THE Cochise Corral County WESTERNERS

The Border Vidette

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The *Border Vidette* is published quarterly by the Cochise County Corral of the Westerners. The Corral meets at 7 p.m. the first Thursday of each month at Schieffelin Hall, Tombstone. Schieffelin Hall was built in 1881 as a theater and lodge of the Freemasons. King Solomon Lodge Number 5 still meets upstairs. The Corral is dedicated to preserving Western Frontier History and Legend and to having a good time while doing so. Membership in the Corral is $20 and entitles the Ranch Hand to attend talks on the Old West, join us on Trail Rides (by automobile) to sites of historic interest, and to our publications*: The Fremont Street Mail*, a monthly newsletter, and the *Border Vidette*, our journal. More information about the Corral can be found at www.CochiseCountyCorral.org and about Westerners International at http://www.westerners-international.org/

The *Border Vidette* accepts **interesting** articles about Western Frontier History no matter how short. Articles should be sourced and accompanied by endnotes. An unlimited number of photos (JPG preferred) may accompany the article. If the author has the rights to the article, the *Border Vidette* is willing to republish it. The journal is only published on-line and may be distributed as a PDF via email. Please contact us if you think you have something interesting to share. Contact us at InkSlinger@CochiseCountyCorral.org

A vidette is the term used in the 19th century for a mounted (cavalry) lookout.

Cover: The Tombstone Stage, photo by Doug Hocking. See JOHN CLUM'S MYSTERIOUS STAGECOACH RIDE, DECEMBER 14, 1881

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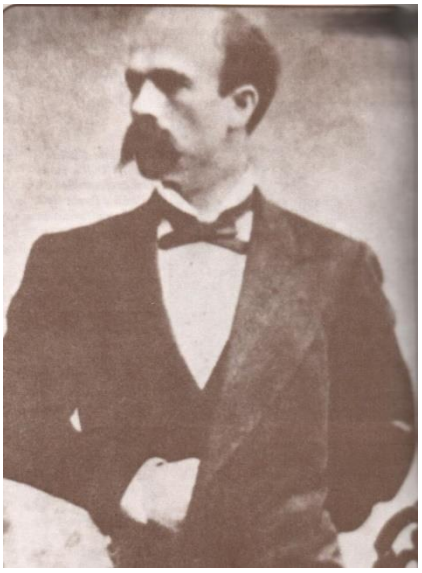
Book Reviews

John Clum's Mysterious Stagecoach Ride, December 14, 1881

by
C. Gilbert Storms

John Philip Clum, the Republican mayor of Tombstone, city postmaster, and editor of the *Tombstone Epitaph*, boarded the Kinnear stage to Benson on Wednesday, December 14, 1881, at 8:00 p.m. He was on the first leg of a journey to Washington, D.C. to be with his family for Christmas. Clum's wife Mary had died in Tombstone in 1880, and his three-year-old son, Woodworth, was living with Clum's parents in Washington.[1] But Clum was not looking forward to his Christmas trip. As editor of the *Epitaph*, he had become an outspoken foe of the notorious Cochise County "cowboys," and now he feared that the cowboys would attack his stage and take their revenge.



John Philip Clum
(Papers of John Philip Clum, 1860-1975, AZ003, Box 2,
University of Arizona Special Collections, Tucson)

John Clum Comes to Tombstone

Clum was intelligent, ambitious, and brave—sometimes to the point of recklessness. He also was self-centered, opinionated, and a relentless self-promoter.[2] Born in 1851 near Claverack, New York, he graduated from the Hudson River Institute and attended Rutgers College for a year.[3] He worked as a weather observer for the U.S. Army in New Mexico and became agent at the San Carlos Apache reservation in 1874, at the age of 22. There, he established and trained an Apache police force to keep order and used them to escort new Apache bands to the reservation. He quarreled incessantly with the army and the Indian Bureau over how San Carlos should be run and was adamant about keeping the army off the reservation. Nevertheless, he implemented the Indian Bureau's dangerous policy of relocating diverse, sometimes antagonistic, Indian groups to San Carlos.[4]

After resigning as Indian agent in 1877, Clum studied law and practiced in Florence, Arizona. He then purchased and edited the *Arizona Citizen* newspaper, moving it from Tucson to Florence, then back to Tucson. The paper did not produce the income Clum expected in either place. So, in 1880, Clum sold his interest in the *Citizen*, moved to the booming mining camp of Tombstone, and founded the *Tombstone Epitaph*.[5]

Clum Takes on the Cowboys

In Tombstone, Clum became known for his strong law and order stance in the *Epitaph* and his spirited opposition to the Tombstone Townsite Company, a group of speculators who had perpetrated a brazen land fraud in the new community, filing a claim for the Tombstone townsite and then selling lots to residents and business owners, some of whom had already settled on the lots and thought they owned them.[6]

Clum also became the voice of Tombstone's moneyed interests—mine owners, superintendents, lawyers, and merchants—in their conflict with the Cochise County cowboys, a loose collection of outlaws and their supporters, who committed crimes and caroused in small towns throughout southern Arizona. Newspaper editors like Clum typically portrayed the cowboys as a single gang with identifiable "leaders," notorious figures such as Curly Bill Brocius, Bob Martin, John Ringo, and Ike Clanton. But the cowboys were rather less organized than that. They were small groups of individuals with shifting allegiances, who rode together briefly at different times and for different ends. Some were long-time criminals with histories of rustling, robbery, and murder. Others were small ranchers, drovers, miners, or merchants who took to crime now and then in hopes of improving their fortunes—or perhaps just for the excitement.[7] Clum described them as a nomadic group of "outlaws and desperados who pursued various lines of depredations and deviltry."[8] They were secretive and elusive, their offenses often only a matter of rumor or allegation. They were seldom arrested. And since they always seemed to have a ready supply of alibi witnesses, they were almost never convicted of the crimes with which they were charged.[9]

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, the cowboys mostly rustled cattle on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border and sold the stolen livestock to small ranchers, butchers in Tombstone and the San Pedro Valley mill towns, and the San Carlos and White Mountain Apache reservations. But through 1880 and 1881, cowboys also stole horses and mules from stagecoach line corrals and army posts. They robbed Mexican and American wagon and pack trains, sometimes killing men. Some took up stagecoach robbery.[10] In leisure hours, the cowboys drank and gambled in the saloons of Charleston, Contention City, and Galeyville. Occasionally, they shot up these and other towns.[11]

Tombstone got a taste of cowboy "deviltry" on the evening of October 28, 1880, when several cowboys and others were carousing at the Alhambra Saloon on Allen St., took their celebration outside, and began shooting "at the moon and stars."[12] City marshal Fred White rushed to the scene, encountered Curly Bill Brocius, and demanded that Curly Bill hand over his six-shooter. Brocius drew his weapon to surrender it, and White seized the gun by the barrel. At that moment, Wyatt Earp, then a Pima County deputy sheriff, arrived and threw his arms around Brocius from behind. Seeing Wyatt holding Brocius, White tried to jerk the gun out of Bill's hand. The gun went off, and White was shot through the groin. He died two days later. Wyatt hit Curly Bill over the head with the butt of his six-shooter and hauled him off to jail.[13] Brocius was charged with attempted murder and had a hearing before Judge Joseph Neugass in Tucson, December 22, 24, and 27. However, he was released when the judge ruled White's shooting accidental. The judge's decision was supported by deathbed testimony from White, who said that the shooting had been unintended.[14]

As the cowboys' rustling, robbery, and carousing continued, Arizona residents took greater notice—and journalists sounded the alarm.[15] Clum, in particular, waged an unrelenting campaign against the cowboys in print. He called them "rustlers," "thieves," and the "murdering cowboys."[16] He argued that their continued lawlessness would destroy Tombstone's reputation and cut off the flow of Eastern capital the city needed in order to prosper.[17] He called for vigilante action against them.[18] Without question, he would have been seen by the cowboys as an enemy, who sought to arouse public opinion against them and drive them from the territory.

Law and Order

Clum said that the townsite controversy "obliterated" Republican and Democratic party lines in Tombstone in 1880. A bipartisan group opposing the Townsite Company formed, called the Citizens Protective League, who offered their own slate of candidates for the January 1881 city elections. George Parsons chaired the League's executive committee. When Parsons and other committee members decided that the League's original mayoral candidate, Robert Eccleston, was not "strong" enough, Parsons recommended his friend Clum. Clum's Republican politics, his tough law and order stance, his forceful opposition to the townsite company, and his outspoken, sometimes hyperbolic editorial style all seemed to make him a more electable candidate. The committee agreed, and Clum led the Citizens Protective Ticket, which swept the election, taking the mayoralty, all four seats on the village council, and the town marshal's office.[19]

Clum had called for citizen action against the cowboys and followed up by organizing the Tombstone Citizens Safety Committee, a vigilante force of some "two hundred business and professional men of the city." Its purpose, he said, was to support local law officers and to defend Tombstone residents and businesses in the event of a cowboy "invasion."[20] Clum's committee was just a defensive force, to be summoned in emergencies. But the cowboys took notice of the move and felt threatened. Frank McLaury complained to Virgil Earp, "I understand you are raising a vigilance committee to hang us boys."[21] McLaury's statement also shows that the cowboys associated the Earps with Clum and the Citizens Safety Committee.

The rivalry between the Earps and cowboys has been well documented in numerous books and articles and dramatized, with considerable artistic license, in movies. The gunfight that took place in a vacant lot off Fremont St., October 26, 1881 (the "gunfight at the OK Corral"), was the outcome of a quarrel between Ike Clanton and "Doc" Holliday, Ike's drunken threats to kill Holliday and the Earps, an ill-advised attempt by Virgil to arrest some of the cowboys for carrying guns against city ordinance, and both sides' refusal to be publicly humiliated by their rivals. When Virgil, Wyatt, and Morgan Earp and Holliday faced off against Tom and Frank McLaury and Ike and Billy Clanton, the McLaurys and Billy were killed, and Virgil and Morgan were seriously wounded.[22]

Both before and after the gunfight and the subsequent hearing before Judge Wells Spicer over the conduct of the Earps and Holliday, Clum supported the Earps in the pages of the *Epitaph*.[23] Spicer declared the Earps and Holliday not guilty of wrongdoing, since they had acted in self-defense and in the performance of their duty as law officers (Virgil had deputized his brothers and Holliday).[24] But this hardly calmed feelings in Tombstone, and the conflict among Earp and cowboy supporters intensified. George Parsons fretted in his diary that deadly street violence might break out again any day.[25]

Death Threats

A sign of the impending crisis, Parsons said, was that people associated with both the Earps and cowboys had received threats that they would be killed unless they left town.[26] The *Epitaph* reported that the Earps; Clum; Spicer; Wyatt's attorney, Tom Fitch; Lou Rickabaugh; Frank

Leslie; Judge Thomas Moses; and several mine superintendents had received threatening post-cards, and letters decorated with skulls and cross-bones. Who made the threats has never been determined. The *Epitaph* published the threat Judge Spicer received and his defiant reply but offered no proof of other threats.[27] The *Epitaph*'s rival, the *Tombstone Nugget*, reported a rumor "current on the streets" that members of the Citizens Safety Committee had approached cowboy supporters and threatened them with harm if they did not leave town. The *Nugget* found no evidence of such threats but were certain that they had been made.[28]

Amidst this talk of threats, a rumor grew that the cowboys had a "death list" of people whom they had targeted for revenge after the Spicer hearing. Clum said that he was on the list along with Virgil, Morgan, and Wyatt Earp; Holliday; Judge Spicer; Tom Fitch; Wells Fargo agent Marshall Williams; and one or two others Clum couldn't recall (he was writing in 1929). He said that he and Spicer ranked fifth and sixth on the list, respectively.[29] The death list probably was a fiction.[30] Clum ridiculed the melodramatic tales of how it was composed in a canyon at midnight, with the names of the victims written in the blood of a murderer.[31] But he seemed to believe the list existed and was convinced that the cowboys planned to kill him. He particularly feared a cowboy raid on the town at night when, as postmaster, he often worked late at the post office. He had heavy plank doors and shutters installed on the building and had them closed and locked after dark. On several occasions, when rumors circulated that cowboys were going to ride into town and rob the bank, Wells Fargo, and the post office, he had some well-armed friends stay with him at the post office through the night.[32]

To Clum's fearful imagination, his December 14 stage journey afforded new opportunities for the murderous cowboys. Just before boarding the coach, he told *Epitaph* business manager O. W. Thornton that he thought the cowboys would stop the stage and use a fake robbery as a cover to kill him.[33]

The Attack on Clum's Coach

The coach Clum boarded was a large, six-horse Concord, with three bench seats (front, back, and center). Four male passengers were in the coach with Clum—two on the front seat and two on the rear.[34] Clum did not know the other passengers. The mayor chose to sit on the middle seat by himself since it was next to the coach doors, and Clum thought it gave him a better chance for a hasty exit in case of attack. He later realized that he could not see outside the coach because the windows in the doors were too high above the middle seat. He also noted that the coach's sidelights (oil lamps behind the driver's seat on each side of the coach) made him an easy target if he jumped out. Clum was bundled in a heavy overcoat against the mid-December cold and had two six-shooters strapped around his waist.[35] He was ready for trouble.

Concord coach exterior and interior, showing one of the sidelights, the rear and middle seats, left-side door, and the raised window in the door (Arizona History Museum, Tucson, author's photograph)

The driver of the stage was Jimmie Harrington, a veteran driver. There was no messenger guard on the box since the coach was not carrying cash or bullion. By this date, John Kinnear had decided not to carry valuable cargo on his night stages in order to afford greater safety to his passengers. Mail and valuables went out on Kinnear's morning stage. But on the evening of December 14, an empty bullion wagon was following the coach, driven by "Whistling Dick" Wright.[36]

The coach's route was northwest, down the stage road to Contention City on the east bank of the San Pedro River, then north to Benson. Almost three miles out of Tombstone, near the top of a hill just past Malcom's Station, passengers heard shouts from the roadside, including the command to "Halt!"[37] Almost simultaneously, shots erupted from the bushes on both sides of the road. At the cry to halt, Jimmie Harrington shouted "All right!" and applied the brake. But the horses were panicked by the shooting and "lunged forward," dragging the coach up the hill. So, Harrington changed strategies. He released the brake and whipped the horses. They broke into a gallop. The coach topped the hill and lumbered down the other side, out of range of the gunmen.

As soon as the shooting started, the four men with Clum dropped to the floor of the coach and shouted to Clum to do the same, or he would be shot. But Clum did not drop to the floor. He was convinced that the gunmen were cowboys out to kill him and that they would chase down the coach and attack again. He also thought that if that happened, and he stayed in the coach, he would be trapped, with no chance to fight or escape. So, he swung open the door on the right side of the coach and stood with one foot on the step, looking down the road, expecting the cowboys to re-appear in front of the coach, getting ready to jump to the ground if they did.

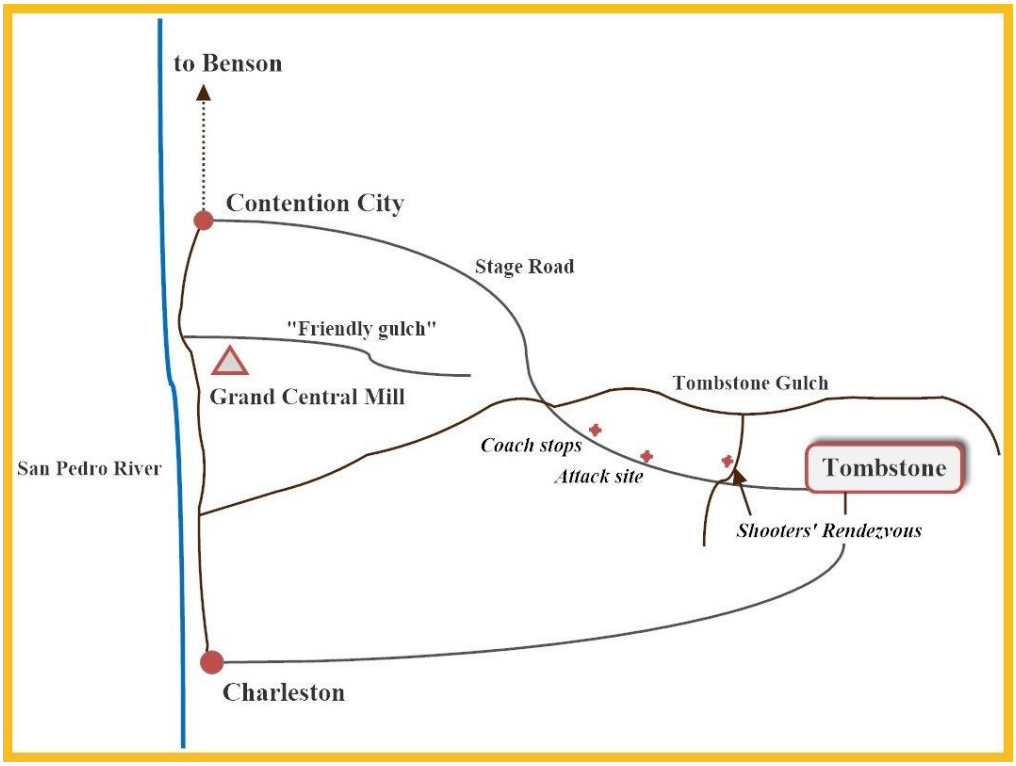
The stage barreled down the road for about a half-mile, when someone shouted up ahead, and once more Harrington applied the brake. This was exactly what Clum had feared would happen. So, before the stage could stop, he jumped to the ground and ran beyond the range of the side-lights, with both of his pistols drawn.

Stagecoach shooting site on Schieffelin Monument Rd. near Tombstone
(author's photograph)

But in this case, there was no cause for alarm. Whistling Dick, in the bullion wagon, had been right behind the stage when the shooting started, close enough that he had been shot in the calf as he ran the gauntlet of shooters along the road. His horses also had been panicked by the gunfire; and, like the stagecoach horses, they ran. Having only an empty wagon to pull, they flew past the stage on the left. It was a half-mile before Wright could stop them. Now his wagon sat in the middle of the road forcing the coach to stop, too. When it did, Jimmie Harrington discovered that his "off-leader," the lead horse on the right side, had been shot through the neck and was bleeding to death. Harrington said that the horse had been "staggering," as it ran down the road.

Passengers bandaged Wright's wound with a couple of handkerchiefs. Then Clum and George Dunham, one of the other passengers, cut the two leaders from the traces. The coach now had a four-horse team. Harrington got back on the box, picked up the reins, and shouted, "all aboard." But Clum said that "as soon as Jimmie and Dick were ready to proceed," he walked away from the coach, fifty paces into the darkness. He said it was to look and listen for horsemen; but he could not have seen much in the dark, and his timing (*after* the driver was ready to leave, not before) suggests that he had already decided to abandon the coach. What he saw when he looked back at the coach confirmed his decision. With its sidelights burning in the dark, it was an easy target—as he would be if he continued his journey in it.

In his written accounts, Clum spun his choice a little differently. He said that he felt his presence in the coach endangered the other passengers and that he could better evade the cowboys on foot. "Very promptly," he said, "I decided to walk." But when he walked away from the coach, Clum had not told anyone what he was doing. Harrington assumed that he had taken his seat inside the coach; the passengers thought he was up on the box. Before Clum could return to the coach and announce his decision, Harrington cracked his whip, and the coach took off, leaving Clum standing in the dark. His absence was not discovered until the stage and bullion wagon pulled into Contention.[38] The passengers and drivers were mystified. Clum seemed, simply, to have vanished.



Area where the shooting occurred

Lost in the Desert

Back at the roadside, Clum knew that he was only a few miles from Tombstone (probably less than four). He could have walked there inside of ninety minutes. But he said that he never considered going back. Benson was over twenty miles away. But Clum, stunned by the attack and angrily determined not to be diverted by the cowboys, was fixed on seeing his family ("I was en route to Washington"). So he started walking toward Benson, aiming to reach the San Pedro somewhere north of Contention. He was afraid that if he followed the stage road, the cowboys would find him, so he left the road and bushwhacked across the desert. It was a poor decision. For a while, he stumbled across washes and ravines, his mind racing, staring into the dark, studying any moving shadow, and listening for the sounds of horses. After ninety minutes, he found himself at the edge of an abandoned mine shaft. He stepped around it, only to find himself at the edge of another shaft.

Clum now realized that he was lost. He had left the coach impulsively and had not set his course by the stars, so he could not be sure what direction he had been walking in or where Benson was. Now, he forced himself to calm down and decided to walk down the next gulch he came to, reasoning that, being a waterway, it would take him to the San Pedro River. He said that he found a "friendly gulch," walked down it, and eventually arrived at the Grand Central Quartz Mill, the newest and largest of the mills being built on the San Pedro to process ore from the Tombstone mines.[39] As he walked, Clum said, he heard a low, rumbling sound. It was the thirty stamp machines of the Grand Central Mill, running through the night. He followed the sound and arrived at the mill around 1:00 a.m., on December 15. He had walked seven miles in four and a half hours.[40]

Ruins of the Grand Central Mill
(author's photograph)

A view from the top of the ridge behind the mill shows Clum's likely route from the east. It is a wash, or gulch, extending east two miles to an area where Clum reasonably could have found it in the first half of his walk. At its west end is a road that leads north, past the mill.[41]

Clum and the Cowboy Camp

The mill superintendent, E. M. Crane, was a friend. Clum told him his story, then slept for two hours and, at 4:00 a.m., rode to Benson with a horse and saddle borrowed from the mill.[42] Still afraid of meeting the cowboys, Clum avoided the main road to Benson up the east bank of the San Pedro. Instead, he crossed the river and followed a trail north along the west bank. When he got near Contention, two miles to the north, Clum said that he came upon the camp of the cowboys, the same men who had attacked the stage; but they were asleep. Clum said that the men had planned a second attack on the coach north of Contention, but when they learned that he was not on the coach, they gave up the idea and camped near the San Pedro.[43]

There are several problems with this story. First, Clum did not see the holdup men during the attack, so it is unlikely he would have been able to identify them while they slept in the dark. Second, there is no evidence that the attackers met the Benson stage again or pursued it or even went into Contention to ask about it—nothing that supports Clum's story. Third, the story is not from 1881; it does not appear in any of the contemporary articles about the stage attack. It appears only in Clum's 1929 article "It All Happened in Tombstone." The tale doubtless made the cowboy menace seem more real and Clum more courageous for daring to approach the men who had tried to kill him. But the story makes no sense and has nothing to corroborate it.

Clum said he rode quietly around the camp and on to Benson. He got there by 8:00 a.m., stabled his horse, and went for breakfast in a local restaurant. When he left the restaurant, he met Jimmie Harrington on the street (the stage had long since arrived in Benson) and thanked him for not stopping the coach when the shooting started. Harrington protested that the thanks were undeserved: "'I'm tellin' you, mayor, you don't owe me nothin'. I just couldn't hold them damned broncos." He added that he was hardly being paid enough to defy armed men when they ordered

him to stop: "'When they pulls the guns on me and tells me to stop, it don't pay me to drive on—not at $35 per month.'"[44]

Clum's "friendly gulch," a wash leading to the Grand Central Mill. This view looks east from the back of the mill. (author's photograph)

The Search for the Mayor

Meanwhile, word of Clum's disappearance had reached the *Epitaph* office via a driver of the Benson-to-Tombstone stage, who had met Clum's stage on its way to Benson and learned of the shooting.[45] Now two posses formed to look for Clum. The first, consisting of Cochise County Sheriff John Behan and Charles Reppy, Clum's partner in the *Epitaph*, went out at 3:00 a.m. and rode to Contention. There they learned from passenger George Dunham the details of the shooting. Dunham had stayed in Contention when the stage went on to Benson. Behan and Reppy immediately back-tracked on the road to Tombstone, found the site of the attack, looked for signs of Clum, but found none.[46] This is not surprising since Clum did not leave the stage at the shooting site but a half-mile down the road.

The second posse, consisting of Thomas Sorin, Clum's former partner in the *Epitaph*; Jim Kirk, a friend of Behan; and a third man, left Tombstone at 4:00 a.m., rode to Malcolm's Station, and spoke with two teamsters, who were camped there with their freight wagons. The teamsters had witnessed the stage attack from their campsite near the hill where the shooting took place. They heard the gunfire and saw muzzle flashes. They estimated that fifteen to twenty shots had been fired over about thirty seconds. Participants in the incident corroborated this. The *Epitaph* later increased the number of shots to twenty-five. It is not clear whether they had new information or were exaggerating the number given by witnesses. Clum estimated the number of shooters as five or six, based upon the rapidity with which shots were fired and the fact that they came from both sides of the road.[47]

The teamsters told the Sorin posse that the attackers had used a gulch one hundred yards northeast of their camp as an escape route. Their description suggests the site was a south-running branch of Tombstone Gulch, the main part of which extends east along the north side of town and west toward the San Pedro. The teamsters heard hoof beats in the gulch after the shooting, and the posse found evidence of horses having been picketed there multiple times. Clum said that the cowboys had met there every night for a week, plotting to kill him when he left town on the stage. They kept a lookout in town, he said, who rode out to alert his companions when he saw the mayor board the coach.[48] This explanation sounds contrived, but Clum may have been at least partly right. Journalist Clara Spalding Brown said it was rumored at the time that the cowboys had men on all the roads out of Tombstone, waiting to attack the Earps or any of their supporters if they left town.[49] So Clum may have been right about the gunmen's tactics, just mistaken in suggesting that they were designed exclusively for him.

After talking with the teamsters and visiting the shooting site and the rendezvous point in the gulch, the Sorin posse rode to the place where the stage had stopped and, by the light of a match, saw two large pools of blood at the right side of the road, where the wounded horse had stood before wandering off in the brush to die. They could find no trail of Clum or the attackers and so rode to Contention, where they, too, talked with Dunham. While they were there, word arrived that Clum had turned up at the Grand Central Mill. The posse rode to the mill, only to discover that Clum had left. They learned that he was unhurt and had gone to Benson.[50]

So, the mystery of the mayor's disappearance was solved, and the stage incident was ended. Clum traveled by train to Tucson, where he stayed for several days visiting his brother George, who lived there.[51] Then he went to Washington, where he spent Christmas with his family as planned. The attackers were never identified. Clum later complained that Sheriff Behan made no serious attempt to find them.[52] Behan told the *Arizona Citizen* that he was "powerless" to apprehend the attackers but that if he had "a company of troops," he might be able to clear all of the outlaws from the county.[53]

Narratives of the Attack

Without a definitive explanation of the shooting, stories of it drifted into speculation and the ongoing war of words between Clum's Republican *Epitaph* and Harry Woods' Democrat *Tombstone Nugget.*[54] This may be a good place to point out that most of what we know about the December 14 stage attack comes either directly from Clum's personal writings or from his newspaper, the *Epitaph*. The *Epitaph* articles published at the time of the event were probably written by Charles Reppy, who headed the paper in Clum's absence.[55] But Clum, the newspaperman, took steps immediately after the event to get his story out. The *Nugget* said that Clum telegraphed the *Epitaph* from Benson when he arrived there, giving his version of events.[56] The *Arizona Citizen* published an article about the attack based upon an interview with Clum while he was in Tucson.[57] Clum's own published accounts did not appear until nearly fifty years later, in "It All Happened in Tombstone," published in the *Arizona Historical Review* in 1929, and in Clum's autobiography, *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, written in 1932 and published posthumously in two parts.[58]

Despite the fifty-year gap in publication dates, Clum and the *Epitaph* had the very same narrative about the attack—and no doubt about who had done it. It was the cowboys, and their attack was, as Clum had predicted, an attempt to assassinate him by faking a robbery. That attempt, they said, was part of the cowboys' larger conspiracy to murder the Earps and their supporters. The letter threatening Judge Spicer; the shooting of Virgil on December 28; the murder of Morgan

Earp on March 18, 1882; and the alleged attempt on the lives of Wyatt and Virgil at the Tucson railroad station the following day all were evidence of this conspiracy.[59]

Predictably, the *Nugget* countered the *Epitaph*'s stories, not by offering contradictory evidence, but by making fun of the incident and thus implying that no one should take it seriously. On December 16, the paper ridiculed Clum, saying that after the attack, he had jumped from the coach and run away at the first opportunity. Since he had not been heard from when the article was written, the paper said he probably was "still running."[60] The next day, the *Nugget* acknowledged that Clum had not run but said that he had cowered on the floor of the coach during the attack and that he had invented the idea of the assassination plot when the stage stopped after the shooting.[61]

The *Epitaph*, of course, could not let such charges go unanswered. On December 19, five days after the incident, the paper published a startling new piece of evidence that seemed to clinch things for its assassination theory. An anonymous letter, signed "A Citizen," reported a remark allegedly shouted by one of the attackers and overheard by two of the passengers: "'Be sure and get the old bald-headed son of a b____.'" "That," said the letter writer, "explains it all! They were assassins seeking to murder our mayor, and to do so [were] even willing to murder a stage load of passengers."[62]

With this sort of encouragement from the local press, the stage incident quickly became part of the escalating conflict among the Earps, the cowboys, and their supporters. The morning after the attack, Oriental Saloon proprietor Milt Joyce and Virgil Earp were in Joyce's establishment, talking about the "attempted stage robbery." Joyce attempted a joke based upon rumors of the Earps' and Holliday's involvement in recent stage holdups. Referring to the Clum incident, Joyce "laughingly remarked to Virgil that he had been expecting something of the sort ever since they [the Earps and Holliday] had been liberated from jail" following Judge Spicer's decision. But the joke fell flat. An angry Virgil slapped Joyce across the face. Four or five Earp friends, "all heavily armed," immediately surrounded the two. Frightened, Joyce remarked that "a man would be a fool to make a fight single-handed" against such a group and backed toward the door. When he got there, he defied the Earp party: "'Your favorite method is to shoot a man in the back, but if you murder me you will be compelled to shoot me in front.'" He then left. The *Nugget* likewise could not resist a parting shot at the Earps. Joyce's "coolness and good judgment," it said, "undoubtedly saved Tombstone from the disgrace of another bloody tragedy, all who are cognizant of the peculiar characteristics of the Earp party will readily admit."[63]

Clum Returns to Tombstone

Clum returned to Tombstone around February 1, 1882, but to a much-diminished role in the community. Some Tombstonans believed that Clum had helped provoke the Fremont St. gunfight by his noisy and relentless opposition to the cowboys and that the *Epitaph*'s constant talk of assassination and cowboy death threats were contributing to a growing fear and lawlessness in town.[64] The signs of Clum's political decline were apparent. Three days after the gunfight, Clum's city council suspended Virgil Earp from his job as police chief, and appointed James Flynn in his place.[65] On December 8, Clum chaired his last council meeting.[66] Realizing that he had little chance to keep the mayoralty with public sentiment shifting against the Earps, Clum declined to run in the January 3, 1882, city elections. On December 13, 1881, the day before he left town, he was booed off the speaker's platform at a meeting of the Citizens Protective League, the group that had chosen him as its mayoral candidate the year before.[67]

After his return to Tombstone, Clum continued to support Wyatt and his posse in the *Epitaph*, during Wyatt's bloody vendetta against those he blamed for Morgan's death. But on May 1, Clum sold his interest in the paper and left Tombstone that summer. He returned in 1885 to take

up his old job as postmaster and, later, new positions as city auditor and police judge. But he left again the following year and did not return until the city's first Helldorado Days celebration in 1929.[68] By then the stage attack and the stories about it had long been forgotten.

Solving the Mystery

Today, as in 1881, the incident remains mysterious. Was it a robbery attempt? An attempted assassination? Was the whole thing just a hoax? Who had done it? And what of Clum's strange tale about wandering away from the coach, walking across the desert, and finding the camp of the cowboys? Was any of that true?

Was the stage attack a genuine robbery attempt? The *Epitaph's* and the *Nugget*'s first reports of the attack called the holdup men "robbers."[69] But in the end, both Clum and the *Epitaph* said that the attack probably was not a real robbery attempt because there was no mail, bullion, or Wells Fargo box on the night stage, and this was well known in Tombstone.[70] The risk of discovery or of being shot during a robbery would have been too great just to empty the pockets of five passengers.[71]

Was it an attempted assassination? Probably not. Clum had been a thorn in the side of the cowboys for some time, but he had not killed anyone, unlike the Earps and Holliday. He had called the cowboys some bad names in print and alleged that they conspired to murder prominent Tombstonans. But even the *Epitaph* said that nothing Clum had done called for murder as revenge.[72] Surprisingly, the paper found some who shared this view in the pages of their rival. An anonymous letter to the *Nugget* agreed that Clum's political activities were too insignificant to deserve assassination. Instead, it charged that the mayor's prediction of the stage attack to his friends suggested that the entire incident had been faked to win sympathy for a failing politician.[73] In the same issue, the *Nugget* reprinted an article from the *Tucson Journal* saying that the attackers were really just Clum's friends giving him a celebratory send-off on his Christmas holiday.[74]

The large amount of aimless shooting in the incident also seemed, to some, inconsistent with a murder attempt. Of the fifteen to twenty-five shots fired, by men witnesses said were no more than ten feet away, not one bullet hit the coach.[75] The *Tucson Journal* found it "incredible" that experienced "road agents" would have failed to hit their target in twenty-five tries.[76]

But the shooters were not aiming at Clum, the *Epitaph* said. They were shooting in the air to stop the coach, as was common in holdups, so that they could fake a robbery and murder Clum.[77] The shooting panicked the horses, and they bolted. Clum said that when the gang saw their plan was failing, they deliberately shot one of the horses to force the stage to stop, also a common practice in holdups.[78] The *Epitaph* had said the same fifty years earlier. But if that had been the plan, surely the holdup men would have chased down the stage to finish the job. Robbers of the Tombstone-Bisbee stage on January 6, 1882, did this.[79] The attackers of Clum's stage did not even try.

What about the alleged command by one of the attackers to shoot Clum? Surely, that was evidence of an assassination plot. But the remark was not reported until five days after the incident. Why the delay in reporting a statement so revealing and supposedly overheard by two passengers? Who were the passengers who heard the remark? Obviously, Clum was not one of them since he never mentioned it. And Clum knew about the "Citizen" letter; he had a copy of it, cut from the *Epitaph* and pasted in his personal scrapbook.[80] But he did not quote the letter in any of his writings about the incident, even though it would have supported his charge that the cowboys were out to kill him. He must have known the statement about shooting him was not genuine.[81]

Who attacked the stage? Clum and the *Epitaph* blamed the cowboys, of course. Some people, as we know, suggested other candidates, though not credible ones. The methods used in

the attack did resemble those used in other holdups that cowboys were rumored to have done. But the fact is that none of the December 14 attackers was ever identified.

Was Clum's story true? In most particulars, yes. Leaving his assassination theory aside, many of his details are consistent with witness accounts. The story has always had a bizarre, comical quality to it because there was so much ineptitude—the wagon drivers unable to control their horses, Clum "secretly" wandering away from the coach, Harrington taking off and leaving him at the side of the road, Clum getting lost and nearly falling down a mine shaft. But not all of Clum's story rings true. His tale about the cowboy camp near Contention was almost certainly invented.

What was the stage attack about? It was an act of terrorism, a response to Clum's aggressive opposition to the cowboys, who would have liked to punish him for his taunts and calls for their eradication. It was a defense of cowboy "honor," which historian John Boessenecker explains was an essential matter in frontier society.[82] Clum had insulted the cowboys publicly and that demanded a retaliatory act that would assert cowboy identity, demonstrate their power, and intimidate, a tactic the cowboys had used before in Charleston, Maxey, and elsewhere.[83] Its purpose was to frighten Clum and discourage him from returning to Tombstone. The men shouted and fired bullets wildly around the coach, then left. With a vocal Earp supporter like Clum out of the way, cowboy partisans would have had an easier time painting the Earps as murderers and driving them from Cochise County.

And the strategy of intimidation nearly worked. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Thomas Gardiner, a former correspondent, revealed that he had met Clum on the train to Washington and thought him "the worst scared man I ever saw."[84] For his part, Clum said that on the train he thought long and hard about whether to return to Tombstone. His political career there was over, and his efforts to bring Eastern-style law and order to the mining camp had failed because of the persistence of the cowboys and what Clum and others felt was the favor shown them by a compliant Sheriff Behan. "There is altogether too much good feeling," Clum had complained in the *Epitaph*, "between the Sheriff's office and the outlaws infesting this country."[85] He no longer had family in Tombstone. His wife had died, and his son was in Washington with Clum's parents. Finally, his financial circumstances were sketchy. The *Epitaph* did not make much money, and his postmaster's job involved long hours of work for little pay. "Informal efforts had been made," he said, to have him reappointed Indian agent at San Carlos. At the reservation, Clum had been able, for a time, to control events and run the community his way, a sort of control he could not exercise in Tombstone.

But whatever efforts had been made on his behalf, they were not successful and, in fact, nearly cost him his postmaster's job. While he was in Washington, Clum read in a newspaper that he had been replaced as Tombstone postmaster by Fred Emerson Brooks. Shocked and alarmed by the story, Clum rushed to see Assistant Postmaster General Frank Hatton, who told him that Clum had been replaced because it had been reported he was returning to San Carlos. Clum told Hatton that he had not been reappointed as agent at the reservation. Fortunately, Hatton was able to get Clum's postmaster's job back for him. Having a family to support and no prospects, Clum was relieved. He returned to Tombstone, he said, for the small income provided by the *Epitaph* and his postmaster's position.[86]

John Philip Clum, 1931
(Portraits—Clum, John Philip, #11824, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson)

The Incident Forgotten—and Recalled

Not surprisingly, Clum's stagecoach adventure faded into obscurity. After all, except for Dick Wright's leg wound and the dead horse, no serious harm had come from it. So, it produced no widespread public outcry or investigation and was forgotten amidst the more terrible events that took place before and after it—the Fremont St. gunfight, the shootings of Virgil and Morgan Earp, and Wyatt's vendetta. Clum understood this when he revived the story fifty years later. He told Wyatt's biographer Stuart Lake in a letter dated January 29, 1929, that he had noticed neither Water Noble Burns (*Tombstone: An Iliad of the Southwest*, 1927) nor Billy Breakenridge (*Helldorado: Bringing the Law to the Mesquite*, 1928) had included the story in their recent Tombstone books. Clum was writing about the incident in "It All Happened in Tombstone," and he anticipated that his audience would find it a surprising bit of Tombstone history. The story, he told Lake, "'is so old it will be new—even to the old timers.'"[87]

Notes

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[1] John P. Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone* (Flagstaff: Northland Press, 1965), 19; *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights: John Clum's Autobiography, 1877-1887,* edited by Neil B. Carmony (Silver City, New Mexico: High Lonesome Books, 1997), 68.

[2] Paul Andrew Hutton, *The Apache Wars: The Hunt for Geronimo, The Apache Kid, and the Captive Boy Who Started the Longest War in American History* (New York: Broadway Books, 2016), 191, 193.

[3] Gary Ledoux, *Nantan: The Life and Times of John P. Clum, Volume 1: Claverack to Tombstone 1851-1992* (Trafford Publishing, 2007), 12-14.

[4] Neil Carmony, "Introduction," in Clum, *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, 2-8; Ledoux, *Nantan,* 149-150. More information about Clum's army appointment and his life in New Mexico can be found in Ledoux, *Nantan,* Vol. 1, 21-37. Detailed accounts of Clum's time at San Carlos can be found in his autobiography, *Apache Agent: The Story of John P. Clum* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978) and Ledoux, *Nantan,* Vol. 1, Chapters 3-4.

[5] Clum, *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights,* 13, 23.

[6] Henry P. Walker, "Arizona Land Fraud Model 1880. The Tombstone Townsite Company," *Arizona and the West,* 21:1 (Spring 1979), 5-36; Clum, *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights,* 37; "Introduction," Scott L. Nelson, in Roy B. Young, *Cochise County Cowboy War: A Cast of Characters* (Apache, Oklahoma: Young & Sons Enterprises, 1999), n.p.

[7] John Boessenecker, *Ride the Devil's Herd: Wyatt Earp's Epic Battle Against the West's Biggest Outlaw Gang* (Toronto: Hanover Square Press, 2020), 79-80. Steve Gatto, *Curly Bill: Arizona's Most Famous Outlaw* (Lansing: Protar House, 2003), 26-27, 64.

[8] *It All Happened in Tombstone,* 16.

[9] Bob Alexander, *John H. Behan. Sacrificed Sheriff* (Silver City, New Mexico: High Lonesome Books, 2002), 186; Casey Terfertiller, *Wyatt Earp: The Life Behind the Legend* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), 194. Terfertiller quotes a letter written to the *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, February 19, 1882: "If by chance one or more of these robbers are arrested they have innumerable friends through whom they always do prove an alibi. Hence they obtain their liberty regardless of what may be the evidence against them."

[10] Boessenecker, *Ride the Devil's Herd*, 81; Lynn R. Bailey, *The "Unwashed Crowd": Stockmen and Ranches of the San Simon and Sulphur Springs Valleys, Arizona Territory, 1878-1900* (Tucson: Westernlore Press, 2014), 39-45, 69-70.'

[11] See, for example, William A. Duffen, "'Jollification'—Arizona Style: A Description of Gunplay in 1880." *Arizona and the West,* 1, 1959, 281-284; and Lynn R. Bailey's comments about the cowboys' 1879 raids on Maxey and Safford (*Unwashed Crowd*, 42).

[12] "The Murderous Pistol," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, October 28, 1880, repr. Douglas D. Martin, *Tombstone's Epitaph* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1963), 177-78; Clum, *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, 45.

[13] Clum, *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, 45; "'Curly Bill': His Examination Concluded Before Justice Neugass," *Arizona Daily Citizen*, December 27, 1880, quoted in Gatto, *Curly Bill*, 44-46.

[14] "'Curly Bill': His Examination Concluded Before Justice Neugass," *Arizona Daily Citizen*, December 27, 1880), quoted in Gatto, *Curly Bill*, 44-46.

[15] The *Arizona Daily Star* proclaimed, "The terror [the cowboys] have caused the traveling public as well as residents along the San Pedro, is having a serious influence, and this scab on the body politic needs a fearless operation to remove it" (January 27, 1881, quoted in Bailey, *Unwashed Crowd*, 75.

[16] "The Murdering Cowboys," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, August 13, 1881, repr. Martin, *Tombstone's Epitaph*, 149 ; "The Cow-Boy Scourge," December 9, 1881, quoted in Martin, *Tombstone's Epitaph*, 152.

[17] *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, April 16, 1881, quoted in Martin, *Tombstone's Epitaph*, 151.

[18] "The Murdering Cowboys," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, August 13, 1881, repr. Martin, *Tombstone's Epitaph*, 150; "More Stock Stolen," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, August 14, 1881, repr. Martin, *Tombstone's Epitaph*, 150-51; "The Cow-Boy Scourge," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 9, 1881, quoted in Martin, *Tombstone's Epitaph*, 152.

[19] *Clum, Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, 41-42; George Parsons, *A Tenderfoot in Tombstone*, 114-15; "The City Election," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, January 5, 1881.

[20] *It All Happened in Tombstone*, 16-17; *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, 54.

[21] Terfertiller, *Wyatt Earp*, 110; Steven Lubet, *Murder in Tombstone: The Forgotten Trial of Wyatt Earp* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 162.

[22] Billy Claiborne also was in the vacant lot with the Clanton and McLaury brothers, but he left before the shooting started. Ike ran away during the shooting.

[23] Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone*, 17. For evidence of Clum's support of the Earps, see *Tombstone Epitaph*, October 20, 1880; October 28, 1880; and October 27, 1881, all quoted in Martin, *Tombstone's Epitaph*, 176-78, 189.

[24] "Opinion of Judge Wells Spicer," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 1, 1881, repr. Martin, *Tombstone's Epitaph*, 209-13.

[25] *A Tenderfoot in Tombstone*, 196.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] "A Cheerful Letter," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 18, 1881.

[28] "Street Rumors," *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 15, 1881.

[29] Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone*, 18; *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, 63.

[30] Boessenecker agrees, *Ride the Devil's Herd*, 296.

[31] *It All Happened in Tombstone*, 18.

[32] *Ibid*., 19; *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, 64.

[33] *It All Happened in Tombstone*, 19-20.

[34] Two of the other passengers are known—George Dunham of Philadelphia, named in "A Dark Deed," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 16, 1881, and Duke Du-Reune, an acquaintance of George Parsons, whom Parsons said he saw off on the stage the evening of December 14 (*A Tenderfoot in Tombstone*, 196).

[35] Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone*, 20; Chuck Hornung, *Wyatt Earp's Cow-boy Campaign, The Bloody Restoration of Law and Order Along the Mexican Border, 1882* (Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland and Company, 2016), 109.

[36] Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone*, 20, 21-22.

[37] According to Clum, the site of the shooting was on today's Schieffelin Monument Rd., at the top of a hill near the Ed Schieffelin Monument (Harry Carr, "Will Tombstone Become a Ghost Town?," *Los Angeles Times*, April 26, 1931). The precise location of Malcolm's Station is not known today, but it was the site of a spring and a water stop for freighters on the

road between Tombstone and Contention City. It also was the site of the last house travelers would see on the road to Contention. Clum said he saw "the lights of Malcolm's Well" just before his coach was attacked (*It All Happened in Tombstone,* 20).

[38] Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone,* 20-22; Clum, *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, 68-70; "Road Agents," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 15, 1881; "A Dark Deed," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 16, 1881; "Attempted Assassination of Hon. John P. Clum," *Arizona Citizen*, n.d., repr. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 20, 1881.

[39] Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone,* 23-24; Clum *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights,* 70.

[40] "Attempted Assassination of Hon. John P. Clum," *Arizona Citizen*, n.d., repr. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 20, 1881.

[41] The *Epitaph* reported that an unnamed source at the mill said Clum walked in on the "ore road," a branch of the stage road freighters used to haul ore to the mill ("A Dark Deed," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 16, 1881; see also John D. Rose, *On the Road to Tombstone: Drew's station, Contention City and Fairbank*, Sierra Vista: John D. Rose Publications, 2012, 125). The ore road's location is uncertain today. The north-south road passing by the current mill ruins may have been part of it. Clum never acknowledged that he used the ore road.

[42] Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone,* 24-25; Clum, *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, 70.

[43] Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone,* 25.

[44] *Ibid*., 26.

[45] "Road Agents," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph,* December 15, 1881. Clum said that mill superintendent E. M. Crane made a phone call to "friends" revealing Clum's arrival at the mill (*It All Happened in Tombstone,* 24). The call would have been made on the new phone line the Grand Central company had installed between the mill and its office near Tombstone. There is no evidence that the call caused the formation of the two search parties. The *Epitaph* said it learned of Clum's adventure from the Benson-Tombstone stage driver.

[46] "A Dark Deed," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph,* December 16, 1881.

[47] *Ibid*.; "Telegram from Tombstone to the Tucson Star. Tombstone Stage Assailed by Armed Rustlers," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph,* December 15, 1881, repr. Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone*, 41-42; Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone*, 27.

[48] Clum, *It All Happened in Tombstone,* 26-27.

[49] *Tombstone from a Woman's Point of View: The Correspondence of Clara Spalding Brown July 7, 1880 to November 14, 1882.* Compiled and Edited by Lynn R. Bailey (Tucson: Westernlore Press, 1998), 50.

[50] "A Dark Deed," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph,* December 16, 1880.

[51] *Tombstone Daily Epitaph,* December 15, 1881.

[52] Clum, *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights,* 71.

[53] "The Attempted Tragedy," *Arizona Weekly Citizen,* December 18, 1881.

[54] Terfertiller, *Wyatt Earp*, 167-68, gives a good summary of the conflict between the two newspapers.

[55] *Ibid*., 166.

[56] "How It Happened," *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 16, 1881.

[57] "Attempted Assassination of Hon. John P. Clum," *Arizona Citizen*, n.d., repr. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 20, 1881.

[58] "It All Happened in Tombstone," *Arizona Historical Review* (October 1929), 46-72; *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights: John Clum's Autobiography*, 1877-1887 (Silver City: High Lonesome Books, 1997; *Apache Agent: The Story of John P. Clum* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978).

[59] The stage attack became part of a circular argument in the *Epitaph*, in which the existence of the conspiracy explained any violence or threats against Earp supporters, and each violent incident or threat proved that the conspiracy existed.

[60] "Rustlers Abroad," *Tombstone Nugget*, December 15, 1881.

[61] "How It Happened," *Tombstone Nugget*, December 16, 1881.

[62] "The Cowboy Organ," *Tombstone Weekly Epitaph*, December 19, 1881.

[63] "A Close Call," *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 16, 1881.

[64] "Vox Populi, Vox Dei," *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 20, 1881; "A Covert Enemy," *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 23, 1881.

[65] *Minute Book Common Council Village of Tombstone*, ed., Ben T. Traywick (Tombstone: Red Marie's Books, 1999), 131.

[66] *Ibid.*, 151.

[67] "His Honor at the Citizens' Meeting," *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 14, 1881.

[68] Clum, *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, 82; Gary Ledoux, *Nantan: The Life and Times of John P. Clum, Volume 2, Tombstone to Los Angeles November 1882-May1932* (Trafford Publishing, 2007), pp. 218-19; When the Tombstone post office was demoted to a third-class facility because of the town's declining population, and Clum's salary was reduced accordingly, he resigned his position as postmaster and accepted the jobs as city auditor and police judge.

[69] "Road Agents," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph* December 15, 1881; "Rustlers Abroad," *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 15, 1881.

[70] "The Last Outrage," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 16, 1881. The *Arizona Citizen* observed, "None are better posted as to when treasure is placed upon a coach than those persons who rob them." ("Attempted Assassination of Hon. John P. Clum," repr. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 20, 1881).

[71] The *Epitaph* also argued that the attack could not have been a robbery because the Sorin posse searched the ground at the shooting site and found only "revolver" shells, no rifle shells. ("A Dark Deed," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 16, 1881).

[72] "The Last Outrage," *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 16, 1881.

[73] "Vox Populi, Vox Dei," *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 20, 1881.

[74] "Clum-sily Done," *Tucson Journal*, December 18, 1881, repr. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 20, 1881.

[75] "Attempted Assassination of Hon. John P. Clum," *Arizona Citizen*, n.d., repr. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 20, 1881.

[76] "Clum-sily Done," *Tucson Journal*, December 18, 1881, repr. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 20, 1881.

[77] "Attempted Assassination of Hon. John P. Clum," *Arizona Citizen*, n.d., repr. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 20, 1881.

[78] *It All Happened in Tombstone*, 22.

[79] R. Michael Wilson, *Encyclopedia of Stagecoach Robbery in Arizona* (Las Vegas: RaMA Press, 2003), 44-46.

[80] John P. Clum Collection, University of Arizona Libraries Special Collections, Tucson.

[81] We will probably never know who "A Citizen" was. But it is significant that the "Citizen" letter mentions the *Epitaph*'s published arguments about the cowboy conspiracy to kill Clum and other prominent Tombstonans and the danger of the cowboys to Tombstone's future. It condemns Hugo Richards, the new owner of the *Nugget*, and his paper for their irresponsible mockery of Clum and the robbery; and it claims that before the letter was sent to the *Epitaph*, it was read to many of Tombstone's leading citizens and endorsed by them. The letter may have originated in the Citizen's Safety Committee or even in the *Epitaph* office.

[82] *Ride the Devil's Herd*, 109.

[83] See note 11.

[84] "Arizona Affairs: Thomas Gardiner's Views on the Cowboy Nuisance," *Los Angeles Times*, December 30, 1881.

[85] *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, August 19, 1881, quoted in Martin, *Tombstone's Epitaph*, 152.

[86] *Apache Days and Tombstone Nights*, 70-71.

[87] Quoted in Ledoux, *Nantan*, volume 1, 387.

George Bird Grinnell -- Becoming A Westerner

In His Own Words (Mostly)

Edited and Assembled by Hugh Grinnell

Introduction

"It is ironic that a man, such as the young George Bird Grinnell, who hastened the extinction of at least one species [carrier pigeon] and considered shooting Native Americans for sport, would, by the end of his life, become a leading conservationist and advocate of the rights of Plains Indians." [1]

George Bird Grinnell (1849 – 1938) was only twenty-one when he first crossed the Missouri as a member of Prof. O.C. Marsh's geological expedition of 1870. The Great West he witnessed then, with its enormous herds of bison, free-ranging aborigines and vast wilderness areas, was shortly to disappear before his eyes. Nobody was quicker to sense this desecration or more eloquent in crusading against it than this remarkable man who has come down to us as "the father of American conservation." [2] Although he worked in New York City his entire life, he always dreamed of returning to the West whenever he could. His first trip to the West changed his life, and he knew he could never follow in his father's footsteps as a stock broker. He became a free spirit who yearned for the open spaces with a horse to ride, a rifle and fishing pole, and his pipe.

(Figure 1 - George Bird Grinnell, Yale Graduation)

Part I – My first trip to the West

I was born in Brooklyn, New York. When I was 8 years old, my father moved my family to Audubon Park, an estate of wild land on the Hudson River in Upper Manhattan belonging to the widow of the famous naturalist, John James Audubon. In our new home I enjoyed catching bats in a nearby barn, and stalking robins and wild pigeons with a hickory bow and arrow my uncle purchased for me from the Indians at Saratoga. I went killifishing and crabbing in a nearby tidal pool as well as skinny-dipping in the Hudson River, to the embarrassment of passengers on the Hudson River trains.

(Figure 2 - Home in Audubon Park)

I grew up next door to the Audubons. Lucy Audubon (who we kids called Gramma Audubon) the widow of naturalist, John James Audubon, helped shape my early interest in natural history. “She was remembered by Grinnell to be ‘a beautiful white-haired old lady with extraordinary poise and dignity …”

(Figure 3 -Lucy Audubon)

she loved to read, to study, and to teach. She knew how to gain the attention of the young and how to fix knowledge in their minds." [3] She and her two sons each lived in their own homes on the estate. She taught her own grandsons and neighborhood children, including me, in a schoolroom she had established in her son, Victor's home on the estate. "Mrs. Audubon … tutored George in the science of ornithology, often spending afternoons with him in her bird room pouring over many books, paintings, and stuffed specimens." [4] One day as I was approaching their home for class, I saw a dozen or twenty small greenish birds feeding on the grass under a pine tree. I approached them slowly, trying to see what they were, and they did not fly away. Backing away from the birds I ran to fetch a small crab net and returned to where they were feeding. I caught one and rushed into the house and up to Grandma's room to show her. She told me it was a Red Crossbill**,** pointed out the peculiarities of the bill, told me something about the bird's life, and later showed me a picture of it. My interest in birds grew, and I continued my hobby of studying birds during my youth, and eventually more formally studied birds at Yale College. In later years when I founded the Audubon Society, I named the Society both for John James Audubon and Lucy Audubon.

(Figure 4 - Red Crossbill)

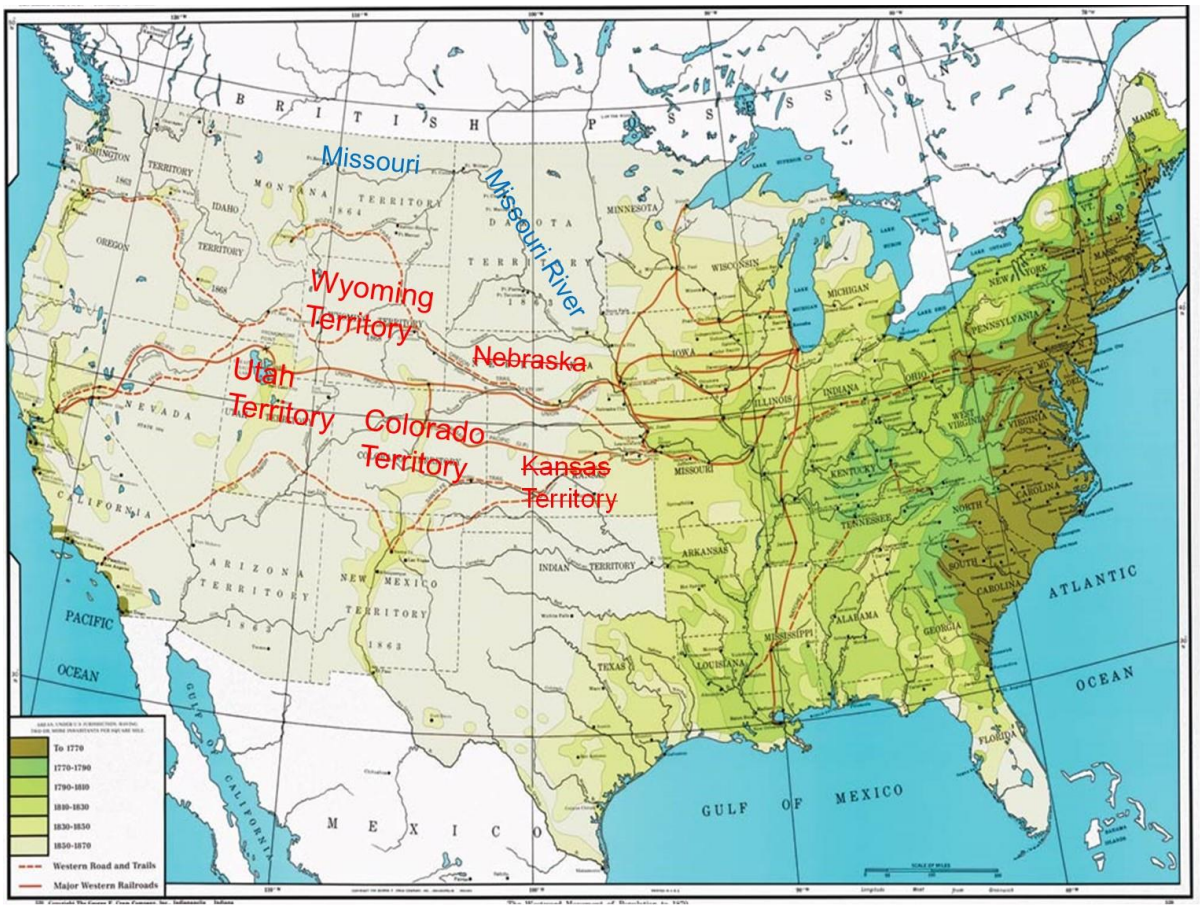
I was not interested in college, but my father always insisted I attend Yale, the alma mater of several ancestors. "I did not in the least want to go. I tried to escape it, but my parents had made up their minds, and I was not in the habit of questioning my father's decisions."[5] When I was 14 years old I left Grandma's tutoring and attended Churchill Military School for 3 years. When I was 17 I spent all summer studying Greek and Latin. I passed the entrance exams at Yale with conditions in Greek and Euclid (geometry). When in school I found myself perpetually in trouble.

Hazing freshmen and hat stealing occupied much of my time. "… one stormy night I climbed the lightning rod on the building known as the Lyceum and with red paint inscribed the number of my class [year] on the face of the clock. There it remained one or two days to the enormous pride of my class, until the college carpenter was able to devise a means of getting up to the clock face and erasing it … I was suspended from school for one year because of hazing a freshman and was required to have a tutor during that year." [6]

(Figure 5 – Lyceum on campus)

Grinnell remembered his stay as 'a very good time, doing very little studying and spending most of [my] time out of doors'. He returned to Yale to take his final exams, failing them all. He spent the next semester under the tutelage of Dr. Hurlbert, who was a great disciplinarian. He kept George on task in his studies. The next semester he returned to college and passed all his examinations with flying colors . . . which, Grinnell said, was wholly due to Dr. Hurlbert. On returning to Yale he was able to graduate with his class.

I was always drawn to the West. The summer of my college graduation, there was a rumor that Dr. Othniel C. Marsh, head of the Peabody Museum at Yale and recipient of the first Chair of Paleontology in the United States, would organize a geology and paleontology expedition to what was considered the West at the time -- the area west of the Missouri River. The rumor greatly

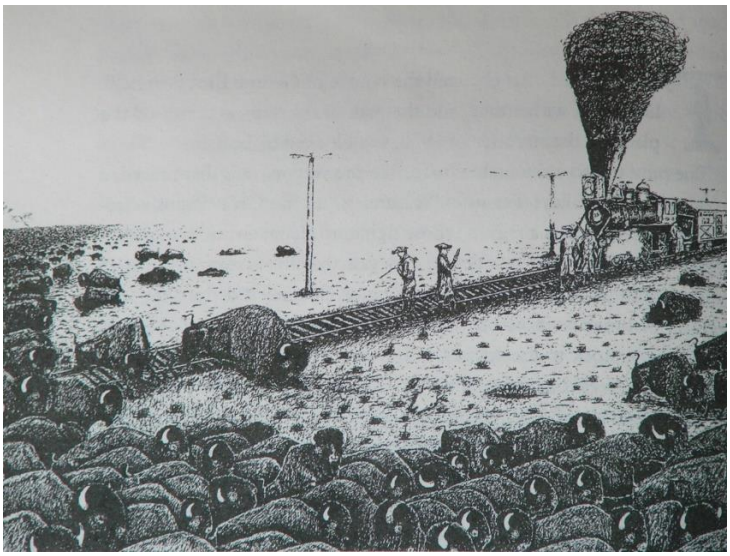


(Figure 6 – 1870 Map of the US)

interested me. "From boyhood I had read the books of Capt. Mayne Reid which told of the western country in the forties, and that country and its wildness had taken strong hold on my imagination."[7] I as well as others yearned for the life beyond the confines of our secluded valley. I wasn't the brightest student, and I was painfully aware of my record at Yale. I expected that I wouldn't be accepted after I interviewed with Prof. Marsh, but he had promised to inquire about my credentials. When I returned for a second interview, he told me that I was accepted as a member of the expedition. (I was the only student who applied.) He asked me to suggest some students who could be beneficial to the expedition, and he accepted all of my friends whom I recommended.

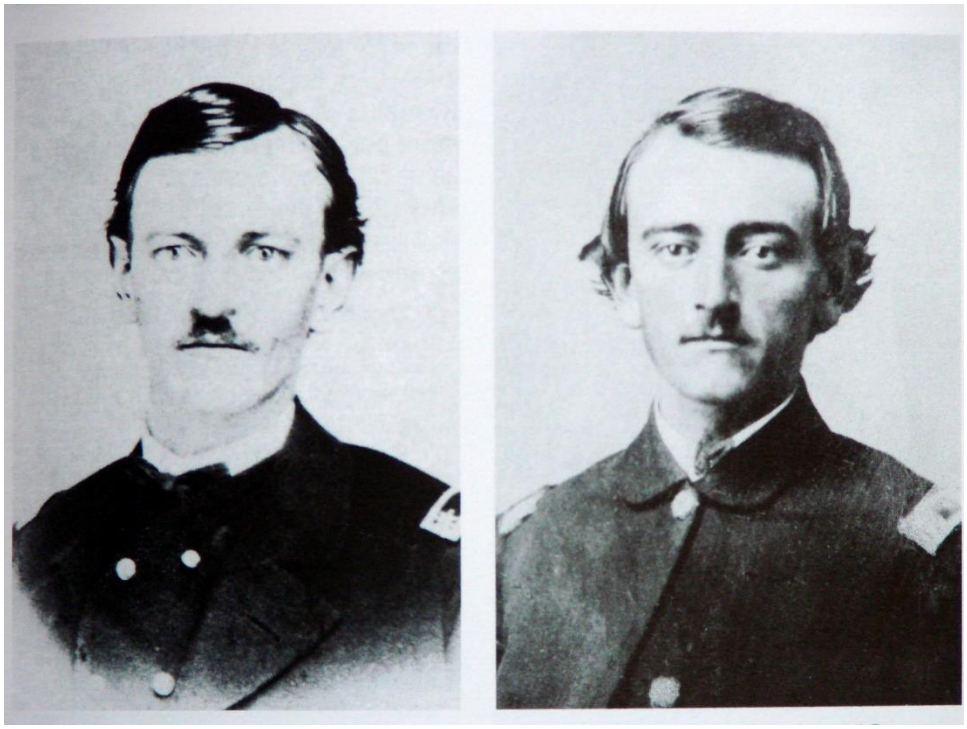
(Figure 7 - Marsh Expedition Members. Grinnell in top row 2nd from left)

In a matter of weeks I would depart on a five-month, 6000 mile journey that would change the course of my life. On board the train Grinnell "was fascinated by the appearance of one of the passengers, who carried a long rifle and wore moccasins. 'I believed that now I was on the frontier, and I was not far wrong.'" [8] I was astounded by what I saw when my train west was stopped for three hours by migrating buffalo in Nebraska. Professor Marsh had arranged that we should go first from Fort McPherson to the Loup Fork River to the north where, it was understood, there were late Tertiary fossil beds of considerable interest. A troop of cavalry was to accompany us as escort, with six army wagons to carry the provisions and supplies, including tents, blankets and ammunition. [9]



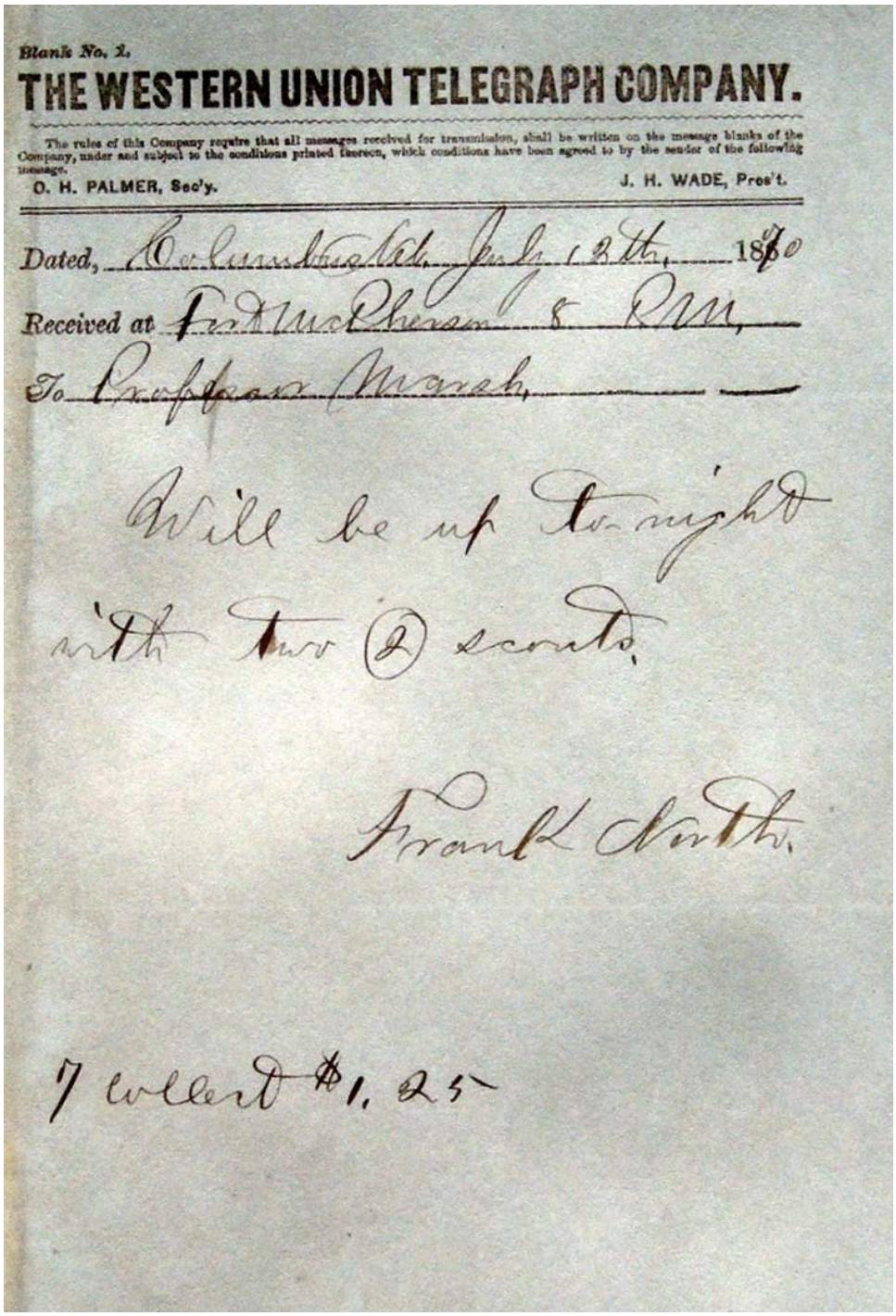
(Figure 8 – Buffalo Crossing RR Tracks)

We arrived at Fort McPherson in Nebraska. Inside Fort McPherson was a large corral which contained over 200 Indian ponies captured from the Sioux (bitter enemies of the Pawnee) and [which] were used by the Pawnee scouts in wartime. Ft. McPherson was the home base of Major Frank North and his brother, Lute North.



(Figure 9 – North Brothers)

Major North is an old prairie man who has passed his life among the Pawnees and who consequently knows their character well and has great influence among them…He is but thirty, [which] indicates the length of time he has been on the plains. [The] major, who accepted by telegram, was engaged by the Prof. as our guide, and when he joined us he was accompanied by two of his Pawnee scouts. Both of [the Pawnee] were celebrated, the oldest as a warrior and the youngest as a hunter. The oldest was named, Tucky-tee-lous, [who] sang." [10]



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THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.

The rules of this Company require that all messages received for transmission, shall be written on the message blanks of the Company, under and subject to the conditions printed thereon, which conditions have been agreed to by the sender of the following message.

O. H. PALMER, Sec'y. J. H. WADE, Pres't.

Dated, Columbus Neb. July 12th, 1870

Received at Fort McPherson 8 PM,

To Professor Marsh,

Will be up to-night with two (2) scouts.

Frank North.

7 words $1.25

(Figure 10 – telegram)

Frank North was a close friend of William Cody who in later years employed Frank as a sharp shooting expert in his touring Wild West show. Prior to this time and after 1877 when the Plains Indian wars were over, Cody and Frank North went into the cattle business together under the name, "Cody and North". They remained lifelong friends.

"The last night in camp (before starting on our expedition), we had a good deal of fun. We all put on blankets and marched in single file to the Indian tent where we sat in a circle and smoked the

pipe of peace. (After speeches in English and Pawnee, which delighted the Indians even though they couldn't understand English) they sang the buffalo song and we sang some college songs. Then the council broke up."[11]

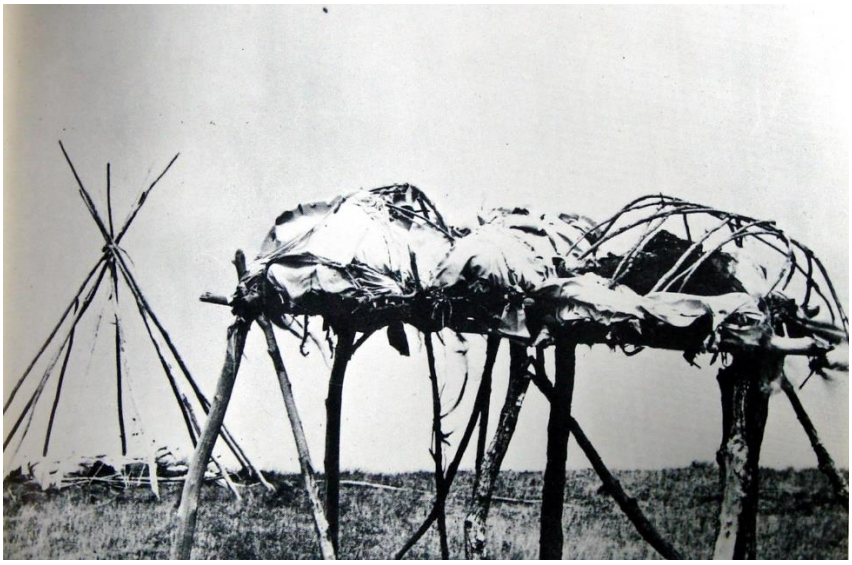
[Our] two Pawnee scouted ahead of the column, sometimes crawling on their bellies to peer over hilltops before advancing. I and my Yale friends rode on Indian ponies in a company of cavalry. We were armed with rifle, revolver, geological hammer, and Bowie knife. A small guard of soldiers formed the rear. Six Army wagons, loaded with provisions, forage, tents, and ammunition, followed. I discovered shortly why this area of Nebraska was part of what was called The Great American Desert, because we measured the temperature at 110 degrees in the shade. We finally hit the Loup River where water was available." I was delighted by discovering what I supposed was a new species of heron, but upon close examination I found it was only one of the large mosquitos of the country."[12]

(Figure 11 - Loup River)

"Our researches resulted in the discovery of the remains of various species of the camel, horse, mastodon, and many other mammals, some of which were new to science; but in addition to extinct animals, these hunting grounds of the Sioux were well stocked with live deer, antelope and elk."[13]
"[A]bout 9:00 AM the 19th, we saw two herds of elk … and I went after both but did not get one out of either herd. The first herd contained from 200 to 250. Lieut. Thomas sent a sergeant with one soldier, Ballard, and myself to get some. The elk were on the north bank, and we on the south. We went carefully along the river until we got a little beyond them. They did not pay any attention to us but were gazing curiously at the command which was two or three miles down the river. We crossed and rode down on them through a belt of trees, but unfortunately just as we had got across, they smelt one of the Pawnees who was to windward of them. [A]way they went over the bluffs. We rode as hard as we could to the top of the bluffs to try and get a crack at them but only arrived in time to see the last of the herd disappear over a bluff about half a mile away. I shot nothing larger than a sharp tail grouse. On this expedition I am not altogether without hopes that I may shoot an antelope or a deer … I certainly expect to shoot a buffalo.[14]

"I am here again, I am happy to say, with my hair all right for which I most sincerely thank God. I do not mean to say by this that we have been in a fight with Indians, or even that we have seen them, but I mean to say that for two days and a night I expected every moment to lose my hair and never to see any of you again."[15]

I and my classmates, including my friend, Jack Nicholson from Yale, were called *"pilgrims,"* because this was our first trip to the West. On July 20, Prof. Marsh asked Jack and me to bag some ducks for the expedition as the camp was out of fresh meat. Jack Nicholson and myself should take our shotguns and kill some ducks for dinner. We were camped on Wild Horse Creek in Nebraska which promised many ducks. A cavalry captain named Montgomery gave us instructions to follow the stream which ran in a straight line, because the wagon train was moving to a new location in the same direction as the stream. *"Simply follow the creek and meet us at the camp at night!"* he commanded us. "After following the creek for about 15 miles we had shot enough ducks for the evening meal. Now noon, we did not sight the wagon train since it first disappeared when the creek started to bend. We became rather uneasy at not seeing either the column or wagons. We were in the middle of country inhabited by both Cheyenne and Sioux. Our anxiety was approaching panic**.** Nearby we discovered a platform grave. The man had died recently, because his knife, which was by him, was not rusted, and his long hair looked fresh. I stopped to marvel at a pair of barn swallows who had commenced to build a nest under the litter he was laid on. How curious that a mighty Dakota warrior, perhaps with many scalps, should now have his own hairs removed to line the nest of tiny birds.



***(Figure 12 - Platform Grave*)**

"We traveled along for 7 or 8 miles, and suddenly to our great astonishment struck the creek again. For a few moments we thought we must have come in a circle, but on looking at our landmarks we saw that we had kept a straight course and that the river bent around almost at right angles with its former course. We then determined to follow the creek as we were sure of water. About this time, 2 or 3 PM, we saw a smoke in the east. At first we were afraid it was an Indian signal fire, for we were right in the heart of the Indian country, but after watching it awhile we saw that it was the prairie burning. We hurried along the creek, and when the flames got

within about half a mile of us, I got off my horse and found the creek bottom. As the flames seemed to advance slowly we mounted and rode on, but after going a few hundred yards I thought it safer to get off and set the grass ahead on fire again. The fire seemed about a quarter of a mile off when I dismounted, and I gave my horse to Jack to hold. I had set the fire going in two places and was lighting a match for the third, when suddenly I heard Jack scream to me: 'Mount, Birdie, mount!' I knew by his tone that there was danger, so without looking around I jumped on my horse and then turned to take my gun from him. At that moment the fire was not twenty feet from us, the flames were 5 or 6 feet high, and the air was as hot and filled with smoke that we could not breathe. As soon as I was on my horse we both put spurs to the animals and galloped down into the bottom of the creek. Jack said that he sat with his eyes on the fire the whole time, and that it moved very slowly until it got within about 200 yards of us, and then it took the immense leap which almost reached us. After the fire had passed we traveled along the creek 'till nearly sunset. We then gave up all hope of finding the camp that night, and going down into a small gulch where there was grass, we unsaddled and made as if we were going to camp there. We watered our horses and picketed them where they could get the best food. Then Jack and I cleaned and ate a raw duck. We had no wood, and if we had had, we would not have dared to build a fire for fear of Indians. After our duck, Jack and I had a talk over our chances, and we decided that they were very small. We thought that in all probability the Indians had been watching us all day from the bluffs and that at night they would come down and lift our hair, or, if they did not do that, that they would lay for us next day … Another thing that made us uneasy was the fact that we were without rifles … We determined that our best plan was to follow our own trail back to camp and there to strike the wagon trail to follow … We saddled up and moved quietly down the bed of the stream for a few hundred yards and then leaving the water we pushed on for about a mile and a half. After looking for a place we went into camp for the night. By good luck I had my poncho strapped to my saddle and that with the saddle blankets formed our bed. We did not dare to trust our horses to the picket pins for the ground was very soft and we were afraid that they might get away. We tied one end of our lariats around our legs and the other around the horses' legs. We did not get much rest, for every time a bird or an animal rustled in the bushes, we would sit up and listen. Jack's horse had a trick of pulling up his picket pin by jerking on his lariat, and when the rope was around J's leg, you may suppose at each jerk Jack would go flying through the air. As the first gray broke in the East, we saddled up and started down the creek … By afternoon we were getting tired, and the constant anxiety was so great that Jack was almost done up. I myself was feeling badly discouraged. About 3 miles from the water I struck the [wagons'] trail … When I saw the trail I gave a whoop, and Jack rode up and we shook hands."[16] By afternoon we were reunited with our friends who thought surely that we had met our demise at the hands of the Red men. Having successfully spent most of two full days on our own in the wild, Jack and I were no longer called *"pilgrims."*

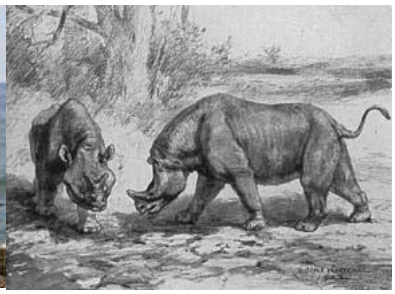
"From Fort McPherson we proceeded west by rail to Cheyenne, and a few days later left Fort D.A. Russell, Wyoming Territory, to explore a region lying between the north and south forks of the Platte River. Before long we came upon some bad lands not previously known, the southwestern boundary of a Tertiary lake basin, in which were entombed and waiting to be excavated turtles, rhinoceroses, *Oreodon*, and the huge *Titanotherium*. These beds we followed for a long distance westward. At

Antelope Station on the railroad … we found several species of horse, one of them a little fellow only two feet high and having three toes.

(Figure 13a – Eohippus)

(Figure 13b – Oreodon)

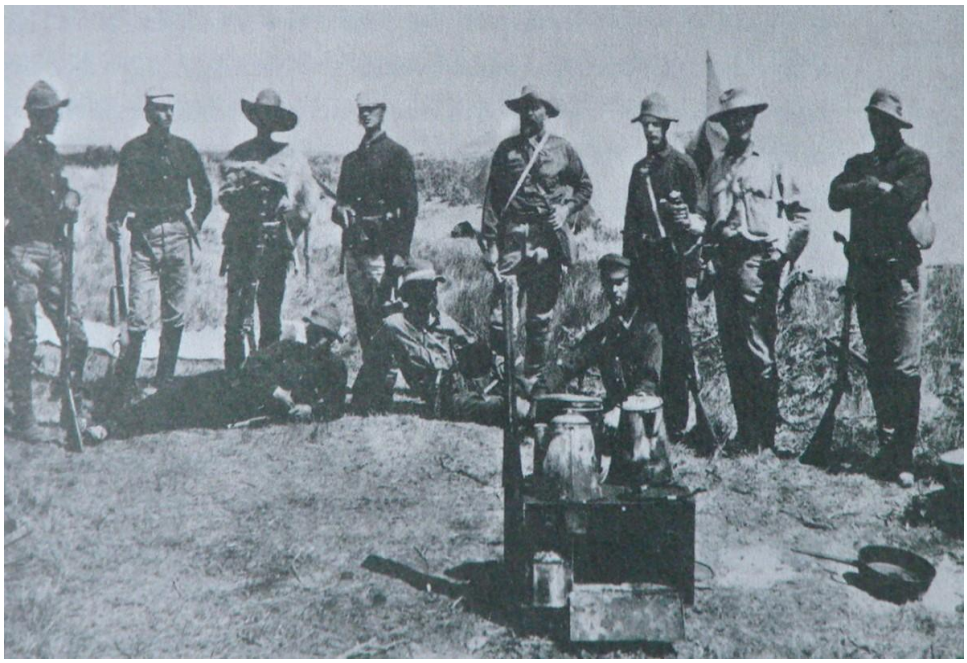
(Figure 13c – Pterodactylus)



(Figure 13d – Titanothere)

(Figure 13 – Paleontology Finds)

After some weeks in this general region the party traveled west by rail to old Fort Bridger in Wyoming. "Ft. Bridger was not an active place, but its situation was delightful. A few soldiers were stationed there, and it was an established military post. From time to time groups of Indians from south or north camped near it, stayed for a little while, sold their furs or purchased goods at the traders' store, and then went on … The post with its timber, its green grass and its trout streams, seemed very attractive."[17] "South of the fort were great washed deposits of greenish sand and clay of the Eocene age, and here we found great numbers of the extraordinary six-horned beasts later described by Marsh as *Dinocerate*. It was from this locality, too, that came Eohippus, the earliest horse-like animal of which we know … Later in this expedition, [g]oing down one of the rough narrow mountain trails toward the valley of Henry's Fork, we lost the pack mule which carries our mess outfit, and at the foot of the cliff we were able to recover from its load only a few battered tin plates and broken knives and forks."[18]



(***Figure 14 – Grizzled Men)***

After a break in the previous months of exploring, we traveled to Utah and California for some fun. A few weeks later we were back at the grind. "[We] finally reached Fort Wallace, in Kansas … We started on the 20th of November. The nights had now become bitterly cold, and to avoid the piercing wind our camp was pitched under a high bank. About midnight a wolf jumped off this bank into the midst of our mules and frightened them to such a degree that about a dozen broke loose and stampeded … The mules, with broken halters and lariats flying, reached the fort early in the morning which caused great consternation among the officers. [They] concluded that the Cheyennes had attacked us and sent a company of soldiers to our rescue. The troops appeared more disappointed at losing the expected fight than gratified at our safety.

"The search for fossils met with great success, and remains of cretaceous reptiles and fishes were collected in great quantities. One trophy was the skeleton of a sea serpent, nearly complete, and so large that we spent four days in digging out and carrying it to camp. This monster when alive could not have been less than sixty feet in length. It was allied to the genus Mosasaurus, which … had a slender eel-like body and tail, and not only the anterior paddles previously known, but posterior limbs also. With a mouth resembling that of the boa constrictor, this monarch of the cretaceous seas could bolt with ease the largest of his coeval reptiles and fishes.

"The weather day by day grew colder … Knowing the danger of exposure to snow on these open plains, we reluctantly bade farewell to our geological diggings, and satiated even with buffalo hunting [we] turned back to Fort Wallace. So ended our last excursion … On commencing the journey homeward, and entering the palace cars, our ruffianly appearance created consternation among sober railroad tourists. Months of hardship, labor, and adventure had made a rent in our well-worn clothes. [The] buckskin breeches and army blouses of several members gave to the party a wild and warlike character, in keeping with the open display of revolver and bowie knife and bronzed faces covered with the untrimmed stubble of a season."[19]

While in Wyoming, Grinnell discovered a complete fragmentary skeleton and skull of an ancient crocodile. Professor Marsh honored his discovery by naming it, crocodilus grinnelli.

(Figure 15 – Crocodilus grinnelli)

This specimen now resides in the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History. In all, the expedition returned to New Haven with thirty-five crates of fossils for the Peabody Museum. Also, the expedition had unearthed the fossils needed to present the full evolution of the horse, the most dramatic demonstration yet of Darwin's theory of evolution.

Thinking he had sewn his wild oats, Grinnell headed back to New York City to resume business in his father's stockbrokerage office. "I entered my father's office at thirty-six Broad Street, as a clerk without pay." [20] Despite his attempt, Grinnell found business totally unsatisfying and longed to go back out west.

Notes

1 LaBarbera, Thom, George Bird Grinnell: The Making of a Conservationist
2 Reiger, John, *The Passing of the Great West*, Winchester Press, 1972
3 *Ibid*, LaBarbera, Thom, George Bird Grinnell: The Making of a Conservationist
4 *Ibid*
5 Grinnell. 1915 Memoirs
6 *Ibid*, Memoirs
7 Grinnell, "An Old Time Bone Hint", *Natural History, 1923, pg 330*
8 *Ibid*, LaBarbera, Thom, George Bird Grinnell: The Making of a Conservationist
9 *Ibid*, Grinnell, *"An Old Time Bone Hunt"*
10 Letter to parents, Cheyenne WY 8/3/1870 Yale Archives, Letter Box
11 *Ibid*
12 Grinnell's field journal, 1870

13 Grinnell, “The Yale College Expedition of 1870”
14 Letter to parents, Cheyenne WY 8/3/1870 Yale Archives, Letter Box
15 *Ibid*
16 *Ibid*
17 Grinnell, “A Memory of Fort Bridger”, Yale Archives
18 *Ibid*, Grinnell, “An Old Time Bone Hunt”
19 *Ibid*, Grinnell, “The Yale College Expedition of 1870
20 *Ibid*, 1915 Grinnell Memoirs

Bert (Burt) Wilkinson's Life

By
Lowell F. Volk

Lowell Volk is the award-winning author of several series of historical fiction about the Civil War and the journey west to Colorado. Lowell lives on a small ranch surrounded by huge herds of mule deer and elk as well as Anasazi ruins in Pleasant View, Colorado, where he is a retired member of the Montezuma County Sheriff's Posse, former Montezuma Sheriff's deputy, former President of the Pleasant View Fire Protection Board of Directors, Member of Rocky Mountain Writers and the Western Writers of America. Here he writes a tale of the ***real history of Durango****, Colorado, and the short life of Bert Wilkinson, phrasing it as if it were fiction. Trust the events as real. You can find Lowell's work on Amazon.com and at* http://lowellfvolkauthor.com/

> "Silverton Justice." *Omaha Daily Bee*, 8 September 1881
> National Associated Press
> Denver, September 7 - Ten days ago D.C. Oglesby, city marshal of Silverton, was murdered by Bert Wilkinson, a desperado, while trying to quell a disturbance in which Wilkinson and two companions, Eskridge and a negro boy, had become involved. The negro surrendered and the vigilance committee of Silverton hung him. Wilkinson and Eskridge have just been captured and it is rumored that they were hanged by the mob last night.

In 1862 a boy born in Indiana to Mahlon and Louisa Wilkinson in Greencastle lived a short life of crime. At the age of eight, his father died while working in Washington, DC. With no husband, Louisa Wilkinson wanting to be near other family members moved to the San Juan area in Colorado with her son Bert and one of his sisters. There she met Simeion P. Hendrickson, who lived in Animas City, Colorado, where on March 15, 1877, Louisa and Simeion were married.

Married life was good for Louisa and her new husband but not so good for her son Bert. Feeling alone and neglected by the other children, Bert started to wander

At the age of fifteen, Bert explored a new life in Animas City and Durango, an area that had become crime prominent with outlaws, cattle rustlers, stagecoach robbers, and horse thieves.

No one was safe as lawlessness ran throughout. Outlaws found travelers an easy target from which to acquire money. It was common to find the local people afraid for their lives or robbed; they started wearing double-action revolvers on their hips to protect themselves. Carrying Winchester's rifles strapped to their back to protect themselves, farmers worked their fields.

On the day Bert rode into Animas City looking for some excitement, he found Ike Stockton and Harg Eskridge in the local saloon drinking and laughing with the saloon girls. These two were considered to be upstanding local cattlemen. While Bert stood at the bar and ordered a beer, he was distracted by the noise generated by Ike and Harg and kept turning around, watching them. Calling the barkeep over, he asked, "Who are those men?"

Animas City 1885
Courtesy Colorado Historical Society

"They are a couple of ranchers from near Durango," said the barkeep. "They come in here now and again to drink. You don't need to worry about them as they don't hurt anything, and the girls enjoy their company."

Bert being somewhat jealous of them enjoying themselves while he had not found anything that pleased him since his mother had remarried, continued to watch.

Ike and Harg had done some illegal cattle gathering in New Mexico and with the extra money were celebrating. Even though the locals considered them as reputable cattlemen, they were always on guard for someone coming after them. The stolen cattle acquired would be sold to the Army or marketed in their butcher shop. While sitting at the table, Ike began to be bothered, noticing that someone that he didn't know was watching them and, turned to Harg asking, "Do you know him?"

"Naw, I ain't seen him in here before," said Harg. "Do you think he could be with the Simmon's from New Mexico?"

Ike asked the girls, "Have you seen him in here before?"

The girls both replied that they had not seen him before.

Turning back to Harg, Ike said, "They ain't come up this far before. That don't mean they ain't started. We need to find out who he is."

Ike's gang, the Stockton-Eskridge gang, would appropriate cattle in New Mexico near Farmington from the Simmons family ranch. The Simmons had suspected that Ike and his men were the ones rustling their cattle but had not been able to catch them. The Simmons had trailed after Ike when cattle came up missing, but they had never ventured north to Durango or Animas City.

Still being bothered, Ike called out, "Hey kid, have you got a problem with us?"

Bert, not knowing what to say, turned his back to them and took a sip of his beer, trying to ignore Ike.

"Kid," Ike called out. "You at the bar, I want to know why you got an interest in us."

Bert continued to keep his back to Ike until he heard Ike's chair being pushed back, making a scraping noise as it slid on the floor. Looking up into the mirror located behind the bar, Bert watched Ike get up and walk to the bar. He became nervous, not knowing what was going to happen.

Ike noticed that the stranger standing at the bar was not wearing a gun and was becoming nervous. With no likely threat, Ike continued to approach the bar.

Harg, not knowing what Ike was going to do, stood up and put his hand on the .44 Colt he had holstered at his side.

Ike stopped behind Bert and turned him around again, asking, "What you do'n watching my friend and me?"

"I don't mean no harm in it," replied a nervous Bert. "I was just trying to figure out what you were laughing so much at. It seems you and your friend are having a good time."

"Where you from?" asked Ike.

"I just moved near here from back east," said Bert.

"Do people back east always watch others who are having a good time and wonder why they ain't?"

"I don't know."

"Well, why don't you come and sit with us and find out what a good time is about," said Ike grabbing Bert by the arm and dragging him to the table.

At the table, Bert sat uncertain what he would do or what would happen to him. The girls who had been with Ike and Harg had moved away when Ike got up and now returned to the table.

"What's your name?" asked Harg.

"Bert," replied Bert.

"Bert what?" asked Ike

"Bert Wilkinson," said Bert.

"Do you know the Simmons?" asked Ike.

"I don't know no Simmons," said Bert. "Like I said, I just got to the area, and my name is Bert Wilkinson."

"What makes us so interesting that you kept watching us?" asked Ike again.

"I just found you interesting," said Bert. "I ain't had any fun since we moved here, and you two were having a lot of it."

“I ain't heard of any Wilkinson's in the area, have you, Harg?"

"Naw, can't say that I have."

Bert told them about moving to San Juan area and his mother marrying Simeion P. Hendrickson. He told them that he had made a little money and decided to have a beer.

BURT WILKINSON

MURDERED MARSHAL OGSBURY AT SILVERTON, COL., ON AUG. 24TH.

Durango, Colorado 1881
Courtesy Colorado Historical Society

"I know of Simeion Hendrickson," said Ike. "Don't you, Harg?"

"Ya, I heard of him," replied Harg.

Ike looked Bert over before he asked, "Do you need money, kid?"

"Ya, I could use some money," said Bert.

"You got a horse?" asked Ike.

"Ya," replied Bert.

"Have you ever worked cattle?" asked Ike.

"Naw," replied Bert.

"You interested in learning how to work cattle?" asked Harg.

"I don't see why not," said Bert.

"We're gonna take a little trip tomorrow to get some cattle. Why don't ya come with us?" commented Ike. "We need to drive some cattle to the Army, and I'll pay you to help us drive them."

With the offer of a job and the promise of earning money, Bert spent the rest of the afternoon with Ike and Harg. They introduced him to some of the girls in the saloon, which later changed Bert's life. Hanging out with Ike, they would get to know Bert well.

The next morning Bert met Ike and the rest of Ike's men outside of town near Ike's brother Porter Stockton's ranch. With everyone gathered, they headed for Farmington, New Mexico. On the way south, Bert realized the cattle being driven to the Army would be stolen. The idea of taking the cattle didn't bother him; it even increased the excitement he felt. Two days later, they were near the Simmons family ranch. Ike sent Lark Reynolds to look for the Simmons's herd.

When Lark returned, he told Ike that he had found the herd in a canyon two miles south of them. "It's going to be easy for us to get some of the cows," said Lark. "I circled and didn't find anyone watching the herd."

"How big is the herd?" asked Harg.

"I guess three to four hundred head," said Lark.

"Aint that too many for us to handle?" asked Bert.

"We're gonna take twenty-five to thirty of them," said Ike. "We can move faster, and they won't be missed as soon."

That night with a full moon, there was enough light for them to cut the cattle they wanted out of the herd. At about ten o'clock, they entered the canyon. Within an hour, they had the cattle and were moving them north. They continued to drive the small herd the rest of the night. With the sun starting to come up, Ike found a box canyon they had used before and held the cattle there during the day. Ike sent Tommy Radigan back to check for anyone following them.

Half of the men laid down to rest while the rest watched the herd. Four hours later, they switched so those watching the herd could get some rest.

Tommy returned at noon and told Ike that they were clear and no one was trailing them.

Late that day, they started moving the herd north again. With the moon still bright, they kept moving the cattle late into the night. Two days later, they neared Durango, where Ike's ranch was, and he could keep the cattle until they could butcher the ones the Army didn't want to sell the meat and sell the rest to the Army.

With the herd safe, the men were paid. With money in their pockets, it was time to celebrate. Bert, along with Harg and some of the others, visited the local whiskey row in Durango along saloon row. It didn't take long before Bert became one of the favorites with the local saloon girls. His generosity with them gained his loyalty as a generous man. Bert was welcomed whenever he would arrive at one of the local establishments by both the girls and the barkeep.

Whenever money was running short, they again would ride to Farmington, New Mexico, to steal more cattle.

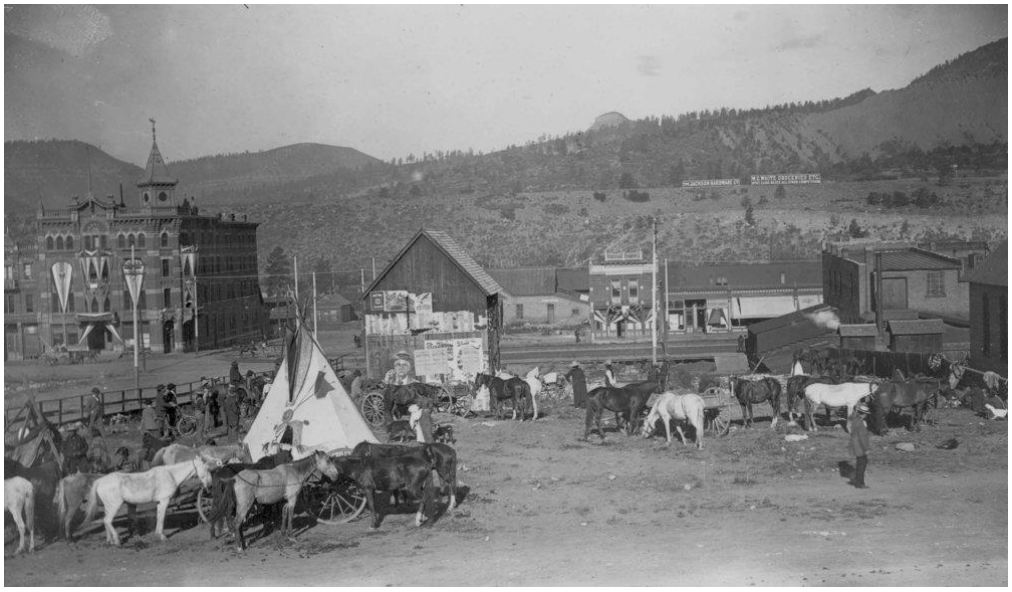
The night before April 16, 1880, inside the Coliseum saloon Henry Moorman, a gambler, shot another patron in cold blood in front of everyone in the saloon and was taken to jail. Before Henry could go to trial, he was lynched near the railroad tracks. It just so happened that same day the Simmons family decided that they had lost enough cattle to the Stockton-Eskridge gang and formed the Farmington Vigilante Committee to take revenge against the outlaws. The Committee rode for Durango.

The Vigilante Committee crossed the high mesa with 50 armed men vowing to kill Ike and the Stockton gang. Riding, into town they spotted the body of Henry Moorman still hanging from the pine tree near the railroad tracks. One of the men commented, "I wonder what he did. I know they don't hang rustlers." After finding Moorman's body, they kept watching riding with caution as they entered Durango.

Gang member "Texas Bill" Hunter spotted the vigilantes riding down saloon row. The Committee had heard that Ike and most of his men were in one of the saloons. With twenty saloons standing next to each other, the vigilantes still had to discover which saloon Ike was in. Texas recognizing that trouble was coming, went to the saloon where the gang was celebrating, and warned Ike.

Entering the saloon Texas walked over to the gang leader and said, "Ike, the Simmons just rode in with 40 to 50 men. They're out on the street, and it looks like they are looking for us with blood in their eyes."

Ike went to the saloon doors and looked out. Seeing the Vigilante Committee milling around in the street with guns drawn, Ike turned to his men and said, "Get ready; when they find out where we are, they're going to open fire."



Durango, CO, 1880s
Courtesy Colorado Historical Society

One of the Simmons men spotted Ike looking out the saloon doors. Not waiting, he took a quick shot at Ike and missed.

Ike turned back into the saloon just as the vigilante fired. Nearly missing him, the bullet lodged in the door near his hand. Hearing the gunshot, Ike's men opened fire from within the cover of the saloon.

Gunfire, coming from the saloon, caused several of the Vigilante Committee to take cover, across the street behind a convenient building. There they continued to pour lead into the saloon.

Several of the town's people, hearing the gunfire, wanting to remain out of the fight, took refuge in the Luttrell House, a brick house, on Third Avenue. Some of the town members, seeing one of their own attacked, joined Ike and his men. The battle went on for about an hour before the Vigilantes were driven out of Durango. Forced back to Farmington, they took their wounded and dead with them.

After driving the Vigilantes from Durango, Durango's people started to lose their respect for Ike and his men, learning that he wasn't the cattleman he pretended to be. Bert continued to befriend Ike as their lawlessness continued. They would go out and celebrate when they had money, and it was not uncommon for one or more of the men out whooping it up to ride their horses into a saloon and order whiskey.

Several months later, the soldiers stationed at Fort Lewis hireda black fellow named Kid Thomas to herd cattle. Kid Thomas worked for the Army until August 1881, when he got word that his brother was in jail for stage robbing. Collecting his pay, he left his job to see his brother. With money in his pocket, he found Bert and Harg sitting at a table in the saloon.

Bert recognizing him when he came in called out, "Hey kid, why don't ya join us."

Kid Thomas sat down, and Harg asked, "I thought you were working for the soldier? What are you doing here?"

"I got word that my brother is in Conejos County jail for robbing a stage. I aim to see him before he goes to trial," said Kid.

"You riding there alone?" asked Bert

The Kid asked, "How would you like to ride there with me? I got myself some money, and I heard that he has plenty of loot hid. We could split it when we find it."

"What kind of money are you talking?" asked Harg.

"I got $300 from the army," said Kid. "I don't know what he got hidden. If ya come with me, I will split what I got and what we find."

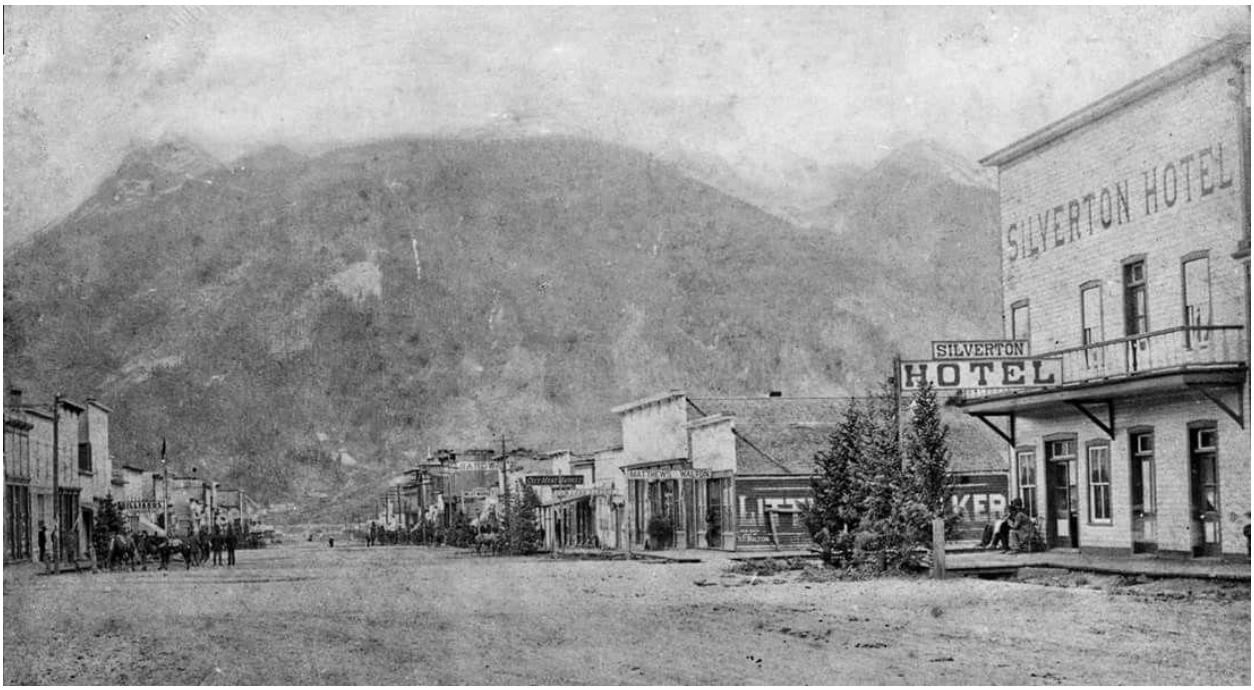
"We ain't got nothing going," said Bert. "We'll ride with you."

"When do you want to leave?" asked Harg.

"In the morning."

On the morning of August 24, 1881, Bert Wilkinson, Harg Eskridge, and Kid Thomas met and the Kid divided his $300 with Bert and Harg. Wanting to avoid traveling direct from Durango to the San Luis Valley, they headed to Silverton.

Arriving in Silverton, they went to a café and ate supper. Noticing the dancehall across the street, Bert, with money in his pocket, suggested that they go and celebrate. With their bellies full, they walked to the dancehall.



Silverton, CO, 1880s
Courtesy Colorado Historical Society

Sitting at a table, Harg ordered a bottle and three glasses. When it arrived, he poured shots for all three. After the first couple of rounds, Kid started refusing drinks. "What is the matter, Kid? Don't ya want to drink with us? It's your money," said Harg laughing.

"I don't want to drink too much," replied Kid.

"Do you have any idea how much money your brother has hidden away?" asked Bert.

"The word I got was a lot," said Kid.

"Barkeep get us another bottle," called out Bert.

By the time the second bottle was half gone, both Bert and Harg were drunk. Bert decided that it was too quiet, said, "Watch this." As he took out his Colt .44 revolver, he shot one of the lights out on the stage.

Harg, not wanting to be outdone, took out his Remington .44 and shot the light out next to the one Bert had shot. “You ain't the only one that can do that.”

When the shooting started, customers started moving away from the three men. Kid Thomas sat watching but did not part take in any of the shooting.

Shots continued to ring out as Harg and Bert kept shooting at the lights.

Clate Augsbury, the Marshal of Silverton, was sitting in his office when the shooting started. Wondering what was going on, he got up and went outside. Hearing the shots coming from the dancehall, he walked towards it to put a stop to it.

Bert and Harg were standing arguing about who had shot out the most lights when the doors opened, and Augsbury came in. They were both going to take another shot when Augsbury called out, “Put those guns away, boys.”

Startled by the sudden interference, they both turned to see who was interrupting their fun. Seeing the Marshall surprised them and their guns accidentally went off. Marshall Augsbury hit by one of the stray bullets, fell to the floor.

One of the customers who were still in the Dancehall ran to the Marshall and found him dead. Looking at the three men, he yelled out, “You just killed the Marshall!”

Bert and Harg looked at each other, and Harg said, “We need to get out of here.”

Wilkinson and Eskridge ran to their horses and rode out of town escaping into the mountains. Kid Thomas stayed as he had not taken part in any shooting. He figured that he was safe. The town people grabbed Kid and took him to jail.

The Kid protested, saying, “Why are you putting me in jail? I didn’t shoot the Marshall or do any of the shooting in the hall.”

“You were with them, and that’s enough,” said one of the men as they locked him in a cell.

Riding into the mountains, Bert asked Harg, “What happened to Kid Thomas?”

“He stayed. He should be alright. He didn’t do any of the shooting.”

On the way to a hideout Bert knew about, they stopped near Rico at a stage stop and got supplies from an aunt.

The next night a crowd of Silverton men set on revenge for the Marshall’s death went to the jail. They drug Kid Thomas from his cell and to the courthouse shed. “We don’t hold to someone killing our marshal,” said the leader of the lynch mob.

The Kid saw that they were going to hang him. “You can’t hang me. I didn’t kill your marshal. I didn’t fire my gun. Bert Wilkinson shot the marshal.”

The men didn't pay any attention to what the Kid said and strung him up by the neck on one of the beams in the shed until he was dead.

On Friday, August 26, the people of Silverton gathered and raised $4,000 as a reward for the capture of Bert Wilkinson. They formed a posse of 24 men and went searching for him. After an extensive search, they failed to find Wilkinson, and Eskridge returned to Silverton empty-handed.

Ike Stockton heard about Bert's reward; he decided that the four thousand dollars was too much to turn down. Going to the stage stop where Bert got supplies, Ike talked to Bert's aunt, saying, "I know you can tell me where I can find Bert."

"Why would I tell you where to find them?" she asked.

"I am a friend of Bert, and I want to help him get to Mexico."

"Who are you?"

"Ike Stockton."

Recognizing the name, she said, "Bert has mentioned you."

Being convinced that Ike was there to help Bert, she told him where to find him. Welcomed like a friend by both Bert and Harg when he arrived at the cabin.

"Ike, how did you find us?" asked Harg.

"Bert's aunt told me so I could come and help you get away," said Ike. "The folks of Silverton have put up a reward for your capture, so you need to head to Mexico."

"How much is the reward?" asked Bert.

"Four thousand dollars."

"What about Kid Thomas? What has happened to him? Have you heard?" asked Bert.

"They took him to jail, and a lynch mob hung him the next night," said Ike.

"He didn't shoot the marshal," commented Eskridge. "We did all the shooting."

"That's why you got to get out of here before they find you like I did," said Ike.

They continued to talk and drink into the night, making plans on going to Mexico. The next morning they had all agreed that they needed to go to Mexico. They would need better horses, so Ike told Eskridge to go to Morrison's ranch and get some good horses.

Eskridge rode out to arrange for the better horses leaving Ike and Bert alone at the cabin. Ike waited until Eskridge was gone and Bert had his back to him. Taking his .44 Colt, he pointed it towards Bert and said, "I am taking you back to Silverton."

Bert turned with a shocked look on his face. Seeing Ike holding a gun on him, he started to reach for his.

Ike stopped him, “Don’t make me kill you.”

Bert surrendered to Ike and let his hands be tied. Ike put Bert on his horse, and leading Bert’s horse; they rode back to Stockton.

While riding, Bert asked Ike, “I thought we were friends.”

“I need the money,” said Ike. “We haven’t been doing well with the cattle, so I need the money.”

Arriving in Silverton, Ike turned Bert over to the new marshal. Ike collected the $4,000 and left Silverton.

On September 4, 1881, vigilantes moved in on the Silverton jail and overpowered the jail guards about 9:00 PM that night. With the guards out of the way, they seized Wilkinson with the intent to hang him. At the age of nineteen, Bert knew that his life was going to come to an end. They asked if he had anything to say.

Wilkinson replied, “Nothing gentlemen… Adios.” He climbed up on a chair with the noose around his neck, assisting them with his own hanging. (According to the Story of Hillside Cemetery, Page 0-8)

Shortly after Ike received the reward money, he was in trouble with Jim Sullivan, deputy sheriff of La Plata County. Jim had previously been sympathetic with the Stockton-Eskridge crowd and knew of the problem Ike had in Texas. He obtained a warrant from Texas on Ike and went to arrest him. Ike pulled his gun, but Sullivan shot Ike first in the upper leg. Ike’s gun went off, and the slug went into the boardwalk. Sullivan’s bullet was a soft point forty-five that shattered Ike’s leg and severed the femoral artery. Ike was taken to the doctor but bled to death that night.

Later the Stockton-Eskridge gang disbanded, and several of the members were caught and brought to justice ending their raiding.

Bert Wilkinson and Kid Thomson pictures in the Silverton Museum

*A lot of the information about the life of Bert Wilkinson was given to me by MD Blair W. Byle, who said that Bert was a relative in his family tree.

* Dates in the article were confirmed through the Farmington Museum collection.

Arkansas Valley Democrat, KS, January 18, 1881
Chicago Tribune, Il, September 6, 1881
Chicago Tribune, Il, September 17, 1881
The Canton Advocate, Canton, SD, September 29, 1881
Kaw Valley Chief, Perry, KS, September 16, 1881
Kirwin Kansan, KS, September 21, 1881
Muscatine Weekly Journal, IA, September 9, 1881
Omaha Daily Bee, NE, September 8, 1881
Rock Island Argus, Il, September 6, 1881
Worth County Time, MO, September 22, 1881

Grant Wheeler and Joe George, Cochise County Cowboys Extraordinaire

By
Doug Hocking

> "About 16 years ago a train on the main line of the Southern Pacific was held up in approved style a short distance east of Maricopa and **thereafter within two years robberies were frequent in the eastern part of the territory**. About the same time there were a couple of train robberies on the Santa Fe. But with the breaking up of the Bill Smith and the Black Jack gangs, the holdups ceased. But there was never before such a robbery in Arizona as the one that took place yesterday evening."[1]

Although mistaken in numerous details, i.e. the Bill Smith and Black Jack gangs didn't operate in the Territory as train robbers; the writer did recognize that there was something *special* about southeastern Arizona. Most of 19th century train robberies along the southern corridor took place in or were tied to Cochise County, the southeastern corner of the territory.

Many factors contribute to this. The 32nd Degree Corridor runs through this part of the country. Today we see it as the I-10/I-8 corridor. It was one of the few places where 19th century technology made a transcontinental railroad possible. The next place to the north was at South Pass in today's Wyoming and snow closed that route several months each year. Rail traffic was heavy and carried money being transferred between banks as well as registered mail and travelers with money in their pockets. Before the days of travelers' checks, convenient bank to bank check transfers, and credit cards a great deal of money was to be found on passengers and in the mail-express car.

The big cities of the late 19th century are not the big towns of today. Tucson, Benson, Fairbank, and nearby Deming, N.M. where railway crossroads. Tombstone and Bisbee in Cochise County, and Silver City, near Deming, were some of the largest towns on the southern corridor mining wealth in gold, silver, and copper. Population clustered in Cochise and the adjoining counties. There were mountains to hide in and the other "four corners" between Arizona and New Mexico Territories and Sonora and Chihuahua, Mexico were conveniently close at hand. Smuggling and cross border banditry were rampant.

Cochise County had a "cow-boy" problem when cow-boy meant outlaw. The Earps and their friends tried to clear it up, but eventually left the area pursued by the "law" with the problem only slightly ameliorated. "Texas John" Slaughter tried a few years later but local juries were loath to convict. Even photographer, C.S. Fly, took a turn as sheriff. Virgil Earp described the problem in 1882:

> "**The Bad Element**
> "knows its advantage in this respect, and makes the most of it. The cowboys are collected from all parts of the Western country, from which they have been crowded by advancing civilization., and they know that Arizona is about the only place left for them to operate in as an organization. With a complete breaking up of their company threatened in event of losing their hold where they are now, they resist official interference with the greatest desperation. Concerning the fights between the cowboys and myself and brothers, it has

> been stated over and over again that there was an old feud between us and some of our enemies, and that we were fighting only to revenge personal wrongs and gratify personal hatred. All such statements are false. We went into Tombstone to do our duty as officers. To do that we were put in conflict with a band of desperadoes, and it resolved itself into a question of which side could first drive the other out of the country, or kill them in it. To-day my brother Morg is dead, and I am a cripple for life. My other brothers are fugitives, but they will give themselves up. It was our boys who killed Stillwell.
>
> "**Before Stilwell Died**
> he confessed that he killed Morg, and gave the names of those who were implicated with him."[2]

The bad element collected in Cochise County. Trail drives brought cattle and drovers from Texas to supply beef to the Indian reservations and the Army. Many of the drovers left Texas under a cloud. Once in the Territory, they spent their pay and had no way to get back to Texas. So, out of work, they stayed and rustled cattle and held up stagecoaches and trains.

Some say ranchers on isolated spreads had little choice but to harbor dangerous outlaws. Assistance was nowhere close at hand. The cow-boys found support and assistance close to hand. Given the origins of many of the small ranches who rustled from the large spreads to build a herd, it appears that assistance was more than sympathetically than grudgingly given to outlaws. Thus, train robbers had means, motive, opportunity, and local support for their activities.

> "Grant Wheeler has been heard too often say that there was no use in living such a d---d life, that he would hold up a train and get something or they would get him. He also told on numerous occasions of how easy it could be done. 'I am not fool enough' said he 'to go to Mexico where I would get caught, the mountains are good enough for me.'"[3]

In the evening dusk of January 30, 1895, Grant Wheeler and Joe George climbed aboard the *blind baggage* of westbound Southern Pacific passenger train No. 20 at the station in Willcox, AZ. They huddled close in the cold night air hoping the darkness would conceal them. The train was arranged so that the engine was followed by the tender full of wood and water. Behind that came the baggage car whose door-less forward end, known as the blind baggage, was a place of concealment for hobos and other non-paying riders. Beyond the baggage the U.S. Mail-Express Car was located ahead of the passenger cars. Perhaps the arrangement distanced passengers from the smoke and sparks of the engine. Those with an eye to a stickup found this organization convenient.

Willcox is a cattle shipping railhead in the Sulphur Springs Valley midway between Benson and Steins, NM, on the territorial border. It is a cowboy town with close ties to the ranches and *vaquero* traditions. In 1895, the town ran for three blocks along the rails and about four blocks north and south. When the train came through, the whole town was aware of it. It's also at the northern edge of what had been, until 1876, Cochise's Chiricahua Reservation.

Brakeman, W. J. Young passing down the line, detected noise and movement in the blind baggage. He stepped up to investigate and found two cow-boys crouching there. Sheepishly, they offered to pay a dollar for passage as far as Dragoon Summit, but the brakeman, an honest man, declined.

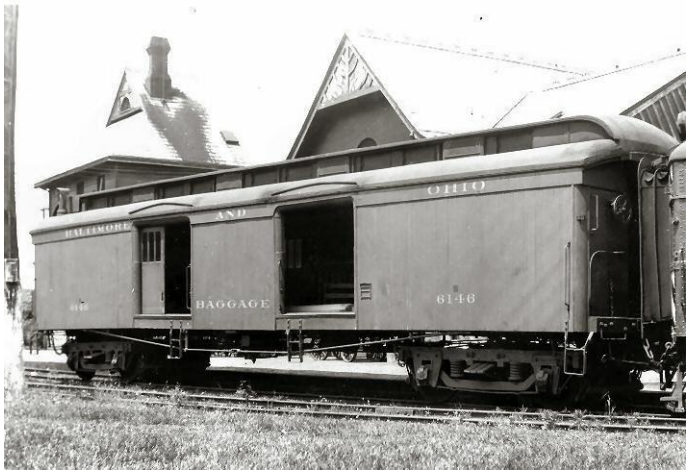
Two drawn and cocked six-shooters instantly confronted him. Fireman O. J. Johnson soon joined them and likewise was taken captive by the two hobos, and escorted to the engine, where engineer Zeigler was ordered to put the train in motion. In the crowded station, the armed men and early departure drew the attention of the whole town.[4]

Everyone knew, according to the *Morning Call* of San Francisco,[5] everyone except Sheriff C.S. Fly, the famed photographer turned lawman in Willcox from Tombstone, the county seat, on business. The Tucson papers said that he did nothing until the next morning.

> "If the reports concerning Sheriff Fly, of Cochise county are true he ought to be indicted and fired from office. If they are not true then a gross wrong is being done the man. He was, it is said, in Willcox at the time of the late railroad robbery, and although it was well known in that town, and to Fly among others, that a robbery was in progress, he made no attempt to go to the rescue of the train notwithstanding the hold up was within hearing and was a whole hour and a half in [consummation]."[6]

Perhaps his response was casual, but subsequent accounts show him highly active in pursuit although not having much luck. He may have been the only person in Willcox who was unaware of the robbery. The locals may have considered it unsportsmanlike to tell him. However, local oral history says that Fly and his deputy flew into immediate action pursuing the captive train for a about a mile on foot until it outran them or they ran out of steam.[7]

> "Sometime since we published a statement in reference to the inactivity of Sheriff C.S. Fly at the time of the late railroad robbery near Willcox. The statement was made then that Sheriff Fly was in Willcox at the time of the robbery and made no effort to arrest its progress although within hearing of it. In reference thereto Sheriff Fly writes us that said statement does him great injustice and in turn he reflects somewhat harshly upon those who gave the CITIZEN such information. At the time of publication referred to the CITIZEN said that the sheriff of Cochise county was either a much maligned official or should be removed from his office for neglect of duty and we say so yet. If the things said of him are correct he is unfitted for the responsibilities of his position, but if they are not true then he has been grossly wronged and we will be pleased to put him right before the country."[8]



The Blind Baggage – at right
Courtesy Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society

In any event, the train, Grant Wheeler and Joe George aboard, got away, only to halt about two miles out of town on the Willcox Playa where the cow-boys ordered the passenger cars disconnected and left behind so as not to further discommode the paying customers. Meanwhile, aboard the express car, Wells, Fargo & Co. Messenger Mitchell was contemplating his ill-luck as it had only been three months since he was held up near Maricopa. As the passenger cars were unhitched, he jumped with the local money and ran back toward Willcox, perhaps hoping to meet Sheriff Fly along the way. He train proceeded further into the playa and stopped again. The brakeman was sent back along the track "to the train two miles away with the reassuring intelligence that the passengers and conductor need not feel apprehensive of bodily harm if they did not interfere with the proceedings in front."[9]

The train is said to have stopped by a small campfire where additional men, well-known to those who had boarded the train, were in waiting. Initial stories gave the names and descriptions of five men as Wells, Fargo & Co. offered $300 for the arrest and conviction of each and the Southern Pacific Railroad put up $200 per head:

> "Joe George -- about five feet eight or nine inches high, very slim, very dark and swarthy complexion, forefinger off right hand, 30 to 35 years old, weight 140 pounds.
> "Jim Yates -- slim, dark complexion, about five feet nine inches high, 28 or 30 years of age, has very small sandy mustache, weight 145 to 150 pounds.
> "Grant Wheeler - about five feet seven inches high, dark complexion, dark eyes, weight 145 pounds, 30 or 35 years of age.
> "Mart Taylor -- small man with lame leg.
> "John Woods -- a tall man, light complexion, about six feet, weight about 180 pounds."[10]

In subsequent accounts, all but the names of Joe George and Grant Wheeler disappear.
Out on the playa, the two outlaws escorted Engineer Zeigler to the express car and directed to demand that the messenger open the door. As the Wells, Fargo & Co. employee had already departed, no answer came from within. On opening the car, they were surprised to find it vacant. Undaunted, the cow-boys proceeded to crack the "through safe" which the messenger would not have had access in any event and which contained the greatest prize in ill-gotten wealth, about $40,000. In the car, they found twenty sacks of Mexican money, "dobie" dollars, then valued by the ton, although having a face value of $20,000.[11] These were used as tamping to blow the safe, their heavy weight directing the explosion of the dynamite they'd brought down toward the safe. As the San Francisco *Call* noted:

> "Among the coin was 18,000 "dobie" dollars. As Mexican money has little value in less than ton lots, and as the robbers had no drays with them they had no use for the stuff and so they made a heap of it, put a stick of dynamite under it and touched it off. Only 700 of the 18,000 dollars have been found. They went through telegraph poles, cars and, in fact, flew everywhere."[12]

What was left of the express car gave the appearance that it had been the target of a giant shotgun. The Mexican inhabitants of Willcox came out the next morning to gather their sudden bounty collecting thousands of pesos scattered, stuck in telegraph poles and fragments of the car. They received aid and food at "isolated ranches" were perhaps the stockmen and their families feared

retribution if they failed to assist. On the other hand, they appear to have been unduly cooperative in failing to provide information to the five posses in the field.

Union Pacific Express Car blown up by Butch Cassidy at Wilcox, Wyo.
Courtesy Wyoming Historical Society

> "The latest news received at the sheriff's office says that there were four men in the train robbery, and they are still together. There [sic] are given as Joe Scott, Jim Yates, Grant Wheeler, and John Woods.
>
> ---
>
> "Deputy Sheriff Graham left this morning with a posse to try and head off the train robbers, who held up the west bound train near Willcox last evening. They started south in the Sulphur Spring valley."[13]

Southern Pacific Railroad Detective William "Billy" Breckenridge joined the search. Some may recall him as Johnny Behan's wimpy deputy in the movie *Tombstone*. In reality he was a tough and long serving lawman. He knew the geography of the county well. The *Epitaph* said:

> "There is absolutely nothing new from the pursuit of the train robbers. None of the pursuers have returned and no one has shown up who has seen any of them. A telegram from Breckenridge this morning from Willcox indicates that he has not been out with the posse which left there the day after the robbery.
>
> "Several others are now believed to be implicated in the robbery. It is suspected that the outlaws went to Mulberry, just over the mountain, where they procured a fresh relay of horses in waiting for them, and kept on into Mexico.
>
> "Others who know Wheeler well say he would not go to Mexico under any circumstances."[14]

And so, two extraordinary cow-boys disappeared into the dusty playa and mountains of Cochise County passing up the opportunity to escape into Mexico and history having conducted an

apparently successful train robbery. How much they made off with remained a mystery. Wells, Fargo & Co., and the Southern Pacific Railroad remained mute though it was reliably whispered by some that "After using six sticks of dynamite the safe was finally blown open, the robbers securing about $2000."[15] On February 26, 1895, about a month after destroying an express car, Grant Wheeler and Joe George chose instead to seek even more glory at Stein's Pass.

Billy Breckenridge
Courtesy Cochise County Historical Society

Stein's, pronounced Steen's, was near the New Mexico-Arizona line. It was named for Major Enoch Steen who, in 1856, led the 1st Dragoons to Tucson taking possession of the Gadsden Purchase. By 1895, the correct spelling of his name forgotten, the Southern Pacific Railroad established first a quarry and then a whistle stop providing wood and water and servicing a few local mines. Stein's Pass, where I-10 runs today, although easy of passage, was not much used by wagon trains as it was dry. The railroad had to bring in tanker cars of water to serve the tiny town.

Steins, New Mexico
Courtesy New Mexico Historical Society

On Monday evening, February 25, 1895, Grant Wheeler and Joe George, guns drawn, mounted the engine of the westbound Southern Pacific Express No. 20. They directed engineer Jacky Burke (or Bruce[16]to cut loose the cars. All was done with "alacrity and strictly according to instructions."[17] Proceeding westward several miles into Arizona, the cow-boys again issued orders, this time for the train to halt. Engineer Burke was handed a gunny sack and told to starting filling it with stones and gravel. Burke followed orders supposing he "had fallen in with a band of escaped lunatics instead of train robbers." Curious he asked, "What's that for?" The robber explained that the gravel was to be placed on top of the safe to offer greater resistance to the dynamite, tamping the ensuing explosion as effectively as in the express car on the Willcox Playa, cracking the safe like a walnut to expose the riches inside. To this Burke replied, "But we don't carry a safe in the cab." Only then did the bandit realize that the express car had been left behind, per his orders, at Stein's.[18]

At least one newspaper, the *Arizona Silver Belt* of Globe, thought there was more to it running a story labeled "Heroic Brakeman:"

> "[T]he intentions of the robbers to rob the express was frustrated by the brakeman who purposely uncoupled the mail car and engine, leaving the express car behind at the station. When the engine and mail car had been run about three miles up the track, the "mistake" was discovered, and the robbers foiled, lit out, intent only upon escape."[19]

What followed was wondrous and terrible to behold. It involved terms neither gynecological nor scatological adhering entirely to the Biblical and theological. Engineer Burke that the leader of the gang indulged in the worst profanity that had been reported between ancient and modern times. Jacky considered himself an expert on profanity as an engineer of the Southern Pacific who had witnessed Captain Tevis losing at cards on a fine hand, been present when Barnes and Dunbar were sentenced to hang and having served a term in the Arizona legislature. "Profanity on those occasions would pass for religious worship" by comparison.[20] He damned the Southern Pacific starting with the president and chairman of the board working his way down through the conductors, engineers, and fireman to the lowliest brakeman and Pullman porter. He then commenced on the track and cross-ties working his way across the mainline and out onto the spurs and sidings. The rolling stock was not overlooked. He cursed the section hands, the bridges and every foot of track from San Francisco to New Orleans. "The longer he swore the more eloquent and blasphemous he became."[21] Even the *Associated Press* and the *Arizona Republican* were impressed:

> "The bandits indulged in considerable strong language and then mounting horses that were fastened to a tree near by they rode to the south. The engine and car returned to the rest of the train. The passengers as is always the case were scared nearly to death; many crawled under the seats and remained there till assured that the danger was over."[22]

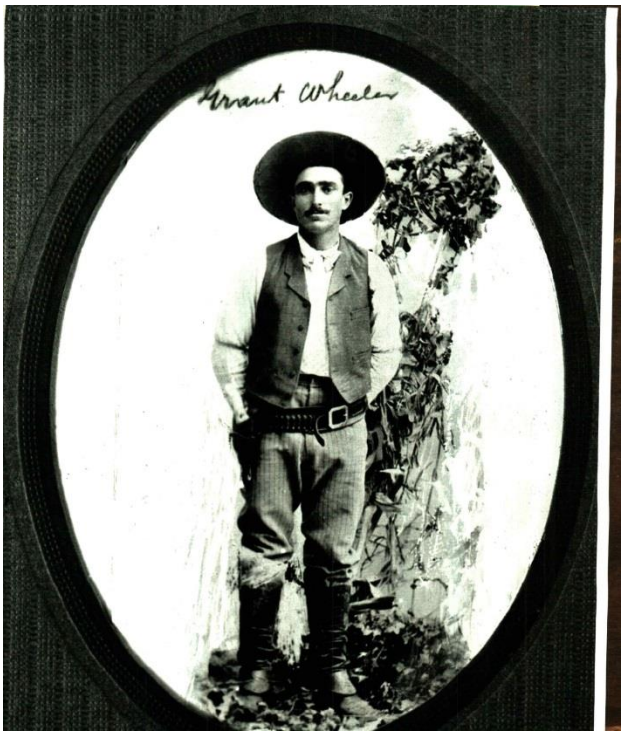


Photo of Grant Wheeler Billy Breckenridge showed around
Courtesy Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society

It was now that the real problems began for Joe George and Grant Wheeler. Detective Billy Breckenridge was in pursuit and he was persistent. Abandoning Wells, Fargo & Co. detective John Thacker, Billy stayed on the trail telling the newspapers.

> "I left him [Thacker] and returned to Tucson, where I had plenty to do. He stayed in the Tombstone vicinity for about a month and accomplished nothing, and then went back to San Francisco. One of his plans was to get one of the outlaw's friends to bring them a bottle of drugged whiskey, and, after they fell asleep, to hog-tie them and bring them to him in Tombstone. The friend told the bandits about it and they laughed about his trying to catch birds by putting salt on their tails."[23]

Breckenridge thought that many of the folks in Cochise County were in sympathy with the outlaws. Both Wells, Fargo & Co. and the Southern Pacific were unpopular with the people who though their freight and express charges excessive. During a drought earlier in the decade, Southern Pacific had jacked up their rates making it difficult to ship and sell cattle. Wheeler and George remained in hiding.

And then, Billy got a clue that they had gone north to Durango, CO. He picked up the trail at Durango and followed to the vicinity of nearby Farmington, NM, and the ranch of a man named Short. There Wheeler was identified from a photograph as "the man the children call the bad man." Pursuit continued to Shiprock and then on north to Cortez, CO, where, even showing the photograph around, they lost all track of Grant. It was suggested that the outlaw may have headed for the Blue Mountains of Utah where many men such as he were known to hide. Billy headed back to Durango to pick up his friend the sheriff who knew those mountains. On the way, at

Mancos, a farmer's wife recognized the man in the photo. Breckenridge planned to grab Grant Wheeler when he came to town to a saloon he was known to frequent. Billy wrote:

> "We saw him bring up his two horses, put a light pack on one and saddle the other. But instead of coming to town, he went into a gulch that ran down toward an irrigating ditch close to town. It looked as if he were alarmed and was getting away, so we saddled up and went after him. As we neared the gulch, he came up the bank. One of the officers told him to throw up his hands. Wheeler replied that he had not done anything and would not do it, and started to step back into the gulch. When one of the officers fired at him, he disappeared and none of us were anxious to go to the rim of the gulch to see what had happened to him."[24]

On Sunday night, April 28, 1895, a telegram arrived in Tucson from Southern Pacific Detective Breckenridge, stating that Grant Wheeler, the train robber, had been tracked to his camp near Mancos, CO, about thirty miles north of the New Mexico line. There, finding escape impossible, Grant took his own life.[25]

The whereabouts of Wheeler's companion, Joe George, remained unknown. Some said he'd gone to Pueblo, CO, where he was known and had friends.[26] Billy Breckenridge said he knew George's location. "Detective Breckenridge of the S.P. is in Tucson. He is said to have a good idea of the whereabouts of George, the companion of Wheeler, the dead train robber."[27] A more dubious tale claimed he was leading a gang:

> "It is now positively known that the leader of the Nogales bandits who were near the New Mexico line is Joe George, who planned and executed the robbery of the Southern Pacific passenger train at Stein's Pass, in the territory, about eighteen months ago, and whose companion, Wheelock, was killed by Colorado authorities shortly afterward, George escaping during the fight. The robbers say they are going to live on the ranches until they make a raise. There are nine of them They will probably rob a train or a bank."[28]

There is no further record of this gang and Joe George was never identified in another holdup. He disappeared from history. Perhaps he settled down near Pueblo changing his name to escape notice. Perhaps he died somewhere on the trail to Durango or disappeared into Mexico where the $2,000, never recovered, would have gone a long way. He may even have returned to Cochise County where the ranchers are still helping him to hide from the dreaded SP and the law.

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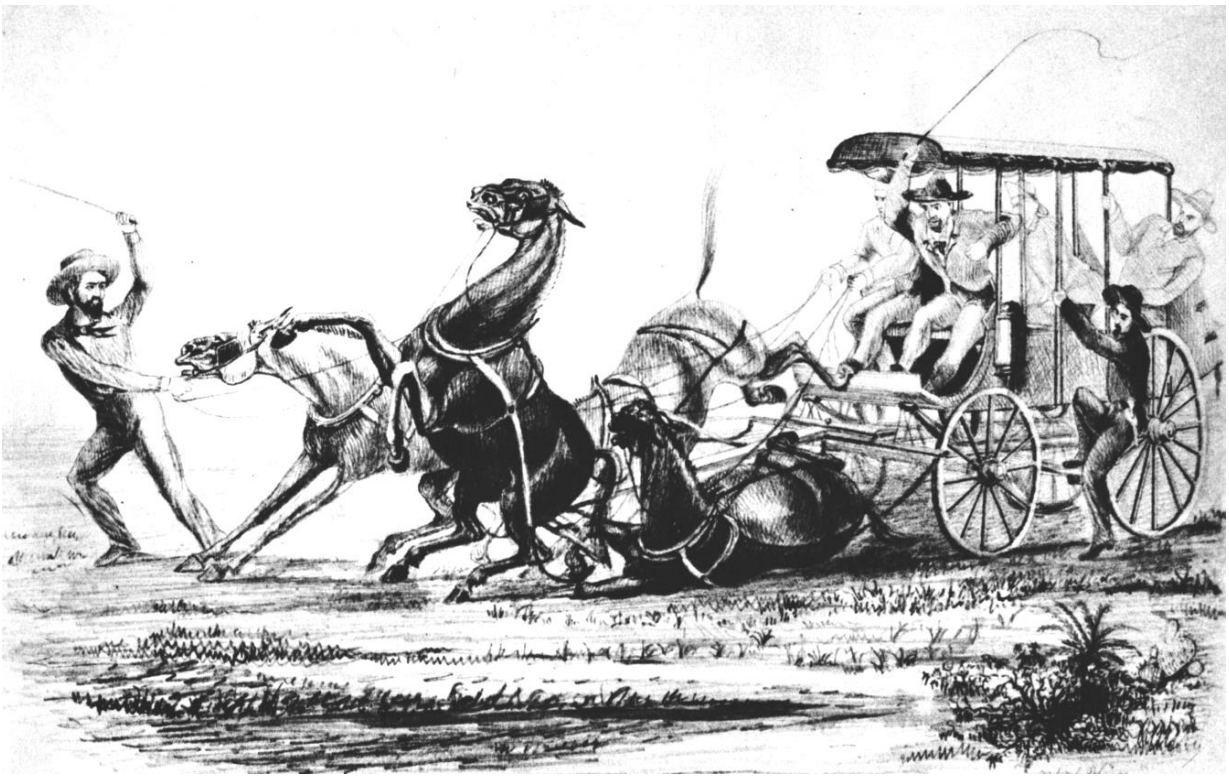
[1] "Beardless Boy Bandits." *Arizona Republic*, 12 May 1910.
[2] "Virgil W. Earp." *San Francisco Examiner*, 27 May 1882.
[3] "Train Robbery." *Tombstone Epitaph*, 3 February 1895.
[4] "Another Arizona Train Robbery." Arizona Republic, 1 February 1895.
[5] "Left Silvery Trails." *Morning Call*, 1 February 1895.
[6] "Sheriff Fly." *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, 9 February 1895.
[7] Personal communication Kathy Klump, Chiricahua Regional Museum and Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society.
[8] "The Inactivity of Sheriff Fly," *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, 16 February 1895.

[9]"Another Arizona Train Robbery." Arizona Republic, 1 February 1895.
[10] *Tombstone Epitaph*, 3 February 1895.
[11] Wells, Fargo & Co. were not always completely forthcoming concerning their losses. "Left Silvery Trails." *Morning Call*, 1 February 1895.
[12] "Left Silvery Trails." *Morning Call*, 1 February 1895.
[13] "Sheriff Fly." *Tombstone Epitaph*, 3 February 1895.
[14] *Tombstone Epitaph*, 3 February 1895.
[15] "Dies to Escape Arrest." *San Francisco Call*, 29 April 1895.
[16] The Tucson papers thought his name was Bruce. "He Swore Much." *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, 16 March 1895.
[17] "Worse Than Robbery." *Arizona Republican*, 27 February 1895.
[18] "Worse Than Robbery." *Arizona Republican*, 27 February 1895.
[19] "Heroic Brakeman." Arizona Silver Belt, 2 March 1895.
[20] "He swore much." *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, 16 March 1895.
[21] Ibid.
[22] "Green as Grass." *Arizona Republican*, 26 February 1895.
[23] Breakenridge, William ;M. *Helldorado: Bringing the Law to the Mesquite*, ed. Richard Maxwell Brown. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1982, p 400.
[24] Ibid, p 401-404.
[25] "A Dead Train Robber." *Arizona Weekly Star*, 2 May 1895.
[26] "Dies to Escape Arrest." *San Francisco Call*, 29 April 1895.
[27] *Tombstone Epitaph*, 12 May 1895.
[28] *Arizona Republic*, 5 September 1896.

Surviving a Ride on a Butterfield Stagecoach

by
Gerald T. Ahnert

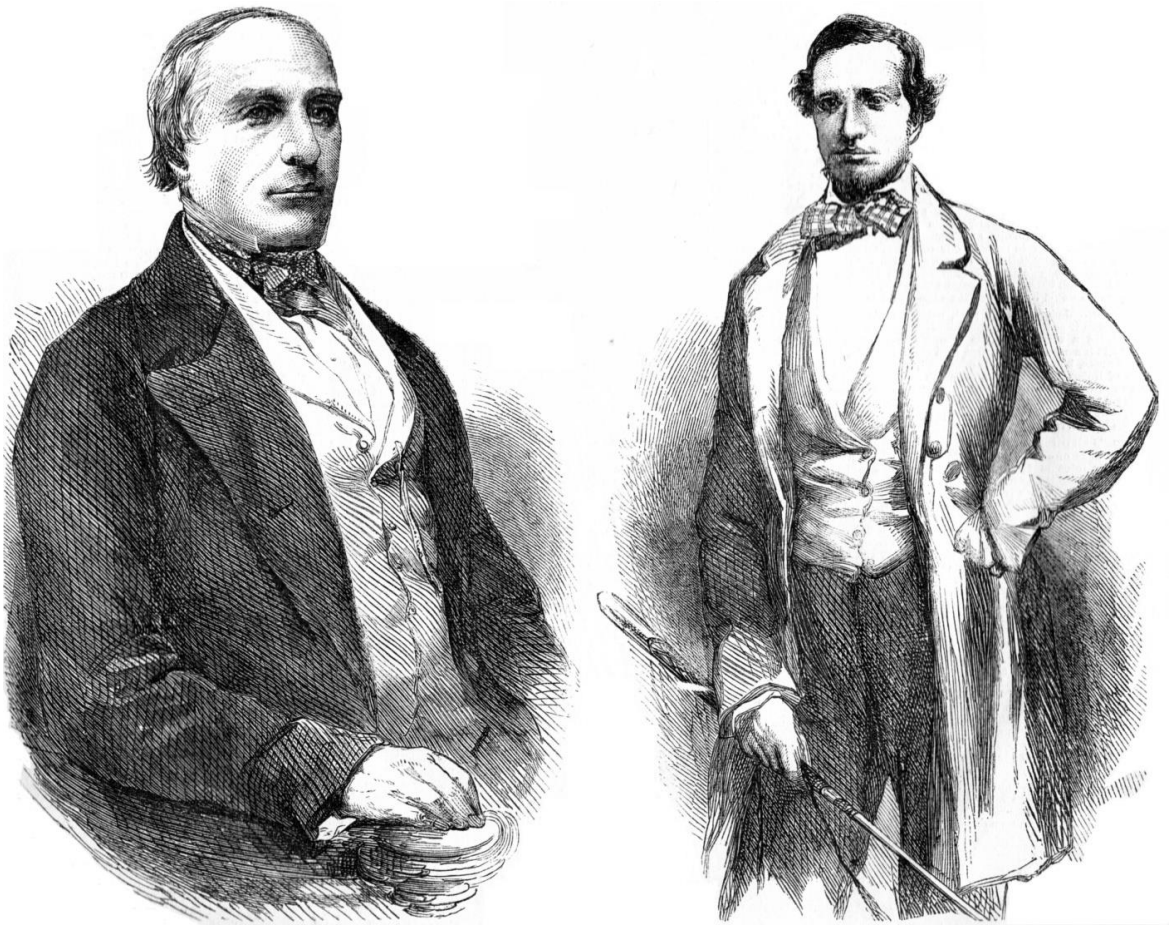
A Butterfield Overland Mail Company stagecoach stopping at a desert station on the Southern Trail was like making a NASCAR pit stop. Nearing a station, the stage conductor would announce their impending arrival with a blow on his horn. This would give the station hostler (a station employee that takes care of the livestock) time to get a fresh team of wild mules ready. Stage axles might be greased or a damaged wheel replaced. The stage normally stopped at a station twenty minutes for the passengers to partake in a meal or to take care of other "business." If a passenger did a little sightseeing, and missed the allotted time to return to the stage, the driver would announce to the concerned passengers upon leaving the tardy passenger behind, that "There'll be another stage through here in two days."



A Butterfield stage (celerity) wagon on the trail in Arizona. William Hayes Hilton was a passenger in early October 1858 and captured this humorous scene of the rebellious wild mules. It was common to use wild mules to pull the stage wagons on the rougher sections of the trail. Some wild horses were also used. Courtesy Huntington Library

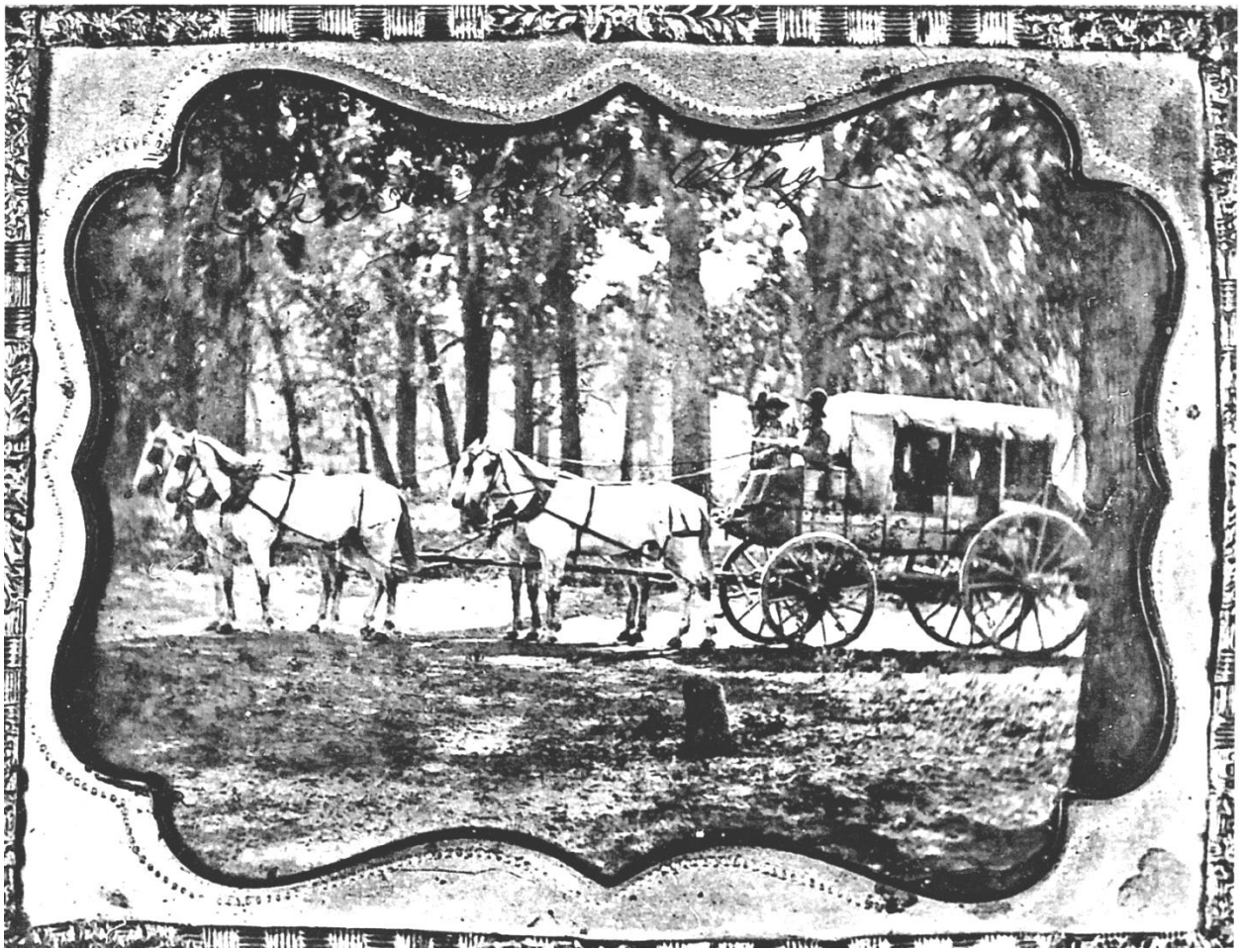
The 2,860-mile-long bifurcated Overland Mail Company line started at St. Louis, Missouri, and Memphis, Tennessee, and met at Fort Smith, Arkansas. The first 160 miles were by train from St. Louis to Tipton, Missouri, where passengers and mail were transferred to a stagecoach. Along the section to Fort Smith, the stage stops were at trading posts, hotels, and other well-constructed

buildings. After Fort Smith, the settlements became farther apart and more primitive through Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma), Texas, New Mexico, Arizona (at that time Arizona was a county of New Mexico), Mexico, and California before ending at San Francisco. Although some stations were made of stone and fortified, many newly constructed stations were mere adobe hovels. The first stagecoach to leave either the eastern or western terminus left San Francisco with postal inspector Goddard Bailey on board. His report to Postmaster General Aaron Brown stated that they left San Francisco on September 14, 1858, at ten minutes after midnight. Although he reported that there were 139 stations, the number expanded to 180 before the line ceased its service in March 1861 because of the impending Civil War.



John Butterfield Sr.(left), president of the Overland Mail Company, and his son John Jr. (right) about the time they boarded the first Overland Mail Company stagecoach leaving Tipton, Missouri on September 15, 1858. John Jr. was the driver. John Sr. rode as far as Fort Smith, Arkansas, and returned to Tipton on an eastbound stage, then on to his hometown of Utica, NY. From a drawing in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, November 27, 1858.

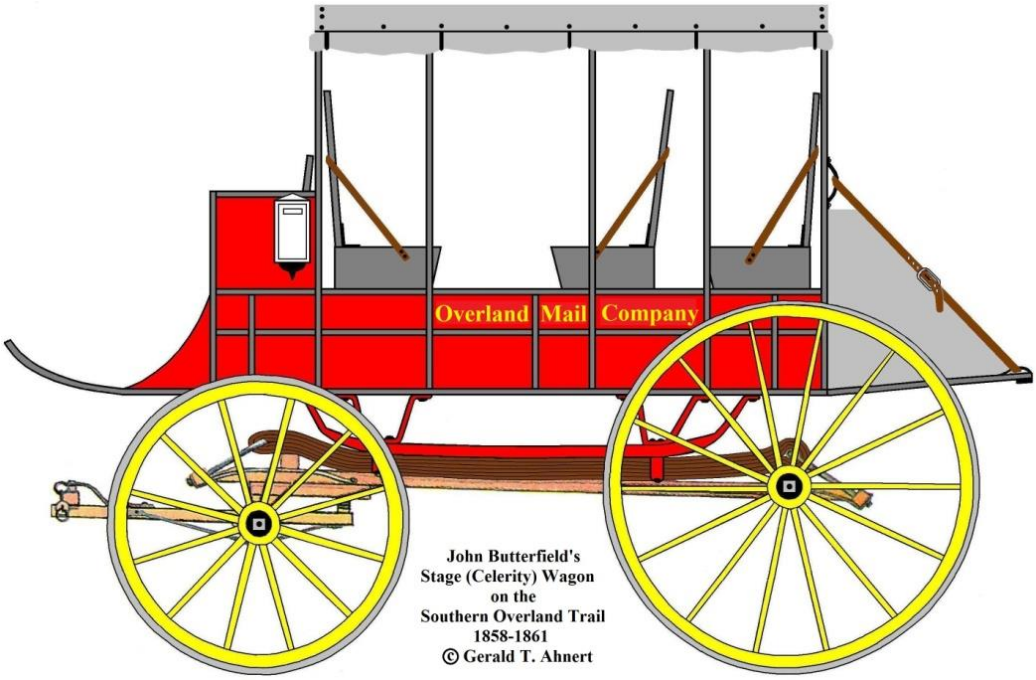
Through passengers had to endure a twenty-five-day ride on a Butterfield Overland Mail Company stage. It was like being condemned to a level of Hell, as passengers had to sleep on the stagecoaches and stage wagons that traveled twenty-four hours a day with only twenty-minute stops at the stage stations.



This is the only known photo of Butterfield's stage wagon. Taken early 1861, it is at the Texas-New Mexico border and near Cottonwood Stage Station. The driver was David McLaughlin. No Butterfield stagecoach or stage wagon is known to have survived. It is a copyrighted personal photo and used with the permission of the Nita Stewart Haley Memorial Library, Midland, Texas.

There were 100 hundred distributed to stage stations along the trail. Stage wagons were exchanged about every 160 miles. It was easier for the mules to pull this lighter stage wagon through the desert sand and up the steep sides of mesas. They were described in John Butterfield's hometown (Utica, NY) newspaper, the *Sunday Journal*, April 19, 1896, in an article titled "The Overland Mail Route."

> "From Memphis and St. Louis [actually Tipton] regular stage coaches were used, similar to those used at the time in the Atlantic States, but from Fort Smith [Arkansas] onwards wagons were of the description known as celerity wagons, being similar in build to the common Troy coach, except that instead of the heavy wooden top it had a light canvas covering. Each wagon had three seats, arranged so that the backs let down and formed one bed, capable of accommodating from four to ten persons. The company had one hundred of these coaches."



John Butterfield designed this version of a stage (celerity) wagon. As none are known to have survived, the author has drawn this composite of what one would look like by using the drawings made by William Hayes Hilton in 1858 and the photo of an actual stage at the New Mexico-Texas border. The image will appear on interpretive markers that the National Forest Service and the Arizona State History Curator have requested the author to design. The markers will be at Arizona's Dragoon Springs Stage Station and Picacho Pass Stage Station.

Butterfield's stage wagon varied in its design significantly from other stage wagons. The driver's and conductor's seat were not elevated, as in other standard designs, but was at the same level as the passengers' seats. The wheels were a smaller diameter than stagecoaches to lower the center of gravity to lessen the possibility of upsetting. The most significant feature was that the backs of the three seats could be folded down to make a bed. The light canvas top was held up by light staves so it was not capable of supporting the usual iron rail on the roof for additional baggage that is seen on other stage wagons.

During Butterfield's service on the Southern Trail, from September 1858 to March 1861, the worst section was considered to be through Arizona (at that time Arizona was a county of New Mexico). In Arizona there were twenty-six stage stations and the only settlements along the trail were Tucson, Gila City, and Arizona City.

It could be said that this was a "New York State trail" in many ways. John Butterfield was from Utica, New York, and most of the stage drivers were from towns in Upstate New York not far from John's home. Waterman L. Ormsby in one of his September 1858 reports to the *New York Herald* wrote: "The employees of the company, I found, without exception, civil, and attentive. They are most of them from the East, and many, especially of the drivers, from New York state. I found the drivers on the whole line, with but few exceptions, experienced men. Several are a little reckless and too anxious to make fast time, but as a general thing they are very courteous." The New York State influence on the line is also shown by the names given to five of the twenty-six Butterfield stage stations in Arizona. John Butterfield selected Marquis L. Kenyon of Rome, New

York, accompanied by John Sr.'s son John Jr., to lay out the line and the sites of the stage stations. Kenyon gave his name to one of the stations in western Arizona. About forty miles to the west, he named another Stanwix Ranch Stage Station after his Stanwix Hall Hotel in his hometown of Rome, New York. Three others in Arizona were named Seneca, Oneida, and Mohawk. These are common town and county names in Upstate New York. Their origin is from names of tribes included in the Iroquois Confederacy.

The passengers' comfort was about to take a turn for the worse. By the time a stage wagon from the east had entered Arizona, it had traveled about 1,600 miles, and the sleep-deprived passengers were often hallucinating. Raphael Pumpelly was a passenger in October 1860 and the following is from his *My Reminiscences*:

> "At El Paso we had hoped to find a larger stage. Being disappointed in this, I took a place outside, wedged between the driver and conductor. The impossibility of sleeping had made me half-delirious, and we had gone but a few miles before I nearly unseated the driver by starting suddenly out of a dream.
>
> I was told that the safety of all the passengers demanded that I should keep awake; and as the only means of affecting this, my neighbors beat a constant tattoo with their elbows upon my ribs. During the journey from the Rio Grande to Tucson my delirium increased and the only thing I have ever remembered of that part of the route was the sight of a large number of Indian camp-fires at Apache Pass. My first recollection after this is of being awakened by the report of a pistol, and of starting up to find myself in a room, where a number of people were gambling. I had reached Tucson, and had thrown myself on the floor of the first room I could enter. A sound sleep of twelve hours had fully restored me, in both mind and body."

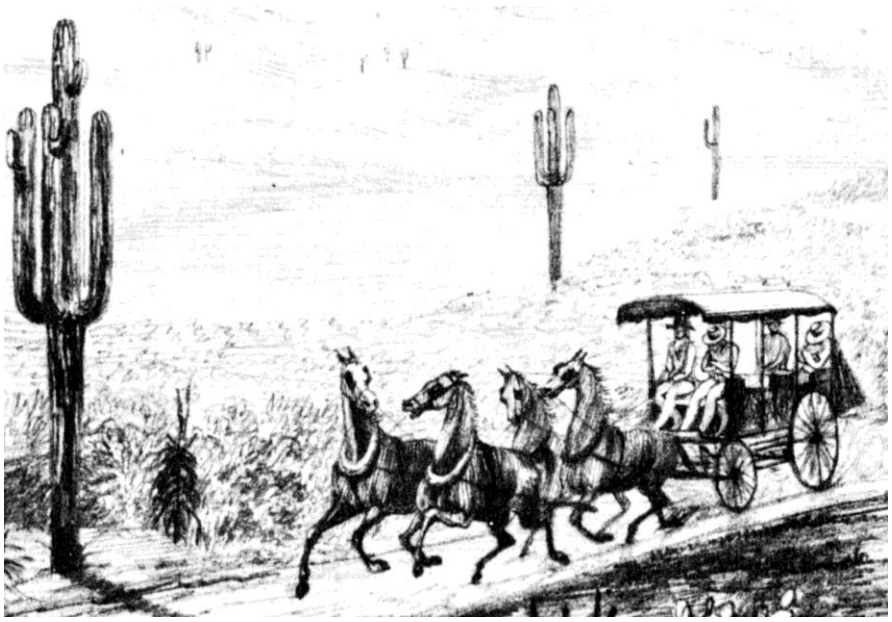
After leaving Fort Chadbourne, Texas, Waterman L. Ormsby, a correspondent for the *New York Herald* in September 1858, wrote about his life-threatening situation riding on a stage wagon:

> "Some little delay was experienced, here before the wild mules could be caught and harnessed, by which several hours of our advance time was lost.
>
> …The mules reared, pitched, twisted, whirled, wheeled, ran, stood still, and cut up all sorts of capers. The wagon performed so many evolutions that I, in fear of my life, abandoned it and took to my heels, fully confident that I could make more progress in a straight line, with much less risk of breaking my neck.
>
> Mr. Lee, sutler at the fort, who, with others, had come out on horseback to see us start, kindly offered to take me up behind him—to which, though not much of an equestrian, I acceded with the view of having a little better sight of the sport at a safe distance. In this I was eminently gratified, for the gyrations continued to considerable length, winding up with tangling all the mules pretty well in the harness, the escape of one of the leaders into the woods, and the complete demolition of the top of the wagon; while those in charge of it lay around loose on the grass, and all were pretty well tired out and disgusted, except those who had nothing to do but look on.
>
> For my part, I thought it the most ludicrous scene I ever witnessed, though it seemed a great pity that time which was needed on other parts of the route should be thus wasted or lost here. Both of the leading mules having escaped and Mr.

> Mather having become completely anxious that everyone should go to the d—l, and understand that he did not care a d—n for anyone, I thought the progress of the mail, for that night at least, was stropped, but Nichols averred that the mail should go on if he went alone with the two wheel-mules; and sure enough, he started off getting the harness once more disentangled, and kept the road in fine style."

J. M. Farwell arrived at the San Pedro River Stage Station, Arizona, late in October 1858 and in his correspondence to the *Daily Alta California*, he wrote:

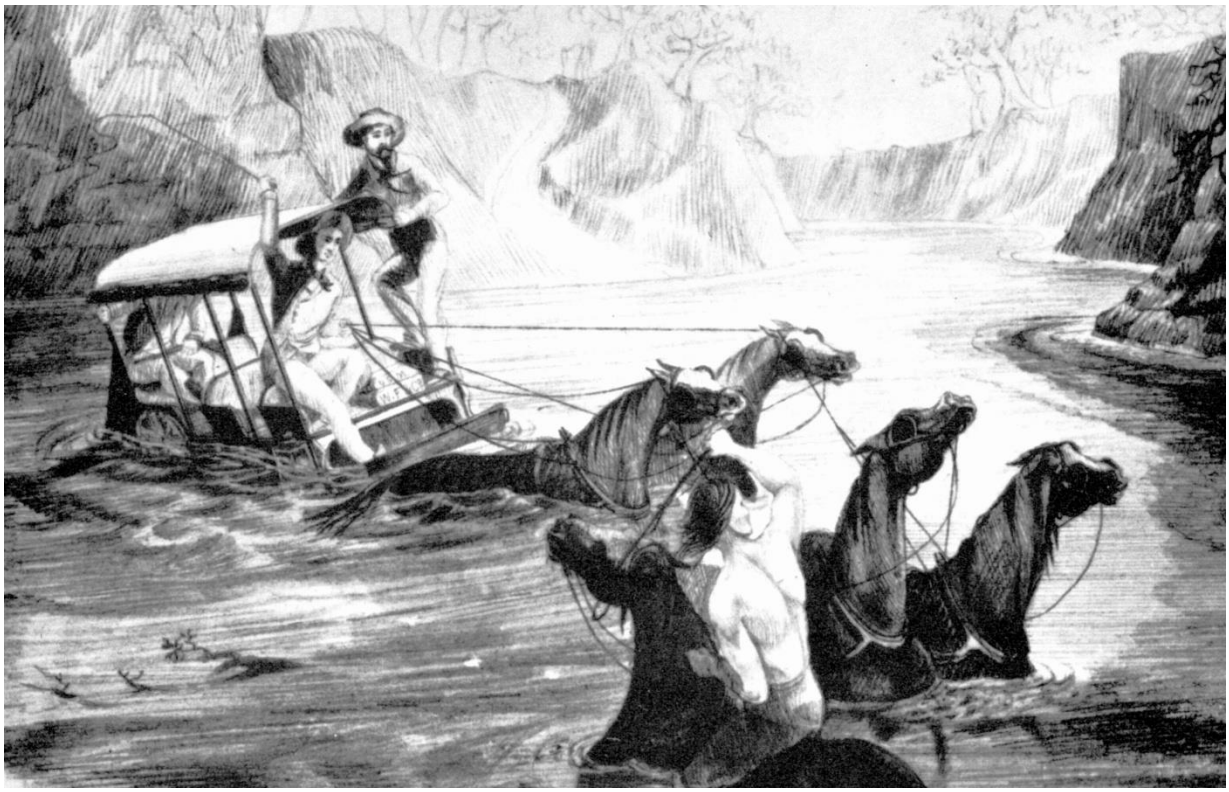
> "Some coffee was prepared for us, and we were soon ready to start again. This time, after we were all seated in the coach, the horses, which were said to have been always kind and gentle, refused to move. After a great deal of beating, coaxing and a trial of various methods suggested by almost every one present, we were all obliged to get out again, and after a great deal of trouble, the horses were started, but the passengers being out of the coach, the driver was obliged to stop again, and again, after they were in, the horses refused to go. After working with the might and main for some time, they were got off upon a run, and this time they were kept going. Hitherto, in starting from any station, a person was obliged to stand at the heads of the horses—they being with a few exceptions wild ones—until the driver was seated on his box, the reins gathered and everything in readiness, when he would give the signal, "turn 'em loose," or "let 'em go," and they would go upon a run. As we get further along, however, they are growing tame, and are more easily handled."



A Butterfield stage wagon in early October 1858 coming through Picacho Pass north of Tucson. The conductor and a passenger are trying to sleep as best they can. Because of the open style of the stage wagon the sleeping passengers would often awake to find their hats had blown away. Drawn by passenger William Hayes Hilton. Courtesy of Huntington Library

Those traveling with the great wagon trains out of Texas proclaimed that there were so many hats hidden amongst the cactus that were lost by passengers on the Butterfield stages that they could have their pick to replace their worn-out hats. Ormsby mentions this annoyance of losing their hats: "…we estimated that not less than fifteen hundred hats were lost yearly by travelers for the benefit of the population along the road." A colorful account of this is recorded by William A. Wallace in his correspondence to the *Daily Alta California,* July 1, 1860:

> "It was night when we left the Maricopas [Maricopa Wells Stage Station, Arizona], and we adjusted ourselves to sleep, and were not disturbed until two in the morning, on arriving at the Picacho mountains, when "H___ Roaring Jackson," as he was styled by common consent, discovered that he had lost his hat, and, thereupon, he began to utter a great multitude of newly-invented and strange ejaculations, with frequent mention of sacred names, but in forms not prescribed in the prayer-books. These ejaculations he kept up for half an hour, giving us an endless variety of them, and making it a point of honor never to use any one of them a second time."

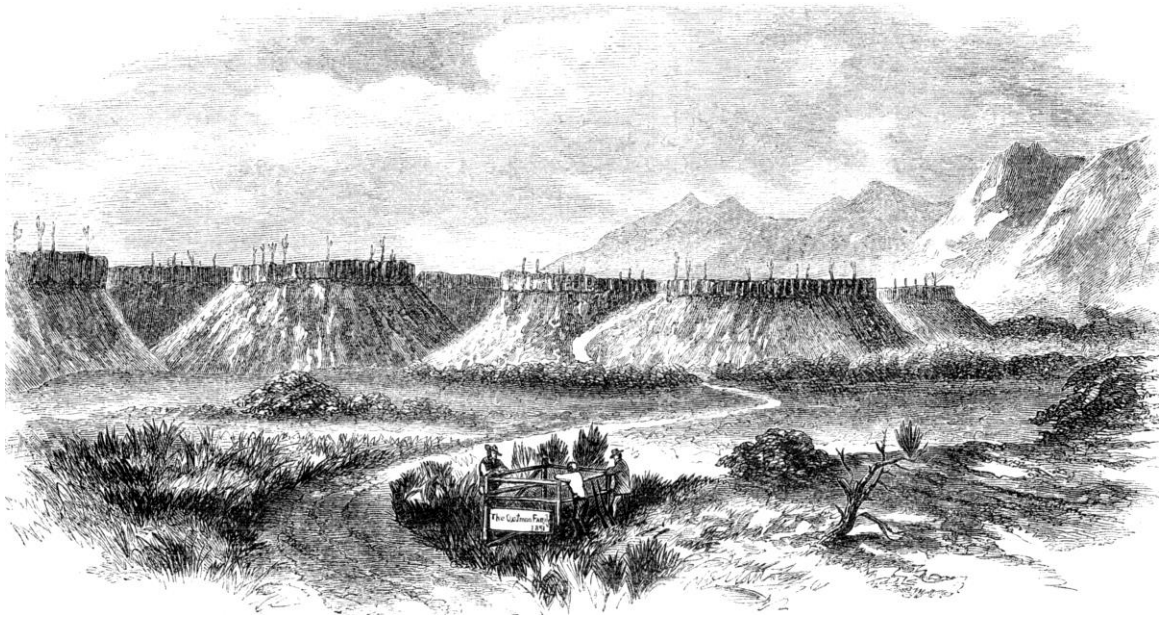


Crossing Boggy River in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). This drawing made by passenger William Hayes Hilton in October 1858. Courtesy Huntington Library.

Another danger for the passengers to endure was fording the many rivers. If the passengers got a little wet that was just part of the hardships they were expected to endure. But the most important responsibility was for the driver and conductor to deliver the mail undamaged.

Photo: G. Ahnert-2010

The bone-jarring condition of the rough trail did not make it easy for the passengers to sleep. This section across the volcanic surface of a mesa in western Arizona just before Stanwix Ranch Stage Station has changed little since its use by Butterfield's Overland Mail Company.



Arizona's Oatman Flat and the common grave of the Oatman family is shown in this 1864 drawing by J. Ross Browne. Butterfield's old trail can be seen ascending the mesa known as Sentinel Plain. Just to the right of the trail at the edge of the mesa was the site where members of the Oatman family were massacred by Indians on February 18, 1851. From Harper's New Monthly Magazine, November 1864, "A Tour through Arizona."

Although a Butterfield stage was attacked only once by Indians, and no one was killed, the most common fear of the passengers was of being attacked by Indians. The monotony of the endless desert landscape was broken when the stage neared the Oatman family grave site. In 1851 this pioneer family had broken away from the main wagon train and were camped at the edge of the distant mesa. They were attacked by Indians and all but two daughters and a son were massacred. Lorenzo was left for dead, but survived after being found by friendly Pima Indians. Mary Ann died while in captivity and Olive Oatman was rescued in 1856. The massacre was one third mile from the present burial site on the rim of the mesa. The bodies were first buried at the massacre site, but the volcanic surface of the plain provided very little overburden with which to cover the bodies and wolves dug them up and scattered the bones. They were taken down into the flat where an adequate grave could be provided for these unfortunate pioneers that met their fate, as many others had along the trail. The fear of Indian attack was rekindled in the minds of the Butterfield stage wagon passengers by the sight of this lonely desert grave.

Although there were perceived dangers by the passengers, many which did not materialize, the greatest danger was the stagecoach ride itself. The twenty-five-day trip with the only sleep obtained was while riding in the overcrowded stagecoach, the bone-jarring ride from the rough trail, the heat of the southwest desert, the lack of a bath, the losing of their hats, and the stage sometimes being upset by the wild mules, was the memory of their journey that would stay with them for the rest of their lives--if they survived!!!

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Hilton, William Hayes, early October 1858 drawings from *Sketches in the Southwest and Mexico, 1858-1877*, Dawson's Book Shop, Los Angeles, 1963, reproduced for this article with permission from Alan Jutzi, Huntington Library, Pasadena, California

Personal photo of a Butterfield stage wagon copyrighted by Nita Stewart Haley Memorial Library, Midland, Texas. Author's purchase of photo comes with permission to use.

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Sunday Journal, April 19, 1896, “The Overland Mail Route.”

Wallace, William A., *Daily Alta California*, July 1, 1860

Book Reviews

WARNING! Included here are some books I've wanted to submit bad reviews on. Even bad books can be fun to read and may teach lessons in how NOT to write and do history or Western novels.

Cash, Marie Romero, ***The Mariachi Murder: A Jemimah Hodge Mystery***. Seattle: Camel Press, 2016, pp. 310
I've always wanted to kill one, haven't you? Mariachi as rock star, well, why not? It's Santa Fe. It kept me reading all the way through to the end intriguing me with all the Santa Fe landmarks. The reader even learns the best places to eat and get drunk in Cerrillos and Madrid. But where's Waldo [Road]? If you love Santa Fe, you'll enjoy the tour of all the familiar places. There are plot twists galore and enough familial coincidence to satisfy an incestuous Arkansas clan. The murders are all in the family or among *primos*, as they say in the Land of Enchantment.

Doug Hocking

Oddly enough, the book above was dedicated to Robert Ray, the author's teacher and mentor. The next book I received for review was one of his.

Ray, Robert J., ***Murdock Rocks Sedona, A Matt Murdock Murder Mystery***, Seattle, WA: Camel Press, 2016, pp. 347, $16.95.
Warning! Due to severe geriatric lust, the reader should come equipped with Viagra and Geritol. This crime novel is extremely fast-paced sucking the reader into the world of billionaires, high finance, low politics and murder, 18 at a rough estimate. The author seldom finds time to stop and finish a sentence, but it works and the reader cares what happens to his characters in this Kafkaesque world. Murdock's method consists of asking 'what if' and letting his girlfriend, Helene, shoot the bad guys; there are at least five from different teams of serial killers. One, who has committed five murders for hire, survives and returns to working as a barista in Sedona. Read it so you can brag to your friends that you survived.

Doug Hocking

Left out of this review was the mention of three teams of two-person serial killers operating for fun and profit. The billionaire is staying in the tenth-floor penthouse of a Sedona hotel from which height he can see Phoenix. Obviously, he's never been to Sedona. As I recall, the total number of murders eventually exceeded 40. In the climax, Murdock rappels down from the tenth floor on a line made of torn bedsheets shooting bad guys on each floor as he passes by. Wow!

McDevitt, Kevin, with Ed Sitzberger. ***History of the St. James Hotel, Cimarron, New Mexico***. Cimarron: Cimarron Press, 2019, pp. 154, $19.95.
This is a fun to read book about a famous (infamous), historic, Old West hotel where you can stay that claims 26 deaths within its walls and numerous attendant ghosts. The book features many historic photographs where everyone from Wyatt Earp to Jesse James and Buffalo Bill Cody is supposed to have stayed. I'm glad the author had the courage to publish as the book is open to

criticism, as well as praise, from folks like me. The founder of the hotel, Henry Lambert, may have cooked once or twice for President Lincoln, but the story probably comes down to family legend. Kit Carson died in May 1868, at Fort Lyon, Colorado, on the Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail. Henry came west in the late summer of 1868, so it's unlikely that the two met or that Kit recommended Henry to Lucien Maxwell. The author needs to know his place and period. In 19th century New Mexico, monte refers to a form of faro played with a Spanish deck, not three-card-monte, an entirely different game. The author notes of Henry's grave that "a large piece of the Old West was buried with him." Must have been crowded. Watch the hyperbole. Nonetheless, it's still a fun read.

Doug Hocking

Hanson, James A. ***When Skins were Money: A History of the Fur Trade***. Chadron, NE: Museum of the Fur Trade, pp 216, $29.95.
If you have any interest at all in Mountain Men and the Fur Trade, this book is a MUST read. The Mountain Man Era is almost entirely covered in one chapter. The trade was much older dating back to the 16th century contact between northern Europeans and Native Americans. Hanson makes the case that the quest for furs drove settlement and the wars in North America up to about 1840. Furs and hides were that important. Before the age of synthetic materials, men relied on the products of nature for his clothing and artifacts. Drive belts of buffalo hide powered the Industrial Revolution. As the Indians stripped the land of beaver, used to make felt for clothing, the trade pushed further and further west.

Doug Hocking

Volk, Lowell F. ***Trouble in the Mancos Valley.*** Tucson: Wheatmark, 2020, pp. 208, $13.95.
Lowell Volk is a great author and this is eighth foray into the world of historical fiction centering around the Civil War and Durango/Cortez, Colorado. This book is full of action suspense and mystery. What I really liked was the story showing both the point of view of the good guys and the bad guys. He describes Mesa Verde very well and pays attention to detail in all things. This book is nice and clean, good for any age. It has a very happy ending. His Civil War series and Lucas Yates and the Roses are some of the best Western Historical Fiction I have ever read. See his article in this edition of the *Border Vidette*.

Debbie Hocking

Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly. Published by the Museum of the Fur Trade, Chadron, NE. The journal is primarily devoted to archaeology of the fur trade – the whole fur trade from the 15th Century thru the 19th. It's only a few pages but I read it cover to cover. It has stories about people and places and about tools and trade goods. I highly recommend it.

Doug Hocking

Childs, Craig. ***House of Rain: Tracking a Vanished Civilization Across the Southwest***
Craig Childs is an Arizona native now living in western Colorado. Winner of the 2009 Rowell Art of Adventure Award, he is part deep traveler, part writer who focuses on natural sciences, archaeology, and journeys into global wilderness. His adventures take you through places the Anasazi lived and the things he found with observing their lifestyle and discovering new theology

to complement what has been discovered about the tribe. You will experience his adventures as he describes them in detail and one feels like they are on a journey with him. This is a fascinating written travelogue and sheds some light for adding to the Anasazi Riddle.

Rosanna Baker

Trimble, Marshall, Arizona State Historian, ***Arizona Outlaws and Lawmen***
These are true stories that tell of Outlaws and Lawmen at the close of the 1800's in the Arizona Territory. These short stories get to the major points of the incidences and sheds some new light on old stories by more intensive research. Examples are about Buckey O'Neill, George Ruffner, Climax Jim and James Addison Reavis.

Rosanna Baker

Archaeology Southwest Magazine, Fall 2013, a quarterly publication of Archaeology of the Southwest.
The information states in detail about the exploration of how settlements transition into villages in the Colorado Plateau and how to preserve eroding sites for future generations. This magazine may be checked out from our Cochise County Corral library as well as other materials.

Rosanna Baker

We're looking for your reviews/book reports on western history and western historical fiction. Submit them in Word format to InkSlinger@CochiseCountyCorral.org.

Important Journals of Frontier History

Cochise County History Journal. This is the journal of the Cochise County Historical Society and its issues may be found in the Cochise County Corral's library. Lots of very good stories centered on Cochise County.

Desert Tracks. This is the semi-annual journal of the Southern Trails Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association and its articles are centered on the Southern Corridor and on travel between 1848 and the coming of the railroad.

Journal of Arizona History. This the quarterly journal of the Arizona Historical Society, which is currently striving for higher academic standards as it descends into post-modernism and departs the Frontier to focus on the 20th century.

Journal of the Wild West History Association. The Wild West History Association publishes this journal quarterly. The WWHA although trying to expand its interests is primarily focused on the efforts of Outlaws and Lawmen on the Western Frontier. There is some good, exciting reading here.

New Mexico Historical Review. This is the quarterly journal of the New Mexico Historical Society and the New Mexico University. Very scholarly with recent tendencies toward post modernism, but still the most authoritative journal of frontier history.

Overland Journal. This is the quarterly journal of the Oregon-California Trails Association and its articles follow pioneers and 49ers on the Overland Trails. The articles are very good and well researched.

The Rocky Mountain Fur Trade Journal. This is the annual publication of the Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, WY, and contains excellent, first quality articles about the Mountain Men and the fur trade.

The Smoke Signal. Semi-annual journal/publication of the Tucson Corral of the Westerners. Its editors strive for high standards as they focus on the Frontier History of the Arizona, especially southern Arizona. Many excellent articles on subjects you'll find nowhere else.

***Wagon Tracks*.** This is the journal of the Santa Fe Trail Association and always features excellent stories about the Santa Fe Trail, those who traveled it, and the goods they carried. Excellent publication.

Movies Filmed at Old Tucson Studio

Up to 1995

Arizona – 1940

The Bells of St. Mary's – 1945

Three Who Were Thoroughbreds – 1946

The Last Roundup – 1947

The Last Outpost – 1950

Winchester '73 – 1950

Strange Lady in Town 1954

Ten Wanted Men – 1954

The Violent Men – 1954

Apache Agent – 1955

Backlash – 1955

Walk the Proud Land – 1955

The Broken Star – 1956

Reprisal -1956

3:10 to Yuma – 1956/57

Gunfight at the OK Corral – 1957

Guns of Ft. Petticoat – 1957

Gunsight Ridge – 1957

The Lone Ranger and the Lost City of Gold – 1957

The Tale of Consequence – 1957

Badlanders – 1958

Buchanan Rides Alone – 1958

Last Train from Gun Hill – 1958

Rio Bravo – 1958

Cimarron – 1959

Wagon Train – TV – 1959

The Deadly Companions – 1961

A Thunder of Drums – 1961

Have Gun, Will Travel – TV – 1962

Lilies of the Field – 1962

McLintock! – 1962

Young Guns of Texas **–** 1962

Arizona Raiders **–** 1964

The Great Sioux Massacre **–** 1964

The Outrage – 1964

The Reward – 1964

And We Shall Die – 1965

El Dorado – 1965

Bonanza – TV – 1966, 71 and 72

Death Valley Days – TV – 1966-69

The High Chaparral – TV – 1966-71

Hombre – 1966

Last Challenge – 1966

The Long Ride Home – 1966

Playhouse 90 – TB 1966

Return of the Gunfighter – 1966

Dundee and the Culhane – TV – 1967

The Way West – 1967

The Girl in the Leather Shirt – 1968

Heaven with a Gun – 1968

Hell's Belles – 1968

Romeo and Juliet – 1968

Young Billy Young – 1968

Monte Walsh – 1969

The Mountain Men – 1969

Dirty Dingus Magee – 1970

Rio Lobo – 1970

Scandalous John – 1970

The Wild Rovers – 1970

The Animals -1971

Ballad of the Old West – TV – 1971

Bearcats – TV – 1971

Death of a Gunfighter – 1971

Dirty Little Billy – 1971

Joe Kidd – 1971

The Legend of Nigger Charley – 1971

Pocket Money – 1971

A Ton of Grass Goes to Pot – 1971

Gunsmoke – TV – 1972-74

Life and Time of Judge Roy Bean – 1972

Night of the Lepus – 1972

Soul of Nigger Charley – 1972

Boomtown Bank & Cattle Company – TV – 1973

A Knife for the Ladies – 1973

The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing – 1973

Trial of Billy Jack – 1973

Death Wish – 1974

Posse – 1974

HAWMPS – 1975-76

The Last Hard Men – 1975

The Outlaw Josey Wales – 1976

A Star is Born – 1976

Tales of the Hunundaga – 1976

Another Man, Another Woman – 1976

How the West Was Won – TV – 1977-79

Little House on the Prairie – 1977-83

What Goes On in the West – 1977

The Sacketts – 1978

The New Maverick – TV – 1978

Frisco Kid – 1979

The Gambler – TV movie – 1979

I, Tom Horn – 1979

Death Valley – 1980

The Wife of Wyatt Earp – TV Movie – 1981

Calamity Jane – TV movie – 1983

Cannon Ball Run, Part II – 1983

Natas, the Reflection – 1983

Flashpoint – 1984

Revenge of the Nerds – 1984

Jackals – 1985

Buckeye – 1986

Stagecoach – TV – 1986

The Three Amigos – 1986

Ghost Town – 1987

Nobody Like It Hot – 1987

Once Upon a Texas Train – TV movie – 1987

Poker Alice – TV movie – 1987

Walker – 1987

Gore Vidal's Billy the Kid – 1988

Laughing Dead – 1988

The Young Riders – TV – 1989-1991

El Diablo – TV Movie 1989

Young Guns II – 1990

Nemesis – 1992

Legends of the West – TV – 1992

Posse – 1992

Tombstone – 1993

Geronimo – TV Movie – 1993

Lightning Jack – 1993

The Quick and the Dead – 1993/94

Terminal Velocity – 1994

Timemaster – 1994

Hard Bounty – 1994

Under the Hula Moon – 1994

The West – 1994