

Charles S. Stobie, Artist of Colorado

BY MICHAEL A. SIEVERS

The American West in the years following the Civil War was the scene of unbelievable growth and activity. Miners seemingly panned and probed every stream and rock in search of the big strike. Farmers, marching up the rivers of the plains, plowed and planted the soil of the "Great American Desert." Immigrant and freight wagons churned up dust along an increasing number of roads penetrating the plains. The iron horse and its twin rails of steel inched westward. Merchants, bankers, and businessmen established and fostered the growth of population centers like Denver.

The decision to move West was made by persons from all walks of life and for a hundred different reasons. Some were foot-loose veterans of the Civil War who either had no reason to go home or who had outgrown their hometowns. Some went seeking another chance. Still others, bored with their existence, packed their belongings and set out in search of a new experience. One such person was a twenty-year-old Chicagoan named Charles Stewart Stobie.

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, on 18 March 1845, Stobie attended the Maryland Institute in Baltimore and studied drawing and painting for two years at Madras College in Saint Andrew, Scotland.¹ Shortly after he returned to the United States, Stobie and his family moved from Maryland to Chicago during the winter of 1862-63. Two years later, Stobie journeyed west to Saint Louis and obtained passage up the Missouri River to Nebraska City, where he hired out as a bullwhacker. An impatient young man, Stobie quickly became bored with the slow pace of the ox train and found employment with a horse-mule train at a stage station along the route from Nebraska City to Fort Kearney. The train skirmished with Indians

¹ A Charles S. Stobie sketch book, apparently done during his studies in Scotland, is in the custody of the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library.



Twenty-year-old Charles S. Stobie in June 1865 "just before I went to Colorado." Stobie "joined a wagon train owned by the Pittsburgh and Colorado Gold Mining Co., driving a Bullteam for \$30. per month and his 'chuck' [grub]."

between Forts Kearney and Sedgwick, and by the time he had reached Denver, Stobie's heroism had been reported to the citizens.² "From that time forward," wrote Stobie, "I never wanted for employment, friends or money in Colorado."³

Stobie, it seems, never did want for employment in Colorado, for he ably combined scouting and painting. The winter of 1865-66 he

spent working as a scenic artist for Jack Langrishe's theatre troupe.⁴ Also during the winter months, he began to paint landscapes. One such painting, described by the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* as "the most excellent and beautiful work in oil painting we have seen in this country," was raffled off at Andy Stanbury's Tambien Saloon.⁵

During the spring or summer of 1866, Stobie crossed the Snowy Range by way of Berthoud Pass and lived with Nevava's band of Ute Indians.⁶ Adopted into the tribe and known as Paghaghet (Paghagh-et) or Long Hair, he was a member of a Ute war party that took seven scalps in a skirmish with a band of Cheyenne and Arapaho in

⁴ Considered by one Colorado historian to be "one of the most popular and capable of all western actors," John S. Langrishe was "universally respected as a man and a performer" among Colorado miners during the 1860s (Duane A. Smith, *Rocky Mountain Mining Camps: The Urban Frontier* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967], pp. 163-64).

⁵ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 2 August, 27 February 1866. As early as 1866 Andy Stanbury was listed as a merchant on Larimer Street, and by 1871 he was the proprietor of the Tambien Saloon (Junius E. Wharton and David O. Wilhelm, *History of the City of Denver from Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time to Which Is Added a Full and Complete Business Directory of the City* [Denver: Byers & Dailey, 1866], p. 166; *The Rocky Mountain Directory and Colorado Gazetteer for 1871* [Denver: S. S. Williams & Co., 1870], p. 294; *Corbett, Hoye & Co.'s Directory of the City of Denver for 1873* [Denver: Denver Tribune Association, 1873], p. 198).

⁶ Even before Stobie's arrival in Denver, the Ute had come under pressure for cession of their lands. The coming of the whites, implied Captain Charles Kerber of Fort Garland, had an adverse effect upon the tribe. He reported that the Ute were declining in population because of small pox, social diseases, and the decrease in game due to white encroachment on their hunting grounds. In 1863 Territorial Governor John Evans concluded at Conejos a treaty with the Tabeguache Ute, who ceded much of the San Luis Valley to the United States. The Ute were compelled to sign another treaty in 1868, which ceded the remainder of their Colorado lands in exchange for annuities and a reservation bounded on the west and south by Utah and New Mexico, the 107th meridian on the east, and on the north by a line approximately fifteen miles north of Meeker. The government also agreed in the second treaty to establish agencies at White River for the northern bands and another in the southwest portion of the reserve for the Southern and Uncompahgre Ute. Continued pressure for cession of their mineral rich reservation lands led in 1873 to the so-called Brunot Treaty. This agreement left the Ute with a small reservation in the southwestern part of Colorado. The document further named Ouray as spokesman for the entire Ute tribe. The Ute, however, continued to face white pressure for complete removal from the state. This force, combined with Nathan Meeker's attempts to civilize the tribe, culminated in the 1879 "Meeker Massacre" (Floyd A. O'Neil, ed., *The Southern Utes: A Tribal History* [Ignacio, Colo.: Southern Ute Tribe, 1972], pp. 29-33; Wilson Rockwell, *The Utes: A Forgotten People* [Denver: Sage Books, 1956], pp. 72-137; Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith, *A Colorado History*, 3d ed. [Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1972], pp. 173-80; *Condition of the Indian Tribes: Report of the Joint Special Committee Appointed under Joint Resolution of March 3, 1865 with an Appendix* [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1867], pp. 480-81; U.S., Congress, Senate, *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties: Treaties*, ed. and comp. by Charles S. Kappler, S. Doc. 319, 58th Cong., 2d sess., 1904, 2:856-58, 990-93).

² Alfred E. Mathews was another artist who arrived in Denver at about the same time as Stobie. Mathews, noted for his lithographs of Denver street scenes and buildings, published three Colorado related works entitled *Pencil Sketches of Colorado* (1866), *Gems of Rocky Mountain Scenery* (1869), and *Canyon City, Colorado, and Its Surroundings* (1870) (Robert Taft, *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, 1850-1900* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953], pp. 78-82, 307). Frederic Remington was also a frequent visitor to Stobie's Denver studio, and one of Remington's drawings has Stobie, the scout, in it (Edgar C. McMechen, "Art, Drama, and Music," *Colorado and Its People: A Narrative and Topical History of the Centennial State*, ed. LeRoy R. Hafen, 4 vols. [New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1948], 2:421).

³ Charles S. Stobie, "With the Indians in Colorado," *The Colorado Magazine* 7 (March 1930): 75-76; *Chicago Indicator*, 10 March 1888. Charles Stewart Stobie Collection, Scrapbook, p. 66. Documentary Resources Department, State Historical Society of Colorado, Denver (hereinafter referred to as Stobie Scrapbook, SHSC); Stobie, "Crossing the Plains to Colorado in 1865," *The Colorado Magazine* 10 (November 1933): 201-12.

Middle Park near Grand Lake. It was during this time that Stobie, rugged yet sensitive, began to paint and sketch in earnest, particularly the Middle Park region in Colorado. The coming of fall found him once again back in Denver working as a scenic artist and apparently also as an actor. Before the year was out, a painting of an Indian camp in Middle Park and a landscape of Grand River were hung in the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* office. His activities during 1867 are less definite. Possibly he visited Chicago, for early in 1868 he sold a sketch of a Chicago fire to Frank Leslie's New York Publishing House.⁷

With the coming of spring, Stobie was again in Indian country as a scout for Major Jacob Downing's 1868 expedition against the Cheyenne and the Arapaho.⁸ But Stobie still found time during the year to establish a studio over the Tambien Saloon at 355 Larimer, where, according to the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, he would devote himself to portrait painting. The editor remarked that his prices were reasonable and "his work not without merit of a marked character." On 15 December a raffle of a Longs Peak oil and an Arkansas valley oil was held at the studio.⁹

In 1869 Stobie or "Mountain Charlie," as he had come to be known to whites, returned to scouting. In the company of Major D. C. Oakes, Uriah M. Curtis, the Ute interpreter, Jim Baker, mountaineer and guide, and Judge Hiram P. Bennet, he assisted in marking the location of the White River Ute Agency. Sometime during the year he apparently returned to Chicago where he was commissioned to paint four panels for a Catholic church. During 1870-75, Stobie continued to move in and out of Colorado. He served on a murder trial jury in 1871, hunted near Fort Wallace in 1873, and completed a portrait of Ute Chief Ouray from a personal sitting in 1874. In the fall of 1875, for some unknown reason, Stobie returned to Chicago.¹⁰

From 1875 until his death on 17 August 1931, Stobie painted mainly at his Chicago studio.¹¹ But he did move to Denver once, and perhaps twice. In 1890 he considered a change of residence, but there is no evidence to document conclusively whether or not he returned to Colorado. In 1900, however, he wielded his brush at 1605 Larimer. He remained in Colorado until 1902, painting and frequently visiting the southwestern part of the state. He traveled to Wyoming in 1902 to paint his old friend Buffalo Bill's hunting expedition. Unfortunately, Cody was dissatisfied with the painting, and he wrote Stobie that several of the horses were out of proportion, the Indians looked like "toy indians [sic]," and Stobie's rendition of Cody was "not the likeness" of the buffalo hunter.¹²

While in Chicago, Stobie also began to dabble in poetry and song lyrics. His poem "Old Colorado," written in December 1907, is indicative of his knowledge of Ute customs and dress and points directly to his Middle Park adventures.

Collection. SHSC: *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 18 September 1870, 2 February 1871, 25 January 1874.

¹¹ At the time of Stobie's death, his will did not specify the disposition of his documentary and artifactual collection. State Historian LeRoy R. Hafen first attempted to obtain the collection for the State Historical Society of Colorado in 1928, and he later described it as "one of the largest and most important collection[s] of Indian and early western historical relics ever assembled for the Colorado region." Stobie indicated his intentions in 1931 when he wrote Hafen that he had "always wanted the Society to have this Collections [sic]." Considering this statement, the executor of the will agreed to transfer the collection to the Society if the residuary legatees, Agnes Whittet and Mary Margaret Agnes Willis of Scotland, also agreed. By September 1933 an agreement had been reached and the Stobie Collection was transferred to the Society. Included in the artifact collection were Stobie paintings of Colorado; Indian items, such as rugs, weapons, dolls; and western riding and wearing apparel as well as weapons. The documentary collection consisted of photographs, letters, newspaper clippings mounted in a scrapbook, reminiscences, poetry, and an autobiography. The latter are under the care of the Documentary Resources Department of the Society, while the former are cared for by the Material Culture Department ("The Charles S. Stobie Collection," *The Colorado Magazine* 10 [November 1933]: 234-36. Copy, "Last Will and Testament of Charles S. Stobie" and "First Codicil to the Last Will and Testament of Charles S. Stobie," Case 172644, Probate Division, County Department, Court of Cook County, Illinois; Hafen to Stobie, 4 May 1928; Stobie to Hafen, 24 June 1931; H. H. Benjamin to Hafen, 8 September 1931; Hafen to Benjamin, 16 May 1933; Unsigned to Benjamin, 19 September 1933, Document File for 1933, Department of Material Culture, SHSC).

¹² *Chicago Standard*, 27 March 1890; Copy, *Denver Post*, August 1900; Stobie note of 31 October 1900; Stobie Diary, 1902, Stobie Collection, SHSC. *Denver City Directory*, 1900, 1901, 1902 (Denver: Ballenger & Richards), pp. 1186, 1311, 1032, respectively. There is some evidence that Cody did not accept the work and did not pay Stobie. This painting now hangs in the City and County of Denver's Buffalo Bill Museum (William F. Cody to Stobie, 12 March 1903; Mike Taguin to "Dear Old Pard," 7 April 1904, William F. Cody Collection, Documentary Resources Department, SHSC). A 1914 Stobie painting of Buffalo Bill is owned by the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming.

⁷ Stobie, "With the Indians in Colorado," p. 76; *Chicago Evening Journal*, 19 May 1877; Frank Leslie to Stobie, 3 February 1868, Stobie Scrapbook, pp. 93, 18, SHSC; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 19 October 1865; 2 August, 15, 18, 20 September 1866; 20, 22 October 1866.

⁸ Stobie, "With the Indians in Colorado," p. 76.

⁹ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 11 November, 16 December 1868. Of the work done in 1868, three are known to have survived. One of a mountain scene inscribed to Miss E. Oakes is owned by the Denver Public Library. Two others, a village scene and perhaps the last portrait of Kit Carson before his death, are at the State Historical Society of Colorado.

¹⁰ Stobie, "With the Indians in Colorado," p. 76; *Chicago Evening Journal*, 19 May 1877; *Chicago Standard*, ? 1869; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 17 September 1870; *Chicago Times*, 8 August 1875 in Stobie Scrapbook, pp. 93, 44, 99, 94, SHSC; Stobie autobiography, "On the Buffalo Range," Stobie

Life on the frontier had clearly altered Stobie's appearance as this photograph taken after his return to Chicago indicates. Stobie wrote that Chief Nevava's band of Ute "knew me and gave me the name of 'Pagh-agh-et,' Long Hair, as I wore my hair very long. We wore our hair long as a protection from wind, sun and rain, and not to be odd, as some thought. When riding horseback our hair would shake and flaunt in the wind and in the summer served as a fan to keep us cool, while in the winter it protected the head and neck from the cold."



Creeping slowly along on the old Ute Trail
That winds in and out in a torturous way,
A band of wild riders like knights clad in mail
File silently by through the mists cool and gray.

.....
There are bright colored blankets, red, yellow and blue,
And feathers nod blithly, and flaunt in the breeze,
Side braids and scalp-locks, and eagle plumes too,
And war-axes cruel that nery hands seize.

Do they ride to avenge some dark deed of the Sioux,
Or charge fierce Arapahoes out on the plain?
The scalps of the Cheyenne, they've raised quite a few,
And their horse-herds depleted again and again.

.....
Will their village rejoice at the warriors return,
Or moan and lament in their wierd, wild way?
Will those braves be greeted with pomp and form,
Or the wolf-like wails, or hounds sorrowful bay?

Will the scalp dance and song enliven the night,
Or the sounds from the lodges be groans and cries?
Will the maidens rejoice, and don garments bright,
Or morn as one does when some warrior dies?

This poem, like most of the ones that Stobie wrote between 1890 and 1924, was of the romantic school.

Several of Stobie's verses were love poems, while "The Cowboy and the Auto" dealt with the horseman's befuddlement with the new machine. After turning the car "loose right up the trail in regular chauffeur style," and burning "the earth some fiercely for may-be half a mile," the two cowboys ended up in a wreck, "felt like a light-nin' bolt had busted" them, and were ashamed to have "tackled that bloomin' old machine." Exactly how many of Stobie's poems were published is difficult to say, but at least one appeared in print. Entitled "Gratitude," it related the theme that "Injins is human, in spite of the fact/That they sometimes has rough ways." In essence, many of his poems were another art form expressionistic of his Colorado experiences.¹³

¹³ Stobie poems in his handwriting, Stobie Collection, SHSC. Five of the eleven stanzas of "Old Colorado" are reproduced here. For a printed copy of "Gratitude," see newspaper clippings pertaining to Charles S. Stobie, Stobie Collection, SHSC.

Poetry, however, was only a sideline for Stobie, and painting remained his best and most successful expression. Among Colorado contemporaries Stobie was an artist of recognized ability. In 1874 his portrait of Ouray was considered to be a "very correct likeness."¹⁴ A writer for the *Denver Post* observed at the turn of the century that Stobie was a "rare painter of Western life and scenery, with all the charm and romantic passion that only those who love it, know how to throw into pictures of the great West."¹⁵ But as much as he might have wanted to, Stobie could not limit his work to the West. After his 1875 return to Chicago, he was forced by economic circumstances to design calling cards, to prepare wood cuts, and to paint panels and murals as well as more classical subjects, such as *The Pompeian Mother*.¹⁶ Stobie's attempts to portray the West were significantly limited to portraits of Indians, village life, and portraits of whites involved with Indians, such as Frank North and Kit Carson.¹⁷ A romantic at heart who probably realized that Indian life was bound to be altered by white settlement, Stobie painted few works documenting the growth of urban centers and the development of mining, transportation, and agriculture.

In particular, Stobie formed an emotional bond with the Ute. Perhaps with the benefit of hindsight, he observed in 1890 that the

... white man has not time to wait or fool away in instructing them, the indian [*sic*] is swept into a corner somewhere . . . and the sooner he dies the better it suits the white man, for he gets a few more thousand acres of real estate to gamble with. This rapid process of civilizing and christianizing a race certainly does not pan out well for them.¹⁸

Among the Ute tribe, according to former agent James B. Thompson, he "was always a great favorite," and as a result there were "few white men living [at that time] who [were] as intimately acquainted with their history as he."¹⁹

Stobie painted portraits of other Indian tribes as well, particularly the Sioux. But in the main, these lack the depth and the feeling of his Ute paintings because they are primarily historical reconstructions.

¹⁴ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 25 April 1874.

¹⁵ Copy, *Denver Post*, August 1900, Stobie Collection, SHSC.

¹⁶ *Chicago Indicator*, 10 March 1888, Stobie Scrapbook, p. 66, SHSC. Examples of calling cards and wood cuts are mounted in the Stobie Scrapbook, pp. 84-85, 92.

¹⁷ Stobie also painted portraits of Generals John A. Logan and George Crook (*Chicago Evening Journal*, 25 March 1887, 27 April 1890, Stobie Scrapbook, pp. 45, 61, SHSC).

¹⁸ Stobie letter excerpt, March 1890, Stobie Collection, SHSC.

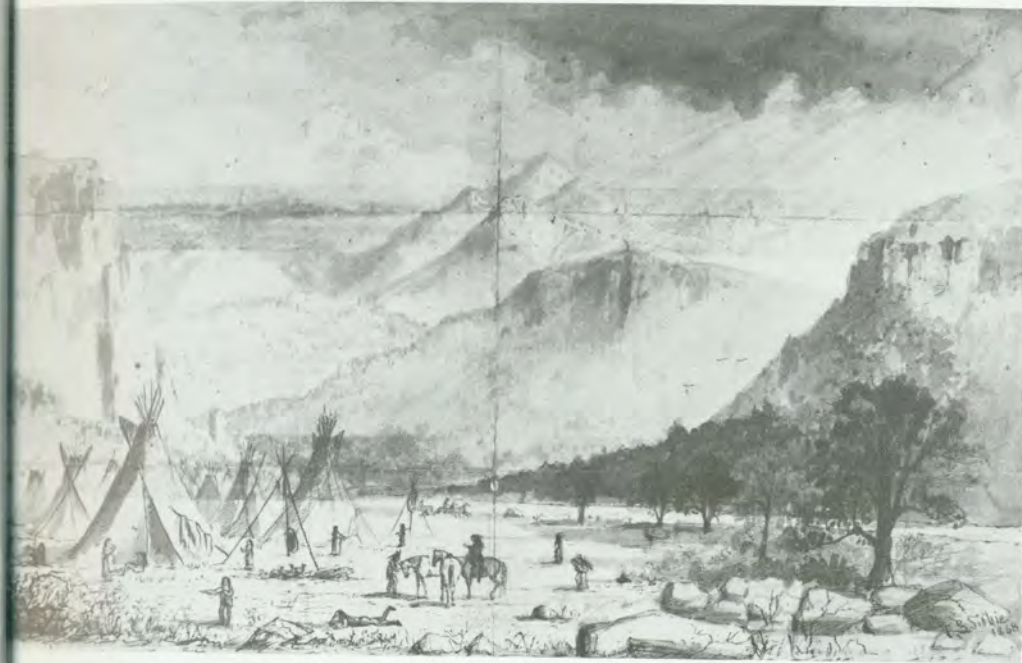
¹⁹ James B. Thompson to Whom It May Concern, 25 November 1889, Stobie Collection, SHSC.



This portrait of Sioux Chief Little Wolf was painted in 1900 during Stobie's brief, second Colorado residence. Less knowledge of and empathy for tribes other than the Ute is apparent when this painting is compared to Stobie's portrait of the Ute Chief Ouray (cover).

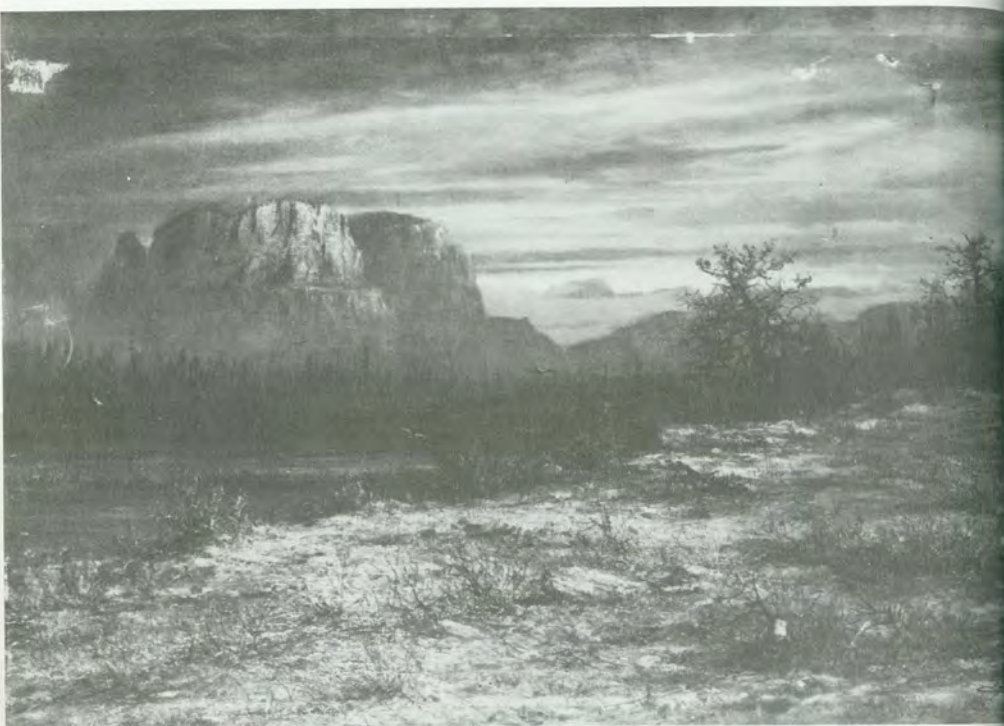
tions. It is also evident from these less realistic portraits that Stobie was not so well acquainted with other tribes as with the Ute, nor did he form that essential emotional bond with other Indian subjects that he was able to achieve with the Ute. A certain predisposition or lack of interest or ability led Stobie to paint few action scenes. His landscapes too are rare, probably because he was uncomfortable with that medium. Most landscapes, as a result, form a backdrop for village scenes and Indian personages, and these are usually far more colorful, light, and cheerful than are his basic landscapes. A lack of confidence in his ability as a landscape artist is clearly evident from the fact that he consistently employed plains or flatlands in the middle ground and nearly identical buttes in the background.

This updated Stobie painting is of Navajo Black Horse, or "Amer Killer," and was probably painted around 1900. Assuming that the painting is accurate, the McClellan saddle is indicative of the adoption of Anglo items by the Navajo.



Stobie completed this 1868 ink wash probably during the time he lived in Middle Park with the Ute. A historically important work, it depicts, for example, the division of labor among the men and women of the tribe. "As I had done more or less drawing and painting from childhood," remarked Stobie, "this helped me to make clear records."

This ink wash could be the village he described recalling his participation with the Ute in their skirmish with the Cheyenne-Arapaho. Stobie wrote "we made a start back for the village on the Grand [River]. All were elated over their success and little rest did the ponies get until we struck the main village which was now pitched just below the high rocks, a short distance north of the Hot Sulphur Springs. . . . There were about ninety lodges in the village, besides a number of wick-i-ups."



A typical Stobie landscape painted in 1904. The painting, like those of more famous artists of the period, is rather ethereal and somewhat gloomy and foreboding. With the artist's eye for color and detail, in his autobiography Stobie commented on the Colorado landscape: "The rocks and light-colored earths of various tints bake in the bright hot sunshine of the southwest. . . . As we sit in our saddle and gaze we feel as though we are monarchs of all within sight. Soft greens, reds, purples, yellows, blue and orange sparkle in the lights and contrast with the shadows — cool silvery grays and half-tints of every grade."



Painted in 1915, this Stobie depiction of an Indian village employs somewhat similar scenery to that used in his 1904 landscape. On one of his many excursions through Colorado, Stobie wrote: "In a few minutes I came in sight of a camp of Utes, one lodge and two little wick-i-ups, or small arrangements made by sticking willow wands in a half circle, bending the tops together, dome-like, and covering with saddle cloths, pine branches, etc. This keeps the moon from shining on the face of the sleeper, something an Indian always guards against."



An unfinished action scene, perhaps suggestive of Stobie's lack of interest in this style of artistic expression. Stobie, however, showed no lack of interest in describing his action-filled life with the Ute: "Now was our time! Great Scott! how the rifle shots cracked and swished and echoed in that gulch in wild harmony with the warhoops, and how the arrows whizzed."

Although Stobie's canvasses are owned by collectors and museums throughout the United States, his paintings to date have had a rather limited regional appeal. Artistically and ethnologically, his works vary widely, and naturally each must be judged on its own individual merits. In general, his attention to detail in the case of Indian dress and village life remains a valuable record. Coloradoans are particularly indebted to Stobie for his vivid and colorful paintings of their state and its native inhabitants. His success was built upon this foundation, which stemmed in part from his desire to communicate accurately what he saw and experienced on the frontier. Indians were, of course, a striking part of the Colorado scene, and Stobie devoted much of his western work to this theme. Taken as a whole, then, Charles S. Stobie stands as both a capable artist and an important chronicler of the West.

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The Coe Gang: Rustlers of "Robbers' Roost"

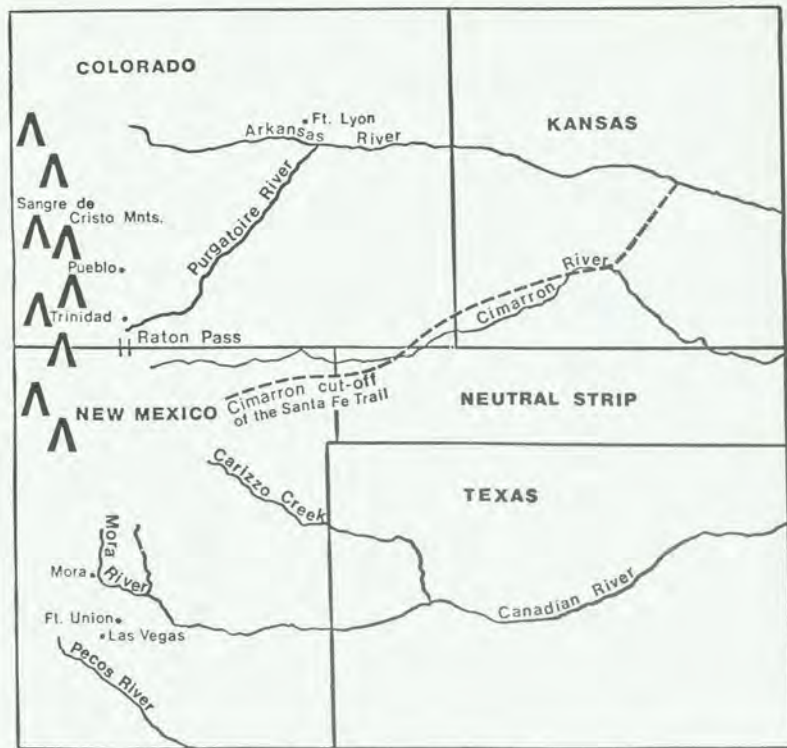
BY MORRIS F. TAYLOR

The western desperado is sometimes an unfashionable subject among professional historians today, but the attempt to cut him down to size and to put him into perspective should not be taken to the point of acting as though he did not exist. Outlaws of various types were present in the American West, and they persist in popular legend. Sometimes the legend, often a distortion, can be brought into truer focus if the effort is made. To make that effort is the purpose of this paper, and the result suggests again that some of the classical features of outlaw stories are rooted in fact.

After the Civil War a band of rustlers, called the Coe Gang, harassed southeastern Colorado, northeastern New Mexico, and the western extremity of what is now the Oklahoma Panhandle. Their rustling area generally was bounded on the west by the Sangre de Cristo Mountains with the valley of the Arkansas River on the north; the Cimarron Cutoff of the Santa Fe Trail running through the Neutral Strip (Oklahoma Panhandle) and New Mexico marked their eastern limits; and the Mora River served as their southern boundary. In their passing between New Mexico and Colorado they frequently went through Emory Gap and what is now known as Toll Gate Canyon (both in New Mexico), passing the ranch of Madison Emory on the Dry Cimarron. When Coe stopped there, he usually expected food and sometimes beds—requests that were granted because the Emorys did not dare to refuse.

Government livestock was particularly prized by the gang, and their raids were a curse to the commanding officers at Fort Lyon, Territory of Colorado, and Fort Union, Territory of New Mexico.¹

¹ Albert W. Thompson, *They Were Open Range Days: Annals of a Western Frontier* (Denver: World Press, 1946), p. 57; E. J. B. Bradley, "Early Days in Toll Gate and the Dry Cimarron Canon" (manuscript in the possession of Richard Loudon, Branson, Colorado), p. 2; notes from Frank W. Nelson in Nellie L. Grantham to Morris Taylor, 25 July 1967.



Not that the gang was disinclined to take the animals of civilians or even their lives, but the military was a preferred target mainly because of a leader's whim and choice and the fact that in 1867 army animals usually were in more plentiful supply.

William Coe first appears in the record as Cyrus I. Coe, which may or may not have been his real name.² Little is known of his origin or background. He may have served in an Ohio regiment during the Civil War, but a contemporary account in the *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News* indicates that he fought for the rebel cause, a point supported by some anecdotal material.³ A more recent interpretation says that when he returned as a Confederate veteran to his Texas farm, he found the livestock stolen and the place in ruins. Thoroughly discouraged, he drifted towards No Man's Land (Neutral Strip) and another life style. Other stories portray him as

the wayward son of a distinguished Southern family, who was a Confederate captain and deserter.⁴ Such stories are impossible to authenticate. A credible participant in some of the incidents of Coe's life later, Sergeant Luke Cahill, wrote nothing about any wartime experience but stated that Coe was a mason by trade, serving as foreman of stonemasons at Fort Union and then at the second Fort Lyon, the latter under construction at a new site beside the Arkansas River in June 1867.⁵ Coe's evident bias against the army could have grown out of any of those circumstances, but his predilection for government livestock simply may have been based upon his inside knowledge of government herds while working at the forts. In the meager personal data available there is but one description of Coe. A stocky 175 pounds, he had a bewhiskered, moon-shaped face and was generally well dressed.⁶

The overall gang worked both sides of the Colorado-New Mexico line, and one of the first big jobs pulled by the outlaws may have been planned by Coe but was not carried out by him. A trusted associate was in charge of a raid in February 1867 on a sheep camp belonging to the Bernal brothers of Las Vegas, New Mexico. The rustlers drove off about thirty-four hundred head of sheep and killed two or three of the herders. One version of the incident says that the sheepmen pursued the overconfident and careless thieves, recovering the sheep but only tying up captured members of the gang because of fear of Coe's retaliation.⁷ That the Bernal sheep raid was the work of a subaltern fits well with contemporary items indicating that the gang numbered from one hundred to perhaps more than one hundred fifty men.⁸ A highly centralized organization of that many men was not likely, so the gang may well have operated in subgroups for greater frequency and effectiveness, while still responding to loose direction from the top.

² C. L. Packer, "Castles on Carrizo Creek Compared, 1867-1967," *Boise City (Okla.) New Historical and Anniversary Edition*, 1968, Section C: *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 16 April 1868. The Denver paper said that Tex was an alias for Coe (Cole), which is an error. The article also gave the name of Gray as another Coe alias.

³ Luke Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 17, Luke Cahill Collection, Documentary Resources Department, State Historical Society of Colorado, Denver; LeRoy Boyd, *Fort Lyon, Colorado: One Hundred Years of Service* (Colorado Springs: H. & H. Printing Company, 1967), p. 3.

⁴ Jennie Rose Benton, "Robbers' Roost Was Hideout of Notorious Coe Gang of Outlaws," *Boise City (Okla.) New Historical and Anniversary Edition*, 1968, Section A, drawing on an article published by Albert W. Thompson.

⁵ *Ibid.*; Thompson, *They Were Open Range Days*, p. 57; Packer, "Castles on Carrizo Creek Compared, 1867-1967."

⁶ *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 10 March 1868; *Denver Rocky Mountain Herald*, 14 March 1868.

⁷ *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 3 May 1868; Harry E. Chrisman, *Lost Trails of the Cimarron* (Denver: Sage Books, 1961), p. 57.

⁸ Chrisman, *Lost Trails of the Cimarron*, p. 57; *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 16 April 1868.

Fort Union in New Mexico Territory was very vulnerable in the summer of 1867 because of a cholera quarantine, and some of the rustlers, based in Cherry Valley a few miles southeast of the fort, made successful incursions on the army's mule herd. When the quarantine was lifted in the late summer and Brevet Colonel William B. Lane, commandant, could move more vigorously against them, the Cherry Valley thieves shifted their operations to the north of the Raton Mountains in Colorado, where a cavalry detachment followed without notable results.⁹ Lane's successor at Fort Union, Lieutenant Colonel and Brevet Brigadier General John R. Brooke, warned Captain and Brevet Brigadier General William H. Penrose at Fort Lyon to be on the watch for the outlaws.¹⁰

In the late summer or early fall of 1867 some of the gang raided around the gold camp of Elizabethtown, New Mexico, and also hit the government mule herd at Fort Union. Pursuit was given by a Third Cavalry detachment under Lieutenant George Campbell, who surrounded a house and captured "a man named Cole"—misidentity or an alias. Since only three animals were recovered from him, it is probable that the rustlers had split up in order to elude the troopers, and Coe had the misfortune to be caught.¹¹

Coe claimed innocence and demanded a chance to clear himself. Assuming that he was playing a dual role, his stance had two possible motives: to gain time and to preserve his deception. He was turned over to the civilian authorities, arraigned before a justice of the peace, and bound over to the next term of court at Mora, New Mexico. Coe gave bond and then skipped the territory, going north to Colorado Territory. Perhaps that was his intention all the time, but there is no indication that his ruse was discovered. He maintained that Fairchild, then acting deputy sheriff at Mora, had maliciously accused him of being a horse thief, which, if true, may have caused Coe to feel that the cards were stacked against him.¹²

During this time a man named Barrett had joined the Seventh Cavalry stationed at Fort Lyon. He was promoted to the rank of

⁹ Chris Emmett, *Fort Union and the Winning of the Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), pp. 339-40; Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 16.

¹⁰ Emmett, *Fort Union and the Winning of the Southwest*, p. 412; Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 16; Robert M. Utley, *Fort Union National Monument, New Mexico* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 64.

¹¹ Chrisman, *Lost Trails of the Cimarron*, p. 57; Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from Its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 1:277; Emmett, *Fort Union and the Winning of the Southwest*, p. 340.

¹² Emmett, *Fort Union and the Winning of the Southwest*, p. 340.

sergeant, much to the dissatisfaction of men who were passed over, but it soon became apparent that Barrett was not just another recruit. He was a fine-looking six-footer with the appearance of a good soldier, and rumor had it that he had been a detective on the New York City police force. Although the data does not say it in so many words, the impression given is that Barrett was sent to Fort Lyon to do a specific job. At any rate, he told General Penrose that he could run down the thieves. Penrose decided that Barrett was capable of the task and asked how many men and pack mules he would require. Barrett probably caused a bit of comment when he replied that one good man, who knew the country, and two mules would be sufficient.

The problem of finding the right man to accompany Barrett was solved by a volunteer. Stonemason Coe presented himself as a man thoroughly familiar with the area to be searched. Both Penrose and the quartermaster at Fort Lyon said that they knew Coe well and agreed that he was just the man.¹³ No one at the post seemed to have any idea of Coe's double identity and hence had no comprehension of his daring move to destroy a grave danger at its source. Somehow Coe must have satisfactorily explained his intimate knowledge of the country to Penrose and others, and it is obvious that the appellation, the Coe Gang, was not in common use.

Barrett and Coe were fitted out with two cavalry horses, two pack mules, two Colt forty-five revolvers, and one Winchester rifle apiece. With plenty of ammunition, money, and rations, the two men headed south across the high plains. The first night's camp was made at Higbee and Smith's ranch on the Nine Mile Bottom of the Purgatoire River, about twenty-five miles from the fort. The next morning Barrett changed into civilian clothes, and the two men left the ranch in apparent good spirits. The time was November or December 1867.¹⁴

Weeks passed without word from them. Uneasiness and then anxiety took hold of General Penrose, who received numerous inquiries from New York about the well-being and the whereabouts of Barrett. Vague reports of those communications swept through the fort, causing the troops to think that Barrett was a high government official on some secret mission. Then one day Uriel Higbee came in from the Nine Mile Bottom and informed Penrose that Barrett had been found dead, buried with a rope still around his neck. Excitement ensued at Fort Lyon, and Washington officials were notified.¹⁵

¹³ Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 7 May 1868.

¹⁵ *The Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News* (7 May 1868) said that Barrett

A manhunt for Coe was organized and was further stimulated by an episode that occurred in Trinidad, Colorado, just after Christmas 1867. On Christmas Eve the Texas cattleman Charles Goodnight encamped with his trail herd on the Apishapa River north of Trinidad, which he had skirted after a difficult crossing of the Raton Pass. One of Goodnight's trail bosses had hired three hands along the way. Two of the hands had drifted down toward the Dry Cimarron to join the rustlers, and "Uncle Dick" Wootton at his toll gate in the pass had warned Goodnight that the remaining member of the trio was one of the outlaws. When the herd reached the Apishapa, the suspected man was paid off and told to leave.

A day or so later, a prominent Mexican citizen of Trinidad sent word to Goodnight for help because outlaws under Coe had practically taken over the tiny settlement. The Texan and eight of his men rode hard through the night to Trinidad. Someone forewarned Coe, who, though he was no coward, decided to leave. He and his men rode south just before the cowboys entered town from the north, and reports quickly circulated that Coe had vowed to kill Goodnight on sight.¹⁶

Earlier, Goodnight had ridden ahead of his herd to "Old Mad" Emory's ranch, where he hoped to buy corn for his horses and have it delivered to the trail crossing (presumably of the Dry Cimarron).¹⁷ On Capulin *vega* the cattleman had passed two well-armed horsemen, and when he reached Emory's gate the rancher asked if Goodnight had seen a couple of riders. The Texan said that he had seen two on the *vega*, and Emory asserted that they were Coe and one of his men. The pair had stayed with Emory the night before and had told him that they would kill Goodnight if they ever met him. Their threat evidently derived from the fact that Goodnight, while on the Pecos River, had seized "Fingerless" Jackson, one of Coe's men, and had sent him north by stagecoach to be tried for some offense in Denver. En route, at Colorado City, vigilantes had taken Jackson from the coach and had hanged him for crimes allegedly committed there.¹⁸

successfully infiltrated the outlaw gang by pretending to desert the army. According to Cahill, Coe discovered that Barrett was sending reports to General Penrose, and he killed Barrett for that reason. In my opinion, Luke Cahill's account has the ring of authenticity.

¹⁶ James Evetts Haley, *Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman*, rev. ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949), pp. 201-2.

¹⁷ That would seem to suggest that Goodnight at first planned to cross over the mesas to Colorado through Trinchera Pass, some miles east of Raton Pass.

¹⁸ Haley, *Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman*, p. 223; Sue Flanagan, "Charles Goodnight in Colorado," *The Colorado Magazine* 43 (Winter

Coe could hardly have been ignorant of the net that was being spread for him and his cronies, so they rode to a relatively remote hideout one hundred miles or so southeast of Trinidad, a location that was only vaguely known to the military and civilian authorities. Troopers from Forts Lyon and Union were active in the big search. Parts of three companies of the Third Infantry and a company of the Seventh Cavalry, commanded by Brevet Captain Matthew Berry, had been in Trinidad since January to help quell a civil disturbance (with ethnic overtones) known as the Trinidad War, and they were ordered on 25 February 1868 to cooperate with Sheriff John D. Kinnear's posse in scouring the country east of town.¹⁹

Mild weather in the high plains-mesa country helped the searchers, who came across large numbers of sheep, cattle, and horses—the sheep appearing to be widely scattered by wolves. It was odd that no herders were found, but it was adduced that Indians had killed them. Circumstances ultimately convinced Berry and Kinnear that the animals had been stolen. (Because Luke Cahill's account refers only to the soldiers [no mention of the sheriff's posse] in the subsequent events, it must be assumed that the search led quickly into the Neutral Strip, perhaps through New Mexico, where Sheriff Kinnear's authority did not extend.) The soldiers worked in squads of three, coming into a predetermined point each night, and after several days one of the squads reported that Indians had rounded up some of the sheep. A close watch revealed that the herders were not Indians, and a plan was made to seize them the next morning and to take their clothes for two soldiers to wear in order to infiltrate the area further.²⁰

Six soldiers crept up on two sleeping herders and rushed them, taking their rifles and pistols. The pair offered no resistance and clothing was exchanged. The captured men, who showed no alarm, were put in irons and taken to a secluded spot, because Captain Berry feared a trap.²¹ The prisoners insisted that they were simply two men hired for \$25.00 per month and board. They professed to know little about their employers except that they were fine

1966):5. "Fingerless" Jackson probably was John Jackson, one of the Cherry Valley thieves, who also was under sentence of death at Mora, New Mexico (Emmett, *Fort Union and the Winning of the Southwest*, p. 339).

¹⁹ Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 25; notes on Edward J. Hubbard, Samuel W. DeBusk papers, Trinidad State Junior College Library, Trinidad, Colorado; *Post Return from Fort Lyon, Colorado*, February 1868, Microcopy No. 617, Roll No. 659, National Archives Microfilm Publications.

²⁰ Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 18.

²¹ *Ibid.*; notes on Edward J. Hubbard.

horsemen, excellent shots, and quite fearless, and they talked freely about a headquarters being fortified "against the Indians" with plenty of guns, ammunition, and food.²²

The herders were undoubtedly referring to the outlaws' major retreat near the Black Mesa in the extreme northwestern corner of the Neutral Strip. The earliest description of the place (1869) says: "It was on a high bluff near the juncture of Willow [North Carrizo] creek, and the [Dry] Cimarron. . . . It commanded a view of the country for fully fifteen miles in every direction [an exaggeration]. . . . it would have required great loss of life to have taken it, unless cannon were used. . . . It was truly a robber's roost." Later accounts speak of it as being on an eminence above the Dry Cimarron near [North] Carrizo Creek about five miles north of present Kenton, Oklahoma. The place has been variously called Robbers' Roost, Rock Ranch, and Bummers' Retreat. The 1869 description says that the structure "was built of stone, 20 by 40 [feet], walls three feet thick, with loop holes, etc."²³ A later, more elaborate account, basically agreeing, stated that "it consisted of a low one-room rock structure, 35 by 16 feet. The domicile, or fort, as it was sometimes called, contained two doors, one in each of its ends. Windows were lacking but 27 port holes admitted a little light. A wide stone chimney stood in each end of the building whose deep fireplaces, within which cooking was done, diffused heat through long winter days and nights."²⁴

The troopers from Fort Lyon located the hideout from information given by the herders, and they heeded the hints that the herders had given. Their approach was carefully made after dark, and at dawn they had their first clear view. Smoke came from one of the chimneys as breakfast was being prepared, and the concealed soldiers watched as eleven men emerged and went about different chores at varying distances from the place. About 9:30 A.M. the troopers fired three signal shots and quickly encircled the building. The shots brought eleven men straggling back to find out what was going on, and one by one they were caught and put in irons. Among them was Coe, who was recognized as the last man seen with Sergeant Barrett; it was clear that he was the "captain" of the rustlers and his "lieutenant" was a man identified simply as Tex.²⁵

Coe's capture transformed suspicion, engendered by Barrett's death and the wild time at Trinidad, into certainty of his double life.

The only female at the hideout was a Black woman named Laura Young, who was the cook and paramour of one of the men. Word was sent to Fort Lyon of the success of the mission. While waiting several days for orders, the soldiers enjoyed Laura's cooking and ate heartily of ham, bacon, beef, and dried fruit. Sergeant Luke Cahill's account relates that the soldiers named the place Robbers' Roost. Orders from Fort Lyon directed that the prisoners should be brought there, while the recovered livestock and other property should be taken to Fort Union.²⁶

That Laura Young was the only woman at the hideout may have been unusual, and the circumstance is out of line with other stories about the amenities of Robbers' Roost, which say that it was much more than an isolated refuge to use when matters were too dangerous. A well-stocked bar was to be expected, but a piano in the place is open to question. The main allure, women, were brought from far and near—even from Old Mexico—it was claimed. One story discloses that after Coe and his boys had a big spree in Trinidad, ten dance hall girls willingly went with them to the Roost, because they knew that they would not be subjected to the brutalities and the indignities that were their lot in the saloons of the settlements.²⁷ "Captain" Coe did not permit that sort of thing. It may be true that he was gallant and deferential, but it may also be true that the characterization is part legend with an element of admiration for dangerous and talented outlaws that often appears in folk stories.

In some of the tales about the Coe Gang the feature most open to doubt is that about the troopers having a six-inch cannon with them to reduce the Robbers' Roost. Especially unlikely is their dragging it to the top of the Black Mesa overlooking the hideout about a mile away. But the case against the cannon does not rest on logical deductions alone. Mention of the cannon in an 1869 account in the *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News* does not say that it actually was used.²⁸ Most significant, however, is the absence of any reference to a cannon in Luke Cahill's account and the fact that the Fort Lyon post returns give no evidence of such a weapon at that post. It is reasonable to dismiss the anecdote about a shell being lobbed from

²² Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," pp. 18-19.

²³ *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 6 March 1869; Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 19; Thompson, *They Were Open Range Days*, p. 56; Bradley, "Early Days," p. 2; Chrisman, *Lost Trails of the Cimarron*, p. 57.

²⁴ Thompson, *They Were Open Range Days*, p. 56.

²⁵ Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 19.

²⁶ *Ibid.*; notes on Edward J. Hubbard; *Denver Rocky Mountain Herald*, 2 May 1868.

²⁷ Packer, "Castles on Carrizo Creek Compared, 1867-1967."

²⁸ *Ibid.*; *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 6 March 1869.

the mesa into the Roost, destroying one end of the building and driving its occupants into the open.²⁹

The men in New Mexico who had posted Coe's bond in the Fort Union mule-stealing case learned that he was imprisoned at Fort Lyon and asked the New Mexican Territory's Acting Governor H. H. Heath to secure his extradition. Colorado Territory also had an acting governor at the time, Frank Hall, and he ordered that Coe be returned to New Mexico.³⁰ But Coe made the negotiations pointless by escaping before his return could be effected.

General Penrose had ordered Coe and his men placed in a common cell in the basement of the commissary building because the guard house was full. The room had one entry at which a guard was posted, and another sentry was placed outside a small, barred window. The window was post number four of the ten sentry posts at the fort. One night the "all is well" was not called from that post at midnight, and a corporal hastened to find out why. He found the iron bars sawed through and eleven prisoners gone—the two herders evidently refused to leave. The sentry, a man named Sheppard, also had disappeared into the night. The entire garrison was turned out, but none of the outlaws had been apprehended by daybreak. (It is impossible to establish a firm chronology for these events, but from the data it appears that the successful military operation against the hideout on the North Carrizo occurred about 1 March 1868. And, within weeks Coe and his colleagues had escaped from Fort Lyon.)³¹

Once freed from their cell, escape was fairly easy—Fort Lyon had no stockade around it. In the morning a composite infantry-cavalry force under the command of First Lieutenant Charles Porter, Fifth Infantry (with First Lieutenant John W. Thomas, Third Infantry, as second in command) marched up the valley of the

Purgatoire River past Boggsville, about sixteen miles from the fort, where the gang had another "fortified" base in Turkey Canyon.³² The force was again joined by Sheriff John D. Kinnear and his posse. Overconfidence and carelessness combined to give most of the escaped outlaws only a few hours of freedom. They were easily tracked down and surrounded in a ranch house, having posted no sentinels while they were playing cards inside. How many other members of the gang were already there or in the vicinity is not known, but when the trap was sprung eleven men were caught. However, Coe was not among them, but his second in command Tex was along with the sentry-deserter Sheppard. The Turkey Canyon hideout also came to be known as Robbers' Roost.³³

A few days after the Turkey Canyon episode Coe was taken at a house above Uriel Higbee's on the Purgatoire. The second capture of Coe was the work of Sheriff Kinnear. Details are lacking, but Coe joined his friends again at the Fort Lyon guardhouse. There must have been room this time, because he was placed in a cell by himself. One of the men captured with him was turned over to the New Mexico authorities for the alleged killing of two herders.³⁴

Imagine the shock when Coe brought off a second breakout from Fort Lyon. Several members of the big gang still at large came to the post posing as wood choppers seeking a contract to furnish stove wood. During their feigned negotiations, one of them was able to pitch a gun into Coe's cell. The next time the guard came with food, Coe forced him to exchange clothes, and the rustler walked away from the fort.³⁵ It was calculated that Coe would head south, and warning messages were sent to Fort Union and to Fort Bascom on the Canadian River. Two accounts tell about the final capture of Coe; they are in general agreement but vary in specifics.

²⁹ Packer, "Castles on Carrizo Creek Compared, 1867-1967"; Benton, "Robbers' Roost."

³⁰ *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 5 May 1868; *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 5 February 1868. Colorado Territory's Governor A. Cameron Hunt was in Washington with a delegation of Ute chiefs from about 1 February to early in March (Morris F. Taylor, "Ka-ni-ache," pt. 2, *The Colorado Magazine* 44 [Spring 1967]:140-42).

³¹ The deductions are based on the following data. Captain Berry and his troopers left on detached service 25 February 1868. The *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News* carried an item about the capture of cattle thieves (twenty-four having been captured) on 10 March 1868, and the same paper on 10 April 1868, telling about the second breakout and recapture, referred to the circumstances of the first escape of Coe and some of his men (*Fort Lyon Post Return*, February 1868; *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 10 March, 10 April 1868). No correspondence on the subject of Coe and his gang has been found in letters sent from Fort Lyon between 1868 and 1872 (Garry D. Ryan, assistant director, Old Military Records Division, National Archives and Records Service, to Taylor, 18 July 1967).

³² Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," pp. 19-21; notes from Frank W. Nelson; Charles W. Bowman, "History of Bent County," *History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado* (Chicago: O. L. Baskin & Co., 1881), p. 844, says the place was known as the Hoerner Ranch and was on the Purgatoire River about twelve miles above Boggsville.

³³ Bowman, "History of Bent County," p. 844; Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 21; notes from Frank W. Nelson. Cahill (pp. 21-23) gives an account of the shooting of Sheppard and the near killing of Tex in very suspicious circumstances while they were under military escort back to Fort Lyon.

³⁴ Bowman, "History of Bent County," p. 844; *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 7, 10 April 1868. No distances are given in these accounts, so locations are highly speculative. There is a third and very questionable version of the capture of Coe (see Chrisman, *Lost Trails of the Cimarron*, pp. 48, 57) by L. A. Allen, first sheriff of southeastern Colorado. The account is so at variance with the other data that there probably is no injustice in dismissing it. Benton's "Robbers' Roost" also summarizes Allen's account.

³⁵ Notes from Frank W. Nelson.

In the first account, General Brooke at Fort Union ordered the Third Cavalry to investigate the countryside, and it was felt that the Emory ranch would be a good base camp and possible site for a trap. A corporal and twenty men camped there in concealment below the river bank. After an unsuccessful search, they left for Fort Union, Madison Emory going with them. Just after they departed, Mrs. Emory saw a bedraggled figure ride in on a nearly broken-down horse. It was Coe, and she invited him into the house, calling to her son Bud (Sumpter) to take the man's horse to the corral. Satisfied that no one else was there, Coe came in to a hearty breakfast and then followed her suggestion that he get some sleep in the bunkhouse. Certain that Coe was asleep, Mrs. Emory told her son to get his white pony from the pasture and ride as fast as he could to overtake his father and the troopers.³⁶

The second version of Coe's capture says that the cavalrymen took Emory with them because they suspected that he might be Coe's accomplice. Mrs. Emory ran out to the milk house, while Coe slept, and hung a white rag on a post—a signal to the house boy to come at once. In a loud voice she told him to bring in the cows, but she slipped a note into a milk pail instructing him to ride after Emory and the troopers.³⁷

In both accounts of the story Mrs. Emory spent an uneasy three hours before men in blue rode up the lane and quickly surrounded the bunkhouse, twenty rifles being aimed at it. In the first account, Coe was aroused by a call to surrender and gave no resistance. Leaving his gun at the head of the bed, he came out and allowed himself to be handcuffed.³⁸ The second account says that soldiers entered the room, and Coe sprang up gun in hand just as they opened the door. Then he surrendered.³⁹ As they brought him out of the bunkhouse, Coe noticed the white pony covered with dust and sweat. When he passed Mrs. Emory, he remarked to her that the "little horse has been rode hard."⁴⁰ In one glance, he had taken in the circumstances of his entrapment.

Military orders directed that the outlaws be turned over to the civil authorities at Pueblo, Colorado, for examination by a grand

jury. Fort Lyon's General Penrose personally took charge of the three-day trip commencing 4 April 1868, accompanied by Captains Matthew Berry and Lee Gillette with a cavalry escort for the mule-drawn ambulance and wagons carrying the fourteen to sixteen prisoners. On the day following this detachment's arrival in Pueblo, Fort Union troopers rode in with "Captain" Coe and probably eight members of the gang who had been in jail in Trinidad. The Fort Lyon officers were among those who testified, and the rustlers were bound over to the next term of the district court.⁴¹

Strict orders were given to Sergeant Luke Cahill, Company A, Fifth Infantry, about the care of the prisoners. They were housed in a little adobe building on Santa Fe Avenue, and Cahill was told that no one should talk with them and no outsiders should be allowed within one hundred yards of the place. Guard duty was expected to be short, but for some reason the men were not soon taken into the custody of the Pueblo County sheriff. When Sheriff H. R. Price and three deputies did show up a week later in a team-drawn, two-seated buggy, it was midnight, and they demanded that Coe be released to them to be placed in more suitable quarters. Cahill refused because the sheriff had no orders from General Penrose, and attempts to browbeat the sergeant only brought stronger refusals. The sheriff stomped out in anger, and Cahill looked in on Coe and Tex, who were in subdued and earnest conversation. Coe, thought the sergeant, looked very pale and nervous.

In about thirty minutes Price was back with General Penrose. The general called the sergeant aside and said without explanation: "Sergeant, turn over Coe to Sheriff Price, but we will be compelled to hold all the other prisoners until the civil authorities are able to try them; but by all means carry out to the letter my first orders. Sergeant, I am sick and disgusted with this outlaw gang. They have caused my men a wonderful lot of trouble and the end is not yet."⁴²

Penrose departed, and Price walked into the room occupied by Coe and Tex, evidently thinking that they had slept through the commotion outside their door. "Coe, wake up," the sheriff said: "I want to take you to more comfortable quarters, where you will be alone."⁴³ There is no indication that Coe had asked to be separated from Tex, so the sheriff's reason for moving him is not very convincing. Coe, his hands and feet shackled, got up with effort and

³⁶ Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 23; Thompson, *They Were Open Range Days*, pp. 58-61; Bradley, "Early Days," pp. 2-3; Utley, *Fort Union National Monument, New Mexico*, p. 64. In Benton's "Robbers' Roost" there is a more elaborate version with much dialogue.

³⁷ Bradley, "Early Days," pp. 2-3.

³⁸ Thompson, *They Were Open Range Days*, pp. 60-61; Benton, "Robbers' Roost."

³⁹ Bradley, "Early Days," p. 3.

⁴⁰ Thompson, *They Were Open Range Days*, p. 61; Benton, "Robbers' Roost."

⁴¹ Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 23; *Fort Lyon Post Return*, April 1868; *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 14 April 1868; *Denver Rocky Mountain Herald*, 14 March 1868.

⁴² Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 23.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

shuffled towards the door. "Bring your blankets along; you will need them," the sheriff told him, but Coe paid no attention except to say, "No, I won't need it." Of course, someone had to remark later that Coe knew that the climate where he was going would be warm enough.⁴⁴

Coe struggled into the back seat of the buggy. His erstwhile guards watched with great interest, and at some distance down the street they saw about fifty men emerge from the shadows, take Coe and the buggy from the law officers, and then proceed with the prisoner to a large cottonwood near the Fountain River, a tributary of the Arkansas. One of the men threw a lariat over a large limb, while another stepped forward and said, "Coe, you are now about to meet your Maker; have you anything to say or any message to leave?" Coe made no reply. The noose was placed around his neck, and, at a given command, the buggy was pulled out from under him. William (Cyrus) Coe died about 11:30 P.M. on Saturday, 11 April 1868, with a placard—"Hung by Vigilantes"—attached to him.⁴⁵

Many classic elements of a western-style lynching were there, and published accounts and comments had a familiar ring. The *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News* related that the next morning Coe's "knees were touching the ground, but death by strangulation was quite as final as by more graceful and finished hanging." The editor of the *Santa Fe New Mexican* chose to be less grisly and more pious: "Thus has one of a large gang of desperadoes, who have infested this country for some time received the just reward of his wrong doing, though we must condemn the manner of his 'taking off.'" ⁴⁶

Skepticism persists concerning the roles of the military and the vigilantes in the death of Coe. He was hanged while awaiting trial, and two defense attorneys had been obtained. One of them, a young lawyer from Trinidad named Edward J. Hubbard, had been promised several guns and five horses by some of the gang, and Coe himself, who said he had no money, offered a fine gold watch and chain. Hubbard later claimed he saw an army surgeon wearing the watch and chain on the day after the hanging, and he "suspected [*sic*] that the guard of U.S. soldiers were not ignorant of the plot to

raid the jail and hang the thieves." He clearly stated that Coe and another man were hanged at the same time, a point made in no other source.⁴⁷ Perhaps Hubbard's memory combined the hangings of Coe and Tex, while in fact Tex was strung up near the same spot about two years later.⁴⁸

Except for the brief sketch given, descriptions of Coe are very vague as well as rare. A cowhand for Charles Goodnight, John Milton Rumans, said he was "a nice-looking fellow but sure a game son-of-a-gun"—the latter expression doubtless a Victorian euphemism used in print.⁴⁹ Another source simply called him a "big fine looking man."⁵⁰ For some other members of the gang only names survive, with infrequent, brief items about them. Tex is a good case in point. No description of him has been found, only a few tantalizing flashes of his activity with the gang, and no evidence of his surname. Then there were Sam Newark (or Rouak) and Billy Hughes. Hughes had worked for Madison Emory, and when he decided to throw in with Coe, he stole some home baking from Mrs. Emory and rode off on his employer's gray horse.⁵¹ Charley Howard formerly kept a stage station on the Platte River route, and Ira Schofield had driven a team for a man in Pueblo. A half-breed Cherokee using the alias of Pete Hill, but whose name was Fred Fleishman, also rode with the rustlers. Two members, Hornsby and Pickard, escaped after the prisoners were taken to Pueblo, and two others arrested were George Yates and a man named Kelly.⁵²

The principal witness against those arraigned for trial was Laura Young, who had a rather disturbing experience during the time of the court actions. It appears that she was staying in the home of Judge A. A. Bradford (not the trial judge) in Pueblo, where a man described as tall, dark, with red whiskers, and dressed "a la militaire" came to see her, telling her that a mutual friend near town was ill and wanted her to visit. Taking the stranger at face value, Laura went with him and near the edge of town she was rushed by several men, put on horseback, and taken to a night camp. Captain Matthew Berry and a detachment of troopers tracked them

⁴⁷ Notes on Edward J. Hubbard.

⁴⁸ Haley, *Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman*, pp. 224-25, 262; *Pueblo Colorado Chieftain*, 4 August 1870.

⁴⁹ Haley, *Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman*, pp. 201-2.

⁵⁰ Bradley, "Early Days," p. 2. There is a group photograph, dubiously purporting to show Coe, in the Kit Carson Museum at Las Animas, Colorado.

⁵¹ Bradley, "Early Days," p. 2.

⁵² *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 14, 29 April, 7 May 1868; *Pueblo Daily Chieftain*, 23 March 1875.

⁴⁴ Haley, *Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman*, p. 224.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*; Cahill, "Recollections of a Plainsman," p. 24; *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 16 April 1868. There was a brief postscript. Some years later, excavations for a street near the Fountain River unearthed a large skeleton of a man with ankle and wrist irons still in place. There was little doubt that it was Coe's earthly remains.

⁴⁶ *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 16 April 1868; *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 5 May 1868.

successfully. But the outlaws escaped into the night after threatening Laura to silence before releasing her.⁵³

Of those brought to trial (27 April-1 May) before Federal Judge Moses Hallett, six were convicted after prosecution by United States Attorney G. W. Chamberlain and District Attorney Wilbur Stone. Lawyers for the defense were Judge John W. Henry of Pueblo and Edward J. Hubbard.⁵⁴ Many years later, attorney Hubbard recalled that one of the outlaws, Charles W. Howard, upon receiving a ten-year sentence, remarked "let it be ten years . . . I know where my money is and when I get out I will still be young, and will have a sum equal to ten years wages."⁵⁵ That statement suggests that some of the gang branched out from rustling to other forms of robbery—such as holding up stagecoaches.

Fate dealt differently with Coe's second in command, Tex. He was released for insufficient evidence (as were others) and went back to his old way of life. He made a bad reputation for himself around Ellsworth, Kansas, and was detained for a short time at Fort Wallace for having shadowed a wagon train for days. Then he and another man stole the livestock from a train of thirty to forty wagons on the Arkansas about sixty-five miles below Pueblo in the late summer of 1870. That same day the stagecoach bound for Pueblo came by with cattlemen Charles Goodnight and his new bride from the States as passengers. Reaching Pueblo, Goodnight told the vigilante committee that he had seen the stranded train. Evidently Tex and his companion were moving up the Arkansas to an undisclosed destination when they were captured by a sheriff's posse at a point on the Saint Charles River, an Arkansas tributary south of Pueblo. The two rustlers were taken into town, where there soon occurred a sequence of events reminiscent of Coe's passing from the scene. The sheriff came at midnight and took the two men because night traveling (to where was not recorded) was cooler. Outside the

jail the vigilantes seized them, hanging Tex and his crony from a telegraph pole but a stone's throw from the tree that played a major part in Coe's death just two years before.⁵⁶

Tex's activities subsequent to Coe's death indicate that members of the gang continued to operate as outlaws, but there is no certain evidence that Tex, or anyone else, was really Coe's successor in the leadership of a coordinated gang operation. Only an imprecise estimate of the scale of those operations during the 1867-68 heydays under Coe's direction can be made from available data. The *Denver Rocky Mountain Herald* for 14 March 1868 reported that 2,600 head of sheep and 1,000 head of cattle had been recaptured from the band of thieves "who have been holding southern Colorado in terror the past season."⁵⁷ On 7 May 1868 the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* said that the gang had rustled 5,000 head of sheep, but only 300 to 500 head of cattle, along with an unspecified number of mules and horses. Six unproved murders, including the death of Sergeant Barrett, were attributed to the gang.⁵⁸

The statistics are sketchy, and only tentative and sometimes contradictory conclusions can be drawn. At most, it can be said that William Coe and his associates had a brief, cooperative career as outlaws in the Colorado and New Mexico territories. However negatively, they were a part of the Southwest's historical development.

About twenty years after Coe's downfall a dime novel conclusion had been given to the story of the Coe Gang. Its origin probably was oral, but it appeared in print in 1889 under the headline "Border Reminiscences" in the *Trinidad Daily News*, and perhaps elsewhere. The article's highlights are within the range of the data presented here—until its close, where it reads that "a night or two after they reached Pueblo they were all taken from the officers by a vigilance committee, and the next morning seven hanging bodies ornamented the cottonwood trees about the mouth of the Fontaine qui Bouille. . . . A desperate lot of men had met a summary but just fate."⁵⁹

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⁵³ *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 29 April 1868; *Denver Rocky Mountain Herald*, 2 May 1868. No other version of this incident has been found.

⁵⁴ Charles W. Howard, age 23, was sentenced to ten years imprisonment; William Henry Harrison, 27, Henry B. Clay, 28, and Samuel E. Rouak, 23, were given six years each; Ira Schofield, 19, received three years, and Lewis Maloney, two years. A newspaper account said that they had a reckless and bravado air, but only two of them (not identified) had the look of hardened villains. After the trials they were taken to Denver in two wagons by Deputy United States Marshal Haskell, escorted by eight troopers commanded by Captain Berry. The Irishman, Maloney, served out his time and became boss of a railroad crew, which graded the Denver & Rio Grande into El Moro, near Trinidad, in 1876 (*Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 7 May 1868; notes on Edward J. Hubbard).

⁵⁵ Notes on Edward J. Hubbard. It appears that Howard and Harrison escaped from jail in Denver and were recaptured (*Pueblo Colorado Chieftain*, 10 September 1868).

⁵⁶ Haley, *Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman*, pp. 224-25, 262; *Pueblo Colorado Chieftain*, 4 August 1870.

⁵⁷ *Denver Rocky Mountain Herald*, 14 March 1868.

⁵⁸ *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 7 May 1868.

⁵⁹ *Trinidad Daily News*, 11 May 1889.

The Red Special in Colorado

BY GORDON O. HENDRICKSON

In May 1908 the Socialist Party of America met in convention at Chicago to adopt a national platform and to select a presidential slate. Eugene V. Debs of Indiana and Benjamin Hanford of New York, receiving the accolades of the party rank and file, headed the list of nominees. In 1904 that same ticket had obtained over 402,000 votes, which represented considerable growth from the less than 100,000 votes Debs had received in his first presidential campaign in 1900.¹ The fourfold increase in voter response from 1900 to 1904 stimulated Socialist party hopes for an even larger presidential vote in 1908.

Eugene V. Debs was the logical choice to lead the Socialist party in 1908. A popular leader of the party and a man who had long been associated with the socialist movement and with the Socialist Party of America, he was able to address an audience, spellbind them with his oratory, and entertain them with his wit. Originally active in the labor union movement, especially in the American Railway Union, Debs had moved toward acceptance of socialist principles in the period following the Pullman strike of 1894. The use of federal troops to break that strike for the benefit of the railroads showed Debs the necessity for action other than strikes to achieve needed reforms in America. By 1897 he had publicly endorsed the socialist doctrine and thereafter devoted his life to promoting the socialist cause.

The government of the United States did not, in the eyes of the Socialist party, work for the benefit of the people. This societal imbalance led the party to demand an overturn of the existing power structure of the nation. Through government ownership and operation of industry, the transportation and communication networks, and the various public utilities, as well as control of the government by the people, the party hoped to establish a new, equitable order in

¹ H. Wayne Morgan, *Eugene V. Debs: Socialist for President* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1962), pp. 90-93, 80.



Eugene V. Debs, spellbinding his audience with his oratory.

America.² Firmly convinced of the need for an alteration of society along socialist lines, Debs could serve all factions of the party while avoiding the pitfalls of doctrinal debates and disagreements on details of the program.³

The major problem for the Socialist party in 1908 was to get their message out from the inner circles of committed Socialists to the vast majority of Americans who were unaware of socialist beliefs. While a traditional campaign seemed likely in May, the technique changed considerably before the final casting of ballots on 3 November 1908. Early in the contest, National Secretary J. Mahlon Barnes dreamed of a special campaign train that would tour the nation coast to coast and border to border.⁴ Such a train would surely lead to a vote at least twice as large as that of 1904. Finances seemed, however, to preclude such an ambitious undertaking. Barnes, nevertheless, advanced the idea, which captured the

² Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, comps., *National Party Platforms, 1840-1968* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), pp. 127-28, 140-43, 163-66.

³ See Ray Ginger, *The Bending Cross: A Biography of Eugene Victor Debs* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1949); Morgan, *Eugene V. Debs: Socialist for President*; and Herbert M. Morais and William Cahn, *Gene Debs: The Story of a Fighting American* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), for biographical treatments of Debs.

⁴ Charles Lapworth, "The Tour of the Red Special," *International Socialist Review* 9 (December 1908):401.

imaginings of his fellow party leaders. Plans proceeded in August as the party arranged to charter a locomotive, baggage car, and a combination sleeper, observation, and dining car.⁵ Leaders hoped that donations from the rank and file would cover the estimated cost of about \$20,000.

Before launching the "Red Special," as Algie M. Simons, editor of the *Chicago Daily Socialist*, aptly labeled the campaign train, the party called for financial support from its membership.⁶ With nearly sufficient funds in hand the chartered train departed Chicago on 31 August on the first of two major tours through the nation. The Red Special's western tour included stops in the central plains and mountains and on the Pacific Coast before returning east through the



Debs, holding a child (back row, center), beside the Red Special on the tracks of the Chicago and Eastern Illinois railroad.

northern Rockies and the upper Midwest. The swing through the West was to terminate in Chicago on 25 September. The second, and much more lengthy excursion, toured the populated centers east of the Mississippi River.

⁵ David Karsner, *Debs: His Authorized Life and Letters* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1919), p. 191.

⁶ Lapworth, "The Tour of the Red Special," p. 401; Debs repeatedly announced throughout the campaign that the rank and file membership financed the effort through their donations of nickels and dimes (Karsner, *Debs: His Authorized Life and Letters*, p. 190; "The Surprising Campaign of Mr. Debs," *Current Literature* 45 [November 1908]:482). Additional commentary on Debs and the Red Special is contained in the Western Federation of Miners Denver-based publication, the *Miners Magazine*; see 13, 27 August 1908; 10, 17, 24 September 1908.

The Socialist Party of America, despite predictions of as many as two million votes, increased its vote totals in 1908 by less than 20,000 to only 421,000 votes.⁷ But these national election statistics do not accurately reflect the utility of the Red Special. Eugene V. Debs viewed his several campaigns for the highest office of the land as educational in nature, as attempts to inform the people of socialist beliefs, not as endeavors to "win" the elections. As he stated to Lincoln Steffens during the campaign, if the party thought he had a chance to win, they never would have nominated him.⁸ A study of the Red Special's trip through Colorado may offer some insight into the efficacy of the endeavor in both an electoral and an educational sense.

The 1908 Socialist party campaign train reached Colorado on 4 September for an evening meeting at the Denver Coliseum. In accord with the Socialist appeal to the masses rather than the few, Debs declined to use a carriage for transportation to the meeting house. He preferred to illustrate his identification with the workers by walking to the meeting. Prior to facing the excited Coloradoans, Debs took time to relax at the home of his old friend Channing Sweet. Having dined with the Denverite, Debs proceeded to the coliseum where he found the building filled to its capacity of 5,000. An estimated 1,000 additional people milled in the streets desiring admittance.⁹

Following a five-minute ovation, Debs delivered his message to the Coloradoans. He attacked the major political parties as tools of the capitalist class and sought to emphasize the existence of a class struggle in the United States. "There are just two classes in this world," the Socialist informed his listeners, "one owns tools it can not [*sic*] use and the other uses tools it does not own."¹⁰ The audience cheered enthusiastically when Debs referred to the democratic platform as "an omelet made of stale eggs," and to the Republicans as the party of the capitalists.¹¹ These two lines of attack were the major emphases of Debs's speeches throughout the West in the fall of 1908.¹²

⁷ Morais and Cahn, *Gene Debs: The Story of a Fighting American*, p. 83.

⁸ Lincoln Steffens, "Eugene V. Debs on What the Matter Is in America and What to Do about It," *Everybody's Magazine* 19 (October 1908):458.

⁹ *Denver Times*, 4, 5 September 1908; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 5 September 1908.

¹⁰ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 5 September 1908.

¹¹ *Denver Post*, 5 September 1908.

¹² See the *Eugene V. Debs Newspaper Clippings, 1887-1919* (8 reels microfilm), Coe Library, University of Wyoming, Laramie, for examples of published accounts of meetings in other areas of the West.



Eugene V. Debs

Socialist Candidate for President.
will speak at the

COLISEUM

Tomorrow — Friday
September 4—8 P.M.

DON'T LET ANY OTHER
REPORT MISLEAD YOU

An evening meeting has been arranged
for and will be addressed by other promi-
nent speakers who accompany Mr. Debs
on the

"RED SPECIAL"

COME EARLY.

Announcing
Debs's speaking
engagement in
Denver in the
Denver Post, 3
September.

Partisan Denver newspapers reported the Debs meeting differently. The *Denver Rocky Mountain News* merely reported that the gathering was well attended and printed some of Debs's more notable epigrams.¹³ The *Denver Republican* emphasized the train's financial difficulties in hopes of discrediting the Socialists. Indeed, there were major concerns for finances as funds seemed insufficient to continue the trip into the East following completion of the western tour.¹⁴ The *Republican*, however, interpreted the problems as much more serious than they were. "Because of lack of funds . . . the 'Red Special' . . . may have to turn back from Denver to Chicago and abandon its Eastern trip." Similarly, in an attempt to play down the importance of the Socialist presidential candidate's speech, the *Republican* suggested that while the crowd cheered Debs's speech, which added "considerably to the oppressive heat in the room," they would not vote the Socialist ticket.¹⁵ The other Denver papers, especially the *Post* and the *Times*, reported a spirited crowd that cheered Debs "to the echo."¹⁶ The *Denver Times* editorially countered Debs's speech by suggesting that Debs spoke in hollow phrases that any thinking man could discern. The capitalists and the laborers were not, in the *Times's* view, so radically different—the capitalist worked with his head while the laborer toiled with his hands.¹⁷

Debs apparently had reason to be pleased with his reception in Denver despite some adverse newspaper coverage. The coliseum's paid admissions and donations, when coupled with those of other meetings in Colorado and the West, assured the continued use of the train throughout the campaign.

The Red Special departed Denver on the morning of 5 September en route to an evening meeting at Leadville. A scheduled afternoon stop at Salida, which was advertised in the *Salida Mail*,

RED SPECIAL COMING

EUGENE V. DEBS, Presidential Candidate

SOCIALIST PARTY

WILL SPEAK AT DEPOT

Saturday, September 5th, at 3:15 p. m.

Advertising for Debs in the Salida Mail, 4 September.

reportedly was not held. The local news section of the *Mail* for 8 September reported that "the socialist candidate for president refused to travel over the Rio Grande because of the strike of machinists on this road. His dates were therefore canceled all along the line to Salt Lake City."¹⁸ The *Salida Mail* was incorrect. The Red Special continued over the Rio Grande rails, stopping at all scheduled cities along the route to the Utah capital. The reason for the cancellation of the Salida meeting, if indeed it was canceled, cannot be determined from the evidence examined.¹⁹

The Leadville papers reported the Red Special's journey more completely than did the Salida press. Coverage of the trip commenced with the departure from Chicago. Wire service accounts of meetings in Davenport, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, were published by both the *Leadville Evening Chronicle* and the *Leadville Herald Democrat*.²⁰ The reported 1,500 miners and other workers

¹³ *Salida Mail*, 4, 8 September 1908.

¹⁴ The only mention of the meeting's cancellation was in the Salida paper. A press dispatch from Denver published in Grand Junction indicating that the Red Special departed Denver on 5 September en route to a short meeting at Salida and then on to Leadville, casts some doubt on the Salida story (*Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 5 September 1908).

¹⁵ *Leadville Evening Chronicle*, 1, 4 September 1908; *Leadville Herald Democrat*, 1, 4 September 1908.

¹³ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 5 September 1908.

¹⁴ Lapworth, "The Tour of the Red Special," p. 403.

¹⁵ *Denver Republican*, 5 September 1908.

¹⁶ *Denver Post*, 5 September 1908; *Denver Times*, 5 September 1908.

¹⁷ *Denver Times*, 5 September 1908.

who gathered around the "soap box" at the corner of Harrison Avenue and Sixth Street in Leadville cheered both Eugene Debs and Algie Simons, whose speech preceded the candidate's. Both Debs and Simons reiterated the points made in Denver concerning the class struggle. "Socialism," according to Debs, "would give the wage earner of today ownership of the tools of production." Once workers controlled the means of production they could utilize a scientific distribution of wealth to eradicate millionaires and poverty alike. Simons suggested that control of the ballot box was the first step toward solution of the laborers' problems. Socialism, when enacted by the laborers, would control government and industry for the benefit of labor and services, not for capitalists and profits.²¹

Like editors elsewhere on the western tour, Leadville newspapermen tried to counter the socialist appeal. The *Leadville Herald Democrat* suggested that Europe was better fitted for socialism than the United States and that the reason for the large crowds along the campaign trail was the unique character of the Socialist party campaign. "His Red Special is one of those picturesque features of the political campaign which naturally attracts more than the usual amount of attention to a propaganda that has in it we know not what possibilities."²² The *Leadville Evening Chronicle* predicted that the socialists' "New Jerusalem" would come only when "human nature becomes something else besides human nature."²³ Neither editor attempted to downgrade the emotional appeal of Debs and the socialist doctrine. Debs's oratorical skills were never questioned. The editors sought rather to portray the philosophy as unrealistic for the United States, if not for the world. The highly idealistic socialist dream would not solve the economic plight of Leadville miners, according to the editors who continued to urge support of the major political parties.

The novelty of a presidential candidate's visit to small towns across Colorado accounts, in part, for the large crowds along the campaign trail. Glenwood Springs, while devoid of a Socialist party organization, nevertheless put together a program for the arrival of the Red Special. The mayor of the city took the initiative for welcoming the celebrity to the resort community.²⁴ While the published itinerary for the train called for a short, thirty-minute stop in Glenwood Springs, the visit ultimately stretched to four hours as

Debs took time from his busy speaking tour to soak in the town's famed hot mineral baths.²⁵

Glenwood Springs citizens listened politely to Debs and Algie Simons as they spoke from the end of the footbridge on the grounds of the Glenwood Hot Springs Company.²⁶ The press in the resort community remained indifferent to the Socialist party call for worker solidarity. The *Glenwood Springs Avalanche-Echo* snubbed the Red Special's visit to the city, not mentioning its appearance. The *Glenwood Springs Post*, on the other hand, covered the event, reporting that Debs called on laborers to organize and take possession of the governmental processes in order to operate the government and industry "for use and not for profit."²⁷ Apparently the *Post* stood by its editorial comment, made before the visit, that "Eugene is a very mild man but his social philosophy is red hot. Harmless, however, when it gets cold."²⁸ The Glenwood Springs editors did not deviate from the general Colorado pattern of curiosity about Debs and his philosophy while rejecting the socialist dream.

While stopped in Glenwood Springs, Debs received a floral bouquet from a young girl. This action, not necessarily significant in and of itself, did stimulate similar expressions of good will throughout the remainder of the trip. Word of the Glenwood Springs hospitality preceded Debs to Grand Junction, where he received another bouquet that evening. Flowers and fruit were given to the Socialist party candidate at stops all along the western route in quantities that "embarrassed" some members of the staff.²⁹

The final stop of the Red Special in Colorado was at Grand Junction on Sunday evening, 6 September. Local Socialists worked to make the last speech in the state a big success. Even the Grand Junction baseball association entered the festive spirit by inviting Debs to attend the baseball game and to deliver a ten-minute speech before the "Play Ball!" The *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel* predicted that Debs would accept the invitation to attend the game, but not to deliver a speech. As events progressed, Debs could not attend the game due to his extended visit at Glenwood Springs. Even without his moral support, however, the Grand Junction team handily defeated Hotchkiss four to one.³⁰

²⁵ *Glenwood Springs Post*, 12 September 1908.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6[5] September 1908.

²⁹ Lapworth, "The Tour of the Red Special," p. 404.

³⁰ *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 1, 5, 7 September 1908.

²¹ *Leadville Herald Democrat*, 6 September 1908.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Leadville Evening Chronicle*, 9 September 1908.

²⁴ *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 7 September 1908.

Although he missed the Sunday afternoon game, Debs did not disappoint his Grand Junction friends that evening. Short whistle stop speeches at New Castle, Rifle, and De Beque did not retard his oratory at Grand Junction. The Park Opera House was filled to capacity with people paying from fifteen to thirty-five cents admission. "One of the greatest audiences that ever turned out to hear a political speaker in Grand Junction" heard Debs reiterate his socialist beliefs.³¹ While the *Grand Junction Herald* suggested that "his program looks too much like compulsory labor to be attractive to the unemployed,"³² the editors of the *Daily Sentinel* admired the speech, not for its content, but for the manner in which it was delivered. Unlike Debs's sometimes caustic speeches, the *Daily Sentinel* reported that the Grand Junction address contained "no bitter personal attack . . . on any of the leaders of the old parties or on the government of the United States."³³ Following his triumphant meeting at Grand Junction, Eugene Debs and the Red Special departed the Centennial State to attend a Labor Day meeting in Salt Lake City before continuing the journey through the West.

The relative electoral success of the Colorado tour could be determined by the compilation of election returns after the general election on 3 November 1908. However, no matter what the outcome of the election, Debs and his message had reached many people through his tour of the state. Eight thousand five hundred people heard the socialist orator in Denver, Leadville, and Grand Junction alone.³⁴ Unreported numbers of listeners at Glenwood Springs and the various whistle stops undoubtedly pushed the number in excess of ten thousand. Not all of these people would embrace the socialist doctrine or vote the Socialist party ticket; however, since a major goal of the Red Special had been to reach the people, the trip appeared to be a success.

Prior to the election, the *International Socialist Review* polled the various state organizations throughout the nation for election predictions. Lewis E. Floaten, Colorado state secretary, reported that the 17,000 votes William D. ("Big Bill") Haywood had received in his 1906 gubernatorial race would not be matched in 1908.³⁵ A shortage of funds would preclude a vigorous Socialist party cam-

paign, and the expected absence of a large protest factor would reduce the Socialist vote even further. The *International Socialist Review* concluded that the party could expect ballot box support from approximately 7,500 Colorado voters. That figure represented an increase of some 3,200 votes over the 1904 total. Socialist party leaders expected a minimum of 675,000 and possibly as many as 1,000,000 votes in the national election.³⁶ They hoped that the Red Special would be a "powerful factor" in the attempt to secure the magic million mark.³⁷ However, final election results gave the Socialists only 420,793 votes, far short of their expectations.³⁸

The total Socialist party vote in the Centennial State nearly doubled between 1904 and 1908, rising from 4,278 to 7,957.³⁹ Despite surpassing predicted returns, the increased Socialist vote in Colorado cannot be interpreted solely as a response to the Red Special. A look at the 1908 Socialist vote in Colorado suggests that the Red Special may have been of some influence in raising the popular vote returns for the Socialist party. When the 1904 and 1908 election returns for the counties Debs visited are compared with the remainder of the state, a somewhat higher voter response in the areas along the Red Special route is demonstrated. The five counties in which Debs had scheduled stops registered an 89.87 percent increase in Socialist votes while the remainder of the state recorded an increase of 84.21 percent (see Table 1).

The influence of the campaign train undoubtedly was not limited to the counties visited on the tour. Newspaper reports of the Red

Workers of the World. While secretary-treasurer of the Western Federation of Miners, he ran for governor from jail where he was incarcerated awaiting trial for the terrorist death of former Idaho Governor Frank Steunenberg. As Steunenberg's death occurred during the time of labor trouble and Haywood's arrest seemed to be politically motivated, the radicals and laborers in Colorado united in support of Haywood's nomination (William D. Haywood, *Bill Haywood's Book: The Autobiography of William D. Haywood* [New York: International Publishers, 1929]; Joseph R. Conlin, *Big Bill Haywood and the Radical Union Movement* [Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969]).

³¹ "News and Views," *International Socialist Review* 9 (October 1908):310, 314.

³² *Terre Haute* (Ind.) *Post*, 8 August 1908; *Eugene V. Debs Newspaper Clippings*, reel 3.

³³ Morgan, *Eugene V. Debs: Socialist for President*, p. 114.

³⁴ Colorado voters in 1904 and 1908 marked their ballots for individual presidential electors rather than for a specified slate of presidential candidates. The individual vote totals for the five Socialist party candidates for presidential electors have been averaged to determine the total vote for the Socialist candidate (Colorado Division of State Archives and Public Records, *Abstract of Votes Cast 1904*, pp. 2-13; Colorado, Secretary of State, *Abstract of Votes Cast at the General Election Held the Third Day of November, A.D. 1908, for Presidential Electors, State, Legislative, and District Officers and the Constitutional Amendments* [Denver: Smith-Brooks Printing Co., State Printers, 1909], pp. 3-12).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3, 7 September 1908.

³² *Grand Junction Herald*, 12 September 1908.

³³ *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 7 September 1908.

³⁴ This number is derived from figures reported in the local press: 6,000 in Denver, 1,500 in Leadville, and 1,000 in Grand Junction.

³⁵ William D. Haywood had been active in radical Colorado labor movements for many years and had been influential in the founding of the Industrial

TABLE I
SOCIALIST PARTY VOTE IN COLORADO 1904 AND 1908

	1904 Vote	1908 Vote	Increase	Percent Increase
Counties Debs visited in 1908	1,353	2,569	1,216	89.87
Total state less counties visited	2,925	5,388	2,463	84.21
Total state	4,278	7,957	3,679	86.02

Special's presence reached people who were unable to attend the meetings and those who lived far from the scheduled stops. These accounts may have induced some voters in areas removed from the train's route to select Socialist party candidates on election day. As a result, the Red Special perhaps stimulated some socialist activity in all corners of the state.

The presence of the Socialist party train in Colorado during the campaign must not be accorded too much credit for the rise in the Socialist vote for there were several other contributing factors. Withdrawal of the Socialist Labor Party and the People's Party from the 1908 electoral contest released potential voters for the Socialist Party of America from earlier party obligations. The economic distress of the nation, which affected the mining industry of Colorado, coupled with the radical labor agitation of the Western Federation of Miners and the Industrial Workers of the World, helps account for some of the increase in the Colorado Socialist vote. Local factors, perhaps related to the economic and political atmosphere, apparently developed an electorate potentially receptive to socialism.⁴⁰ The Red Special was one additional element motivating these potential voters to cast Socialist party ballots in the state.

While contemporaries and historians have debated the meaning of the 1908 Socialist party vote, the efficacy of the Red Special has

⁴⁰ An investigation of 1900 and 1910 census data for the counties visited by the Red Special suggests no pattern relating the percentage of immigrant voters to the voting percentages for Socialist candidates either in 1904 or 1908. It also seems safe to assume that there is no relationship between population, or wage-earner, figures with the Socialist vote in the country as a whole or for any given state. There was a slight tendency toward urbanization in the five counties visited by Debs, but the erratic behavior of the electorate leads to the conclusion that urbanization was not a contributing factor in the election returns. And while the data with reference to qualified voters and their nativity is based only on white male voters over twenty-one, the inclusion of women or other minority groups would not appreciably alter the findings.

not been seriously investigated. The expenditure of some \$35,000 on the train fell far short of achieving the much pursued one million votes.⁴¹ Perhaps the cost of such an endeavor would have been more justified had election returns from along its route showed significantly higher returns than from other areas. Colorado returns suggest that the Red Special may have had an influence on the electorate; however, it probably was not a major factor in the election. Study of individual states along the tour route should further illuminate the utility of the Red Special campaign train as a Socialist party election tool.

The Red Special must not be dismissed out of hand on the basis of electoral analyses alone. Never before had the Socialist Party of America attracted such widespread coverage from the major national newspapers. Socialist speakers of national renown preached the socialist gospel to a larger number of people in more widely diversified centers of the nation than previously. Eugene V. Debs, on the western tour of the Red Special, covered approximately 9,000 miles and delivered close to 187 speeches in twenty-five days. Some 300,000 westerners heard Debs espouse socialist principles before the party standard-bearer commenced the eastern portion of the campaign on 26 September 1908.⁴²

Given the twofold nature of the Socialist party campaign, it may be possible that the train was partially successful. While seeking support at the polls, the Socialists also wished to expose the people to their beliefs. Electoral returns in 1908 disappointed the party leadership, but the desire to reach the people with word of the Socialist party demands was more fully achieved than ever before. The tour of the Red Special helped acquaint many people with socialist beliefs and perhaps was one of many contributing factors in setting the stage for the surge of Socialist party strength that occurred in the 1912 presidential election.

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⁴¹ Morgan, *Eugene V. Debs: Socialist for President*, p. 99.

⁴² *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 September 1908; *Eugene V. Debs Newspaper Clippings*, reel 5.