

CHARLES GOODNIGHT IN COLORADO

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The range cattle industry of the whole nation is stronger today because the mighty frame of Charles Goodnight was allowed to roam a great portion of its western expanses for ninety-three years. During nine of those years, from 1867 to 1876, the Territory of Colorado was the proving and disproving ground for many of his theories which have distilled into practical methods of ranching, farming and cattle breeding.

While his major accomplishments in cattle improvement came later, his Colorado years are important because by his own diagnosis they incorporate his happiest days—his time on the trail.

This decade, attending the birth of the cowboy and the rise of the open range, knows no parallel in historic color. Men who two years earlier were locked in a gigantic struggle against each other, now fought side by side on a new plain and for a new goal. In these western lands, offering "freedom from restraint,"¹ lay the greatest promise of individual and national recovery.

Goodnight, as he blazed the first major cattle trail through Colorado and established the first extensive ranch within its southern borders, gave substance to the strongest desire of his

Goodnight's ranch on the Apishapa. His homestead claim at the head of Apishapa Canon controlled water of a wide range area.



day and residence: to find a market for Texas cattle that then outnumbered Texans nine to one.

He was singularly equipped for the task. He had the fertility of mind to grasp quickly every significant factor in climate, topography, and animal nature. He had the inexhaustible energy constantly to reinvest his knowledge wherever grass lay unbroken.

J. Evetts Haley, his biographer, sums up in one paragraph the momentum of Goodnight's Gargantuan drive:

He rode bareback from Illinois to Texas when he was nine years old. He was hunting with the Caddo Indians beyond the frontier at thirteen, launching into the cattle business at twenty, guiding Texas Rangers at twenty-four, blazing cattle trails two thousand miles in length at thirty, establishing a ranch three hundred miles beyond the frontier at forty, and at forty-five dominating nearly twenty million acres of range country in the interests of order. At sixty he was recognized as possibly the greatest scientific breeder of range cattle in the West, and at ninety he was an active international authority on the economics of the range industry.²

Goodnight had been a Texan some twenty years when his trail activity began. Born on March 5, 1836, in Madison County, Illinois, he moved with his family to Texas in 1845. After two years of formal schooling, the solitude of timber became his prime teacher, imbuing him with an aversion to urban activity that lasted throughout his life.

For the next ten years Goodnight's interests centered a hundred miles west of the village of Dallas in the Comanche-plagued Cross Timbers of Texas, where he and a stepbrother, Wes Sheek, ran cattle on shares. Although Goodnight branded only four calves his first year, he hung tenaciously on to the cattle and began hauling and freighting.³

Indian raids on Texas increased, and by 1859 he was serving in frontier defense with the Texas Rangers—seasoned outdoor men developing the plainscraft art of survival. As soon as one scouting party returned another was sent out. Goodnight would have scouted continually if possible, because he "couldn't stand to sit in camp." Thorough Plains scouts could go as directly to a destination in darkness as in daylight. As a master of the skill, Goodnight put it simply: "I never had a compass in my

life. I was never lost." He also could judge accurately the distance and direction to water by watching animals, and their migrations told him much about the range beyond. By observing plant life he could estimate his elevation and approximate latitude and longitude.⁴

At the outbreak of the Civil War the Confederacy was too busy to defend the Texas frontier, which was receding before the Indian onslaught. The state legislature took matters in its own hands in December, 1861, and created the famous Frontier Regiment of ten Ranger companies to protect the far-flung settlement line from Red River to the Rio Grande. In the fall of that year, Goodnight had sustained a severe leg injury in an encounter with a wild hog, but as soon as he could ride, he joined this regiment.⁵ If, in effect, he sat out the Civil War, he did so in the saddle.

His Ranger service expired in 1864, and he returned to his cattle, which now should have numbered five thousand. But his borderland range had become fertile field for deserters and cow thieves who had reduced his herd to a thousand head. Practically no beef had been sold during the war, and prolific seasons had overrun and overgrazed the untended ranches.⁶

Disfranchised Texans champed at the bit of carpetbagger courts which took possession of their affairs after the war, and none tugged harder than Charlie Goodnight. He was ready to leave the country by late summer, 1865. With two thousand big steers, he and his stepbrother were preparing to move when Indians again swooped down and drove off the cattle, destroying his trail plans for the year.⁷

Doggedly, he mustered another thousand head fit for driving by the rise of grass. While he knew the southern states were destitute of cattle, he knew also that they were bankrupt. He believed "the whole of Texas would start north for market" along the troublesome trails beaten before the war. He had in mind a western route to the mining region, where there was money and likely cattle country.⁸

Although Goodnight had never been to the Rocky Mountain West, from his Ranger experience he had sufficient knowledge of terrain to blaze a direct northwest trail to Colorado. But Comanches and Kiowas held command of that route. He planned

¹ Albert Pike, "Narrative of a Journey in the Prairie," *Publications of the Arkansas Historical Association*, ed. John Hugh Reynolds (Conway, Ark.: Arkansas Historical Association, 1917), IV, 73.

² J. Evetts Haley, *Charles Goodnight, Cowboy & Plainsman* (2d ed.; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949), p. x.

³ *Ibid.*, 15-20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 35, 36, 40, 42.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 100, 102.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 111-12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

instead a course almost twice as long, swinging south to avoid certain Indian encounter, moving down the abandoned Butterfield Trail to Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos, then paralleling the Pecos north.⁹

As he outfitted for the drive, Oliver Loving also was gathering a herd and asked Goodnight if he could join him. Loving, then fifty-four, and the most experienced cowman in the area, earlier had trailed to Louisiana, and in 1860 on the heels of the gold rush, had moved a herd to Denver over a direct route. The thirty-year-old Goodnight welcomed his company and his cattle, and on June 6, 1866, with two thousand head and eighteen men, they left the Texas frontier to blaze a new trail for Longhorns.¹⁰

The first three hundred miles were blazed dearly—three hundred cattle died of thirst before reaching the Pecos, and a hundred more were left mired in its quicksands. They had covered one waterless stretch of eighty miles that came to be known as the worst part of any trail driven by Texas cowmen during the years of the Longhorn exodus.¹¹

When Goodnight and Loving reached Fort Sumner, New Mexico, they found a ready steer market at eight cents a pound on foot. Established three years earlier as a Navajo and Mes-calero reservation, the post had eighty-five hundred half-starved Indians. Government contractors, however, would not take the seven or eight hundred stock cattle, and the Texans proceeded with their original plan. Goodnight would make the seven hundred-mile saddle trip back to Texas for another herd before winter, and Loving would move the stocker cattle on to Colorado.¹²

Loving drove to Las Vegas, following the Santa Fe Trail north over the Raton Range and skirting the base of the Rockies

Raton Pass, where Oliver Loving drove his Longhorns in 1866.



to Denver, where he sold to Colorado's most prominent ranchman, John Wesley Iliff. Goodnight took the \$12,000 in gold from the steer sale and twelve days after reaching Texas had put together another herd of twelve hundred steers. Within forty days, he had them at Bosque Grande, forty miles below Fort Sumner. Loving joined him, and as they went into winter camp, they became the first Texans to locate a southern New Mexico ranch.¹³

The 1866 drives had been profitable. They sold some cattle during the winter on government contracts, and the next spring sent five hundred head to graze on the broad *vega* of Capulin Crater in northeastern New Mexico, while they returned to Texas with plans for heavier drives.¹⁴

But in 1867, Goodnight recalled, "the sign just wasn't right." News of their success encouraged others to follow their route, and Indians discovered the trail, attacking the partners on the trek back to Texas. Their next herd was reduced by three stampedes—one by redmen, and two by fierce lightning and rain.¹⁵

It was the end of July when they reached Horsehead, and cattle contracts were to let at Santa Fe in August. Loving went ahead to be present for the bidding, but was mortally wounded in an Indian ambush. After three days on the desert—bleeding, hiding, fighting, starving—he was discovered by Mexicans who took him a hundred and fifty miles by ox wagon to Fort Sumner. Goodnight reached there before Loving died on September 25, and promised to continue the partnership for at least two years until Loving's remaining debts were paid.¹⁶

Their cattle were still far south of Sumner, and Goodnight had missed the contract-letting. Hurrying the steers northward, he joined remnants of the previous herd held by his men at Capulin *vega*, and as they moved thirty miles northwest, Charles Goodnight had his first glimpse of Colorado.¹⁷

It was late fall, 1867. He gazed down from Raton Pass on a great infinity of grass stretching northward to the Arkansas

⁹ *Ibid.*, 126-27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 127; Willie Clytes Cullar, *The Loving Family in Texas* (n.p.: n.n., 1953), pp. 46-47. "Longhorn" is now capitalized as an official breed. A registry office in San Antonio, Texas, was set up in 1964 by the Texas Longhorn Breeders Association of America. About 5,000 cattle conforming to the original sway-backed, lean-flanked lines are preserved in herds across the nation.

¹¹ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 134-35.

¹² *Ibid.*, 137, 139, 142.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 140, 145, 147.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 155, 162, 166, 168.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 169-82.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 193, 198.



Uncle Dick Wootton's house still overlooks the old toll road. A chain across the road forced travelers to pay or turn back.

Valley. The west was rimmed by the rugged profile of Spanish Peaks, the Greenhorns, Pike's Peak. In this cow-promising plateau he would "have the world to himself," but not before he verbally grappled with Uncle Dick Wootton. Wootton, a giant mountain man (6 feet, 4 inches, 260 pounds) with the grim visage of Daniel Webster, had set up a toll station on the Colorado side of the pass. The charge was ten cents an animal. Goodnight, tall but only 200 pounds—muttered he would find another pass—Wootton laughed there was no other.¹⁸

North of the pass the country was broken only by arroyo-like walls of streams, aimed north and northeast at the Arkansas. With this choice of rivers Goodnight singled out the Apishapa, and at the head of its canyon forty miles northeast of Trinidad, began the first extensive cattle ranch in southern Colorado.¹⁹

Apishapa Cañon was not radically deep, but almost inaccessible except at the ends of its twenty-mile length. Here also Goodnight established a pattern of ranch location he would follow many times. He always searched out a place that Nature had designed, fenced, sheltered, and watered, which would allow him to dominate a large range area beyond. This ranch would be his swing station on the trail for wintering horses, recruiting cattle, and holding his steady men. He set cowboys to work at once locating the herd and building a log cabin, while he turned back five hundred miles to Bosque Grande and more cattle.

¹⁸ Baca House Museum Files, Trinidad, Colorado; Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 199, 200, 452.

¹⁹ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 200.

By Christmas eve he was back with a thousand head to release on the Apishapa, but this time the snow on Raton Pass had exacted a greater toll than Wootton.²⁰

Losses of the 1867 drives had been heavy for the firm and Goodnight still had his promise to Loving to fulfill. Loving's son, Joe, was in charge of their cattle at the Bosque, but holding cattle in two widely separated points in a wild country presented grave problems. Plans for the abandonment of Fort Sumner meant the loss of a market as well as protection. Only John Chisum and one other ranchman had moved into the Bosque area. Goodnight decided to shorten his line of operation by contracting to receive, at Bosque Grande, Chisum's drives from Texas. The arrangement was on a fifty-fifty basis, allowing Chisum a dollar a head extra for his trail risks. With a cattle supply assured, Goodnight turned his attention to the range and speculative end of the business, delivering to ranchmen and other contractors throughout the western plains.²¹

In the spring of 1868, Iliff came to the Apishapa and offered Goodnight \$40,000 for his cattle, delivered to Cheyenne.²² This

The Apishapa at Goodnight's claim. Apishapa is said to be Ute for "stinking water."



was the largest cattle transaction for either man to date, and as Goodnight made the delivery, he stretched and straightened the Goodnight-Loving Trail the full length of Colorado. Loving had trailed from Pueblo to intersect the Platte at Denver. Goodnight now drove almost due north over the divide from Pueblo, leaving Denver to the west. Near present Greeley he struck the Platte at the mouth of Crow Creek and moved up the Crow to Cheyenne.

Although Goodnight pushed only one more herd to Wyoming—at Chugwater—this practical route came into general use. He continued selling to Iliff, with delivery at his northeastern headquarters, Fremont's Orchard. Here where the Kiowa joins the Platte, Goodnight in three years escorted from twenty-five to thirty thousand cattle for Iliff's government contracts.²³

There were striking similarities about these young and thorough cattlemen. In 1868, Iliff was thirty-seven—five years Goodnight's senior. They both bore a remarkable resemblance—particularly Iliff—to Ulysses Grant, who would that year be elected President of the United States.²⁴

Goodnight, though lacking Iliff's formal education, exemplified as Iliff did the rugged individualism of American business leaders. A case in point was their use of public lands for grazing. While both men shared grass with other ranchmen, the land they actually owned was small compared with that they controlled. The secret was selective purchase of water sites, exempting them from the ranks of "range pirates" who turned cattle loose without title to water rights and hence to prescriptive range possession.

John Wesley Iliff's Chalk Bluffs ranch near the Wyoming line.



At Iliff's death in 1878 he dominated a triangular-shaped range of 150 miles from Julesburg to Greeley, yet he had purchased only 15,558 acres. In this total were 105 land parcels in 54 locations, monopolizing water along the South Platte and its tributary lakes and streams. Goodnight followed much the same plan around Pueblo, and later and to a greater extent in the Texas Panhandle.²⁵ Although he ultimately bought considerable land as the free range passed, his initial water acquisitions made easier the purchase of surrounding country, as it would have for Iliff had he lived.

They developed other economic interests in banking and real estate, still neither left cattle management up to their cowboys. Like Goodnight, Iliff "rode the range and followed the roundup."²⁶ Simultaneously, they pioneered in cattle breeding with Herefords and Durhams upgrading the crusty Longhorns on which their two empires were built.²⁷ Although both had reverential faith and were generous in Christian philanthropies, neither was a church member—Iliff having "no tolerance for pretended Christians," and Goodnight impatient with "institutionalized religion."²⁸

The skill with which men like Goodnight and Iliff assumed the risks of land and capital in a rapidly changing time allowed them to move successfully with its opportunities.²⁹ They were symbols of expansion in an industry which remade the map of the West and rewrote its history, and without their kind there would have been no cowboys.³⁰

Goodnight was a respecter of law and order; however, his impetuous nature seldom allowed him to wait for the law to come officially—he made it himself. His often arbitrary action

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 200, 201, 205, 260, 264.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 204.

²² Maurice Frink, W. Turrentine Jackson, and Agnes Wright Spring, *When Grass Was King* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1956), p. 358.

²³ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 205.

²⁴ See the photographs of Iliff in Frink, *When Grass Was King*, following page 242; Dee Brown and Martin Schmitt, *Trail Driving Days* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 197; and Lewis Atherton, *The Cattle Kings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), facing page 107. Photographs of Goodnight are in Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 122; Brown, *Trail Driving Days*, 133; and Mari Sandoz, *The Cattlemen* (New York: Hastings House, 1958), following page 274.

²⁵ Atherton, *Cattle Kings*, 111-12; Henry T. Williams (ed.), *The Pacific Tourist* (New York: Henry T. Williams, 1876), pp. 52-54.

²⁶ Richard E. Leach, "John W. Iliff," *The Trail*, IV (March, 1912), 15.

²⁷ Frink, *When Grass Was King*, 316-20.

²⁸ Atherton, *Cattle Kings*, 132-33, 144-45; Frink, *When Grass Was King*, 424; Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 461. "At his wife's solicitation he joined the church shortly before his death, but when someone asked him what church . . . he answered . . . : 'I don't know, but it's a damned good one.'" Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 462.

²⁹ Atherton, *Cattle Kings*, 220.

³⁰ Edward W. Milligan, "John Wesley Iliff," *The Denver Westerners Brand Book*, 1950 (Denver: The Denver Westerners, 1951), p. 59; Atherton, *Cattle Kings*, 241.

against outlaws and trail-blockers he considered necessary for his herds' protection, and his straightforward approach usually was forceful enough to ward off bloodshed. Once near Canon City fifteen or twenty men blocked his trail across the Arkansas. His horse continued its pace, as he loaded his shotgun and slid it across the saddle. Calling to the other man with him, "John, get your Winchester and point these cattle behind me," Goodnight crossed the river, rode up to the men and explained: "I've monkeyed as long as I want to with you sons-of-bitches." The men went home.³¹

In southern Colorado, where he was plagued by desperadoes and rustlers, he worked with law enforcement groups. William Coe's band was operating on the Colorado-New Mexico border when Goodnight came to the Apishapa. After a Coe foray on Trinidad, Goodnight rode forty miles through the night and snow to help the vigilance committee, and later he was responsible for the arrest of three Coe men, all of whom the vigilantes hanged. Coe had vowed to kill Goodnight on sight, and for several years the trail blazer carried the added protection of a shepherd dog trained to sleep at his feet.³² Through long litigation before Goodnight left the region, he helped secure a rustling conviction against Dick Crouch.³³

After his first Iliff delivery early in 1868, Goodnight rushed up another herd just as spring arrived in the Rockies. He now trailed about fifty miles east of his old route in New Mexico, making a shorter distance to Capulin. And, turning up the South Trinchera he found a passage across the Raton Range a full two days' drive east of Wootton's toll station. From this new pass Goodnight altered his Colorado trail also, and once out of the mountains pointed northwest to the Purgatoire, past the Hog Back, and on to the Apishapa.³⁴

The trail over Trinchera Pass was better than Raton—and it was free.



Trinchera Pass proved to be the outlet Goodnight was seeking. The grades were easier, the trail was shorter, and the tolls were absent. The cattle trade from Texas and New Mexico began to pour through the new cut to such a degree that Wootton offered to let Goodnight pass his cattle free if he would use the original route. Goodnight laughed.³⁵ He continued to absorb every detail of the land, and in describing Trinchera (Spanish for "trench"), he spoke of a long, rock wall formation unlike anything he had ever seen, that "looked like it had been laid up by human hands."³⁶

No sooner would he have one herd located or moving than he would go for another. Up and down the trail from southern New Mexico to Wyoming, day and night through 1868 and 1869, his longest pause was one four-day stay in Denver.³⁷ Tending to another business detail, he developed his own version of how Cripple Creek was named. A buyer in the Pikes Peak area defaulted on cattle payments and Goodnight had to take them back. Many had turned as wild as mountain buffalo, and he left seventy-five head too outlawed to gather. In that bunch, said he, was an old crippled steer that bequeathed his condition to the creek.³⁸

In December, 1868, Goodnight headed for Texas to discharge the final trust to his late partner, paying Loving's family half of the \$72,000 profit he had received since Loving's death. He also dissolved his partnership with his stepbrother, but his visit to Mary Ann Dyer indicated that he might form another soon.³⁹

Thirty thousand dollars were in his saddlebags the next spring, when he continued his quest for cattle. He bought two thousand head on the Canadian in New Mexico and hired three of the herd's men to help trail them to Colorado. But they gambled all night—a pastime Goodnight never allowed—and at dawn he payed them off. For two days he drove these steers—total profits of three hard years on the trail—alone. Near Capulin he met two cowpunchers, who, amazed at a solitary owner-drover, helped him move the Longhorns over Trinchera.⁴⁰

The 1869 summer saw Longhorns—termed "Texas" cattle—selling at Las Animas for \$27.50 a head. The high price for this

³¹ Atherton, *Cattle Kings*, 45; Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 226-27.

³² Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 202, 220, 223.

³³ *Ibid.*, 271.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 209.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁶ Letter from J. Evetts Haley, September 2, 1965.

³⁷ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 210.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 215, 261.

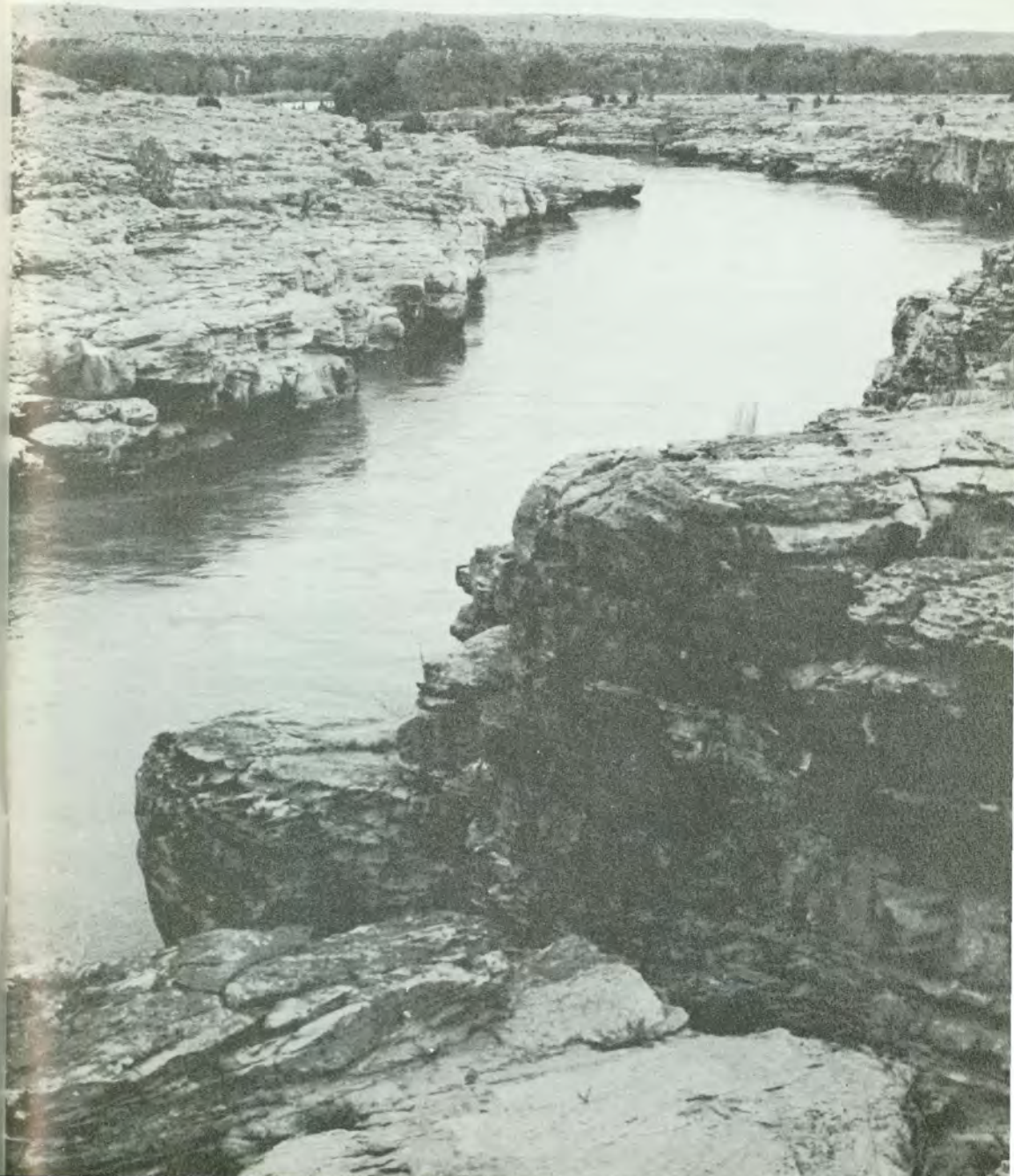
⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 220-22.

rough stock encouraged Texans to flood the markets, and discouraged Coloradoans who were turning to a better grade "American" cattle and could not compete at this figure.⁴¹ The demand for cheap cattle to stock the new ranges had become "so hungry it was grasping at almost everything that looked like a cow," both on the Goodnight Trail and on the Chisholm Trail, which had opened to Abilene, Kansas, in 1867.⁴²

The price competition engendered hard feeling, but there was more. Texas cattle were feared also for their wildness and their wake. Wherever they trailed, resident bovines lay dead within a month, while the Longhorns marched healthily on. The scourge was Texas or splenic fever, that Texans called Spanish fever. It was transmitted by a tick with which Longhorns were lousy and to which they were largely immune. At that time the cause was not known, but the effect was so devastating that legislatures raised hasty legal barriers to divert the trails from settled areas, and to keep down farmer violence. Since it was known that wintering the cattle away from Texas removed the danger, and because the trade brought much money into territorial coffers, Colorado compromised in 1867 with a limited quarantine, admitting only "wintered" cattle.⁴³

But trailing continued in ever increasing numbers. Many herds did winter on the Pecos, but it was impossible to prove that others did not. The ineffective law spurred Boulder, Arapahoe, El Paso, and Fremont County stockmen to form the Colorado Cattle Association, and in April, 1869, to warn: "Fifteen hundred men . . . have pledged themselves that no herds of Texas cattle shall pass over the main thoroughfare between the Arkansas and Platte Rivers."⁴⁴ Goodnight shifted his trail east of the Association and was able to drive without serious trouble, although once on the divide east of Denver settlers shot into his herd at night, stampeding and killing a number of cattle.⁴⁵

In the winter of 1869 he bought from Charles Peck another strategic location about five miles west of Pueblo.⁴⁶ Here the Arkansas cuts through a narrow rock canyon, and a horseshoe



⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁴² *Prose and Poetry of the Livestock Industry of the United States* (Denver: National Livestock Association, 1905), 437.

⁴³ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 225-26; Harry Sinclair Drago, *Great American Cattle Trails* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1965), pp. 54-64; Wayne Gard, *The Chisholm Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), p. 55; Colorado Territory, Legislative Assembly, *An Act to Prohibit the Introduction of Texas Cattle into Colorado Territory*, 6th Sess., 1867, pp. 86-87.

⁴⁴ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 228; *Colorado Chieftain* (Pueblo), April 28, 1869, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 227-28.

⁴⁶ Letter from Charles Goodnight to LeRoy R. Hafen, September 29, 1927, typed copy in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado.

of high bluffs recedes about a mile from the river, making a sheltered valley below the level of the surrounding plains.

A broad virgin range lay on both sides of the Arkansas. To the north it was unprotected, but Goodnight's seasoned eye looked south. There the line of the Rockies jogged east with wooded foothills—fine cover for cattle. Like his friend Iliff, he would operate on a triangular range outlined by twenty-five miles of the Arkansas on the north, with Hardscrabble Creek on the west. The Greenhorns along with the St. Charles River pointed back toward the Arkansas to complete the form.⁴⁷

Although Goodnight had filed a homestead claim on the Apishapa ranch, May 3, 1869,⁴⁸ he now abandoned it and made the Pueblo range his swing station. While the Apishapa claim was never proved up, it is believed to be the only homestead he ever staked.

Rock Cañon Ranch he called the new place, and began immediate improvements. He built a residence in early 1870, but for several years kept the ranch headquarters at the canyon about a mile and a half west of the house. He owned a bridge across the Arkansas there and "crossed many thousand cattle."⁴⁹ Entering his P A T brand on the Pueblo County records and setting more herds on the trail, he went to Kentucky, where on July 26, 1870, he married Mary Ann Dyer in the home of her relatives. She and Goodnight had made their plans the previous spring when he was in Texas. Molly, as she was called, was three years younger than her husband, and born in Tennessee of southern aristocracy. She was one of a large family her lawyer-father moved to the Texas Cross Timbers in 1854, where she met Goodnight and learned the hardships of western living.⁵⁰

The trip to Colorado provided more conditioning for the slight little woman who one day would be the first of her race and sex to live on the Texas plains. By boat, rail, and stage the Goodnights traveled and her endurance was taut. Her first night in Pueblo offered no respite. Mrs. Goodnight awoke to find near their hotel two of outlaw Coe's men hanging from a telegraph pole, and she was ready to leave for Texas. Her bridegroom hastened to see that she met many of Pueblo's young

⁴⁷ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 260.

⁴⁸ Las Animas County Records, Trinidad, Colorado.

⁴⁹ Letter from Charles Goodnight to LeRoy R. Hafen, September 29, 1927, typed copy in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado. The Pueblo Reservoir Dam, part of the Frying Pan-Arkansas Project, will cross Rock Canyon at the site of Goodnight's bridge.

⁵⁰ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 261-62.

matrons, whom, he said, "she found quite as human as herself, and the trip back to Texas was soon forgotten." Nonetheless, he arranged an August sightseeing trip with the Thatchers, Stones, and other friends to the Colorado Springs area, and when the newlyweds returned, they were happily at home on the ranch.⁵¹

As Goodnight's trail work continued, he kept about 3,000 cattle on the Pueblo range which he shared with Cresswell and the Thatchers, and with these neighbors joined in buying out squatters.⁵² His energy overflowed in 1871. He ditched the valley for irrigation.⁵³ He imported apple trees at a dollar each by stage from Missouri and set out the first orchard in southern Colorado.⁵⁴ He built a stone barn and stone corral that were



The stone barn at Goodnight's Rock Canon Ranch.

monuments to permanency.⁵⁵ When eastern freight rates pushed corn to five cents a pound, Goodnight saw the need for a local

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 262-63.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 265.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 272. The Goodnight and Pollard Ditch, Flume and Milling Company was incorporated in 1871 with Goodnight as manager, and constructed an irrigation and milling ditch on the St. Charles. Three years later milling privileges and the site were disposed of. Goodnight retained use of ditch water passing through his land.

⁵⁴ Letter from Charles Goodnight to LeRoy R. Hafen, September 29, 1927, typed copy in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado.

⁵⁵ Present owner Phil K. Hudspeth can attest. The barn is still in use. With great effort and a demolition team Hudspeth tore down the three-quarter-acre rock corral several years ago. It was seven feet tall, thirty-two inches

crop, which he raised with profit until 1872 when the railroad arrived.⁵⁶ He and other Coloradoans were proud of the Denver and Rio Grande Western's little three-foot narrow gauge, even though it had a mule for a switch engine.⁵⁷ The main line went through his ranch, and he shipped in a few Durham bulls and purebred cows and branded them P A T M for Molly.⁵⁸ In July, 1872, he registered their brands as far south as Las Animas County.⁵⁹

Soon after he moved to the Arkansas, Goodnight bought an interest in the three-hundred-thousand-acre grant made by the Mexican government to Gervacio Nolan of Taos. A portion of this land, including Goodnight's, was sold in 1872 to organizers of the D&RGW, who in turn formed the Central Colorado Improvement Company. A half-million trees were planted along the company's twenty-five-mile canal, and the land, ultimately destined for actual settlers, was converted into small irrigated tracts.⁶⁰

The ubiquitous Goodnight invested heavily in city lots and also in farm lands, becoming one of the valley's most extensive farmers.⁶¹ But when he attempted to divert the Arkansas from its natural course to keep it from cutting away his orchard, old timers thought he went too far. Although floods did not move its channel along the course he had indicated until long after he was gone from the area, they believed "Goodnight went broke trying to change the course of the Arkansas."

Recognizing the dire need for ranchman credit facilities in that unusual business where returns come in only once or twice a year, he was an organizer of the Stock Growers Bank. The institution opened in September, 1873, advertising six per cent interest on three-month deposits, seven per cent on six months, and eight per cent on twelve months. Goodnight was then lending money to others at a loss.

wide, and put together with lime burned out of the hills. Always a showplace, the ranch is destined still to be, when the Frying Pan-Arkansas Project is completed. Some 18,000 acres, including the barn, will be in a vast recreation and game preserve area. Goodnight Avenue in Pueblo leads to the ranch, and Goodnight Elementary School is nearby.

⁵⁶ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 266.

⁵⁷ Atherton, *Cattle Kings*, 467; Robert G. Athearn, "The Denver and Rio Grande Railway, Colorado's 'Baby Road,'" *The Colorado Magazine*, XXXV (January, 1958), 46.

⁵⁸ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 266.

⁵⁹ Las Animas County Records, Trinidad, Colorado.

⁶⁰ Athearn, *The Colorado Magazine*, XXXV (1958), 47; Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 271-72; *First Annual Report of the Directors of the Central Colorado Improvement Company* (Colorado Springs: n.n., 1872).

⁶¹ An etching in Joseph G. McCoy's *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest* (Kansas City, Mo.: Ramsey, Millett & Hudson, 1874; reprint, Columbus, Ohio: Long's College Book Co., 1951), p. 384, truthfully portrays the setting and depicts Rock Cañon Ranch at the height of its glory.

This was the year of the locust for him and many others. The Panic of 1873 fell in all its fury. "It wiped me off the face of the earth," was Goodnight's telegraphic summary. He had loaned \$6,000 on a half-block with the only brick building in Pueblo. He also owned the opera house and several vacant buildings which just about paid his taxes that year. For \$2,000 he gladly sold the half-block that two years later brought \$25,000 when the iron works located there.⁶²

Goodnight held on in Colorado a little over two years longer without any letup in work. Despite the fact that he and his range sharers maintained line camps, their cattle often grazed far beyond the St. Charles and had to be gathered in general Arkansas Valley roundups.⁶³

A prolonged storm in 1874 drifted Goodnight cattle into the land point formed by the confluence of the St. Charles and the Arkansas. The high bluffs kept the cattle from crossing the rivers, and the fearful wind at their backs blocked their retreat. In an operation as bold as present-day haylifts by air, crews of cowboys kept the herd from starving by cutting down the bluffs, scattering dirt across the ice, and letting the cattle drift to shelter and grass. Some were gathered as far east as the Kansas line the next spring.⁶⁴

Several meat-packing plants were built at the rail terminus of Las Animas in 1874 and 1875 by indefatigable cattlemen seeking a comeback from the panic and an outlet for their products. Among them were Goodnight and another substantial neighbor, John W. Prowers. The volume was good, but a warm winter caused considerable meat spoilage and made their profits negligible.

Goodnight had been philosophical about finance, however, since his first steer sale on the trail, when his pack mule left him in the desert—200 miles from provisions or game—with \$12,000 in gold. "I never got over the impression it made on me," he said many times. "Here you are with more gold than you ever had in your life, and it won't buy you a drink of water, and it won't get you food."

He believed the meat-packing effort had started a revival in the cattle trade and would be "of immense advantage to the country." All the rough stock which would have brought nothing alive had been slaughtered at good grower prices and had met

⁶² Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 273-74.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 267.

the urban demand for cheap beef. "Small herds of good cattle will require less range to feed them, and will be far more profitable to the cattle grower," he prophesied.⁶⁵

A builder rather than a plunger, Goodnight had let the panic catch him overextending, and his problems arose because he was a progressive rancher, not from his drover activities.⁶⁶ Knowing this, he sold the ranch to J. Livesy in 1875,⁶⁷ and returned to the trail in earnest, clearing one more path on the Plains that would carry many cattle and his name—the New Goodnight Trail. East of his former route in New Mexico, it passed Two Buttes in Colorado and on to Granada.⁶⁸ This marked the end of his most restless activity. In nine years he had moved eight to ten thousand cattle annually, and although many Texans moved more, he broke trails while others only drove.⁶⁹

For many men these hardships and reverses would have spelled the end of the trail, but Goodnight was just beginning. He started in March, 1876, by borrowing \$30,000 at eighteen per cent with the balance of his Pueblo holdings as collateral. In the same month—when life expectancy for white males was 41.35 years—he observed his forty-first birthday.

Once again he set his mental compass and with sixteen hundred cattle moved to stake out the first ranch in the Texas Panhandle, 250 miles from a railroad or base of supplies.⁷⁰ Making camps for his cowboys, he returned to Colorado seeking more capital and secured it from John Adair, a wealthy Irish diplomat who had moved his brokerage to Denver and wanted to expand in land and cattle.⁷¹

With Palo Duro Canyon as their destination, the Goodnights left Colorado permanently early in 1877—Molly Goodnight driving one of the wagons. Her husband took along a hundred head of the new state's best Durham bulls, much to the amusement of his cowboys who could see little hope for increase in a ranch begun by bulls.⁷²

Under terms of the agreement, Goodnight would receive \$2,500 annually plus operating expense. Additional cattle and 25,000 acres would be bought with Adair money at ten per cent to Goodnight, all to be repaid at the end of five years. Then,

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 142, 247; *Rocky Mountain News*, January 4, 1874, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Atherton, *Cattle Kings*, 159.

⁶⁷ Letter from Charles Goodnight to LeRoy R. Hafen, September 29, 1927, typed copy in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado.

⁶⁸ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 228-30.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 217, 230.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 275, 280, 293-94.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 278, 295-96.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 295-97.

the properties would be divided: one-third to Goodnight, two-thirds to Adair. The trailblazer's brand suggestion of Adair's initials, JA-connected, was readily accepted.⁷³ When the first contract expired in 1882, they had—after allowing for repayment of all moneys advanced by Adair and the interest—a clear profit of more than a half-million dollars.⁷⁴

Goodnight had read the signs of a new day and moved in the lead—foreign investments, improved breeds, artificial watering facilities, barbed wire and permanent ranges owned in fee. The combined ranches totaled 1,350,000 acres, ranging 100,000 cattle. By 1885 he had built nearly fifty houses of various sizes, hundreds of miles of roads and fence, and thirty tanks. Goodnight was "a century ahead of the free grass longhorn ranch of a few years ago," according to the *Galveston News*.⁷⁵

By 1887, when the partnership ended, Goodnight had made the JA's, a dominant Hereford strain, into a cattle without peer even to the first quarter of this century. By carefully culling both blooded and stock animals, he doubled the speed of improvement, revolutionizing range cattle blood in eleven years.⁷⁶ Some JA cattle sold that year to John Clay, the rugged Scotsman who pioneered in livestock commission companies. In his memoirs Clay wrote: "In the hundreds, nay thousands, of cattle deals I have made, this was the best. . . . My admiration of Goodnight as a cattleman soared skyward. These cattle had a Texas foundation, several crosses of Shorthorn [Durham] and then a Hereford top. They retained their rustling ability, they had bone, breadth across their loins and a mellowness of coat that caught a buyer's eye."⁷⁷

For many years Goodnight's other major concern was riding the Panhandle of cow thieves and outlaws, and he did so with more sovereignty than the State of Texas. He became violent at personal publicity because "they put too much red tape in it," but finally agreed to write himself "any facts that could do the present or future generations any good." Both generations blazed a trail to his feet and benefited despite gruff answers.⁷⁸

Writers soon found they could break the veneer by asking him about his old lead steer. Goodnight would smile. He "would like for 'Old Blue' to have his dues." Blue had topped Trinchera

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 301-02.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 304, 325.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 316, 325-27.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 318-20.

⁷⁷ John Clay, *My Life on the Range* (Chicago: privately printed, 1924), p. 194.

⁷⁸ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 332, 452.

in the early seventies and was headed for Indian steaks, when Goodnight cut him out at the Arkansas and broke him to the yoke. After moving to Texas he sent for Old Blue, who, crowned with a bell, led the JA's up and down the trail to Dodge City. Smart as a man, he could break ice for a herd, lead the swim, head straight for the railroad corral, and jump aside while the rest swarmed in. The sophisticated steer had nothing to do with stampedes. He stepped apart and bawled the common herd under control. He ate with the cowboys. He had the stride of a horse. When he died, petted and adored after twenty years of adventure known by few men and no steers, his horns became like a coat of arms nailed above the Goodnight door.⁷⁹

Goodnight had praise for the maligned Longhorns in general. "No animal of the cow kind will shift and take care of itself under all conditions as will the longhorns," he said, and "all ranchmen would do well to retain their blood in the improved herds as far as practicable."⁸⁰

He came to champion the Kiowa, Comanche, and Taos Indians. Respecting their integrity and their closeness to the soil, he urged their cause in Congress, collected their artifacts for museums, and gave them herd stock foundations.⁸¹

Bose Ikard, the Negro cowboy who was with Goodnight in Colorado until 1869, also had a special place in his life and lived almost as long. Bose wanted to stay in the Rockies, but his boss advised against it, since there were so few Negroes there. Goodnight said: "I have trusted him farther than any living man. He was my detective, banker and everything else in Colorado. . . . The nearest and only bank was at Denver, and when we carried Money I gave it to Bose." Goodnight helped him through the years and believed his greatest debt to man was to Bose, who had several times saved his life and added much to the time of the trails. He said so in stone on the stoic marker he erected at Bose's grave. The inscription closed: "Splendid behavior.—C. Goodnight."⁸²

He experimented with crops, bred and sold fine cattle, and much of his range was devoted to wildlife. Charles Goodnight was the buffalo's best friend. For 40 years he watched them, preserved them, and crossed some with cattle into "cattalo." Next to the buffalo the impudent prairie dog fascinated him

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 431-36; J. Frank Dobie, *The Longhorns* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1941), pp. 267-75.

⁸⁰ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 256.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 457.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 242-43.

most. In Colorado he had noticed deserted prairie dog towns, and in 60 years of watching believed they extended their range 150 miles southeast. This was not to say that after the grass which they had leveled came back, the area was not "redogged."⁸³

As he had time to accomplish, so he had time to remember, and of the trails he was defensively proud, taking verbal umbrage with anyone who misrepresented them.⁸⁴ He frankly admitted that "all in all, my years on the trail were the happiest I have lived. . . . We were solitary adventurers in a great land as fresh and new as a spring morning, and we were free and full of the zest of darers."⁸⁵

Breaking all dietary rules for nearly a century, Goodnight lived largely on red meat—buffalo if he could get it—coffee, cigars, and chewing tobacco. To his dying day, December 12, 1929, he incongruously remained as hard as a drought, as profane as the wind, and as sensitive as a mother to all needs of the land, its animals, and many of its people.

Legion have been the tributes accorded him for his place in the development of the West and of cattle, but in perspective, none ranks higher than the last written words of outspoken J. Frank Dobie.

Dobie, the arch-liberal who copiously chronicled from first-hand knowledge every element of early day ranching, died on September 18, 1964, just as he finished proof on his last book, *Cow People*. In the final line he let stand this evaluation of the arch-conservative of the American range: "Charles Goodnight approaches greatness more nearly than any other cowman of history."⁸⁶

SUE FLANAGAN is the author of *Sam Houston's Texas*, published in 1964 by the University of Texas Press.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 427, 451.

⁸⁴ J. Marvin Hunter (ed.), *The Trail Drivers of Texas* (Nashville, Tenn.: Cokesbury Press, 1925), pp. 950-52.

⁸⁵ Haley, *Charles Goodnight*, 259.

⁸⁶ J. Frank Dobie, *Cow People* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964), p. 294.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This article and photographs were developed during research on a forthcoming book retracing major cattle trails from Texas after the Civil War. I was assisted in locating historic Colorado places by Arthur R. Mitchell and Carl Taylor of Trinidad; Ralph C. Taylor and Phil K. Hudspeth of Pueblo; Dr. Harry Kelsey of Denver; Mrs. Katherine Halverson and Mrs. Dean Prosser, Jr., of Cheyenne. The basic source is J. Evetts Haley of Canyon, Texas, who as Goodnight's neighbor and biographer interviewed the colorful cattleman almost daily for three years. His Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman is recognized by contemporary writers as one of the most complete and well-documented accounts of an individual in print. I gratefully acknowledge Haley's help and permission to quote.



PORT STOCKTON

BY MAXINE BENSON

Along with the rancher and the cowboy, the outlaw or gunman was an integral part of the cattleman's frontier. The wide-open cow towns on the raw edges of civilization normally counted a large proportion of cattle rustlers, thieves, and murderers among their residents, men who lived and died by the gun. As law and order was established these gunmen gradually disappeared, leaving behind legends of daring escapades and thrilling escapes.¹

Although the days of the gunman were soon over, the outlaw has lived on in countless novels, movies, and television serials, and has been romanticized and sentimentalized until it is difficult to speak objectively of him.² In reality, however, the life of an outlaw was likely to be brutal and short. Violence was a part of his existence, and few gun slingers lived to recount their exploits to their grandchildren. A typical western desperado was Porter Stockton, an outlaw who roamed the plains of Texas, Kansas, New Mexico, and Colorado and died before his thirtieth birthday.³

¹ For a concise account of the outlaw's place in the cattle country see Robert E. Riegel and Robert G. Athearn, *America Moves West* (4th ed. rev.; New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1964), pp. 532-33.

² Kent Ladd Steckmesser describes the creation of the prototype outlaw-hero, Billy the Kid, in his recent study, *The Western Hero in History and Legend* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), pp. 57-102.

³ In various accounts the name is spelled Stogden or Stockdon. F. Stanley, *Ike Stockton* (Denver: World Press, 1959), p. 1, suggests that the spelling "Stogden" was used by the publisher of the Las Vegas, New Mexico, *Optic* to distinguish the outlaw brothers Ike and Port Stockton from the prominent Stocktons who owned the Clifton House stage station. The name is given as "Stockdon" in Howard L. Conard, "Uncle Dick" Wootton, *the Pioneer Frontiersman of the Rocky Mountain Region. An Account of the Adventures and Thrilling Experiences of the Most Noted American Hunter, Trapper, Guide, Scout, and Indian Fighter Now Living* (Chicago: W. E. Dibble and Co., 1890), pp. 436-38.

Like his older brother Ike, who also became a well-known gunman, William Porter Stockton was born in Texas.⁴ He was in his late twenties when he died in January, 1881; thus the year of his birth was probably between 1852 and 1854.⁵ Little is known of the Stockton brothers' early life, but presumably they were active (legally or otherwise) in the cattle business around Fort Worth. It is known that Port married a Texas minister's daughter and that they were the parents of three children.⁶

All that has survived of the first part of Port Stockton's career is a collection of stories, some of which are undoubtedly more fiction than fact. One of the first anecdotes takes place in Kansas. It seems that Port was in Ellsworth in 1873 and witnessed the shooting of Sheriff Chauncey Whitney by Bill Thompson during the course of a fight.⁷ After the shooting, so the story goes, Wyatt Earp forced Thompson's brother Ben, who also took part in the affair, to give himself up. George Peshaur, a friend of the Thompsons, then tried to persuade Port to kill Earp. He declined, another cowboy called him a coward, and Port shot the heckler.⁸ The next year Ben Thompson, Peshaur, and Stockton were in Wichita, where Earp was deputy marshal. This time, when Peshaur asked him to kill the officer, Port agreed. On the appointed day, however, he was quite drunk, and Earp easily shot the gun from his hand. Disgraced and humiliated, the young desperado soon left town.⁹

Another story dealing with Port Stockton dates from 1873 but places him in the Trinidad-Raton area at the time. In that

⁴ Stanley W. Zamonski, "Rougher Than Hell," *1957 Brand Book of the Denver Westerners* (Boulder, Colo.: Johnson Publ. Co., 1958), p. 300, gives his birthplace as Cleburne, Texas.

⁵ His age is listed as twenty-seven in the *Las Vegas Gazette* obituary, January 16, 1881, quoted in Stanley, *Ike Stockton*, 103-04. Philip J. Rasch, "Feuding at Farmington," *New Mexico Historical Review*, XL (July, 1965), 231, says that Port was born about 1851 or 1852.

⁶ *Las Vegas Gazette*, January 16, 1881, quoted in Stanley, *Ike Stockton*, 103-04; F. Stanley, *Desperadoes of New Mexico* (Denver: World Press, 1953), pp. 167-68, 175.

⁷ See Floyd B. Streeter, *Ben Thompson, Man With a Gun* (New York: Frederick Fell, Inc., 1957), pp. 94-98.

⁸ Stanley, *Desperadoes of New Mexico*, 173-74.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 175-76. A similar story featuring a young, unnamed Texan who fits the description of Port Stockton is told by Stuart Lake in his *Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931), pp. 125-26. One would think from reading the numerous accounts of western gunmen that every outlaw of any importance rode with Billy the Kid, or tried to kill Wyatt Earp or Bat Masterson. While this story is colorful, it is probably more fiction than fact. It is possible that Stockton was in Kansas at the time, but there is some doubt that Earp could have been involved in the incident. According to Nyle Miller and Joseph Snell, who have made a thorough study of Kansas gunmen on both sides of the law, in spite of Earp's statement that he disarmed Ben Thompson after the shooting of Sheriff Whitney, "no contemporary record is known to exist which places Earp in the town at that time." Moreover, although Earp said he arrived in Wichita in May, 1874, and was soon hired as deputy marshal, "no evidence of

year a gunman named Chunk Tolbert killed one of Port's friends in a Trinidad brawl and then headed for Raton.¹⁰ According to R. L. "Uncle Dick" Wootton, who had the toll road over Raton Pass, Chunk rode up to his place and had breakfast. Stockton, whom Wootton described as "a great rascal and all round desperado," was already there; but if he saw Chunk, "he must have been afraid to undertake to arrest him," for he soon went away.¹¹

That evening Wootton was sitting by the fire when he heard a knock. "The door opened, and a man stepped inside, with a cocked 'six-shooter' in each hand. We were all taken by surprise, and my guests didn't know whether they were to be 'held up' or had a desperado to deal with . . . and they looked mighty uncomfortable." Uncle Dick asked Stockton what he wanted, and the outlaw said he was looking for Chunk. Wootton told him that Chunk had left and asked him to put his pistols away, "reminding him that it wasn't a very genteel performance to come into a public house, flourishing a couple of 'guns' and frightening people until their hair stood on end, when there was no occasion for it." Port and the men who were with him went out after the murderer, killed another young man by mistake, and came back without seeking Chunk.¹² He was later done in by Clay Allison, another gunman with a considerable reputation in Colorado and New Mexico, perhaps as a favor to Stockton.¹³

A third anecdote that is told about Port Stockton takes place in Cimarron, New Mexico, in 1876. As Port came out of a bar one day, he was met by a Juan Gonzales, who accused him of being more than friendly to his wife. Irritated by this slur on his character, Port promptly shot and killed Gonzales. Although he pleaded self-defense, he was put in jail by the sheriff. Brother Ike soon heard about this and rode to the rescue. He drew on the sheriff and quickly obtained Port's release.¹⁴

his official police employment could be found in the Wichita city records or in either of the town's newspapers until April, 1875." "Some Notes on Kansas Cowntown Police Officers and Gun Fighters," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, XXVI (Autumn, 1960), 317. Streeter, *Ben Thompson, Man With a Gun*, 101, also says that Earp did not arrest Thompson.

¹⁰ Harry Kelsey, "Clay Allison: Western Gunman," *1957 Brand Book of the Denver Westerners* (Boulder, Colo.: Johnson Publ. Co., 1958), p. 387.

¹¹ Conard, "Uncle Dick" Wootton, 436-37. The book is written in the first person, as if Wootton were telling the story.

¹² *Ibid.*, 437-48.

¹³ Kelsey, *1957 Brand Book of the Denver Westerners*, 388. See the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, January 20, 1874, p. 1, for a contemporary account of the killing.

¹⁴ Stanley, *Ike Stockton*, 83-84. Rasch, *New Mexico Historical Review*, XL (1965), 231, states that he killed Antonio Archie in Cimarron in 1876.



Clay
Allison

During the late 1870's the Stocktons made the western part of the Colorado-New Mexico border their headquarters. This country was filled with cattle rustlers, outlaws, and other gun-slingers of every description, and the Stockton brothers, Harg and Dyson Eskridge, Frank and George Coe, and Clay Allison were just a few of the desperadoes who congregated there.¹⁵ Violence was the normal way of life, and occasionally the fighting erupted into conflicts on the scale of the famous Lincoln County War.¹⁶ Some idea of the situation in New Mexico can be gleaned from the following letter from Farmington, printed in the *Dolores News*. The correspondent, who signed himself "X. I. X.," wrote: "A dismal gloom hangs over this section of the country. A lawless mob is operating here, driving civil laws and law-abiding citizens from the valley. . . . A man's life here is not worth much that does not belong to the mob."¹⁷ Port Stockton took part in the fighting in New Mexico, although it is difficult to determine the extent of his involvement in some of the incidents.¹⁸

In 1880 Port found himself on the right side of the law for a change, when he was named marshal of Animas City,

¹⁵ Zamonski, *1957 Brand Book of the Denver Westerners*, 299-300.

¹⁶ See Rasch, *New Mexico Historical Review*, XL (1965), 214-31.

¹⁷ *Dolores News* (Rico), June 26, 1880, p. 3.

¹⁸ Rasch, *New Mexico Historical Review*, XL (1965), 219; Stanley, *Ike Stockton*, 81, 83.

Colorado.¹⁹ Animas City was a bustling frontier community of several hundred people, located near Durango on the Rio de las Animas "in a very pleasant location."²⁰ In describing the settlement, a visitor noted that there were "about two hundred persons at present residing in the town, about half of which are miners, gamblers and cowboys."²¹ No doubt Port felt right at home in Animas City, and evidently he took his duties seriously.

In the summer of 1880 one Captain Hart came to Animas City carrying a revolver, which would seem eminently sensible under the circumstances. He was not aware, however, that a town ordinance prohibited the carrying of guns. He soon became engaged in a discussion with Marshal Stockton, who ordered him to give up the firearm. According to the *Dolores News*, "some words followed and resulted in Stockton shooting Hart in the cheek, the ball passing out under the nose. Hart was taken care of and is not seriously injured." The paper judiciously concluded: "The facts in regard to the shooting that are in our possession are too meagre to form an opinion as to who is in the wrong."²² The Animas City *Southwest*, however, had no doubts about the incident. The paper reported:

Captain Hart, of Montezuma Valley, was shot and wounded in the face, last Sunday, while resisting an arrest for violating an ordinance prohibiting the carrying of firearms. Several shots were exchanged between the parties. It is to be regretted that the occurrence happened, but the laws of this town must be enforced to the letter.²³

Always quick on the trigger, Port's actions soon caused the *Dolores News* to comment that he had been "extremely free with his pistol since he had a little authority,"²⁴ and in September he was involved in another shooting. On this occasion

Stockton went into a barbershop to get shaved, and according to Charles Naeglin, then a resident of Animas City, the barber "was afraid of Stockton, who had a bad disposition."²⁵ While shaving the marshal the barber inadvertently nicked him. The *Dolores News* reported that Stockton immediately "pulled his revolver and fired, the ball just grazing the back of the barber's head." Not content with this, "he then took the pistol and beat the head of the barber in a shameful manner."²⁶

This was too much for Animas City, and Mayor Eugene Engley²⁷ deputized Naeglin to help arrest Stockton. They found Port and took him into custody. Then, Naeglin stated, Stockton asked to be allowed to go home for supper, and "Engley consented and took him over home. While he was there and Engley was watching the door, Stockton went out the window and escaped on a horse which he got from Myers and West." They set out after Port but were unable to catch up with him.²⁸

Thus ended Port Stockton's brief career as a lawman. Again he was an outlaw, and the last months of his life were spent in the pursuits which had helped make him a notorious western desperado. There are several different accounts of Port's activities during the last part of 1880 and up to the time of his death in January, 1881. According to Naeglin, after his escape Stockton fled to the area around Farmington. He stated that Stockton jumped a homestead claim while the owner was absent, having gone to Lake City to record the claim. When he returned, "he tried to get his place back. Stockton shot and killed him, and his wife reported the killing, and a posse went after Stockton and killed him."²⁹ It has been pointed out, however, that a man living in New Mexico would not have gone to Lake City, Colorado, to record a claim, so it is probable that Naeglin is mistaken in this instance.³⁰

¹⁹ W. P. Stockton is listed as marshal of Animas City in the *State Business Directory of Colorado with Mining and Live Stock Directory Departments, 1881* (Denver: Jackson Printing Co., Publishers, 1881), p. 137. Zamonski, *1957 Brand Book of the Denver Westerners*, 300, suggests that Port went across the border to Animas City because his band was outnumbered by the Coe outfit.

²⁰ George A. Crofutt, *Crofutt's Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado, a Complete Encyclopedia of the State* (Omaha: Overland Publishing Co., 1881), p. 72.

²¹ Letter to the editor from "C." Hermosa, Colorado, February 8, 1880, in the *Ouray Times*, February 28, 1880, p. 1. *Crofutt's Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado*, 72, gives the population as 451, while it is listed as 350 in the *Colorado State Business Directory with Colorado Mining Directory and Colorado Live Stock Directory Departments, 1880* (Denver: J. A. Blake, Publisher, 1880), p. 40.

²² *Dolores News* (Rico), July 10, 1880, p. 2.

²³ *Animas City Southwest*, reprinted in the *La Plata Miner* (Silverton), July 17, 1880, p. 2. George Coe said that he was told that Hart "got shot in the mouth in a little gambling scrape." *Frontier Fighter, The Autobiography of George W. Coe, Who Fought and Rode with Billy the Kid, as Related to Nan Hillary Harrison* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934), p. 186. The two contemporary newspaper accounts, however, probably present the more accurate version of the shooting.

²⁴ *Dolores News* (Rico), September 18, 1880, p. 2.

²⁵ Interview with Charles Naeglin, January 17, 1934, CWA Interviews (La Plata, Huerfano, and Mesa Counties, 1933-34), Pam 362/20, p. 52, in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado. Hereafter referred to as CWA Interview, SHSC.

²⁶ *Dolores News* (Rico), September 18, 1880, p. 2. Naeglin, CWA Interviews, SHSC, calls the barber a Negro; but the *Dolores* paper, lending a more exotic note to the incident, wrote that while he was "supposed to be a negro and certainly has that appearance, . . . in fact he is a Maouri, a race of people in Australia, and is well-educated, intelligent and has travelled all over the world." *Dolores News* (Rico), September 18, 1880, p. 2.

²⁷ Engley was mayor and also publisher of the *Animas City Southwest*; see the *State Business Directory of Colorado, 1881*, pp. 137-38. Unfortunately, according to the most recent survey of Colorado newspapers, no files of the *Southwest* have survived. Donald E. Oehlerts, *Guide to Colorado Newspapers, 1859-1963* (Denver: Bibliographical Center for Research, Rocky Mountain Region, Inc., 1964), p. 87.

²⁸ Naeglin, CWA Interviews, SHSC. "Myers and West" are listed as proprietors of a livery stable in Animas City in the *State Business Directory of Colorado, 1881*, p. 138.

²⁹ Naeglin, CWA Interviews, SHSC.

³⁰ Stanley, *Ike Stockton*, 93.

Another version of Stockton's last months was given by Erastus Thompson in an interview some years later. Thompson, an early resident of the San Juan area, stated:

There was a good deal of scrapping down on the Colorado-New Mexico border. . . . Once Ben Quick and some others and I took a bunch of cattle to Durango which belonged to Pierson Brothers. They wanted us to stay there and hold the cattle for a couple of days for ten or fifteen dollars extra apiece. The cattle were to go on to Cascade. There was nothing whatever wrong about these cattle of Pierson Brothers, and they had no idea there would be trouble. But the Farmington outfit got it into their heads the cattle had been rustled and shot into the bunch that was holding the cattle. (We had gone back home.) The Eskridges and Ike and Port Stockton and his wife were among those in the scrap that followed. Port Stockton was killed, and his widow stayed right with the fight and had her arm shot off.³¹

As nearly as can be determined, however, Port Stockton was killed because he got involved in the aftermath of a brawl at Francis M. Hamblet's ranch near Farmington. Hamblet gave a party on Christmas Eve but neglected to invite what the *Durango Daily Record* termed three "ruffians," Dyson Eskridge, Oscar Pruett, and James Garrett.³² They tried to crash the party and "conducted themselves in such an indecent and boisterous manner, using profane and obscene language in the presence of ladies that they were requested by the host to leave." A young man by the name of George Brown was watching these events, when "the three roughs began firing at the house and at the same time retreated as they fired." Brown was killed and Pruett, evidently shot by his comrades, died a short time later. The *Record* reported that "the community are greatly enraged and seventeen of the best citizens are out in pursuit of the murderers, and a thousand dollars reward is offered for them, dead or alive. If caught short work will be made of them."³³

³¹ Interview with Erastus Thompson, July 31, 1934, CWA Interviews (Otero and Montezuma Counties, 1933-34), Pam 360/109, p. 535, in the library of the State Historical Society of Colorado.

³² *Durango Daily Record*, reprinted in the *La Plata Miner* (Silverton), January 8, 1881, p. 3. Pruett's name is spelled "Puett" by the *Dolores News* in its report of the incident, but the story is similar to that given by the *Record*. The Rico paper, however, couldn't quite believe that Pruett took part in the fight. He was a former resident of Rico, and the *Dolores News* wrote: "During the time Oscar remained in Rico his conduct was that of a quiet, gentlemanly boy, and it is hard to think that he should have acted in the manner above described. . . . There may have been circumstances which do not appear on the surface as yet, so we will give the dead boy the benefit of the doubt until the true inwardness is exposed to public gaze." January 8, 1881, p. 3.

³³ *Durango Daily Record*, reprinted in the *La Plata Miner* (Silverton), January 8, 1881, p. 3. Stanley tells the story in *Ike Stockton*, 100-04, but has Stockton, Garrett, and Eskridge as the three party-crashers, with Pruett and a James Brown listed as guests. However, neither the *Durango Daily Record* nor the *Dolores News* mention Port Stockton in connection with the fight.

After the Christmas Eve fracas Eskridge and Garrett left the Farmington area.³⁴ Apparently the vigilantes decided that the outlaws would go to Port Stockton's place, and early in January the group rode up to his house.³⁵ A few weeks later the *Dolores News* carried the following item:

We omitted to state last week that the lower Animas country had contributed another killing to its already long list. The one now referred to is the mobbing of Porter Stockton, well and unfavorably known throughout southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. A band of 18 unknown men went to his house and were confronted by Stockton and his wife, both armed with Winchester rifles. A bullet tore a splinter from the butt of Mrs. S's gun, which entered her abdomen, killing her. Porter was completely riddled and fell dead.³⁶

Whatever the exact circumstances, Porter Stockton's death was generally unlamented. Charles Naeglin was "glad to learn that he had been killed as he had sent word that he would shoot Engley and I on sight, so he didn't get the chance. That was a tough fellow and I was glad he was out of the way."³⁷ The *Dolores News* wrote that "as he had made threats against the lives of several citizens, it was thought best to give him to the angels, who now minister to his wants."³⁸ Most of the settlers in southern Colorado would have agreed with the following appraisal of the *Las Vegas Gazette*:

Stockton is a man about twenty-seven years old who came to New Mexico about eight years ago and made for himself an unenviable reputation. His own boast was that he killed eighteen men, but at any rate he has been the means of putting quite a number of men under the sod. He was mixed up in the Lincoln County War and after that was over began depredating in the Indian Nation. For the past year or more Stockton has been stealing cattle in the Lower Arkansas country and it is very gratifying to write the obituary of such a desperado. He died with his boots on.³⁹

MAXINE BENSON, former deputy state historian, is writing a doctoral dissertation on the life of Edwin James, who accompanied the Long expedition to Colorado in 1820.

³⁴ *Dolores News* (Rico), January 8, 1881, p. 3.

³⁵ Zamonski, *1957 Brand Book of the Denver Westerners*, 305, says that Alf Graves and Aaron Barker were with the group and distracted Port, while a band directed by Frank Coe killed him. Stanley, *Ike Stockton*, 102-03, has Graves doing the shooting. Coe, *Frontier Fighter*, 187-88, states that Graves got into a "mix-up" with Stockton and a few days later went to Port's house with Frank Coe and others and killed him.

³⁶ *Dolores News* (Rico), January 22, 1881, p. 3. Mrs. Stockton was not dead, but she was severely wounded. Stanley, *Ike Stockton*, 105.

³⁷ Naeglin, CWA Interviews, SHSC.

³⁸ *Dolores News* (Rico), January 22, 1881, p. 3.

³⁹ *Las Vegas Gazette*, January 16, 1881, quoted in Stanley, *Ike Stockton*, 103-04.



COLORADO CATTLE COUNTRY

A Look at Ranching in the Open Range Days



After the Civil War some five million Longhorns roamed the unfenced Texas range. Beef-hungry miners and free grass convinced the Texas ranchers that money could be made on the long drive to Colorado.

Cowboy, steer, and horse all seemed to be made from the same tough, lean, wiry pattern.



Range cattle, particularly those just driven up from Texas, tended to drift south during the winter storms, sometimes wandering hundreds of miles from their proper range. Every spring cattlemen in the district cooperated in rounding up the scattered cattle, separating the mixed herds, branding the calves, and auctioning off the mavericks. The roundup was hard, dirty work, and usually kept the men away from the home ranch for weeks.

Branding was a man's job, but ranch women sometimes helped. These three young ladies were the daughters of Fritz Becker, who had a ranch in the San Luis Valley. Time, 1894.



Drought, hard winters, and a consumer demand for better beef brought an end to the open-range cattle business. Ranchers began to fence the range, plant sorghums for cattle feed, and crossbreed the animals to improve their conformation. These fenced Longhorns still show their Texas heritage.



JOSEPH G. McCOY

And Federal Regulation of the Cattle Trade

BY WILLIAM E. UNRAU

Most general accounts of the origin and early growth of the Great Plains cattle industry readily acknowledge the fundamental contribution of Joseph G. McCoy. Whether the former Springfield, Illinois, livestock feeder and shipper is characterized as a visionary entrepreneur or a keen but essentially practical businessman, it is difficult to deny the role he played in bringing together eastern buyers and Texas drovers at the frontier village of Abilene, Kansas. His ability to secure competitive freight rates from the infant railroads, his effective appeal to the southern cattlemen, and the channeling in two seasons of well over a hundred thousand beeves through the loading docks of his Abilene livestock yards collectively attest to McCoy's role in the development of the cattle industry on the Plains.

McCoy's hotel and stock pens at Abilene.



Such activity would undoubtedly have assured McCoy a place in the historical literature of the Great Plains, and his own sense of the significance of these events gives added evidence of a man with wide interests and considerable ability. Surely not the least of his accomplishments was the publication, in 1874, of a 427-page historical survey of the cattle trade during the formative years. Writing just seven years after his first major consignment of livestock left Abilene, McCoy candidly made "no claim or pretence whatever . . . to literary merit, or even correct language and syntax," although some readers might charge him with excessive modesty. His pioneer study contains at least three significant points for the economic history of the Great Plains: (1) it is an extremely informative (but not always accurate) account of virtually all aspects of the Great Plains livestock trade and industry in the years immediately following the Civil War; (2) it obviously is a business tract, a clever broadside designed to promote an infant industry; and (3) taken in conjunction with contemporary historical evidence, it suggests a great deal about the role state and federal government assumed (and was expected to assume) in the development of the economy of the region. This last point, particularly in light of evidence related to the Indian Department's experience with men like McCoy, represents the principal focus of this study.¹

The motives which prompted McCoy to fight the prohibitive Texas fever laws passed by the Kansas legislature in 1861, 1865, and 1867 are not difficult to understand.² He described the lawmakers and their small-farmer constituents in eastern Kansas as "utterly unscrupulous [and] incapable of doing a legitimate business in an honest manner." McCoy castigated these men as "ghouls [who] resorted to every device their fertile brains could conceive to defeat the efforts of the parties who were at work at Abilene."³

McCoy apparently realized that the survey line of the Union Pacific Eastern Division Railroad (later called the Kansas Pacific) would outflank his loading yards at Abilene. In addition, the Kansas law of 1867 prohibited drovers from entering the region west of the sixth principal meridian and south of township eighteen, except during three winter months. The enterprising middleman seems to have known that his operation at

¹ Joseph G. McCoy, *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest* (Kansas City: Ramsey, Millett and Hudson, 1874), Preface.

² *General Laws of the State of Kansas, 1861*, p. 280; *General Laws of the State of Kansas, 1865*, pp. 159-60; *General Laws of the State of Kansas, 1867*, pp. 263-67.

³ McCoy, *Historic Sketches*, 57.

Abilene would be short-lived. And so it was. The state quarantine laws, the westward advance of the railroads, and the steady encroachments of the sodbuster operated as forces to bend the Texas-Kansas cattle trails away from Abilene, in a westerly direction. The new routes went into Colorado Territory and the massive grazing country of the central and northern Plains. These forces were largely beyond McCoy's control.

Fitting his abortive campaign against state regulation into an understandable context thus appears to offer no substantial historical problem; but McCoy's complaints against the two principal agencies of the federal government then active on the Plains—the War Department, through its Military Department of the Missouri, and the Interior Department, through its Department of Indian Affairs—present a more complex problem.

Like the military officials then stationed on the frontier, McCoy was no friend of the organized bands of cattle thieves who pounced on the livestock commerce so vital to his Abilene enterprise. He does, however, appear to have viewed the problem from a somewhat different perspective. McCoy looked upon cattle theft, or "smuggling," within the context of his personal campaign against the Kansas quarantine laws. As he put it: "Under the pretext of a fear of disease being disseminated among the so-called native cattle, all manner of outrage, robbery and murder were perpetrated . . . just as the late civil war was a convenient pretext for lawless plundering, outraging, and murdering of civil, quiet citizens." Military officials, on the other hand, were obligated to view the problem from a more general and public point of view.⁴

Reports in 1865 from both the War and Interior Departments announced that since 1862 at least 300,000 cattle—later estimated by an Indian Department official to be worth at least \$4,500,000—had been stolen, or "smuggled," from Indian Territory south of Kansas. This information, plus a number of complaints brought to the attention of Kansas Governor Samuel J. Crawford, contributed measurably to the approval on February 28, 1865, of a federal law making smuggling a felony punishable by a fine not to exceed \$10,000 and a prison term not to exceed two years, and to the passage of the stringent Kansas Stock Law of February 11, 1865.⁵

⁴ *Ibid.*, 21-23.

⁵ Elijah Sells to D. N. Cooley, October 16, 1865, in U.S., Congress, House, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., 1866, Ser. 1248, Ex. Doc. No. 1, II, 437; Robert W. Richmond, "Cowtowns and Cattle Trails," in John D. Bright (ed.), *Kansas, the First Century* (New York: Lewis Historical Publ. Co., Inc., 1956),



Cattle-dealer McCoy had no sympathy for the Texas fever quarantine, as this illustration from his book shows.

With an eye to the past, present, and future, McCoy boldly and wrathfully criticized the Kansas quarantine laws in his book, for the state legislature often was an easy mark for special interest groups. Indiscriminate cattle "smuggling" and federal law enforcement presented more difficult challenges. The federal statute of 1865 clearly represented an obstacle to the promotion of the livestock trade no less significant than did the state law. Honest drovers would be hampered in their movement across Indian Territory, and in any case, the "smuggling" of Indian cattle was not usually considered immoral. But military officials on the frontier were then preoccupied with alleged Confederate activity and largely unverified reports of Indian violence south of the Arkansas river, and they found—probably to McCoy's relief—little or no time to eradicate the contraband commerce. Brigadier General John B. Sanford summarized the situation quite candidly, when on July 28, 1865, he complained: "While engaged in this [Indian] campaign I cannot look so closely after that cattle stealing as I should like. It is a general and very corrupt matter."⁶

I, 256; Samuel J. Crawford to Samuel G. Curtis, February 7, 1865, Samuel J. Crawford Letter Copy Book, Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka; U.S. Statutes at Large, XIII, 441-42; *General Laws of the State of Kansas, 1865*, pp. 159-60.

⁶ John B. Sanford to Grenville M. Dodge, July 28, 1865, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: G.P.O., 1888-1896), Ser. I, Vol. XLVIII, Pt. II, p. 1131.

McCoy, therefore, was reluctant to write about the potential federal military obstacle to the movement of large herds of cattle into Kansas. In the absence of any clear and concise procedural machinery for identifying stolen stock, top-ranking military officials often found themselves hamstrung at the hands of local civil authorities, who apparently viewed the problem in sympathy with businessmen like McCoy. This is not to say, however, that the military command failed to take at least preliminary action in the face of the livestock ring. Twelve days prior to the approval of the federal smuggling statute of February 28, 1865, the Military Department of the Missouri, by Special Order Number 44, dated February 13, 1865, ordered the revocation of all permits to trade in livestock. The order also provided that "military commanders will arrest anyone who has robbed cattle from friendly Indians . . . [and] all stock brought into this military district for speculation will be siezed until full investigation can be held."⁷

This action certainly was more stringent than the Kansas and federal laws of that same month, and its implications for the livestock promoters seemed to require an eventual encounter between civil and military officials. The confrontation came that following August, in a letter from General John Pope, commander of the Military Department of the Missouri, to Judge

*When General
John Pope seized
private property
from the traders . . .*



*. . . Judge David
Brewer fired a
defiant verbal
salvo.*

David J. Brewer, judge of the First Judicial District of Kansas, and reprinted verbatim in a Leavenworth newspaper. Prefacing his letter with references to an "organized system of robbery" then being carried on against the Indians by "persons of Kansas," General Pope threw diplomacy to the winds with a description of forty-nine ponies then in the possession of military authorities. The stock was being held at the request of the Department of Indian Affairs, which desired to return them to their rightful Indian owners. It was of no consequence, warned Pope, whether the stock had been secured by trade or theft; for if not stolen, the animals must have been obtained by trade—a clear violation of Special Order Number 44. In either case the matter was beyond the jurisdiction of Kansas civil officials. The tribes enjoyed treaties with the federal government; writs issued by state officials were invalid; and it was Pope's intention to prosecute those responsible.⁸

Not unaware of frontier sentiment toward the Indians, and in a manner reminiscent of Joseph McCoy's complaint against those responsible for the Texas fever laws, Judge Brewer was clearly up to the occasion. "You assume that these ponies belonged once to certain Indian tribes," he retorted in a public letter, "and therefore state courts have no jurisdiction. Now

⁷ Special Order Number 44, Military Department of the Missouri, *ibid.*, Ser. I, Vol. XLVIII, Pt. I, p. 836.

⁸ John Pope to David J. Brewer, August 15, 1865, printed in the *Leavenworth Daily Times*, August 20, 1865.

let me ask," he continued, "by what law a military officer is authorized to decide whether certain stock . . . ever belonged to the Indian tribes? If in fact, these ponies never belonged to the Indians . . . your whole argument falls to the ground." Brewer's final salvo was phrased as a warning, not a statement of judicious fact: "If the military authorities have a right to go up and down the streets and decide to whom the several articles of property they see belong, we may as well dispose with civil courts altogether."⁹

Invoking the question of property was a brilliant stroke that threw General Pope and his staff off balance, a counter-attack that would eventually bring about a revision in the federal code relative to the Indian and livestock trade. Almost immediately following Brewer's answer to Pope, the latter's superior, General William T. Sherman, commander of the Military Division of the Mississippi, fired a hasty letter to the Attorney General in Washington: "Can a District Court seize from the military horses that the military had seized from those who steal from the Indians?" The answer would seem obvious, but a reply was not forthcoming, perhaps for the reason that agitation in favor of unregulated competition in the Indian and livestock trade was daily gaining momentum.¹⁰

In spite of reports from Indian agents on the frontier, who cautioned Washington officials to consider the ultimate ramifications of an unrestrictive trade code, it was not long before the speculative elements on the Plains would be able to celebrate victory. On March 24, 1886, Kiowa-Comanche Indian Agent Jesse H. Leavenworth, a former Colorado miner and military official, wrote Indian Commissioner D. N. Cooley that if every man of "good and high, moral character" were allowed to engage in the Indian trade, substantial price reductions would follow. More important for the tribes, however, would be the destruction of economic stability established by traders with years of experience. "When the rush is over," continued the agent, "they will leave—and the Indians will have no trader—and will be forced to raid the routes." Commissioner Cooley was impressed with this logic to the extent that he passed the report on to congressional leaders, but the effort was in vain. The victory of free competition and the negation of Special Order Number 44—and, in effect, the federal smuggling statute of 1865—came

⁹ Brewer to Pope, August 19, 1865, printed in *ibid.*

¹⁰ William T. Sherman to the Attorney General of the United States, August 18, 1865, Records of the War Department, United States Army Commands, Division of Mississippi, Letters Sent, National Archives Microfilm.

on July 26, 1866. In a rider sponsored by Senator James W. Grimes of Iowa and attached to the Indian appropriation bill, it was provided that "any moral and loyal citizen," after posting bond and obtaining a permit from a district judge might freely engage in the Indian livestock trade. Now the permit was no obstacle, for local civil officials, anxious to promote the economic expansion of the areas they represented, welcomed the opportunity to even the score with men like General Pope, or Leavenworth. The argument in favor of federal regulation could be conveniently dismissed on the ground that it probably represented another example of a corrupt Indian agent attempting to protect his investments with the few traders he once had licensed.¹¹

Thus by the early months of 1867, during the time Joseph G. McCoy was making final preparations for the first wave of southern livestock at Abilene, the federal military establish-



Broadway Street in downtown Abilene, 1875.

ment had been encouraged—subtly, but firmly—to resume the more orthodox business of apprehending hostile Indians, not livestock "smugglers." With the "trade" open to such an extent

¹¹ Jesse H. Leavenworth to D. N. Cooley, March 24, 1866, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Letters Sent, National Archives Microfilm; U.S., Congress, Senate, "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1866," *Report of the Secretary of the Interior*, 39th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1867, Ser. 1284, Ex. Doc. No. 1, II, 17; and U.S., *Statutes at Large*, XIV, 280.

that some enlisted men at Fort Dodge brazenly made it a practice to pay the Kiowas to steal stock from the area south of the Arkansas, the Abilene promoter in his history of the cattle trade had little reason to discuss the military barrier to his enterprise, for by 1867 there simply was none.¹²

McCoy's reluctance to comment on the military barrier during the formative years of the trade is boldly matched by his almost sweeping denunciation of Indian Department officials then serving on the Plains. In 1867, a Leavenworth newspaper reckoned the Indian Department "a den of robbers" and a place where "no man [could] accept an appointment without jeopardizing his personal reputation." On the frontier a characterization of this sort was the rule, not the exception, and Joseph McCoy made the most of it. But the rhetorical heights to which he ascended, when on the subject of the Indian agent, seem to suggest something more than acquiescence to prevailing attitudes of the people about him.¹³

Following an extended description of how in 1867 a certain southern drover and Indian contractor swindled the federal government, McCoy recalled the nefarious activity of the Indian agent in the following manner: "Of course the government agent was entirely innocent and was not conniving with the contractor. Oh no! It is some one else that is on the make, not Indian agents. . . . It would take volumes to chronicle the unalloyed benevolence and disinterested virtues of that army of noble men who rush to the front of civilization and offer themselves for immolation upon the altar of some Indian agency." And in conclusion: "We doubt not but that the battallions [sic] set to guard the Commissary stores of the pearly eternal city, seen by none of earth save the wandering Peri, will be chosen from the ranks of the Indian Agents of the West."¹⁴

A casual reading of McCoy's narrative might suggest a general indictment, and there is no getting around the fact that the Indian Department—like nearly all departments and levels of government at that time—had its share of profiteers. A more critical consideration of his account, however, particularly from the point of view of his interests at Abilene and the identification of certain Indian Department personnel at Fort Larned in 1867, indicates a rather pointed reference to Kiowa-Comanche Agent Jesse Leavenworth, announced critic of the Grimes rider, op-

ponent of the military establishment, and a figure who, through his authority to negotiate livestock contracts for the Indians of his agency, represented a significant source of competition to McCoy's enterprise at Abilene. In short, every beeve that Leavenworth ordered, for delivery at Fort Larned or some other point on the Plains, was one less beeve McCoy could deliver to the railroad and the eastern buyers.

Government competition was a real, but generally vague, problem. More immediate was the question of stock stolen from friendly Indians. Agent Leavenworth deserved the cooperation of government officials at all levels, but a diminishing interest on the part of the military after the encounter between General Pope and Judge Brewer in August, 1865, soon became the standard adopted by ranking Indian Department officials in Washington. With a substantial quantity of stock entrusted to his care—stock allegedly stolen from the Indians—Leavenworth demanded answers to certain specific questions: Could the recovered stock, once returned to the rightful owners, be sold by the Indians to the traders? Could the Indians sell livestock that had not been stolen.¹⁵

In Washington, Indian Commissioner Cooley was evasive. He encouraged his subordinate to recover stolen or illegally purchased animals and to return them to the tribes. But how was he to accomplish this? By what authority could he oppose the jurisdiction claimed by men like Brewer? And could the Indians legally deal with the traders? These significant questions Cooley left largely unanswered. In the end, Agent Leavenworth's assault on the livestock ring was no more successful than that of General Pope. By the time the Grimes rider had virtually obliterated the federal obstacles to the free movement of stock into the central Plains, it was clear to McCoy that the Kiowa-Comanche agent, like nearly everyone else, had succumbed to the sure workings of natural law in the economy of the region. That Leavenworth was not using his official position to advance his own interests, and that he was in fact principally interested in the welfare of his Indian wards were notions apparently completely beyond McCoy's limited economic conception.¹⁶

¹² Leavenworth to Cooley, November 9, 1865, April 4, 1866, and May 1, 1866, Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Letters Sent.

¹³ Cooley to Leavenworth, April 11, 1866, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, National Archives Microfilm. On June 22, 1867, General U. S. Grant ordered General Sherman to stop "citizens" from stealing stock from friendly Indians, but by then the Indian and War Departments were at odds over a definition of "Indian hostility." Grant to Sherman, June 22, 1867, Records of the War Department, Headquarters of the Army, Letters and Telegrams Received, 1866-1867, National Archives Microfilm.

¹⁴ Leavenworth to N. G. Taylor, May, 1867, Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Letters Sent.

¹⁵ Leavenworth *Conservative*, February 13, 1867.

¹⁶ McCoy, *Historic Sketches*, 66-67.



Joseph G. McCoy

Joseph G. McCoy was quite knowledgeable on most technical aspects of the livestock trade and industry during the formative years, and his promotional excellence speaks for itself. But when it came to his assessment of the Indian agent's responsibility and effort to create some economic order, and when this frontier type emerged as a champion of federal regulation at a time when premature economic expansion might have as its consequences widespread Indian hostility and the disruption of the very commerce McCoy hoped to encourage, the Abilene stockman's narrative must stand as promotional, not historical literature.

Perhaps it is not surprising that McCoy emphasized what he believed to be the corrupt nature of men like Jesse Leavenworth, for the frontier attitude toward this federal official was everything but laudatory. As a Leavenworth newspaper put it in July, 1867: "The Indian office [on the frontier] is a general rendezvous for agents, contractors, traders and the small army of associated ringmasters, who hover like buzzards about the rich spoils which tempt their avarice." It should be kept in mind, however, that McCoy, had he not been so concerned with his personal enterprises, might have recalled more detached characterizations of the Indian agent. For example, Senator John

Wilkinson of Minnesota in the summer of 1864 had observed: "It is very popular to say that all agents are wicked thieves [but] no office in the United States is more difficult to perform. The vagabonds who hang around the border are the real trouble-makers."¹⁷

Was Agent Leavenworth a thief, a "buzzard" anxious to pounce on every honest and struggling entrepreneur? The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that he was not. What McCoy in his sweeping indictment of the Indian Department failed to mention was that the official he was implicating in the more seamy aspects of the livestock trade had been subjected, on the basis of a number of unwarranted charges, to federal investigations in 1866, 1867, and 1868, and that on each occasion, the defendant agent Leavenworth had been completely exonerated.¹⁸

More concerned with immediate economic expansion than with long range ramifications—Indian policy, colonization, land policy, and the ultimate question of regulatory machinery for a booming but infant industry—Joseph McCoy, either by calculation or ignorance (or both) did much to formulate and promulgate the notion that the federal government was no friend of the Plains cattleman.

On November 15, 1935, Charles E. Collins, president of the American National Livestock Association, stated: "More important to cattlemen than the fancied abuses of agriculture in the past is the preservation of the American form of government and the right to conduct business without the dictation of a political agency in Washington." His words, perhaps, reflected an attitude that had prevailed from the beginning. And in this, businessman and sometime historian Joseph G. McCoy seems to have played a measurable role.¹⁹

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¹⁷ Leavenworth *Conservative*, July 11, 1867; U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., Pt. III, p. 2875.

¹⁸ Charles Bogy and N. W. Irwin to Lewis Bogy, November 12, 1866, Office of Indian Affairs, Upper Arkansas Agency, Letters Sent, National Archives Microfilm; Warren W. H. Lawrence to Leavenworth, July, 1867, Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Letters Sent; Albert G. Boone to N. G. Taylor, July 31, 1868 and Boone to C. E. Mix, October 3, 1868, *ibid.* For a detailed discussion of the several investigations into affairs of the Kiowa-Comanche Agency in general, and Jesse H. Leavenworth in particular, see William E. Unrau, "Investigation or Probity? Investigations into the Affairs of the Kiowa-Comanche Indian Agency, 1867," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XLII (Autumn, 1964), 300-19.

¹⁹ Ora Brooks Peake, *The Colorado Range Cattle Industry* (Glendale: Arthur Clark Co., 1937), pp. 167-68, citing the *Greeley* (Colorado) *Tribune*, November 15, 1935.

WILLIAM JACKSON PALMER

P R O M O T E R

BY BRIT ALLAN STOREY

On September 17, 1836,¹ William Jackson Palmer was born in Delaware, but when he was five years old his Quaker parents moved the family to Philadelphia. At seventeen he began work for the engineering corps of the Hempfield Railroad in western Pennsylvania, and his ambitious nature became apparent within two years. In 1855 and 1856 he financed a tour of England and France by writing articles for a Pennsylvania mining newspaper. In France and England he studied railroads, coking installations, collieries, and engineering in general; while his articles were mostly concerned with mining and coking operations.

In September of 1855 Palmer addressed a letter to John Edgar Thomson of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The letter of four closely written pages was devoted to discussion of the production and uses of coal and coke in the areas which he had visited.² Thomson was pleased with Palmer's letter, and he indicated to a mutual friend that such studies might be of use to him in his administration of the Pennsylvania Railroad.³

In mid-1856 Palmer returned to Philadelphia and went to work for the Westmoreland Coal Company. Soon he was the secretary of this company, and on June 1, 1857,⁴ he became Thomson's private secretary. Palmer remained with Thomson until 1861, and during that period he carried on experiments



Promoter Palmer was a brigadier general before the age of thirty.

with coal burning locomotives.⁵ Up to that time the fuel of railroads had been wood, but the Pennsylvania Railroad, due largely to these experiments, replaced wood with coal as its principle fuel.⁶

In 1861 Palmer eschewed his Quaker background for an active role in the Civil War. His ambitious inclinations led him not merely to enlist in the cavalry, but, rather, to raise a troop of cavalry.⁷ He chose a group of young men to compose the "Anderson Troop," and he became this troop's captain. By the end of the Civil War he was a brevet brigadier general and had commanded his own regiment, the Fifteenth Pennsylvania, for some time.

Mustered out of the United States Cavalry, Palmer became the treasurer of the Union Pacific Eastern Division, which was soon to be called the Kansas Pacific. He conducted a transcontinental survey for this railroad to determine the best route for the Eastern Division's extension to the Pacific. In 1869 Palmer was elected a director of the Kansas Pacific, and he was placed in charge of construction into Denver from Sheridan, Kansas. It was during this period that he decided to try to make

¹ Typewritten copy of the "Register of the Camden, Murderkill and Duck Creek Friends Meeting," in the files of the Delaware Public Archives Commission, Dover, Delaware, p. 50.

² William Jackson Palmer to J. Edgar Thomson, September 3, 1855, William Jackson Palmer Papers, Library, State Historical Society of Colorado, Box VI. Hereinafter cited as Palmer Papers.

³ Gerard Ralston to William Jackson Palmer, September 11, 1885, Palmer Papers, Box XII.

⁴ William Jackson Palmer, Diary, 1857, Palmer Papers, Box VI.

⁵ William Jackson Palmer, *Report of Experiments with Coal Burning Locomotives, Made on the Pennsylvania Railroad April-August, 1859* (Philadelphia: Crissey & Markley Printers, 1860).

⁶ Pennsylvania Railroad, *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Rail Road Company to the Stockholders* (Philadelphia: Crissey & Markley Printers, 1860).

⁷ William Jackson Palmer, September 16, 1861, Palmer Papers, Box XXI.

his fortune in the Colorado area. On May 4, 1870, his resignation was accepted by the executive committee of the Kansas Pacific,⁸ becoming effective on August 15, 1870, after both the Kansas Pacific and Denver Pacific had been completed into Denver. In 1869 and 1870 Palmer gradually let his fiancée know that he wished to build a railroad from Denver through New Mexico and on into Mexico.⁹

Even while still in the army his desires and ambitions were expressed in a letter to his mother, when he wrote: "If I live, thee will be as rich as thee cares to be before many years."¹⁰ His aspirations once again appeared in a letter to his uncle, to whom he wrote:

Young men without money can only make a fortune by connecting themselves with Capitalists. The heaviest of these reside in the East, where they can look after their own affairs. But the best place to invest capital is in the West. Eastern Capitalists must therefore have Representatives here to attend to their interests if they wish to invest heavily in the West. Such representatives, if able and correct, must acquire great weight and influence with their distant Principals—to a greater extent and more rapidly than if they lived in the East where the capitalist can judge for himself.¹¹

And, later he wrote to another friend:

As you say I have my fortune to make . . . [and] I can see if I had undertaken to work for myself a little more . . . it might have been better for me in a material sense.¹²

When Palmer left the Kansas Pacific in 1870 frontier Colorado had been a territory only since 1861. The region was lightly sprinkled with settlements devoted to mining, trading, and some agriculture and stock raising. Denver was a thriving trade center of 4,759 persons, and, to the south, Santa Fe could boast only six more inhabitants.¹³ Some seventy miles below Denver, with a population of about eighty, was Colorado City; and Pueblo's residents numbered not more than seven hundred persons. Trinidad, established on a branch of the Santa Fe Trail, was inhabited by five or six hundred persons, and the 1870 census showed a population of 229 persons for Canon City.¹⁴

⁸ Charles B. Lamborn to William Jackson Palmer, March 12, 1870, Palmer Papers, Box XI.

⁹ See the letters from William Jackson Palmer to Queen Mellen, 1869 and 1870, Palmer Papers, Box XV.

¹⁰ William Jackson Palmer to Matilda Palmer, June 5, 1864, Palmer Papers, Box II.

¹¹ William Jackson Palmer to Frank Jackson, August 25, 1865, Palmer Papers, Box XV.

¹² William Jackson Palmer to William McPherson, October 24, 1870, Palmer Papers, Box XI.

¹³ U. S., Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States: The Statistics of the Population of the United States, 1870*, I, 95, 206.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

In Colorado and New Mexico there were no truly profitable freight concentrations which could attract a new railroad. The population between Santa Fe and Denver was about ten thousand persons, and the entire population of Colorado Territory totaled only 38,864 persons.

Palmer did not, however, picture the situation as static, and he brought to bear upon it his knowledge of railroads, collieries, and land and town companies. As a director of the Kansas Pacific he had helped utilize that railroad's land grant from the federal government to organize town and land companies. Palmer had seen such towns as Kit Carson and Cheyenne Wells spring to life as Kansas Pacific railheads. The fact that these towns had withered with the passing of the railroad did not diminish the income realized from land sales there. The Union Pacific set a similar example for Palmer, and it was not too hard for him to conceive of developing town and land companies to provide freight concentrations for his proposed Denver and Rio Grande Railway. In addition, Palmer probably considered the town companies in Nebraska and Kansas, which had netted thousands of dollars for their promoters, yet had never been developed to any great degree. Town development could be especially profitable in the West, and Palmer knew it.

Colorado City had been established in 1859, and for a time it had been second in size only to Denver. A decade later, however, the town had shrunk to a mere vestige of its former self. It was about this time that Palmer's attention was drawn to Colorado City, and he suggested to his fiancée, Mary Lincoln Mellen, that their future home might be located in the area.¹⁵ In early 1870 Palmer inquired of former Territorial Governor A. C. Hunt about the desirability of a settlement near Colorado City at Monument Dells on the confluence of Fountain Creek and Monument Creek. Hunt replied:

Our territory abounds in fine valleys, but after 11 years experience & after having traversed every part however remote I unhesitatingly say that for a small colony the Monument Dells surpasses every other locality.¹⁶

Soon after this exchange Palmer asked Hunt to act as agent for him in purchasing two quarter-sections at Monument Dells where he proposed to lay out a small town. Hunt was more daring than Palmer, and he decided that if a townsite were to be purchased it should be secured beyond any doubt. In order to obtain a townsite of profitable dimension which would be

¹⁵ William Jackson Palmer to Queen Mellen, Palmer Papers, Box XV.

¹⁶ A. C. Hunt to William Jackson Palmer, March 13, 1870, Palmer Papers, Box V.



Wide avenues were a feature of Palmer's Colorado Springs.

untroubled by nearby competition, he purchased about ninety-three hundred acres. The unexpected size of this purchase forced Palmer to wire eastern friends to obtain sufficient funds.¹⁷

In early 1871 the construction of Palmer's Denver and Rio Grande Railway was begun, and on October 21, 1871,¹⁸ its tracks reached Colorado Springs, Palmer's newly founded town. The Colorado Springs Company had been incorporated on June 26, 1871,¹⁹ and its property included the townsites of Manitou and Colorado Springs. One-third of the company property, checker-boarded throughout its holdings, was reserved from sale. It was hoped that an appreciated revenue would be derived from this reserved land after the surrounding property had been sold. In addition, one hundred acres around the mineral springs in what was to become Manitou were reserved from sale.

Colorado Springs was the first of a series of towns which Palmer conceived to provide traffic for the Denver and Rio Grande. It had been a simple matter for him to realize that towns could be profitable, and he wished to capitalize on a mutually supportive group of land, town, mineral, and railroad companies. As a good businessman he hoped to make profits on all of his ventures.

Among Palmer's towns Colorado Springs was to be unique. He founded Colorado Springs as a residential town, and eventually it was known as "Little London" because of the large English colony living there. In Colorado Springs' first railroad depot in 1871, one could order, from a menu which changed daily, such delicacies as lobster salad, ham in champagne sauce,

mock turtle soup, and oyster soup. Yet in that same year a visitor to the town wrote:

You may imagine Colorado Springs, as I did, to be a sequestered valley with bubbling fountains, and green grass, and shady trees: but not a bit of it. Picture to yourself a level elevated plateau of greenish-brown without a single tree or plant larger than a Spanish bayonet (Yucca) two feet high, sloping down about a quarter of a mile to the railroad track . . . and you have a pretty good idea of the town-site as it appears in November 1871.

The streets and blocks are only marked out by a furrow turned with the plough and indicated faintly by a wooden house, finished, or in process of building, here and there, scattered over half a mile of prairie. About twelve shanties are inhabited, most of them being unfurnished, or run up for temporary occupation; and there are several tents dotted about also.²⁰

Nearby Colorado City could not hold its own against the newly founded Colorado Springs. In 1871, in order to secure its position as a trading center, citizens of Colorado City built a wagon road into South Park by way of Ute Pass. Their efforts were futile, however, and in 1872 the county seat of El Paso county was moved from Colorado City to Colorado Springs. The founding of Colorado Springs had resulted in the virtual political and economic destruction of Colorado City.

Palmer's Denver and Rio Grande Railway prepared to move south from Colorado Springs, and A. C. Hunt, acting for the railroad, addressed a mass meeting in Pueblo. He stated that the railroad's main line would miss Pueblo unless funds for an extra twenty-five miles of construction were forthcoming. To finance this construction Pueblo County passed a \$100,000 bond

Pueblo in 1868. After the voters had approved \$150,000 in bonds for his railroad, Palmer put the depot in his own town of South Pueblo.



¹⁷ William Jackson Palmer, "The Founding of Colorado Springs," *Weekly Gazette* (Colorado Springs), August 6, 1896, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Daily Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), October 24, 1871, p. 1.

¹⁹ See the incorporation records of the Colorado Springs Company, records of the Secretary of State, Colorado State Archives and Records Service, Denver.

issue on June 20, 1871, conditional upon the location of the railroad's depot within one mile of the county courthouse and the completion of the railroad to Pueblo within one year. Soon after the bond election Hunt, still the Denver and Rio Grande's representative, asked for an additional \$50,000 bond issue to aid in construction from Pueblo westward to Canon City. Hunt pointed out that this extension would aid Pueblo's economic growth, but he failed to mention that Palmer's Central Colorado Improvement Company needed the railroad to make its extensive coal lands in the Canon City area profitable. In November of 1871 this bond issue, too, was approved by the voters.

The Denver and Rio Grande's *Second Annual Report* declared that the railroad had planned to complete its line into Canon City in 1873 and that financial problems had prevented this.²¹ In reality, although the Panic of 1873 was a definite factor, Palmer wished to establish a town to rival Canon City. As a result the terminus of the Denver and Rio Grande was fixed at Labran, owned by Palmer's Central Colorado Improvement Company. He stated that he could obtain at Labran all of the business which would come to the Denver and Rio Grande if it were finished into Canon City. He therefore demanded \$100,000 in bonds and several pieces of property in Canon City before he would complete the laying of track over the eight miles of graded roadbed between Canon City and Labran. With the Denver and Rio Grande terminus at Labran from late 1872 into 1874, Canon City suffered a severe economic depression. In 1873 bonds were voted but not delivered. On August 6, 1874, Canon City voted \$50,000 in bonds to the Denver and Rio Grande, and donated city lots that were later reportedly sold for \$25,000.²² The road was completed within a short time, but Palmer's manipulations had engendered bitter feelings in Canon City. There was probably little change in civic attitude between 1874 and 1879, when a local author wrote:

No doubt the original plan of a narrow-gauge road to Old Mexico, from Denver, with its numerous branches in and throughout the vast mountain regions, was a brilliant one,

²⁰ Rose Kingsley, *South by West or Winter in the Rocky Mountains and Spring in Mexico* (London: W. Ibister & Co., 1874), pp. 47-48.

²¹ Denver and Rio Grande Railway, *Second Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway to the Stockholders, for the year 1873-July 31st, 1874* (Colorado Springs: Out West Printing and Publishing Co., 1874), p. 9.

²² *Southern Colorado, Historical and Descriptive of Fremont & Custer Counties with their Principal Towns; Canon City, and other Towns, Fremont County; Rosita, Silver Cliff, Uta, and Wet Mountain Valley, Custer County; with a Description of the Immense Mineral Regions of Fremont and Custer Counties* (Canon City: Binckley & Hartwell, 1879), pp. 61-67.



Ox-drawn freight wagons in Canon City in the early seventies.

and conceived, no doubt, in an honest spirit, and it was hailed with joy by the then isolated Coloradoans; and with their proverbial liberality they lavished everything upon the pioneer 'baby' road. But soon after the first train of cars had been launched upon its track, it had become apparent to the shrewd observer that the 'pioneer' road was to be used as a means of gouging every one but the officers connected with it. It has never been a legitimate *railroad* company, expecting to derive its dividends from performing the duties of a common carrier. That was too much like 'working for wages.' There must be some 'wheel within a wheel,' that the managers could make something 'on the side.' Accordingly, the N. L. Co., afterwards the C. C. I. C. and the U. C. Co. was organized.²³

This same writer later bitterly observed that:

Without referring to the well-known history of this company (for the D. and R. G. Company are the responsible parties) in their attempt to ruin other towns on their line, the perfidy of their actions with the citizens of Canon City (which is mentioned above) is enough to cause them to lose the respect and confidence of any community.²⁴

Even as Palmer forced Canon City into compliance, he aroused the enmity of Pueblo. Across the Arkansas River from Pueblo Palmer's Central Colorado Improvement Company established the small town of South Pueblo late in 1872. Pueblo

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 65. N. L. Co. must refer to the National Land and Improvement Company. C. C. I. C. refers to the Central Colorado Improvement Company. U. C. Co. refers to the Union Contract Company. All three of these were Palmer companies. The first two were land companies, and the last was the company which constructed the Denver and Rio Grande.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

had been permanently settled since 1858, although a previous settlement had lasted from 1842 to 1854. The dismayed citizens of Pueblo watched in anger as the Denver and Rio Grande, to which they had voted \$150,000 in bonds, built a bridge across the Arkansas River in order to locate the new depot in South Pueblo.

The Pueblo county commissioners moved quickly to counter the Denver and Rio Grande's actions. In January of 1873 they voted to withhold the second bond issue, and the following May the county commissioners declared the first bond issue invalid. Apparently the Denver and Rio Grande returned the county's bonds in June or July.

In June, 1874, Palmer angered Douglas County residents when he refused to build a station at their new county seat, Castle Rock.²⁵ In an open letter to the county commissioners Palmer frankly stated:

It was part of the consideration to our original subscribers, and one that was necessary to induce them to contribute towards building the road, that they should have an interest in some 15,000 acres of land to be bought at selected points along the line at which the company agreed to locate its stations.

Every acre of this land had to be bought at high average prices, and the subscribers furthermore paid up a large capital for their development, so as to make business for the railroad and compensate for the smallness of the then existing population and traffic.²⁶

Palmer had thus indicated that his enterprises were only for the benefit of himself and his supporters and that all other considerations were secondary.

Palmer and his associates next prepared to extend the Denver and Rio Grande to the south, and in order to do this they accumulated properties which were consolidated into the Southern Colorado Coal and Town Company, incorporated in 1876. In April of that year the Denver and Rio Grande reached the vicinity of Trinidad, where the town of El Moro was platted by the new land company. Palmer clearly expected trouble, for as early as 1874 he had written of "our new proposed town site of Trinidad . . . there will probably be the same sort of fight that we had with Colorado City."²⁷ El Moro was located about five miles from Trinidad, and for a time it prospered. In 1876 the Southern Colorado Coal and Town Company built six experimental coke ovens there, and these having been



Trinidad about 1869 was still an adobe town.

successful, eight more were constructed in 1877. Then, in the autumn of 1878, firebrick for sixty-two additional ovens was ordered.²⁸

Palmer was unexpectedly defeated in his attempts to develop El Moro. The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe in February, 1878, snatched possession of Raton Pass from under Palmer's nose, and by September the Santa Fe had reached Trinidad. This rail connection gave Trinidad a needed boost and, in combination with the precarious financial condition of the Southern Colorado Coal and Town Company, spelled the ultimate doom of El Moro.

Palmer's road moved westward from Cucharas in 1876. La Veta, Colorado was soon founded, and in June of 1877 the rails of the Denver and Rio Grande reached the top of La Veta Pass. Across La Veta and Cumbres passes and in the southwestern corner of Colorado was Animas City, which Palmer chose as his next target. As early as May of 1880 the Animas City *Southwest* voiced distrust of the Denver and Rio Grande. This newspaper stated that.

The Bank of San Juan has issued a circular in which it is stated that a branch office will be opened at the 'new town of Durango on the Rio Animas.' Where the 'new town of Durango' is to be or not to be God and the D. and R. G. Railroad only know. If they are in 'cahoots' we ask for a special dispensation.²⁹

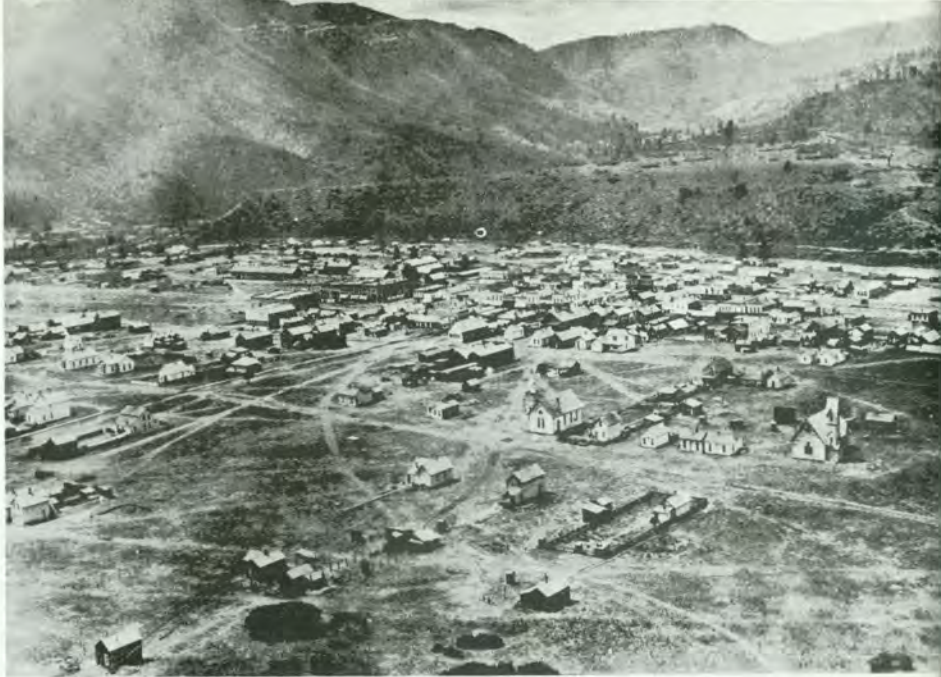
²⁵ *Weekly Rocky Mountain News*, July 1, 1874, p. 3.

²⁶ *Weekly Rocky Mountain News*, July 15, 1874, p. 1.

²⁷ William Jackson Palmer to Queen Palmer, October 12, 1874, Palmer Papers, Box XV.

²⁸ Southern Colorado Coal and Town Company, *The Southern Colorado Coal and Town Company: First Report to the Stockholders, 1878* (Colorado Springs: Gazette Publishing Company, 1879), pp. 4-10.

²⁹ *Animas City Southwest*, May 1, 1880. As quoted in Mary C. Ayres, "The Founding of Durango, Colorado," *The Colorado Magazine*, VII (May, 1930), 86.



Palmer's Durango displaced Animas City in 1880.

This hoped-for dispensation, however, was not forthcoming, and in December the *Durango Daily Record* reported:

All of Animas City is coming to Durango as fast as accommodations can be secured. Even the *Southwest* is coming, despite its small opinions of our dimensions. It will move down sometime next week.³⁰

Within a year Durango had become the county seat of La Plata County.

An example of Palmer's promotional methods appears in the *First Annual Report of the Central Colorado Improvement Company*, where Pueblo's railroad service was misrepresented in order to boost the company and its newly established town, South Pueblo. In the appendices of this *Report* was a map which showed the Denver and Rio Grande's lines as extending south from Pueblo into New Mexico and as extending to the east, west, and north of Pueblo. When this *Report* was published the lines to the east and south of Pueblo were nonexistent, and nowhere had it been made clear that these were merely proposed lines to the south and east.³¹ Questionable in the light of current business ethics, this sort of report was typical of the day and time.

³⁰ *Durango Daily Record*, December 29, 1880. As quoted in Mary C. Ayres, "The Founding of Durango, Colorado," *The Colorado Magazine*, VII (May, 1930), 86.

³¹ *Central Colorado Improvement Company, First Annual Report of the Directors of the Central Colorado Improvement Company* (Colorado Springs: n.p., 1872), p. 10.



William Jackson Palmer

Palmer's promotional ventures drastically affected the five towns of Colorado City, Pueblo, Canon City, Trinidad, and Animas City. During the period from 1871 to 1881 Palmer's railroad never voluntarily entered any major town in Colorado except Denver, the northern terminus of the Denver and Rio Grande. Palmer had little trouble replacing Colorado City and Animas City with his own Colorado Springs and Durango, both of which became county seats soon after their foundation. South Pueblo, Labran, and El Moro competed less successfully with the county seats of Pueblo, Canon City, and Trinidad. These three towns might have succeeded had Palmer been able to muster the necessary financial backing to establish them soundly. His failure was in large part due to conditions arising from the Panic of 1873.

Regardless of one's evaluation of Palmer's business ethics, it is clear that town promotion played an important role in his financial plans. Palmer's papers and methods clearly indicate an ambitious personality interested, in this period, primarily in the financial advancement of himself and his associates.

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