:

WHEREAS, Denver is now the commercial entrepot for a vast region of rich minerals, and a cultural and pastoral country which is rapidly being developed into an empire of wealth, trade and manufacture; and

WHEREAS, the consumption of foreign goods, wares and merchandise in this region is now larger, and will doubtless rapidly increase in the future; and

WHEREAS, the payment of duties on such foreign goods, wares and merchandise, at the seaboard, either at New York or at other Atlantic ports, or at San Francisco on the Pacific, so long before their destination and consumption, as is required, is a heavy tax on this region, which ought to be avoided; and

WHEREAS, the great facility for transmitting goods from the seaboard, either on the Atlantic or Pacific Coast, to Denver, in sealed cars, is such as to make it so easy and economical as to enable the merchants of Denver to import and distribute such

said: "Governor Evans had been active in the growth of Chicago and he saw for Denver the same bright future that he prophesied in the 40's for Chicago. He was a Chicago enthusiast when other Chicagoans were conservative; and when, in the City of the Lakes, he proposed a port of entry he was met by the same incredulity which greeted his proposal here. 'A port of delivery without salt water! It cannot be.' Yet Chicago pushed ahead and became a fresh-water port of delivery."

⁵ *Daily Colorado Tribune* (Denver), January 21, 1870.

⁶ *Inter-Ocean* (Denver), June 10, 1882.

foreign goods, wares and merchandise to all this region of country, at a great saving in cost and outlay of interest on capital if Denver were made a port of entry; therefore

RESOLVED, that the Congress of the United States be earnestly petitioned to make Denver City a port of entry.

RESOLVED, that the President and Secretary of this Board of Trade furnish a certified copy of this preamble and resolutions for presentation to each House of Congress.

RESOLVED, that our Representative and Senators in Congress be, and they are hereby requested to present the same, and urge a compliance with our request upon their respective branches of Congress.⁷

Colorado had attained statehood by this time, and was ably represented in Congress by Senators Jerome B. Chaffee and Henry M. Teller, and Representatives James B. Belford and Thomas M. Patterson (who replaced Belford in December, 1877, in the famous contested seat struggle). Senator Chaffee, although a Colorado booster, was at first inclined to look upon Evans' suggestion as impracticable. He was finally convinced that Denver was the natural location for a port of entry, and presented the resolutions in the Senate,⁸ where the matter was referred to the Committee on Commerce.⁹ Meanwhile, Congressman Belford had arranged for the resolutions to be presented in the House, which also referred the request to its commerce committee.¹⁰

The two committees asked the Treasury Department to submit any suggestion "which the Department may believe to be in the public interest," and the Secretary of the Treasury returned a prompt reply. He informed the legislators that ports of entry were ordinarily created only at places which had direct communication with foreign countries, such as seaports or towns on navigable rivers. He pointed out that Denver was an inland city and was therefore not eligible to be declared a port of entry. The Secretary continued with the opinion that Denver was many miles inland "and that it is not probable that any considerable amount of customs business would be done there for a long time to come."¹¹ He stated that the department's general policy was to discourage the establishment of ports where there did not appear to be a special necessity for one. As a result of the Secretary's unfavorable answer the bill was reported out of committee adversely.¹²

⁷ *Rocky Mountain News*, October 25, 1876. Hereafter referred to as *RMN*.

⁸ *Inter-Ocean* (Denver), February 18, 1882.

⁹ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 44th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1876, V, Part 1, 115.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 276.

¹¹ U.S., Congress, House, *Reports of Committees*, 44th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1876-77, Vol. II, Report No. 171.

¹² U.S., *Congressional Record*, 44th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1877, V, Part 2, 1639.

Evans once more introduced a set of resolutions to the Denver Board of Trade in which he urged them to continue their efforts. He declared that a Rocky Mountain Customs District, with Denver as its port of entry, was of the utmost importance to the commercial development of the whole region. The *Rocky Mountain News* stated that "he presented arguments and reasons at some length," in which he exhibited a table of figures showing the amount of foreign goods sold in Denver.¹³

Item	Value	Duties
Dry goods, silks, etc.	\$1,615,000	\$500,000
Tobacco, cigars, etc.	41,000	12,500
Drugs, wines, etc.	50,000	17,000
Leather and findings	100,000	29,000
Fancy goods, toys, etc.	30,000	9,000
Queensware	40,000	15,000
Hardware, cutlery, etc.	30,000	12,500
Watches, etc.	20,000	5,000
Total	\$1,926,000	\$600,000

Evans further claimed that the interest alone that could be saved on foreign goods sold in Denver, if it were a port of entry, would amount to \$36,000 a year.¹⁴ He emphasized that savings on interest realized by the city's businessmen was certain to increase as the quantity of imports to neighboring states increased.

Colorado's Congressional representatives initiated action again. Senator Chaffee introduced a bill to create a customs collection district in the Rocky Mountain area.¹⁵ It provided for a district encompassing the state of Colorado and the territories of Wyoming, Utah, and New Mexico, with Denver as the port of entry. The bill also provided for a Collector of Customs to reside in Denver.¹⁶ Congressman Patterson introduced a similar bill to create a customs collection district. This bill was read twice and then ordered printed.¹⁷ Both bills were referred to the respective committees on commerce.

As was the custom, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Roscoe Conkling, wrote to John Sherman, Secretary of the Treasury, asking for his views. Secretary Sherman

¹³ *RMN*, November 7, 1877.

¹⁴ Evans' source for these figures has not been located, but the figures appear to be rather high.

¹⁵ U.S. Congress, *Senate Journal*, 45th Cong., 1st Sess., 1877, 35.

¹⁶ *Inter-Ocean* (Denver), June 10, 1882.

¹⁷ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Cong., 1st Sess., 1878, Part 1, 406.

replied in much the same vein as the previous year. He objected to the creation of a port of entry at Denver on the grounds that there was not sufficient business to warrant it. Sherman stated that not only was there not enough commerce to necessitate the establishment of a port at that particular time, but also that "business would not be of sufficient importance to justify the extension of the privilege for a long time to come."¹⁸ Sherman objected to the considerable number of officers that would be required in the event the proposed customs collection district was established, again stating that the volume of business would "not be likely to warrant the increased expense." A similar letter was sent to the Chairman of the House Committee, John H. Reagan, and the bill was laid aside there too, as the decision of the Secretary of the Treasury was usually final in such matters.¹⁹

John Evans stubbornly continued his efforts. Once more he submitted his proposal to the Denver Board of Trade, and once more, in 1879, his resolutions were adopted. Evans' memorial asserted that Denver was the acknowledged business center of the region, that large amounts of foreign goods were consumed there annually, that Denver was rapidly becoming an important railroad center, and that failure to create a port of entry in Denver was an unjust penalization of the region's growing commerce. The resolutions were sent to the Colorado General Assembly where both houses adopted them, incorporating them as a legislative memorial to Congress. The memorial was sent to the office of Colorado Secretary of State Norman H. Meldrum for transmission to the nation's capital. Surprisingly enough, Meldrum did not send the memorial on, claiming that it contained no instruction for him to do so!²⁰

By 1880 Colorado and its principal city, Denver, had assumed such importance that the movement for a port of entry could hardly be denied. The growth of the Leadville mining camps after 1878 and their railroad connection with Denver stimulated a great business boom. There were 35,000 inhabitants of Denver according to the census of 1880; in 1870 the population was only 5,000. It would increase even more rapidly. The 1880 census counted 195,000 people in the state, as compared to fewer than 40,000 in 1870. Denver's total business for 1870 had been approximately eleven million dollars; in 1880 the value of the city's manufactured products alone exceeded fourteen million

¹⁸ *Inter-Ocean* (Denver), June 10, 1882.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

dollars. Denver was fast growing, and the demands of its commercial interests for proper facilities also increased.

Bills were introduced in Congress once more, this time by Senator Nathaniel P. Hill and Representative Belford. Behind the scenes, hopeful that the plan would be adopted this time, was John Evans. He championed the cause at every opportunity, and was in constant contact with all concerned, coordinating their efforts. He expressed misgivings about the wording of Senator Hill's bill, which referred to Denver as a port of delivery rather than as a port of entry. Hill's reply placated Evans.

... you will find that my bill for making Denver a port of delivery "goes for all there is in it." Under the Act of June 10, 1880,²¹ provisions were made for the immediate transportation for merchandise from certain ports of entry to places in the interior without appraisement at the port of first arrival. My bill places Denver in the same position as St. Louis or Cincinnati, for the most favored of all our interior cities. In fact, it gives to Denver all the advantages possessed by New York or New Orleans, except that the merchandise has to be transported by rail from the port where it is first received. You cannot make Denver a port of original entry, or a first arrival, as it is more properly called, unless you can put Denver upon the seacoast, or carry the sea to Denver. Under the Act of June 10, 1880, certain towns are made ports of delivery. They are entirely differently situated from the places that we call ports of delivery under the old law. To send goods to those ports the appraisement had to be made at the port of first arrival. In other words, the goods had to go into the customs house at the port of first arrival, and were generally detained there for two or three weeks.

Senator Hill then soothed Evans with a description of the benefits that the passage of his bill would bring to Denver.

If my bill becomes a law, any merchandise consigned from any parts of the world to Denver, upon their reaching the port of first arrival, will be forwarded immediately to Denver without being appraised at the port where they first entered. In fact as stated before, Denver will have all the advantages of the largest and most favored interior places. All the advantages which a seaport town could have, except that the merchandise must be transported by railroad after being landed from the vessel. I have looked into this matter carefully, and I assure you that I know what I am doing in the premises.²²

The legislative processes moved ahead slowly. On December 5, 1881, Senator Hill introduced his bill, which was referred to committee.²³ The following day Senator Teller presented to the Senate a joint resolution of the Colorado General Assembly favoring the establishment of Denver as a port of entry, and this,

²¹ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 46th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1880, X, Part 3, 2143.

²² Letter from Senator N. P. Hill to John Evans, December 21, 1881, John Evans Collection, Colorado State Archives, Denver.

²³ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 47th Cong., 1st Sess., 1881, XIII, Part 1, 3.

too, was referred to the Commerce Committee.²⁴ On January 9, 1882, Representative Belford introduced a bill, H. R. No. 2192, to establish a customs port at Denver. This bill was referred to the House Committee on Commerce.²⁵ On February 14, 1882, the House committee reported back with a favorable recommendation of Belford's bill.²⁶

The Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred the bill to establish a port of delivery at Denver, in the State of Colorado, beg leave to report that the city of Denver contains a population, at present, of 50,000, which population is rapidly increasing each year. The city of Denver is also the center of a large region of country wherein was consumed last year imported goods to the amount of over \$12,000,000. It is also the center of great railway lines reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean; and there is today in process of construction a railroad . . . from the city of Denver to the city of New Orleans, and also to the city of Galveston, Texas. In view of the increasing commerce of Denver, the Board of Trade of that city have earnestly recommended, as has also the State Legislature that Denver be made a port of delivery.

The bill under consideration has been submitted to the Secretary of the Treasury, and he states that he can see no objection to its becoming a law. . . .²⁷

H. R. No. 2192 was passed by the House of Representatives on March 1, 1882.

Be it enacted, etc. That Denver, in the State of Colorado, be and the same is hereby, constituted a port of delivery; and that the privileges of immediate transportation of dutiable merchandise conferred by the act of June 10, 1880, entitled "An act to amend the statutes in relation to immediate transportation of dutiable goods, and for other purposes," be, and the same are hereby, extended to said port. And there shall be appointed a surveyor of customs to reside at said port, who shall receive a salary, to be determined by the Secretary of the Treasury not exceeding \$1,500 per annum.²⁸

Senator Hill's bill was tabled by the Senate two days later, and that body unanimously passed the Belford bill, which had been sent over from the House. On March 7, 1882, the President of the United States signed the bill into law.²⁹

Little notice was taken in Denver of the events transpiring in Washington at that time,³⁰ events that would eventually mean much to the city's commerce. In later years the credit for creating the port of entry at Denver would be freely given to many

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 276.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Part 2, 1129.

²⁷ U.S., Congress, House, *Reports of Committees*, 47th Cong., 1st Sess., 1881, Vol. II, Report No. 395.

²⁸ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 47th Cong., 1st Sess., 1882, XIII, Part 2, 1524.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1685.

³⁰ The only newspaper that took an interest in the event was the *Denver Inter-Ocean* (February 11 and March 11, 1882).

persons,³¹ although it was John Evans who was largely responsible for changing dream into reality. A lethargic business community failed to take advantage of Denver's port facilities immediately, although the total value of imports in 1890 came to \$264,707.³² Through the years, however, Denver's businessmen have come to appreciate Denver's port facilities, utilizing them to great advantage.³³ In this way they place a stamp of continuing approval on the efforts of John Evans, and others like him, who were willing to toil for many years against great odds for the ultimate benefit of the community.

BERNARD AXELROD is a Ph.D. candidate at Washington University, St. Louis. His University of Denver Master's thesis was on the subject treated here.

³¹ See, for example, the *Colorado Graphic* (Denver), July 28, 1888, which stated that "when Belford was in Congress he made one of his great speeches on the subject of the great western empire in support of the bill to give Denver port entry." Other persons have also received credit, but John Evans' name has not often been connected with this accomplishment.

³² U.S., Treasury Department, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1899*, p. 159.

³³ In an interview with the Assistant Collector of Customs at Denver, the writer was told that the amount of total import duties collected in 1962 was \$2,351,316.

THE DENVER COMMUNITY PLAYERS

BY WILLIAM L. MYATT

The attractive little auditorium in the Wolcott School at 1420 Marion Street became the home in June, 1924, of the Denver Community Players. This was a non-profit organization incorporated under the laws of Colorado on April 15, 1924.¹

The group was an outgrowth of the Denver Community Playhouse, which was formed in 1922 by Mrs. Frank A. (Sally) Stone and for two years operated as an auxiliary to the Woman's Club of Denver.²

The Playhouse opened with *A Dinner with Complications* on September 29, 1922, and Charles B. Young, an established actor and an incorporator of the later group, was in the cast. Mr. Young, according to the *Rocky Mountain News* on Monday, December 11, gave his interpretation of *The Wandering Jew* from Lew Wallace's *Prince of India*. He worked in many plays during the coming years. His experience included appearances at the old Denham when that theater housed the Woodward Stock Company. The late Edward V. Dunklee also appeared with this group on February 23, 1922, in a one-act bill, *The Little Girl*.

The Playhouse made progress. In March prizes were offered for original one-act plays, the first prize going to Ruth Wood for *Her Dream Boy*. This was produced on November 18 and received a nice review in the *Denver Times*. The judges for this contest included Mary C. C. Bradford, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Ida Kruse McFarlane, at that time "a lecturer on modern culture." Bradford Hatton, grandson of

¹ Incorporators: S. May Stone, Charles B. Young, Lelah Morian, Otis B. Thayer, Gertrude Richards, Anabelle L. Hegarty, Laura S. Webber and Minnie L. Weir.

² Charter members in addition to Mrs. Stone were: Mrs. A. B. Collins, Mrs. C. W. Dillingham, Mrs. Sam (Margaret E.) Freed, Mrs. J. H. Hegarty, Mrs. Fred D. Meek, Mrs. Herbert H. Smith, and Mrs. Gilbert Weir.



William Myatt,
playing "Shylock,"
had trouble
with his beard.

Mary C. C. Bradford and now manager of the Bonfils Theatre, played the lead in *The Boy*, a play done in March, 1923. In October, 1934, Brad's mother Adele Bradford, who was an outstanding character actress, directed *Little Women* for the Players at the East Mississippi Theatre. She was with the Woodward Stock Company at the Denham for many years and handled a number of roles at Elitch's and later at the Denver Civic Theatre.

The city of Denver under the administration of Mayor Benjamin F. Stapleton looked favorably on this cultural venture and subsidized it to the extent of \$4,000 per year. After the theater established itself, this was reduced to \$2,000, then \$1,000, and finally eliminated altogether.

Wolcott School, that estimable hall of learning, was founded in 1898 by Anna Wolcott. Although basically a school for girls, boys of kindergarten and primary age were accepted. Miss Wolcott married Joel F. Vaile in 1913 but continued in charge of the school. Later Dr. J. D. S. Riggs assumed charge, until 1921 when Mrs. Vaile again managed the school. After it closed in 1924, all buildings except the theatre were converted into apartments. It was through the courtesy of Horace W. Bennett, manager of the buildings, that the Denver Community Players secured it as a home. The rent wasn't always forthcoming, but Mr. Bennett made allowances by occasionally reducing the rent, and the records indicate that some months he forgave the rent.³

Wilberforce Whiteman, father of Paul Whiteman and conductor of Trinity Methodist Episcopal Choir, organized both chorus and orchestra in the theatre. On December 27, 1925, he directed the cantata, *Bethlehem and the Christ Child*, and on April 15, 1926, he conducted a chorus and orchestra in *The Mikado* for three delightful performances. Mr. Whiteman also produced *Pinafore* in 1925.

The first play at Wolcott, *Mrs. Temple's Telegram*, opened on November 13, 1924. On the following January 2, this initial effort was repeated over KOA with the same cast. O. B. Thayer, a charter member of the Players, directed several plays, among which was *Upon the Waters*. This, too, was aired over KOA, on December 22, 1924, the first play to be broadcast by that station.

It was during Mrs. Stone's administration in 1925 that the Players, at the suggestion of Helen Black, drama critic for the *Rocky Mountain News*, put on the first state tournament in the United States, a plan that was later adopted by many other states. Its purpose was to encourage amateur theatrical performances, and entries were open to all state high school, college, club and community groups. These groups selected their own casts for one-act plays, presenting them in the Woman's Club Theatre at 1437 Glenarm Street. There were numerous prizes, the top for high school groups being a bronze plaque donated by Douglas Fairbanks, the celebrated Denver-born actor. The Masque and Sandal Dramatic Society of the Colorado Springs Senior High School, under the direction of E. Benson Sargent, won the plaque three times (1925-26-27) and thus became the permanent possessor of the trophy. Mr. Sargent's accomplishment so impressed the Players board that in 1927 he was

³ We are indebted to Palmer L. Burch, vice-president and treasurer of Horace W. Bennet & Co., for data on occupancy. He made a diligent search of records "down in the vault" for this information. Mr. Burch is also a representative in the Colorado Legislature.

persuaded to direct the Players. In subsequent seasons he staged outstanding productions of *Outward Bound*, *Children of the Moon*, and *Sun-up*.

The first tournament was rather crude, and Miss Black suggested that higher standards be set and more stringent rules formulated. This being done, the tournaments improved immensely, and the *Rocky Mountain News* then went all out with coverage in text and pictures and really made these tournaments a major project in Denver's little theatre history.

Assisting Mrs. Stone in the 1928 tournament, in addition to Helen Black, was Helen Bonfils, that generous lady whose interest in the theatre has increased through the years.⁴ Anne Evans assisted with the posters, Mrs. Gilbert Weir was treasurer, and Estelle Stewart, who later played an important role in *Princess Goodwill*, was secretary. The judges were Ida Kruse McFarlane, Helen Black, Isadore Samuels, and Frank White. The Lamont School of Music, Brola-Harrison Vocal Studio, the Rinquist School of Music, and the Crosby String Quartet, provided the music. This highly successful tournament produced eighteen one-act plays, including such classics as Shaw's *The Man of Destiny*, Tolstoy's *What Men Live by*, and Maeterlinck's *The Blind*. The 1928 tournament was typical of later tournaments and names connected with it are mentioned to give an idea of the calibre of participants interested in the enterprise. The other tournaments included persons equally important in the cultural life of Denver. Miss Black and Mrs. McFarlane served as judges for several seasons. There were ten tournaments in all, the final one in 1934.

Upward strides continued to be made, especially in the tournaments, prompting *Drama* to comment in one issue: "The Denver Community Players have also attracted to Denver and to Colorado the attention of people who are interested in this form of expression in other places."

In those early days the Players were proud to have as patron or sustaining members such prominent people as Paul White-man, Douglas Fairbanks, H. W. Bennett, William V. Hodges, Clarence Daly, Frederick H. Reid, Pansy Stockton, Blanche Dingely Mathews, Mary Elitch Long, Ida Kruse McFarlane,

⁴ Even as a girl she had charge of miniature stage sets in the Tournament, and her love of the theatre broadened to such a degree that she matured into an accomplished actress and a capable and successful producer. She arranged for *A Thurber Carnival* at Central City, too, for the season of 1960. Her producing company is the Bonard Co., and includes Haila Stoddard, the actress-wife of Whitfield Connor, a favorite of many seasons at Elitch's. Just ten years ago she built the beautiful Bonfils Theatre, the home of the Denver Civic Theatre.

and Mesdames Frank Woodward, H. H. Tammen, and J. B. Benedict.

In their Wolcott Theatre the Players produced such box-office and artistic successes as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Mrs. William Shafroth. The writer made his first public performance in this play with the bit part of Egeus and missed his first entrance cue, thereby learning that memorizing cues is as important as learning lines. Later another Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, was done with the writer as Shylock. It was repeated many times, including performances at high schools in Castle Rock, Longmont, Brighton, etc., with bargain prices for students. We usually filled the house; interested pupils would come backstage between acts and stand in awe of Shylock, and some of the bolder ones would examine the beard and occasionally the boldest would pull on it "to see if it was real." The application of the crepe hair beard was a tedious half-hour job, a few strands at a time stuck on with spirit gum. T'would have been a catastrophe to lose it between acts—but it never happened.

Edwin C. Johnson, then governor of Colorado, came backstage after the opening show of *The Merchant* and offered felicitations to the cast, a gracious gesture and a compliment to Michael Andrew Slane, the director of that particular bill. Other Shakespeare plays included *As You Like It*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, some of them also under the direction of Mr. Slane.

November 21, 1925, that little theatre favorite of the times, *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, opened for several performances with Jessie Pringle in the title role. The play originally opened on Broadway in 1904, and Miss Pringle played the title role more than 100 times. It was a lucky break for the Players to have her. Carl S. Milliken played Mr. Wiggs. Miss Pringle also played over 1,000 performances on Broadway opposite Frank Bacon in *Lightnin'* in 1918, the play that was the biggest Broadway hit of that season, running 1,291 performances and giving Frank Bacon the best role of his career.

Another favorite which we never played was *Charley's Aunt: From Brazil Where the Nuts Come From*, by Brandon Thomas. Perhaps casting the lead was too difficult. This play first opened in London December 21, 1892, and ran four years. It opened in America in 1893 and has been a perennial favorite ever since. The statement was made three or four years ago that *Charley's Aunt* has been playing somewhere in the world every night



The Broadway production of CHARLEY'S AUNT starred Jose Ferrer, Nicholas Joy, J. Richard Jones, and former "Player" Thomas Speidel

since opening. With the permission of the Brandon Thomas heirs it was made into a musical titled *Where's Charley?* It opened on Broadway October 11, 1948, with Ray Bolger, and was an outstanding hit of that season (792 performances). This play is mentioned not only because of its phenomenal run but because one of the Players, Thomas Speidel, did a part in *Charley's Aunt* on Broadway in 1940 with Jose Ferrer in the lead. He and others of the Players made the "big time" and later went on to success in Hollywood.

Another young man, Lloyd Hagerty, played many parts, including roles in two tournaments. In one of these, *The Little King*, he won a "best actor" prize. He went on to Hollywood where he had a fine acting career at the North Hollywood Play-

house, and also worked in pictures. Lloyd now lives in Denver.

Charles E. Works, now a professor of law at Denver University, also worked with the Players, doing among other parts, Petruchio in *Taming of the Shrew*. He later played parts at the Denver University Civic Theatre. He was also for a time a board member of the Players, and for many years he has been a member of the board of trustees of the Denver Civic Theatre.

Names mentioned represent only a small percentage of the people who worked with or came under the influence of the Players. It would be out of the question to include all who gained experience and pleasure by their association with the group even if the information were available.

It was on November 22, 1925, that Robert Mantell, the Shakespearean actor, produced *Hamlet* in modern dress at our Broadway Theatre, and the Players were called on to supply a few supers. This writer was highly flattered to be one of the chosen, until he learned the choice was made because he was one of the few boys who owned a tuxedo. But he went on and "supported" Mantell with all of two lines. It was a thrill to tread the boards with such distinguished artists.

The Players said a sad good-bye to Wolcott in 1926 after two years occupancy, when the theatre was converted into apartments. I've always suspected that we of the theatre precipitated or at least contributed to this change, partly financial but largely due to the exuberance of youth in creating a bit of a nuisance, noisily bounding out after a rehearsal or performance and annoying tenants in the adjoining apartments.

A vacant room at 1554 Lincoln Street seemed suitable, and after installing a stage and totally inadequate dressing rooms, the Players moved in. The dressing rooms were so small we took turns making up, and when a large cast was used, the outside hall was pressed into service for make-up and costuming. A Falstaff would never have been able to get out of the room after his pillow-padding.

The new theatre was not too satisfactory. The floor had no slant and naturally the tall people sat in the front rows. In spite of shortcomings there was usually a good house, indicating the need to satisfy a small group that craved live theatre. It was named Studio Theatre.

Nothing seemed too big for the intrepid Players to tackle. December 17 and 18, 1927, a play for children and young-in-heart grownups, *Princess Goodwill*, played two nights and two mat-

inees at our beloved Broadway Theatre. The play was translated from the German and directed by Victor Neuhaus, then secretary-treasurer of The Colorado Herald Publishing Company. It was sponsored and financed by a large group of public-spirited citizens, including Rev. Hugh L. McMenam, Rev. David Fouse, Mrs. John Evans, Ella M. Weckbaugh, Mrs. Charles E. Hilliker, Mrs. George B. Berger and many, many others



In THE SUN BIRD
William Myatt
played
"Humdrum,
a clod."



Lucille Ferry as
"The Sun Bird"

prominent in Denver civic and social life. A beautiful fairy tale was *Princess Goodwill*, featuring a very large cast that included two lovely ballets and a large chorus directed by Ruth Warren Felover. The project was sold as a charitable one and orphans attended free, and the Denver Tramway and Yellow Cab furnished transportation for the matinees to and from the orphanages.

Mrs. Chester A. Ommanney was president in 1928-29, and some of the productions were directed by Mme. Giana Regamey. She also directed a Colorado Day pageant at the Greek Theatre in the Civic Center titled *The Muses of Colorado*. The cast of over 200 included members of the pioneer territorial societies and other civic groups. A month later *Everyman*, the sixteenth-century morality play, was produced with a splendid cast at the Civic Center, and Mayor Benjamin F. Stapleton made the opening address to an audience of some 3,000.



Cast of KNIGHTS OF THE CRIMSON QUILL; upper, Kimball Burr, Eleanor Weckbaugh, and Harry McGuire; lower, Charles Chipperfield and Frederica Bellamy

An historical and allegorical drama of Colorado, *The Sun Bird*, written by the Denver poetess Elizabeth Kuskulis, was produced by Sally Stone. First performed in an outdoor theatre at Indian Hills on July 21, 1928, it was later repeated at Denver Municipal Auditorium for the Twentieth Biennial Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. This, too, required a large cast, and included the late beautiful Freddie (Mrs. Harry E.) Bellamy as "Imprima, the Spirit of Colorado." It was a beautiful production, especially with the two performances given outdoors which gave the cast an opportunity to work in natural surroundings.

Also in 1928 *Knights of the Crimson Quill*, a pageant drama, was presented by the Denver Community Chest. This elaborate production, also written by Elizabeth Kuskulis and directed by Sally Stone, was not primarily a Community Players project, although the cast for the drama episodes was composed largely of actors from the Players. For this particular show the City Auditorium was packed. Mrs. Bellamy played "Queen Kindheart," Clarence Moore, then at KOA, played "Mr. Denver Colorado," and Estelle Stewart played "Mrs. Denver Colorado."

Under the able direction of Michael Andrew Slane from 1932 to 1934 such favorites as *School for Scandal* and *East Lynne* as well as several of the Shakespeare plays were produced. Carlisle Swain was technical and art director. Mr. Swain is now chairman of the Religious Drama Committee of the Denver



Charles B. Young in his version of "The Face on the Barroom Floor"

Area Council of Churches and also drama consultant, play production, of the Colorado Woman's College. Mr. Slane now lives in San Francisco.

A charter member of the Players, Charles B. Young is still active in theatre, stage, radio, and television and this summer will for the twelfth season present at Central City his version of "The Face on the Barroom Floor" in the Teller House Bar, complete in costume and wig. The cap he wears is seventy-five years old, the coat ninety, and the boots one hundred years old, so he surely is authentic. As a matter of fact, Charles is a native son, born in Leadville in 1883, when his father was superintendent of the Grant Smelter there. He says his interpretation is given as if done by a miner of the early Gold Rush days in Central. When Charley performs there's standing room only in the Teller House Bar.

After the loss of the subsidy from the city, it became increasingly difficult to finance the Players. The formation of other theatrical groups and reluctance of donors to contribute during the depression years were additional factors in the decline of the Players. In the fall of 1934 the Players vacated 1554 Lincoln and moved into a deserted movie house (movies, too, were suffering) at 525 East Mississippi Avenue. Operations there were successful artistically, though not financially. The group finally disintegrated, but the charter is still in existence.

The impact of the Players on "little theatre" in Denver has been felt through the years and the group is remembered fondly by all who came under its influence. Since that time little theatre groups have made tremendous strides all over the country, and a recent estimate indicates that there are now some 5,000 community theatres in addition to college, school, and church dramatic groups in the United States.

WILLIAM L. MYATT, now retired in Denver, was one of the pioneers in Denver's "little theater" movement. He is a frequent contributor to CM.

CHINOOK

BY NORMAN S. BALLANTINE

This is a true story of an adventure which took place some fifty-eight years ago in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Winter had set in early and with a vengeance, and by December, 1905, the entire western slope of Colorado's rugged mountains was sealed in a frozen mass of ice and crusted snow. Trees and underbrush were paralyzed by a cloak of ice crystals. All animals were suffering from the intense cold.¹

In the usually fertile valley at the foot of the towering peaks a hot, dry summer had critically reduced the hay harvest. Where normally there was an abundant supply of hay and grain for all livestock, it had become impossible to purchase feed at any price.

At this time and in this region, I was operating a ranching and cattle business, and my worries revolved about 1500 head of two year old steers confined in barren snow-packed pastures. The hungry animals plodded around the pasture fences bawling piteously, their protests echoing day and night through the frosty atmosphere. All streams flowing through these pastures were frozen solid, and the poor creatures added to their misery by seeking to quench their burning thirst by licking the hard crusted snow until their tongues were sore and swollen.

My worries were multiplied and the herd decreased as the bitter sub-zero cold continued unabated, and a number of dead cattle were found either frozen, or trampled by the stronger steers.

The New Year came in with a frigid ten degrees below zero, and I realized that I must make some drastic decision without further delay. The suffering herd must be moved to a lower elevation where they could browse on old grass and brush free

¹ The *Grand Junction Sentinel* reported on January 11, 1906, that "quite a large number of cattle have been caught in the ice on the Grand River east of the city several miles and are lying there until the spring freshets . . . the cattle are more or less a pollution of the river. . . ."

from snow and ice and drink from streams which had not yet surrendered to the icy cold.

I selected seven cowboys in addition to myself to trail this valuable herd of cattle over an icy treacherous road. Considerable risk was involved in this maneuver, especially since our only route to the outside world led through the deep Colorado River Canyon.

At the crack of dawn on this bitterly cold day our crew assembled to release the miserable animals from their icy environment. The heavy pasture gate swung open on its groaning hinges and a swirling mass of panic-stricken cattle charged in a wild stampede to freedom. Although we were mounted on strong cow ponies we found ourselves powerless to stem immediately this seething desperate tide, this avalanche of panicky creatures, seeking freedom from their icy pasture prison.

Hastily I shouted to two of my best cowhands, Chuck and Bill, and the three of us hustled over a short cut across a low mesa to a position where we could slow down the leaders of the onrushing herd. This strategy worked and soon the animals were under control and strung out along the icy road.

We traveled along through fairly open country for about two hours. Our hands and feet were stiff with cold and our faces were blue and frost-bitten. It was difficult to imagine ever being warm again. Suddenly and without warning a strong hot wind started to blow in from the north. The zero temperatures miraculously began to rise. We cheered this sudden change from sub-zero to balmy weather, never suspecting the terrors it was to hold for us. It was obvious that this was not an ordinary winter thaw. The high velocity of this hot wind, its sudden and arbitrary appearance, were signs that this was one of nature's most unusual phenomena, a chinook wind.²

Soon we discarded our heavy leather jackets, and the horses and cattle were sweating freely under their winter coats. The wind velocity was increasing now and we estimated it at 35 miles per hour. As the hot, dry wind swept down the hillsides and gullies, an astonishing transformation of the mountain slopes took place. The ice and snow, as if by magic, melted under our very eyes, causing torrents of muddy water to cascade down gulches and dry creek beds. These in turn became roaring streams seeking a lower level in the Colorado River.

² The chinook, an unusual weather phenomenon, is a hot, dry wind which flows down the slope of the Rocky Mountains in winter and early spring reaching, in some cases, a high velocity of from 35 to 40 miles per hour. It was so named by the early settlers because it was supposed to come from the country of the Chinook Indians at the mouth of the Columbia River.

The entire countryside appeared to be in motion. Our narrow road traversing a small creek bed was now submerged. The cattle took on new life, quenching their thirst with the murky waters.

Fascinated as we were by this metamorphosis, we could neither suspect nor foretell the dangers we were about to encounter upon entering the deep canyon of the Colorado. The Colorado River drains a vast territory as it flows through the Rocky Mountains, finds its way through Arizona and California to emerge finally in the Gulf of Mexico. Neither I nor my men could conceive of the impact the sudden thaw would have on this great river.

Our cattle swung around a sharp curve in the roadway, and there was the mighty Colorado River covered with a solid sheet of sparkling ice shimmering in the brilliant sunshine. The majestic Colorado Canyon, bounded on both sides by sheer rock walls which reached skyward above the river bed, presented an imposing picture of rugged grandeur. As we entered the canyon I had certain feelings of foreboding. The sudden weather change in the last few hours and the always impressive but somehow ominous canyon left me with a sense of uneasiness and apprehension. I called to my men and we quickly separated twenty-five steers from the head of the herd to facilitate the movement of the balance of the cattle. This would improve our progress through the narrow canyon and ease the crowding in the body of the herd. For a time the cattle trailed along the narrow rock roadway without incident. Both men and animals were grateful to be free of the zero temperatures.

Many of the cattle were drowned in the ice-choked river.



Suddenly an explosive blast of crashing ice reverberated within the canyon walls and we were startled to see the roaring upheaval of the river's frozen ice cap. Huge chunks of ice rose up in front of us only to crack asunder, with scattering ice fragments pitched into the air like paper match boxes. The ice cap seemed to be undulating like waves in the ocean. The pressure exerted by the flood waters underneath the ice cap was almost volcanic in its strength and dynamic power. We watched with awe and a kind of frozen terror as the river disgorged its contents with cannon-like salvos. One of my men shouted the chilling news that our road to the rear was blocked by the accumulation of ice floes. Our only escape was to continue through the seething canyon.

The shattering ice cap hurled large and small ice chunks around and among the frantic cattle. The animals, in their terror, were beginning to crowd each other off the road and into the ice-infested river. Everything was in turmoil. The bursting ice placques sounded like volleys of rifle shots increasing constantly in tempo and volume. I knew we must make a supreme effort to escape this critical situation, and we must act immediately before the road ahead of us was blocked.

This maneuver, however, proved futile. A large, partially upended ice floe had been deposited across our narrow path and leaned against the canyon wall at a dangerous angle. Our forward passage was cut off. With both avenues of escape sealed off, we were all trapped together in this monstrous gorge.

The eerie bawling of the cattle and deafening cracks of bursting ice filled the air with sounds of terror and chaos. Many steers had already fallen down on the slippery ice floes and were drifting out with the turbulent river. Sensing death, they were making heroic attempts to slide off the ice and swim away from the vicious currents. They were quickly crushed by the collisions of floating ice, then disappeared into the depths of the foaming river.

My men and I had lost all control of the herd by now. We were totally unable to handle the panic-stricken animals. The congested condition on the narrow road became chaotic. With sheer rock walls on one side, the ugly river on the other, and our progress blocked, it appeared that annihilation was inevitable. To add to our troubles, rocks and boulders, loosened by the hot wind melting the frosty cliffs, plunged down from higher elevations among our cattle. Several were killed instantly. It seemed incredible that the humans escaped this bombardment.

Chuck, Bill and I at the front of the herd were making superhuman efforts to handle our horses among the excited cattle and to keep from being pushed into the boiling river. Our situation was desperate. The furious river, bent on our destruction, kept licking the rocky bank of the roadway as the water level began to rise. Soon it would approach flood stage, submerging our narrow road and us as well.

Above the sound of distressed cattle I heard a cry for help. Glancing toward the river I was horrified to see Bill, off his horse and floating on a large ice floe, drifting toward the swift current. Bill's horse was further downstream flat on another floe. For the first time I realized the true nature of our predicament. Up to this moment I had been occupied with efforts to save the cattle. Now I must concentrate on saving Bill. We, as humans, were as vulnerable as the cattle. I shuddered with fear. Quickly I uncoiled my lariat rope and cast a loop toward Bill. Fortunately he grabbed it the first time, and with my horse straining and groaning as he tried to find a foothold on the treacherous ice, I hauled Bill through the icy waters and up on the roadway bank. I breathed a sigh of relief and Bill, still shaking from his narrow escape, collapsed momentarily in a rock crevasse by the side of the road.

Chuck, witnessing Bill's rescue, made a determined effort to cast his lariat over the neck of Bill's horse, but the terrified animal was too far from shore. In a matter of moments, the horse on the ice floe drifted into the swirling river current and was engulfed and sucked under the ice. Bill's eyes filled with tears, and for a moment he hid his face in his hands. Tremblingly he climbed up back of my saddle to escape trampling by the milling cattle. Bill had raised and trained his horse and this loss was a bitter one, I knew. But Bill was safe and that was the important thing.

Feelings of helplessness almost overwhelmed me after this incident with Bill. Here we were, small, ineffectual humans, feverishly battling nature in an effort to survive against impossible odds. The water level of the river was now rising at an alarming rate. We could no longer deny the precariousness of our situation. It would be a miracle of the first degree if we could escape the clutches of the river's swirling current. Our chances of salvation from a watery grave seemed hopeless.

"This must not happen," I told myself. "There must be some way to escape. Don't lose your head. This is no time to panic. Don't give up! Don't give up!"



Norman Ballantine, c. 1907

The Colorado was roaring ever more furiously and now had risen to lick at the knees of the horses and cattle. The gruesome sight of dead steers floating downstream added to the general feeling of horror and devastation. I decided to investigate the huge ice floe blocking our passage. My heart jumped. In my agitated state could I be seeing things? No. It was true! The big floe had slipped a trifle from the canyon's wall leaving a small aperture which a single file of steers might squeeze through. I could scarcely believe my eyes! My heart beat a wild tattoo against my ribs. If only there were no further obstacles down river! I shouted wildly to the other men. There was a moment of sheer joy—a return to the world of the living of men who already thought themselves dead. Then—to work, for not a precious moment of time could be lost.

Although the steers could pass through, we could see that it would be necessary for each man to lead his horse through this narrow slit. But how would we get the steers started if we could not drive them through with our horses? After a short conference Chuck cast his lariat over a steer's head, tied his rope to the saddle horn, then dismounted and pulled his horse, dragging the howling critter through the hole. Then he

remounted and pulled the animal down the water-laden road. Instantly the balance of the herd, hearing the bawling of their fellow, followed single file.

As the last steer pushed through the narrow passage, I heaved a sigh of relief and gratitude. A terrific burden had been lifted from my shoulders. However, we were still in the danger zone, and now I must concentrate on our next move. The herd splashed along the submerged road in water up to their bellies. In places they had to swim as the rampaging river threatened to sweep us into its raging maelstrom. The giant chinook was still blowing its hot breath down the canyon walls, and set beads of perspiration rolling down our faces and bodies as we fought with grim determination to cheat the rising flood waters of their intended prey.

Looking ahead about a quarter of a mile, we could see a fantastic accumulation of huge ice chunks piled high and crazily in the air, sparkling and shimmering in the sun. There was a sense of magic and make-believe about this scene. It was as if we had come upon some grotesque yet beautiful citadel in a myth or fairy story. It was, in reality, a mammoth ice jam blocking the river's flow, the last obstacle to our push toward safety. Could we work our way around the ice jam before it broke up from the pressure of the rising tide? If we succeeded we would escape the maw of the enraged river which was trying to sweep us into eternity. We must make the final and supreme effort to reach our goal.

Yelling and prodding the exhausted cattle through the deep turbulent water, we hoped our prayers might be answered. After a valiant struggle, we succeeded in pushing our last steer past the mighty ice jam to safety.

As we emerged onto higher ground, I looked back once more at the seething cauldron below us, and at the ice jam which winked so wickedly and invitingly in the sun. The realization that our escape was indeed a miracle swept over me like a wave, and I breathed a prayer of fervent thanksgiving. We had been victorious in our encounter with nature. We had lived to tell not only of her fury but of her beauty as well. The chinook blew hotly into my face and seemed to laugh at the weakness of man. But I laughed last because man had won.

NORMAN S. BALLANTINE, who has been retired for a number of years, got his start in the cattle business after graduating from high school, when his father put him to work in the Denver Union Stock Yards.

TRINIDAD LEGENDS

BY MORRIS F. TAYLOR

The origin of place names is often a controversial subject. Derivations are blurred by time unless they are protected by documentation or other proof. A legend may in time come to be accepted as fact, and, of course, a fact may be in question when its supporting evidence is not available. Trinidad, the county seat of Las Animas County, Colorado, is a place name about which there is some confusion and disagreement. It is to be hoped that what follows here will bring some clarification to the point.

A commonly accepted version of the name's origin is that the town was named for Trinidad, the daughter of Felipe Baca, one of the town's very early settlers. It is commemorated on a bronze plaque (1930) on the corner of the Columbian Hotel in Trinidad by the State Historical Society of Colorado, which says that the town "was named about 1861 for a daughter of Don Felipe Baca, a pioneer."¹ Prior to that this version was incorporated by A. W. McHendrie in his well-known article

Trinidad in 1875



"Trinidad and Its Environs."² Unfortunately Judge McHendrie does not give his source. LeRoy R. Hafen, then State Historian, made a similar undocumented statement in an article on Colorado place names.³

I have already stated that it seems very doubtful that Trinidad was named for a daughter of Felipe Baca.⁴ Now I should like to expand upon that and submit what I believe to be additional strong support for my contention.

Michael Beshoar, early citizen of Trinidad (1867), said in his *All About Trinidad and Las Animas County, Colorado*:⁵

TRINIDAD, is so-called because of a meeting of the first settlers, for the purpose of naming the place and choosing a patron saint, they decided to dedicate the place directly to the Holy Trinity; hence the name meaning the Trinity.

The *Trinidad Directory for the Year 1892*, the earliest available to me, states on page 13: "It derives its name from the Holy Trinity, the patron saint of its founders." In the *History of the State of Colorado*, Frank Hall, quoting Michael Beshoar, asserts that "Trinidad . . . signifies 'the Trinity' or 'City of the Holy Trinity.'"⁶ The DeBusk papers⁷ have A. W. Archibald, one of Trinidad's earliest settlers (1861) offering another version:

There was no public meeting called to choose a name. There was no proposal of other names; neither any discussion of any consequence. Gabriel [Gutierrez] submitted the name of Trinidad, and it was accepted nem con. It was well understood and believed, at that time, that Gabriel Gutierrez who had lived here for some two months, had left behind him in New Mexico an affinity named Trinidad, a handsome woman. Not Santissima Trinidad—no holy Trinity [sic]. In bestowing the name Gutierrez simply complimented his affinity who so far as known never came to Colorado. Gabriel Gutierrez lived with his lawful wife in Colorado.

I am not aware that this version has been published elsewhere; certainly this clear account, written by a man contemporary with the naming of the town, a man who was present at the incident he relates, demands serious consideration. Archibald had assisted in making the first survey of the townsite, at the completion of which bystanders suggested that Gutierrez be authorized to name the town.

It is significant, I am sure, that Archibald and the other early sources quoted above make no mention of Trinidad Baca.

¹ *The Colorado Magazine*, VII (September, 1930), 202.

² *Ibid.*, VI (September, 1929), 159-170.

³ "Colorado Cities—Their Founding and the Origin of Their Names,"

ibid., IX (September, 1932), 170-183.

⁴ *A Sketch of Early Days on the Purgatory* (Trinidad, Colo.: 1959), p. 39.

⁵ (Denver: Times Printing House and Book Manufactory, 1882), p. 46.

⁶ (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Co., 1895), IV, 192.

⁷ Library, Trinidad State Junior College. See also *DeBusk Memorial*, CWA Interviews (1933-1934), Pam 359/33, II, 30, Library, State Historical Society of Colorado.



The Don Felipe Baca Ranch near Trinidad, c. 1869

If there were some substance to that explanation, it does not seem unreasonable to expect it to have been given attention by them. The fact that they do not do so casts serious doubt on the popular belief that the memory of Felipe Baca's daughter is perpetuated in the name of the town of Trinidad.

Also somewhat pertinent to my point, although by no means conclusive, is that the last will and testament of Felipe Baca, dated March 24, 1874, does not include a daughter named Trinidad in the references to his children.⁸ Similarly, the baptismal records of Holy Trinity Parish, Trinidad, have no entry for Trinidad Baca. Of course, she may have been christened before the family came to Colorado.

In summary, it seems clear that there is no good evidence to support the contention that the town was named after a daughter of Felipe Baca.

MORRIS F. TAYLOR, the Society's regional vice president from Trinidad, teaches history at Trinidad State Junior College. His article on early Trinidad appeared in our October, 1963, issue.

⁸ Book 57, p. 348, office of the County Clerk and Recorder, Las Animas County, Colorado.



PRELIMINARY EXCAVATION AT FORT VASQUEZ

BY GALEN R. BAKER

The Colorado State Historical Society, in conjunction with the Trinidad State Junior College, made initial test excavations in and around the Fort Vasquez State Monument on November 16, 1963. Greatest attention was given to the south end of the site where a new museum and visitor center has recently been constructed.

The purpose of these test excavations was to determine if the construction of the museum would destroy any historical or prehistorical materials in the vicinity of the fort. Near the new museum a large parking lot facility is to cover more of the monument land and test trenches were laid out in that area and partially excavated to determine the extent of occupation there. The tested areas indicated a definite lack of any important archaeological materials in the areas to be disturbed by the above-mentioned construction. It is believed that such materials did exist at the site at one time but that they were lost due to prior disturbance of the site as long ago as the early 1900's. Also, extensive disturbance must have occurred when the fort was reconstructed in the 1930's with the aid of WPA workers.

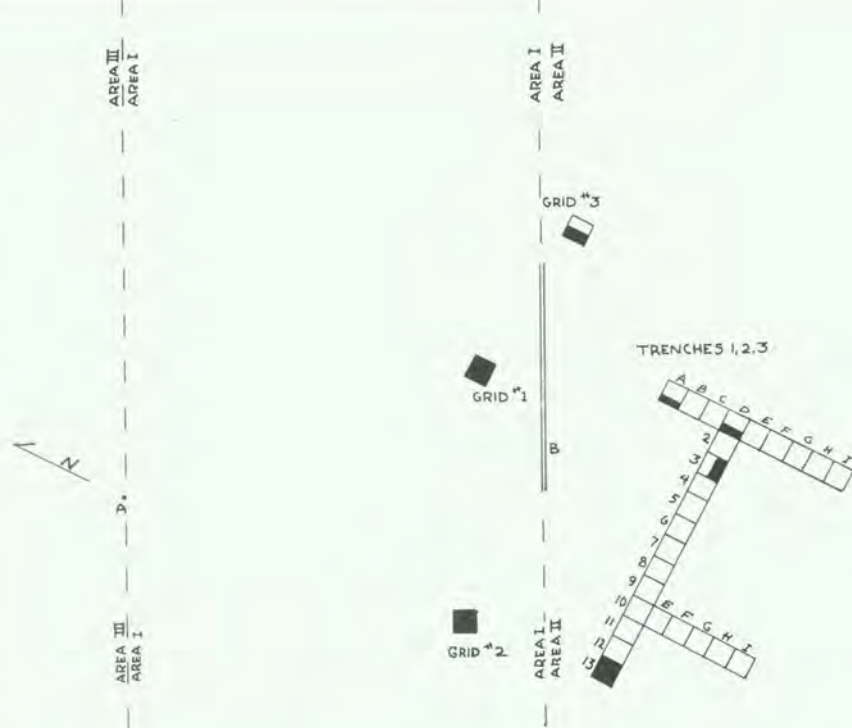


DIAGRAM A:

- A Base point, southeast corner of Ft. Vasquez site monument.
- B South wall of new museum, division marker between Areas I and II.
- C Location of base of flagpole(?) buried near artificial well (not surveyed only approximate point in center of Fort Vasquez Plaza).
- GRID 1 AREA I Located in center of new museum.
- GRID 2 AREA I Located west of new museum.
- GRID 3 AREA II Located east of new museum.
- TRENCHES 1 2 3 AREA II Trench grid system.
- Grids having part or all of the ground level removed.

Approximately six hours of work by some twelve people was accomplished on that very cold and windy November Saturday. The recovered information and materials would seem to indicate that this amount of time and energy was sufficient to determine the archaeological significance of the area immediately to the south of the presently existing adobe fort.

The portion of the site to receive immediate archaeological attention was divided into three contiguous areas. A base point was established at the southeast corner of the stone monument located on the site and just to the west of the gateway leading into the open plaza of the fort. The stone monument is located outside of the fort walls and in an ideal position for surveying in all test grids with the aid of a transit and rod. A master map was prepared showing the position of each excavated area.

The land enclosed by the walls of the presently existing fort south to the front of the site stone monument (location of the site base point) was designed as Area III. A line running

along the edge of the base of the stone monument and extending completely across the state land in nearly an east-west direction separated Area III from Area I (see diagram A). Area I extended from this line south to the south wall of the foundation of the new museum building. Another line running parallel to that at the stone monument separated Area I from Area II. Area II thus extended from the south wall of the museum to the presently existing fence.

Area I was tested first. Grid 1 / Area I was placed almost in the center of the surrounding foundation of the new museum. This was thought to be the most important area for exploration since this plot would be completely destroyed and covered

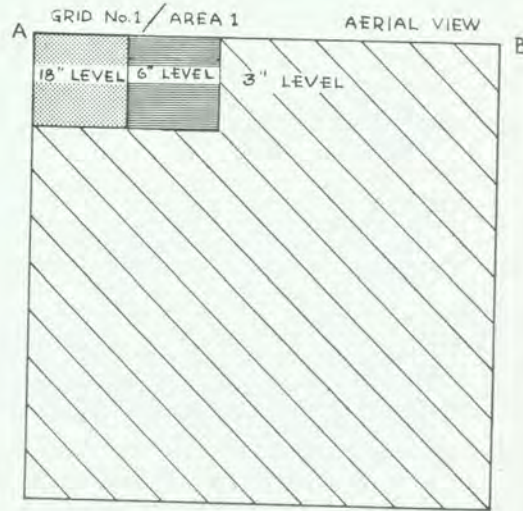
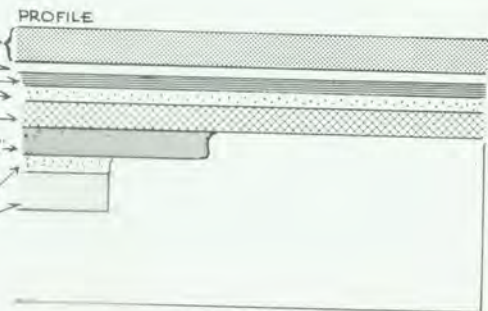


DIAGRAM B:

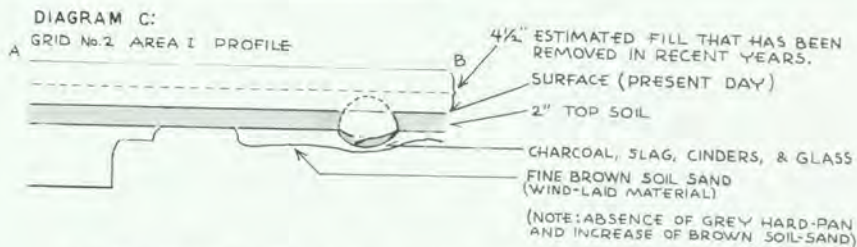
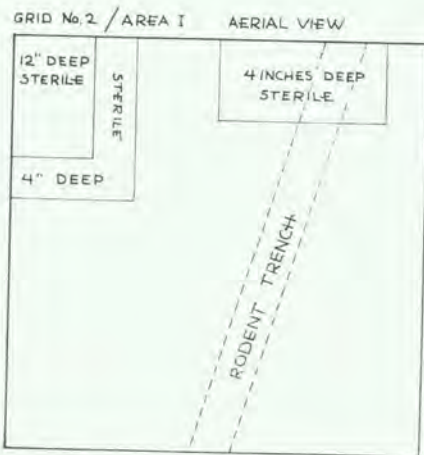
- 1 SAND (CONSTRUCTION WORK) 4"
- 2 TOP SOIL 1/2"
- 3 SAND (WIND DEPOSITED) 1 1/4"
- 4 SMALL GRAVEL 1 3/4"
- 5 GREY HARD PAN (DARK CLAY) 3"
- 6 GREY HARD PAN (LIGHT CLAY) 3 1/4"
(CHARCOAL FRAGMENTS)
- 7 FINE BROWN SOIL-SAND (WIND-LAID MATERIAL) 1 1/4"
- 8 COARSE GRAVEL (WATER-LAID MATERIAL) 4 3/8"



within the next few days. This grid, as were all others, was 5 feet square. The removal of dirt occurred in 6-inch levels unless the soil conditions indicated an even more careful procedure. Such a process of removal allows the excavator to develop an artificial stratigraphy or layering, making it possible to recover and control the relative placement of archaeological information and materials. This grid had 4 inches of sand covering the ground surface put there by the work of the contractor constructing the museum. The top soil was 1/2 inch thick. Below this was 1 1/4 inches of fine sand. Next was a layer 1 3/4 inches thick composed of relatively small gravel stones. A 6 1/4 inch layer of grey hard-pan clay-like substance was found underlying the small gravel stones. Small, loose, somewhat rounded pebbles were found imbedded in this hard-pan.

A 1 x 2 foot test pit was excavated in the northeast corner of Grid 1 to a depth of 6 inches in one part and 18 inches in another in order to determine what kind of geological strata existed between the grey hard-pan and the water-deposited coarse gravels of greater antiquity than the fort. Below the hard-pan was a 1 1/4 inch thick layer of fine sand of well-sorted grain sizes and therefore most probably wind deposited. Below this were found the coarse river gravels of the Platte River when its course was over this area. In summary, it appears that the first 3 inches below the top soil would have been the likely horizons for cultural remains to have been recovered. No such evidence came to light and I am thus led to believe that the surface upon which occupants of the fort lived has been removed, perhaps as late as the 1930's but perhaps much earlier. It may be that the WPA workers who restored the fort used the surrounding surface soils to make the adobe bricks, and thus unknowingly removed much evidence. It should be noted here that construction of the highways also removed evidence of archaeological interest. Fragments of charcoal were recovered from the lower parts of the hard-pan and the upper parts of the coarse gravels. These fragments in my opinion are only to be associated with natural phenomena and not with the activities of man.

Grid 2 / Area I is located at about the same latitude as Grid 1, but outside of the new museum foundations and near the west fence line of the fort monument area. About 4 1/2 inches of loose sand had to be removed from this grid before top soil was reached. This sand was placed here by museum construction work.



Artifacts (man-made objects) that appeared to be of relatively recent origin were recovered from Grid 2. These were fragmentary pieces of glass and one fragment of a white porcelain cup handle. As yet no definite age has been established for these materials, but it is believed that they are under the last 50 years in age and even possibly 10 to 30 years. Of particular interest was a dark trench running obliquely across the grid from the northeast end to the southeast end. The possibility arose that this may have been a drainage ditch leading from the fort area. The dark color was due to the presence of charcoal, cinders and glass in the trench, and also could be used as evidence to show that this was an open trench. Yet I believe that the trench was originally the base of a rodent hole. It contains charcoal probably as evidence of man's efforts to reduce the rodents in the area by fire entering the burrow and burning dead and dried grass there. Cinders may also be a part of this burning process. The glass, I believe, is intrusive into the charcoal after the overlying dirt and upper part of the burrow had been removed by earlier means of construction by man. See diagram C.

Grid 3 / Area II is located slightly south of the museum

foundation and between it and the east fence line. Work here revealed no artifacts or other evidence of human occupation. Within 6 inches of the topsoil or surface the fine brown sand described above was encountered and thus indicated the grey hard-pan was not evident to the south and east of the fort museum.

Three contiguous trenches composed of 5 foot grids were laid out south of the museum in Area II. All three trenches are part of one grid system. The first trench was laid out in a north-south line and divided into Grids A through I (see diagram A). Grids 1A and 1D were partially excavated. Grid 3D was also tested and all three of these grids had essentially the same subsurface profile. This included a top soil of under 1 inch which was overlaid by 3 inches of loose surface sand. Beneath the topsoil is found the light, fine sand 3 to 12 inches deep, thus indicating that the grey hard-pan is almost nonexistent the farther one moves toward the south and east. A second trench was laid out extending to the west from the first trench and labeled 2D through 13D. Grids 3D and 13D were partially excavated but appeared only to substantiate what had been learned before.

A third trench was laid out along a north-south line from Grid 10D south and labeled 10E through 10I. This last grid was completely excavated down to the 6-inch level revealing the same profile as found in Grid 1A. No evidence of human occupation was recovered, indicating, as mentioned before, that those levels have been lost and destroyed previously. All the tests and observations appeared to support the point that no information or materials remained to be obliterated by further construction at the site of Fort Vasquez in the south end of the land where a new museum and parking facility are currently being developed. I do not wish to imply, however, that the whole site is completely barren, as it may be that in the fort plaza and along its walls a quantity of such information is still available.

A test pit was also put into the middle of the fort plaza as it stands today. The point of excavation was directly behind an artificial well placed there in the 1930's and almost directly opposite the gate. A metal detector had indicated a reading here but earlier excavation had brought nothing to light. At a depth of 13 inches a metal pole set into a concrete base was uncovered. The edge of the metal carried evidence of having been cut with a blow torch. The metal and the concrete base was lying some-



what on its side in an easterly direction. It was suggested that this was the base of a flagpole, probably erected here in the 1930's, and that it was cut down during a World War II scrap metal drive and the base pushed over and buried on its side.

A trench cut by the contractor between 32 and 36 inches deep surrounding the museum was useful in giving further study to the subsurface layers of rock, clay and sand. On the south side of the museum the trench gave a profile of 0 to 2 inches of fine sand, 2 to 20 inches of fine brown powdery sand, and 20 to 36 inches of coarse water-deposited gravels, probably laid down by the Platte River at a time prior to the construction of the fort when the river was farther to the east than the present stream channel indicates. It appears there has been a constant and gradual shift of the stream channel to the west.

At the north end of the museum the construction trench shows the following: 0 to 2 inches of a thin layer of top soil, 2 to 6½ inches of a grey hard-pan clay with charcoal traces in it, and 6½ to 15 inches of fine, brown, wind-blown sand. Beneath the fine, brown sand were the coarse gravels of earlier river channel deposits.

Archaeologically very little material was recovered but some information was gained which offered insights into the change of the surface and underlying ground levels starting before the time of the Anglo up to the present day. From the archaeologist's point of view the expedition was a useful opportunity to study a change in the surrounding terrain as well as to attempt to determine what had occurred here before and after the construction of the fort.

GALEN R. BAKER, head of the department of anthropology at Trinidad State Junior College, is currently working on an archaeological survey of the Park Platteau for the National Park Service.