

# DIGGING HISTORY

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## NEW MEXICO: PART I

COMING TO NEW MEXICO



THE FRED HARVEY WAY

Bullets, Barons, Boom and Bust

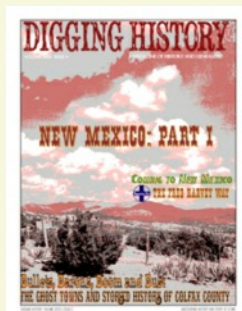
THE GHOST TOWNS AND STORIED HISTORY OF COLFAX COUNTY

# DIGGING HISTORY

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# but first, a word from the editor, researcher, writer, graphic designer and publisher . . .

Dear Reader,

I hope you've had a great summer, and like me, looking forward to the cooler weather of fall!

This issue features one of my favorite places on earth – New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment. The original concept was to feature several articles, but the first two stories turned out to be more extensive than originally planned – and with good reason. They are both fascinating parts of New Mexico history.

I have only traveled through Colfax County on my way to Colorado or heading south to Albuquerque, usually stopping in Raton, the county seat. As you'll see there's so much more to Colfax County – its storied history and more than a few ghost towns. One of these days I want to go and really explore!

There really isn't any way to write about New Mexico history without including one of the ways people made their way to the state. "Coming to New Mexico The Fred Harvey Way" is both a history of the iconic Harvey Houses and Harvey Girls, but also contains a generous dollop of New Mexico history made in the railroad towns across the state.

This is "Part I" of the New Mexico themed issue. More to come in the next issue, including some tips for finding New Mexico genealogical records. Stay tuned!

As always, I am grateful for my faithful subscribers. You are a blessing to me!

*Sharon Hall, Publisher and Editor*

# Bullets, Barons, Boom and Bust

## THE GHOST TOWNS AND STORIED HISTORY OF COLFAX COUNTY

by Sharon Hall

According to the [Ghost Towns of America web site](#) it's the New Mexico county with the second highest number of recognized ghost towns (53). To be fair most of the "ghost towns" of number one Roosevelt County (over 100) were small farming settlements which dotted the landscape, many never even having so much as a post office. Colfax County, on the other hand, owes its high number of once-inhabited towns to a familiar cycle of the late 1800s and early 1900s boom and bust era. Across New Mexico towns "boomed" when someone discovered a precious resource such as gold or silver, or in the case of Colfax County, an abundance of coal.



The history of Colfax County is a long and diverse one, boasting prehistoric "Folsom Man" among its first "pioneers". Were it not for the sharp eye of George McJunkin, cowboy and ex-slave, the world would never have known of his existence. On August 27, 1908, following a severe thunderstorm which flooded and devastated the small town of Folsom, McJunkin was riding across Crowfoot Ranch when he espied a pile of bones exposed by flood waters cutting a sharp gash into Wild Horse Arroyo.

The Folsom flood took the lives of several residents, including telephone operator Sarah Rooke who was credited with saving many lives, just not her own as the telephone building was swept away. Mrs. Rooke was, in those days, what we call today a "first responder":

*It is learned that about 11 o'clock on Thursday night a resident in the hills telephoned in to central that the waters were rising very rapidly and that the office would be floated out and probably carried away within half an hour. Instead of heeding the warning herself, the little woman set herself to the task of saving others. Number after number on the telephone exchange was called up by central with each time the brief warning.*

*"Pack up and leave at once; a flood is coming down the valley."*

*More than forty residents of Folsom, seen this morning, said that they had received the warning from the central office, and that it was due to that warning alone that they were able to get out alive, to most of them the warning coming in time to save some of their effects.*

*Apparently Mrs. Rooke had not finished the task of going through the list of subscribers when the waters reached her.*

*The body of the operator was found this morning twelve miles down the canyon. The headpiece worn by telephone operators was still fixed on her head and gripped to her ear. The telephone cord was broken.* <sup>1</sup>

While Sarah Rooke's headpiece remained stubbornly attached to her head, other victims were mortifyingly "stripped by the branches of trees and jagged rocks. The bodies of women victims were further disfigured by being literally scalped, their hair catching in the trees." Only four businesses remained standing as the town hall was turned into a morgue. <sup>2</sup>

While her actions were indeed heroic and noteworthy, you won't find Sarah Rooke enumerated in lists of prominent citizens who shaped the history of New Mexico. However, in 1999 the *Albuquerque Journal* listed George McJunkin among its "20 individuals, families who helped make N.M. what it is today". While inspecting fence lines following the storm, McJunkin noticed bones he first assumed to be bison. On closer examination he discovered the bones were quite large and laying amongst them was a distinct set of flint points.

Any other cowboy might not have made too much of a pile of giant bison bones and a few arrowheads, but George McJunkin instinctively knew better than most it was a significant historical discovery. Born in Texas in either 1851 or 1856 (dates vary) he arrived in New Mexico Territory, a recent freedman, in the late 1860s, hiring on as a foreman on the Thomas Owen Pitchfork Ranch. George taught himself to read and write, play both the guitar and fiddle and learned Spanish. More importantly in regards to his discovery George was also a self-educated amateur archaeologist and historian.



Except for taking a few flint points, which would later become known as a "Folsom point", an ancient stone tool, George left the site untouched. For years he attempted to generate archaeological interest in the site without much success. By the time archaeologists and a paleontologist named Harold Cook "discovered" the site, George had passed away (1922).

In July 1928 two Raton residents were taking credit for "one of the most interesting and important discoveries of evidence concerning the presence of prehistoric man in the New World, during glacial or Pleistocene times." <sup>3</sup> Today, however, the credit still rightly belongs to George McJunkin. In 2019 he was inducted into the Hall of Great Westerners at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City.

Thus, the history of Colfax County reaches back to the Ice Age as scientists believe "Folsom Man" had traveled from Asia to Alaska to America. The region was also home to the Anasazi and early Pueblo-Plains Indians, centuries before Francisco Vasquez de Coronado led a 1540 expedition into what is today New Mexico. The first Europeans, Spaniards, came to Colfax County in the early 1700s. A century later the Santa Fe Trail, pioneered by Missourian William Becknell, opened the door for trade with Mexico.

In turn, the Santa Fe Trail opened the door for industrious adventurers like Charles Beaubien, a French Canadian who came to New Mexico territory around 1823 to investigate the fur trade. Beaver trappers and entrepreneurs like Beaubien played significant roles in developing the area which would someday become Colfax County. Beaubien eventually settled in Taos, applied for Mexican citizenship (becoming "Carlos" Beaubien), married Maria Paula Lobato

in 1827 and opened a business in Taos. In order to enhance his business interests, which included the fur trade, Beaubien decided to purchase property near the Santa Fe Trail, situated on the eastern slope of the Sangre de Cristo mountain range, just outside Mexican control. In partnership with Don Guadalupe Miranda, he petitioned Governor Manuel Armijo in early January 1841 for a massive tract of land totaling 1.7 million acres.

After signing away approximately one-fourth of the grant, Miranda and Beaubien applied for and received an additional one million acre grant in what is today southern Colorado. Because Beaubien was already in possession of one grant, this new grant was passed to his 13-year old son, Narciso, and a Taos business associate after Armijo's approval in January 1844. The Mexican-American War changed everything for the region in 1846, after which the United States set up a new government in Santa Fe, naming Charles Bent as governor.



Lucien Maxwell

Carlos Beaubien scored a seat on the territory's Supreme Court, and fortuitously, The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ensured the legality of his prior land grants. In 1847 the Taos Revolt cost Beaubien his son Narciso, as he was killed along with business associate Stephen Lee and Governor Bent. His sons-in-law Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell and Jesus Abreu were assigned the task of developing the land grant, which would eventually become well-known as the Maxwell Land Grant following Beaubien's death in 1864. Super-imposed upon a modern-day map, the massive land grant covered much of what today is Colfax County. It made Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell the largest private landowner in the United

States.

Maxwell was also a friend and business partner of Taos resident Kit Carson. In his book, *Blood and Thunder*, Hampton Sides wrote:

*. . . Carson had partnered with another famous Taos trapper, named Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell. A native of Illinois, Maxwell was a stout, swarthy bull of a figure with a vaudevillian mustache. He had been on the first three Fremont expeditions and knew Carson well. By the happy twist of marriage, Maxwell now managed, and would soon own, a land grant in northeastern New Mexico even larger than the state of Delaware. This stupendous piece of real estate – more than 1.7 million acres – would make Maxwell the largest private landowner in the United States. It was a kingdom unto itself, completely undeveloped. From the rugged high country, promising creeks and rivers dropped into broad, lush valleys. Maps of the grant showed immense tracts of empty tableland between the Cimarron and Purgatoire rivers that were marked simply “fine grazing.” Maxwell ruled it all, and he had invited Carson and just a few other acquaintances to develop select parcels of his virgin domain.*

*Ambitious, dry-humored, lavishly generous to his guests, but prone to whipping the peons who worked for him, Maxwell “was king of that whole country,” a contemporary said. “He had perfect control . . . and had Indians and Mexicans just to do what he bid them to.” A solidier who knew him well remembered his “hospitality and firmness of will.” Ranching came naturally to him, for he was already a discerning stockman, ever interested in buying better breeds and improving bloodlines. A contemporary writer said that Maxwell's horses, his cattle, his poultry, even his dogs “were always of the same style – the best that can be had.”<sup>4</sup>*

Carson invested one thousand dollars in his friend's development, establishing a ranch in the Rayado Valley near the Santa Fe Trail which had brought Carson west in his youth. In 1848 Maxwell established Rayado, the first settlement of what would eventually become Colfax County. Today it is home to the Kit Carson Museum and part of the Philmont Scout Ranch.

Maxwell sold most of the land in 1870 for \$1,350,000 to a British company which later went bankrupt. In 1880 it was sold and incorporated as the Maxwell Land Grant and Railroad Company.

Prior to the original sale Maxwell had leased over one thousand acres to the United States Indian Agency which had been established in Cimarron in 1861. Indians who had been relocated from Taos "allowed the local Indians to be fed by the government, lessening the threat of raiding the nearby ranches." This would play a significant role in the establishment of Colfax County since "settlers had a financial incentive to grow beef, sheep, corn and wheat."<sup>5</sup>

By early 1867 the lure of riches in the form of gold ore brought scores of fortune seekers to the lush Moreno Valley situated near present day Red River and Eagle Nest, New Mexico. As the story goes, in the fall of 1866 a group of Indians traveled from Baldy Peak down to Fort Union, a distance of around 100 miles or so. With them they carried some "pretty rocks" ([New Mexico Nomad](#)), offered in exchange for winter supplies.

Retired Captain William Moore, by then proprietor of the fort's civilian-owned commissary, recognized the rocks contained copper ore. In exchange for their supplies he also wanted details as to the location of their discovery. The Indians agreed to take Moore and a few soldiers to the location situated on the upper slope of lofty Baldy Peak (12,441 feet) near the western edge of Maxwell's land. There they found enough copper ore to stake a claim.

According to a 1961 essay by F. Stanley of Dumas, Texas, gold fever had been planted in the minds of soldiers of the region during the Civil War by General James H. Carleton, making him at least partially responsible for the founding of Elizabethtown, the first boom (and later bust) town of Colfax County. Soldiers were restless, tired of fighting Indians, wishing to join the Union Army and fight Confederates. As it turned out, Confederates brought the fight to New Mexico (see the review of *Distant Bugles, Distant Drums* on page 55).

In order to keep his volunteers ready to defend New Mexico (and Colorado) territory, Carleton used the "magic word that worked for the Conquistadors, adventurers, Santa Fe Traders, Forty-Niners, Missourians, Coloradoans [which] should work for the Californians" - he talked gold "until they could see themselves riding in gold carriages, and eating with solid gold forks and spoons." According to Stanley, Fort Union soldiers prospected in nearby mountains during their free time, hoping after discharge from military service they could work their claims full-time. Thus, recently retired William Moore, along with William Koenig and John Buck, was motivated to take the trek up to Baldy Peak to explore the possibilities. <sup>6</sup>

While Moore's group explored the area for copper mining prospects, one of them decided to pan for "color" in Willow Creek while waiting for the evening meal. What he found startled him and his companions. According to Stanley, "that night they had gold for supper." Copper was immediately forgotten as they vowed to keep the secret, marking their claim by carving the words "DISCOVERY TREE" into a nearby Ponderosa pine tree. Winter was setting in and they needed to head back to Fort Union.

Human nature being what it is, the secret was soon out, even before winter's end. By the spring of 1867 hundreds of men were lined up at Fort Union, itching to head to Baldy Peak with little or no regard for one glaring fact – Baldy Peak was squarely and legally situated within the boundaries of the Maxwell Land Grant.

Astute businessman he was, Lucien Maxwell decided against throwing out all comers since it would have been futile to stem the tide of gold seekers. However, as the sole landowner he couldn't just let them flood his property and take what was rightfully his. Instead, Maxwell levied a fee of \$1 per month for every 500 square foot of land – \$12 per year – and half the proceeds proffered from any claim.

To facilitate maximum investment in the land's development, and the lining of his own pockets, Maxwell built a toll road through Cimarron Canyon and later leased land for a toll road through Raton which continued up to Trinidad, Colorado. Once stagecoach service arrived in 1868 he was able to open daily service to Taos and Santa Fe as well. It might not have been his original vision of long-term land development, but it certainly worked in Maxwell's favor.

Long before prospectors flooded the Moreno Valley William Moore had a plan for not only developing his mining interests, but one which involved residential and commercial development. The Moore brothers (William and John) set up shop with a general store supplying miners with all they needed. It wasn't long before tents gave way to cabins and other businesses. Thus, Elizabethtown, named for William's daughter Elizabeth, was established. Business and home lots were sold and the town quickly grew. E-Town, as it was nicknamed, became the first incorporated city in New Mexico territory in 1868.

From inception E-Town created quite a buzz and all comers were welcome, even as the winter of 1867-1868 approached:

*From the Willow Creek Mines: The mineral district is about twenty miles long by eight or ten wide, lying in a valley between the main Taos range and the Cimarron mountains . . . Gold was first discovered in paying quantities in March, 1867, and although mining tools could not be had, except in rare cases, until July, upwards of four hundred men went to work as best they could.*

*Mines enough to work five thousand men have been prospected and opened, and in some instances one hundred dollars to the hand per day has been taken out. Owing to the water giving out in July, a greater portion of the mines could not be worked with profit. This, although it prevented profitable working, led to good results, as it drove many to prospecting in the mountains where their labors have been crowned with great success. New mesas, flats, gulches and lodes, by scores, have been discovered, and the fact developed that all the country wants is men to work. <sup>7</sup>*

Water is an essential component of mining and Maxwell again stepped in with construction of a system of ditches, essentially a 41-mile canal, which diverted water from the Red River to the mining district. By November 1867 “upwards of \$180,000 [had] already been taken out, and yet the diggings [were] not one-third prospected, to say nothing of being developed.” The working mines were divided into two districts, Cimarron and Willow Creek. Willow Creek had yielded at least \$40,000 since July as nuggets ranging from pea-size to “the weight of ten dollars” were being mined.

Elizabethtown was already humming with two stores, a blacksmith shop, steam saw mill, a saloon and the “inevitable graveyard . . . made requisite by the killing of two men by desperados, and the hanging of a third by the outraged community.”<sup>8</sup> Such was life in the “new burg”. Things were humming along so well that miners hung around through the first winter in order to be on the front lines once early spring warmth brought much-needed water. And, new arrivals continued apace:

*Occasionally we find our way to the Mayflower saloon, where we warm the inner as well as the outer man. So pass the long winter evenings. Prices are very reasonable for a mining town. New arrivals are almost of every day occurrence. Denver and vicinity are well represented among the new arrivals. . . There is very little mining property for sale. Claim owners generally think they have a good enough thing to warrant them to suffer a New Mexico winter in order to be on the ground when the water comes . . . A stage line has been established between Elizabethtown and Maxwell’s by V.S. Dhelby & Co. who intend to commence running a tri-weekly line in a few days.*<sup>9</sup>

By early March, however, Elizabethtown experienced a bit of unease as none other than territorial Governor R.B. (Robert Byington) Mitchell was poking around, “exerting himself to advance the interests of the country.” Except, that wasn’t exactly the case. Mitchell was interested in lining his own pockets, Elizabethtown officials believed. After visiting the burgeoning mine operations in the fall of 1867 a series of actions cast disconcerting doubts on his true intentions:

*Elizabethtown was founded in June last, and the first house was built by Mr. John Moore, who furnished the miners with provisions on credit, thereby enabling them to open the country, the results of which we will see in the future. Everything went smoothly, until Gov. Mitchell visited the mines last fall, when he satisfied himself that the mines were rich, and concluded that he ought to have his finger in them. He then started for Mr. Maxwell’s, and there in company with Judge Holly, of Denver notoriety, and one Hooper, formerly Colonel of a negro regiment, tried to lease the entire mines from Mr. Maxwell, but failed. Had Mitchell and Company succeeded, they would then have made their own terms with the miners, or, in other words, would have turned them into peons.*<sup>10</sup>

Rebuffed, Mitchell and company laid out a town of their own and, as politicians are prone to pander, named it “Virginia City” in honor of Maxwell’s daughter. No doubt they had big plans for Virginia City, situated approximately six miles down the road from Elizabethtown. Virginia City was advertised “largely” – Colorado and New Mexico newspapers were “full of Virginia City, but no mention [was] made of Elizabethtown.” Mitchell may have been crowing about Virginia City, but Elizabethtown could withstand it, they declared.

*We have now nearly a hundred houses, and among them several two story buildings, with a permanent population of over five hundred, which by spring will be increased to thousands.*

*All that our worthy Governor (who, we are informed, does all he can for the benefit of the people of this Territory) may do against us, will not prevent Elizabethtown from being the town of the Territory.*<sup>11</sup>

The gauntlet was thrown down, but Elizabethtown ultimately prevailed as “the town of the Territory”, or at least the most prominent town in the early days of Colfax County. Virginia City may have been highly touted, but quickly faded, having managed to establish only one

store and a post office before shuttering in 1869. Most of its population headed down the road to Elizabethtown which was awarded its own post office in early summer 1868. While some of the hundreds of miners chose to live in town and “commute” to their claims up Baldy Mountain, some built cabins near or on top of their mines. Still, by mid-summer 1868 E-Town declared its rival “entirely played out as was long ago predicted. As a speculation it was not a success.” <sup>12</sup>



Elizabethtown and its surrounding mining districts were of great interest to area newspapers. Santa Fe newspapers, in particular, regularly ran articles, sending curious journalists to make thorough examinations of the mines. One group reported on their trek from Santa Fe to Taos and over the newly-minted wagon road between Taos and Elizabethtown. Their observations along the way said a lot about life in New Mexico and its spirited citizenry:

*The good citizens of Taos have set an example which I recommend all the people of New Mexico at once to imitate. Nothing is more necessary for a town than a good in and outlet, especially here in New Mexico, where we have so often to cross the mountains to reach one or the other place good roads, which will enable us to travel winter and summer, are of the utmost necessity. Only too long have the people New Mexico depended upon government to help them; but all this waiting was of no avail. Sometimes when the general Government did recollect that we are in existence, it would send some unscrupulous persons to look after our roads and to build them up, but before or soon after the work commenced, man and money gave out, and everything remained status quo. Now I am glad to notice that the people of New Mexico come out in a new spirit, and shake off the dependence from wirepullers in Washington. Let us help ourselves. We are able to do it, if we only go to work with good will. New Mexico will soon be able to repay the government the few millions it has spent for its soldiers here, and which only too often had been held to our faces, and not seldom we had to hear from the east that “New Mexico is not worth while having it.” <sup>13</sup>*

The ride through Taos Canyon featured scenery which in beauty far exceeded that of New York’s Central Park, the journalists opined. Easterners shouldn’t look down their noses at such expansive scenery, the “Park of Nature” which was “God knows how many thousand years old.” There New Yorkers would find “more than your equal, here is no sickness, everything looks fresh, here is health in every corner. . . We invite you to our “Natures Park” and we are satisfied you will like it. Come one, come all.” <sup>14</sup> Somewhat prophetically, one day health-seekers from across the nation would come to New Mexico in search of a cure.

Bucolic or not, rumors of Indian depredations were seen along the way as word of the disappearance of a Mr. Edmonds caused alarm. Indians had run off some stock near the house of one Charles Kennedy (more about him a bit later) who ran a station for one of the stagecoach lines. Still hoping to find Mr. Edmonds at the mines they continued on and soon came across his lifeless, naked body (save his boots). Nearby they found blood-stained arrows.

For New Mexicans, well aware of Easterners' ill-placed regard for the "noble red men", these depredations were a hard pill to swallow. Rather than rely solely on United States military intervention, the locals formed their own company.

The visitors found Elizabethtown "quite a place" with a burgeoning population catered to by about twenty businesses, artisans and entrepreneurs of one variety or another like "Carpenters, Jewelers, Watchmakers, Blacksmiths, Tanners, Shoemakers, Tailors [sic], Bakeries, one of the largest Beer Breweries in the Territory, Cabinetmakers, Charcoalburners, Feed stables, Hotel and Restaurants, Flour depots and thousand other things a city cannot be without." Of course, like any mining town of the era there were plenty of saloons, the nicest being the one belonging to Frank Riggs, "splendidly fitted up and contain[ing] 2 of the very best of Brunswick's Billiards." Every evening the "finely illuminated" establishment provided entertainment to its customers. <sup>15</sup>

Even though gold dust was selling at \$22 an ounce, there didn't seem to be much in the way of greenbacks to purchase it. Miners toiled away six days a week, Monday through Saturday, despite continuing water shortage issues. Sundays were the liveliest for E-Town as everyone came into town to conduct their business. With the "Big Ditch" on its way expectations were high for long-term success. The visitors agreed, going so far as to opine "Elizabethtown will outrival Santa Fe in less than 3 years . . . the Moreno mines will turn out very rich not only in gold but also in silver, copper and other precious metals. Plenty leads will be discovered to make E. a permanent place . . . Thousands of new mines will be discovered within the next 2 years, and New Mexico will become the most precious stone in the crown of the United States." <sup>16</sup>

Near the end of November 1868 the tables had turned as Virginia City was fading. Elizabethtown was back in the papers, touted as "the metropolis of the mining region [which] is located about 30 miles nearly west of Maxwell's Ranch, and about the same distance north east of Taos. . . The developments of the past season in the vicinity of Elizabethtown, though limited in extent on account of the early failure of water, have been sufficient to prove conclusively the existence of gold in large quantities." <sup>17</sup>

Gold, the town's currency, was coming in to the tune of \$1,000 per day as labor at \$2 per day was plentiful. Mechanics commanded \$4 to \$5 per day. As long as a continuous supply of water was available via the "Big Ditch", official expected "to see a tremendous immigration to that region; and the product of the Moreno mines during the coming year will undoubtedly compare favorably with that of the same extent of mining country in any of the Territories." With "fabulous results" the spring of 1869, followed by the summer was set to "witness lively times on the Cimarron and Moreno." <sup>18</sup>



Elizabethtown was well-positioned by the end of 1868. On January 25, 1869 the legislature established New Mexico Territory's twelfth county as Colfax County, carved out of a section of Taos County and stretching to the Texas and Oklahoma state/territory lines. Elizabethtown became not only the county seat of the newly-minted county, named for Vice President-elect Schuyler Colfax (Ulysses S. Grant's VP), but also became the first incorporated town in New

Mexico. Quite an accomplishment considering towns and villages like Taos, Santa Fe and Albuquerque had been in existence far longer.

The winter snows began to melt by early spring 1869 and, of course, everyone was predicting a most prosperous season. The town was gaining in respectability as “quite a large revival of religion [was] in progress owing to the unceasing efforts of the Rev. Mr. Dyer, who is unremitting in his efforts to establish a church, and with every prospect of success.” <sup>19</sup>

1870 would be a momentous year in more ways than one for Elizabethtown and Colfax County. Despite continuous boasting of “every prospect of success” mining activity began to decline. Elizabethtown, home to seven thousand residents, was at its peak in 1870. Since 1867 the area had experienced exponential growth in part due to the magnanimity of Lucien Maxwell. Maxwell spent money to develop the area in support of mining operations, but he also managed to profit quite nicely as well. Accounts vary as to when he decided to sell his massive land holdings – 1869 or 1870 – but the result was unmistakably the beginning of an unsettling period in Colfax County’s history.

To top off an already momentous year (1870), Charles Kennedy, “well known to parties who travelled the Mora and Taos roads to Elizabethtown, and owner of the ranch at the junction of the above roads” <sup>20</sup> was arrested in September and taken to Elizabethtown on a charge of murder.” The prosecution’s main witness, Jose Cortez, testified of seeing Kennedy shoot an Anglo man with a pistol on Christmas Day 1869. The stranger, a large American with red whiskers arrived on foot and stopped for the night at Kennedy’s way station. Cortez was awakened to the sound of gunfire and when Kennedy lit a candle the scene revealed the American laying dead on his bed with a bullet wound to his head.

Since there was no one else in the house but Kennedy and his wife, the perpetrator was obvious. Cortez fled to Taos after Kennedy implored him to help bury the body. Authorities later investigated and found a number of bones in Kennedy’s garden, which were brought to court as evidence. A few days later an Indian from Taos reported a human skeleton had been found in Kennedy’s house. A coroner’s inquest determined the unknown person had come to his death at the hands of Charles Kennedy.

The party returned to town with skeletal remains which included a mostly intact skull showing a right temple bullet wound of an unknown male of large frame, all of which matched Cortez’s description. An impromptu trial of his peers (chosen by Kennedy himself) ended without consensus as to his guilt or innocence. A court trial awaited, perhaps the following year. Meanwhile, what played out next was pure frontier justice:

*After this the officers who had Kennedy in charge, did not apprehend that any attempt would be made to interfere with the prisoner. Sheriff Houx was fitting up a more secure jail in which to confine the prisoner through the winter, and in the meantime he was kept in a log house heavily ironed and in charge of two guards. About 11 o’clock on Friday night, the 7th instant, a party of men, armed and disguised, surprised the guard, took Kennedy from prison, carried him to an old slaughter house about half a mile from town, and hung him to a rafter. When the body was discovered in the morning Justice McBride summoned a coroner’s jury, who examined the body and returned a verdict to the effect that Kennedy came to his death, by hanging at the hands of parties unknown.*

*Commenting upon the above the Telegraph says: “So ended the life of this cold-blooded assassin. No doubt, if the truth were known, the crime which was brought to light, is but one of many he has perpetrated. There is a general feeling of satisfaction that he is at last beyond the power of doing further harm. Still, while we have no word of pity for the murderer, we cannot commend the action of those who hung him. The time has passed when it was necessary for the people of this community to take the punishment of offenders in their own hands. We have laws that will give justice to all, and we have faithful and efficient officers to execute them, and it is time the citizens of this place should realize that vengeance is not justice – nor a midnight mob the proper guardian of public safety.” 21*

So, apparently Elizabethtown had been home to a serial killer. Not surprisingly, a number of “legends” sprang from Kennedy’s deeds. The Legends of America web site provides more about Kennedy’s (alleged) exploits, including the introduction of another well-known Western character:

*Evidently, when travelers stopped for a bed and a meal, Charles killed them, stole their valuables, and either burned or buried their bodies. These events might never have been known, except for his wife’s confession, when she fled from him in terror in the fall of 1870.*

*The bleeding Ute Indian woman burst into John Pearson’s saloon, where Clay Allison, Davy Crockett (a nephew of the American frontiersman) and others were whiling away the hours. After being helped to a chair, she told the story of how her husband had killed a traveler and their young son. Hysterical, she told the shocking story of how her husband had been luring travelers, perhaps as many as 14, into their cabin and then murdering them. On the day that she fled, she had witnessed another traveler who her husband had enticed inside by offering supper. During the meal, the passerby asked his hosts if there were many Indians around. Her unfortunate son made the fatal mistake of responding, “Can’t you smell the one Papa put under the floor?” At this, Kennedy went into a fury, shot his guest and bashed his son’s head against the fireplace. He then threw both bodies into the cellar, locked his wife in the house and drank himself into a stupor. Terrified, the woman waited until her husband passed out, then climbed up through the chimney and escaped to tell her story. 22*

Clay Allison, a local rancher who was also a sometimes gunfighter, was said to have joined the posse rounding up Kennedy. It made for good copy – a gunfighter on a mission of vigilante justice. Clay Allison did eventually make his way to New Mexico with cattle, but not until May or June 1873. Nevertheless, it didn’t prevent writers from producing what one biographer called “one of the most incredible pieces of fiction written about Allison”. 23

In October 1870 Clay Allison was in fact in Texas, along the Clear Fork of the Brazos, although a fantastical article published in the November 1966 issue of *Frontier Times Magazine* claimed he was one of several cowboys who broke into the jail, captured Kennedy and hung him at the slaughterhouse. Allison had allegedly cut off Kennedy’s head, impaled it upon a pike and displayed it at a Cimarron saloon. What really happened? The *Raton Range* provided an eyewitness account on January 8, 1940:

*A vigilance committee went down and got Kennedy, brought him up to E-Town, and hung him about one mile out of town. A doctor boiled the corpse and cleaned the skeleton, which was in a box in the rafters of Jonah Pearson’s store for several years. I was a boy going to school there. 24*

Either way, it was a gruesome affair, a side-bar to coming unrest. More on Clay Allison later.

According to [New Mexico Nomad](#), Lucien Maxwell sold the grant which bore his name to a group of Colorado and New Mexico investors for \$650,000, keeping a small parcel and some of his mining interests. Maxwell moved to Fort Sumner and the new owners immediately formed the Maxwell Land Grant and Railroad Company. Two years later they sold the company to English investors for \$1,350,000.

The new owners were determined to make the most of this resource-rich land mass and began an aggressive rent collection campaign. They quickly discovered the same problem encountered by Maxwell, who by all accounts maintained a cordial relationship with his would-be tenants. After he cashed out, locals resented their new foreign owners and the so-called “Santa Fe Ring” of crooked politicians who historically had no compunctions whatsoever about seizing large tracts of land, displacing hundreds of New Mexicans in order to line their own pockets.

By 1872 Elizabethtown had dwindled down to about 100 residents, compelling the legislature to move the county seat to Cimarron, Maxwell’s former headquarters. By 1875 mining operations had all but ceased and Elizabethtown was a virtual ghost town (later somewhat revived), even as mounting tensions between settlers and their new landlords erupted into what came to be known as the Colfax County War.

While the English company was very much interested in developing the acquired land, their developers complained of interference from people they considered squatters who impeded progress. People whom Lucien Maxwell had turned a blind eye to, allowing them to live there, were now subject to eviction. The company engaged the services of attorney Frank Springer to represent their interests in New Mexico territorial courts, as crooked businessmen and politicians like Thomas Benton Catron and Stephen Benton Elkins became involved in a new company comprised of Dutch investors.

Cimarron was already a violent town with a well-deserved reputation for lawlessness. On October 9, 1871 two ex-employees of the Maxwell Land Grant & Railroad Company, Tom Taylor and James “Coal Oil Jimmy” Buckley, along with someone named “Jones” robbed a mail coach while the driver was watering his horses along Clear Creek. While no one was hurt, the bandits got away with approximately \$500 in cash.

Buckley, said to be 6 feet 7 inches tall, left little doubt as to his identity. Emboldened, he and Taylor committed more robberies, eventually garnering a \$3000 reward for their capture. They were joined by Joe McCurdy and John Stewart, planning to steal horses from a stage station. Taylor and Buckley decided to take a nap until dark, and after falling asleep their new partners instead shot them dead for the reward money. Their bodies were hauled to Cimarron and displayed on a pool table.

Catron and Elkins sending in troublemakers to harass local ranchers and homesteaders was like lighting a match within inches of a powder keg. The more or less official spark which set off the Colfax County War in earnest occurred in September 1875.

Reverend Franklin J. Tolby was born in 1842 in White County, Indiana. After his Civil War service he volunteered for a Methodist mission in New Mexico, assigned to travel between Elizabethtown and Cimarron, holding regular meetings. He was well regarded, especially by Clay Allison. Reverend Tolby was also a champion of homesteader’s rights and often spoke

out against Santa Fe Ring tactics. It's almost certain he was the author of at least two op-ed articles published in the *New York Sun*, one on July 5, 1875 and the other on August 16. The headlines no doubt enraged Catron and Elkins:

## **THE TERRITORY OF ELKINS**

### **THE PETTY DESPOTISM THAT IS CALLED NEW MEXICO**

#### **A Ring-Ridden People – The Population of a Whole Territory at the Mercy of a Firm of Sharp Lawyers – An Opportunity for Attorney General Edwards Pierrepont.**

In this lengthy letter the anonymous correspondent proceeded to lay out the case for exposing the chicanery of Catron and Elkins, principals (“co-ringmasters”) of the law firm of Elkins & Catron. In particular, the nomination of “that unctuous individual, S.B. Elkins, as candidate for delegate to Congress” was especially disdainful. The two attorneys had managed to “secure the passage of a back pay grab bill by the Legislature, whereby the legislators voted themselves out of the territorial treasury \$5 per diem salary in addition to that paid by the Government.”

However, as no actual monetary funds were available, territorial scrip was instead issued, all of which provided little or no actual benefit to the legislature. The scrip ended up being hardly worth the paper it was printed on, that is until “patriotic lawyers” (Elkins and Catron) and a few of their friends offered to “relieve the holders of the scrip by investing their hard-earned pennies”. To holders of the near-worthless scrip this was a great relief – that is until the next session when the “patriotic lawyers” influenced the passage of a law converting the scrip into interest-bearing territorial bonds. As one might guess Elkins & Catron benefited handsomely, clearing about \$40,000.

Besides exposing the law firm's land-grabbing schemes, the anonymous correspondent exposed legislative machinations of the “Ring”. The legislature had a peculiar way of conducting its business. Rather than debate a bill as legislatures were known to do, a recess of ten to thirty minutes was called. There were never any records of what took place during this intermission, but it was likely that Ring members spent the time shaking down votes which were meant to enrich their own personal interests. Because New Mexico newspapers had done “nothing to remedy the evils herein printed out”, the Ring was being exposed by an anonymous correspondent in the pages of the distant *New York Sun*. <sup>25</sup>

The following month another scathing letter accused a territorial Chief Justice of “petty despotism”:

## **A MOST AUDACIOUS RING**

### **THE PETTY DESPOTISM WHICH EXISTS IN NEW MEXICO**

#### **Personal Government with a Vengeance – A Chief Justice who Suspends the Writ of Habeas Corpus in Libel Cases**

Whether this letter or the first was authored by Tolby is unclear, as the second article's author wished to add his testimony to “that of your correspondent in corroboration of every charge he brings against that corrupt political machine called the Republican party of New Mexico.”

According to the August correspondent, “Elkins and Catron have done all and more than all of what that correspondent has accused them, as hundreds and thousands of the best citizens

of both parties in the Territory are ready to testify; but they would long since have been overthrown and driven from the country, were it not that they are supported in every political measure by Joseph G. Palen, a man who, from the obscure position of a New York country postmaster, was promoted to the Chief Justiceship of New Mexico by Grant.”

Justice Palen’s six year record was “enough to damn any man to an eternity of infamy”. Citizens sent a representative to Washington to expose his crimes, and despite the Territorial Legislature passing a resolution of censure, “he has trailed his official robes in the mire and filth of political corruption, and is entirely unfit for the high position in which chance has placed him”. <sup>26</sup>

As Clay Allison’s biographer pointed out, Palen had confronted Tolby in August, witnessed by Frank Springer who testified that the preacher shot back that he would “write the truth about the Judge so that 200,000 readers would see the record.” <sup>27</sup> It was one thing to verbally confront someone, but quite another to put it in writing for the world to see. The August missive likely resulted in his death at unknown person or persons.

One month later news of Reverend Tolby’s death began to reverberate across the nation. It was simply too obvious to ignore – Tolby had been gunned down and left for dead on the Elizabethtown-Cimarron road. A rather terse and telegraphic-type notice appeared in a Las Vegas (New Mexico) newspaper:

### **MURDER.**

*The following received from Cimarron yesterday afternoon. On Tuesday about nine on this side of Pascoe’s ranch in the cañon, Rev. Tolby was murdered, shot in the heart. Body found last night dragged under the brush. Murderer unknown.* <sup>27</sup>

Clearly, he hadn’t been murdered for plunder as some suggested since both his horse and saddle were nearby. A Santa Fe newspaper speculated the murderer was a “white man and was paid for his job.” He left behind a wife and two small daughters and had recently been interested in purchasing land for a colony of Indians, something that wouldn’t have made him any friends among the likes of the Ring.

Two news blurbs published in newspapers on September 21 might make one wonder if there was any connection between S.B. Elkins winning a seat in Congress and Reverend Tolby’s untimely demise. One Kansas newspaper went so far as to proclaim “they have commenced killing off preachers in New Mexico”, most likely unaware of how volatile the situation in Colfax County was becoming.

The following month Territorial Governor Samuel B. Axtell offered a \$500 reward for information regarding the murder of Reverend Tolby. A fellow preacher, Thomas Harwood, thought his friend might have been targeted after witnessing two Mexicans murder a miner – or a cow, depending on which story one believed. It was Tolby’s assistant O.P McMains who took up the challenge of uncovering the plot to kill his friend and mentor. McMains was also the new printer for the *Cimarron News and Press* and was appointed by Reverend Harwood to take Tolby’s place.

McMains suspected the Ring was somehow involved, perhaps contracting with Cimarron’s marshal, along with one other unsavory character, to carry out the ambush and murder. The marshal, Cruz Vega, had arranged to be in the canyon that day (September 13) when Tolby

would be passing through. McMains was certain Vega, a “jack of all trades” type, had been hired by the Ring to carry out their dirty work, yet he couldn’t prove it.

Meanwhile, Vega was hired by a local farmer who needed someone to guard his corn fields beginning the night of October 29 through the 31st. On the second night the farmer allowed Vega to build a fire, which made it easier to see several horsemen approaching their location, one appearing to have been McMains. They encircled Vega, threw a rope around his neck and led him to an overhang where he was hung to death, although not before being repeatedly hoisted and dropped to the tune of demands for a confession.

Shortly before his demise Vega blurted out “I confess” and admitted that Manuel Cardenas had done the actual killing while he watched. M.W. Mills and Dr. Robert Longwell had hired the two to commit the murder. Before leaving, the vigilantes strung his limp body over a telegraph pole and rode away. Who were the members of the vigilance committee?

According to [New Mexico Nomad](#), once Cruz Vega was suspected McMains had enlisted the support of Clay Allison, local rancher and well-known gunfighter. The whole affair went down like this:

*Clay Allison was a vigilante by nature, with a short fuse on his best day. Whereas McMains wanted to take on the grant owners and the Santa Fe Ring based on principle, Allison wanted to avenge Tolby, a man he liked and respected, based purely on revenge. Allison rallied men from Cimarron to Elizabethtown, including Pastor McMains. They confronted Vega on October 30, 1975. Vega, as one would expect, denied involvement, blaming it on another guy, Manuel Cardenas. However, the mob didn’t care for his excuses. Vega was beaten and hanged by the neck from a telegraph pole. Reverend McMains, as a man of the cloth, discovered he wasn’t cut out for violence. He fled midway through the confrontation. 28*



The newly minted vigilantes called themselves “The Colfax County Ring” and soon began riding across the county “like avenging angels.” It didn’t matter whether a person was out-and-out guilty or guilty only by association. As the Colfax County War escalated everyone was forced to pick a side.

Vega’s uncle, Francisco Griego, vowed revenge against Allison. Griego, a man known to have killed more than a few men himself confronted Allison at Cimarron’s St. James Hotel on the evening of November 1. It didn’t turn out too well for Griego:

*On the night of the 1st inst., Francisco Griego was shot and killed by R.C. Allison. Both parties met at the door of St. James Hotel, entered and with some friends took a drink, when the two walked into the corner of the room, and had some conversation, when Allison drew his revolver and shot Griego three times; the lights were all extinguished, and Griego was not found until next morning. Francisco Griego was well known in Santa Fe where his mother resides. He has killed a great many men, and was considered a dangerous man; few regret his loss. 29*

Allison was charged with murder but exonerated following a ruling of self-defense. Several days later Manuel Cardenas was arrested, claiming Vegas was the shooter and Ring members Mills and Longwell ordered the murder. Mills was later arrested and Longwell fled to Fort

Union where Axtell ordered soldiers to protect his fellow Ring member. Cardenas would later retract his accusation claiming Joseph Herberger forced him at gunpoint to kill Tolby.

Meanwhile, grant owners began their own retaliation campaign against homesteaders, hiring thugs who marauded settlers under cover of darkness, killing them and destroying their property and crops. Governor Axtell ordered Fort Union soldiers to round up and arrest Clay Allison. While being transported from court to jail, following his retraction, Cardenas was gunned down. Clay Allison was the prime suspect, but he soon left New Mexico and returned to Texas.

As violence continued the land grant became subject to a new survey. After rejecting two surveyors on the basis of bias, U.S. Land Commissioner J.A. Williamson settled on John Elkins, brother of S.B. Elkins(!). It was obviously a major conflict of interest, but this particular era (think of it as an extension of the highly-corrupt Reconstruction years) was rife with political chicanery. The survey measured 1,700,000 acres and after the Supreme Court ruled in the land company's favor, the Colfax County War was over, save for occasional flareups over the next several years.

Settlers finally realized their cause was lost after President Grover Cleveland declined to support their claims. By the late 1890s most had either settled with the company, left their land or been evicted. Rolling into the next century did little to solve the company's financial issues as it remained difficult to collect lease payments while juggling development projects. Parts of the grant were sold and by the early 1960s the Maxwell Land Grant Company was no longer operating in the state.

In the early 1900s large tracts were subdivided or set aside for private celebrity retreats. In 1922 wealthy Oklahoma oilman Waite Phillips purchased 330,000 acres in 1922, later donating a sizeable portion to the Boy Scouts of America. The Philmont Boy Scout Ranch remains in operation today just south of Cimarron.

In 1881 the county seat moved from Cimarron to Springer (named for attorney Frank Springer), no doubt in part due to its proximity to the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (AT&SF) Railroad line. In 1893 the territory carved out a new county by taking the eastern portion of Colfax and parts of Mora and San Miguel counties to form Union County. In 1897 Raton, by then an important coal mining town, became the county seat and remains so today.

Elizabethtown would experience a revival of sorts in late 1878 after the AT&SF extended its track from Trinidad, Colorado into New Mexico. Ore could be processed and transported out at a lower price. Investors returned and the population experienced an uptick. Tax revenue generated from various bars and restaurants provided money for schools.

Community gatherings, dances and sporting events lent a certain genteel ambiance to a formerly wild and woolly mining boom town. Gold dredging operations commenced in 1901 and in the first year \$100,000 worth of gold was recovered. The final blow to Elizabethtown came in 1903 when fire swept through the business district – only one business remained standing. Dredging operations finally ceased in 1905 and by 1917 most residents had departed, unable to sell their homes. Scattered mining operations continued for a time and by the 1940s the area had produced as much as five million dollars in gold.

New Mexico's vaunted gold and silver mining history notwithstanding, another important discovery of a more enduring nature was made in the 1850s and continues to be a vital segment

of the state's economic resources. Various military expeditions through parts of what would be Colfax and Union counties observed extensive coal deposits of the very best bituminous variety. Likewise, the Raton mountains contained an "inexhaustible" supply of unsurpassable quality.

It was all there for the taking if the railroads saw fit to extend their lines into the region. In 1876 one New Mexico newspaper was daring the railroads to do just that:

*The first railroad which builds into New Mexico will receive all its trade and secure the good will of the citizens to such an extent as will insure it the larger portion of the business permanently. The railroads are fooling away their time hunting for business in Southern Colorado. The country is not there to make business. At Trinidad it is true they reach the northern edge of the coal fields which extend hundreds of miles south of the Ratons in New Mexico. If they want coal they can get it by coming to New Mexico; and if they want business they can get it by coming to New Mexico.* <sup>30</sup>

What ensued appeared to be a railroad war of sorts as the AT&SF and the Denver and Rio Grande (D&RG) were racing to see which one would be the first to reach Raton Pass. The two titans tussled at the Royal Gorge west of Cañon City, Colorado before the AT&SF had "tacked its rails upon New Mexico's soil"<sup>31</sup> in late 1878. It brought "general rejoicing" to New Mexico with a new shipping point in coal country and expectations of extended track in the not-too-distant future.

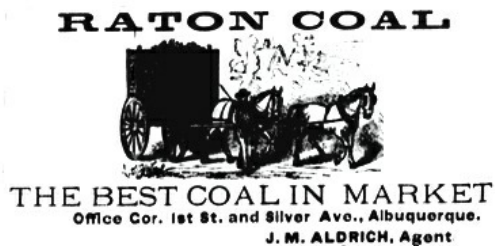
Railroad headquarters were situated at the mouth of Raton Pass, thus the new settlement would be called Raton, which in Spanish means "mouse". The region now had a link to not only general rail transportation, but the ability to both receive goods from other regions and ship out the territory's growing cache of natural resources to fuel a rapidly expanding nation. According to *Mining Raton History II*, "the cow country brought the railroad and the railroad developed the mines." Nothing was more important to the early days of Raton "than the coal mines, for it was the mines that brought the people . . . people from all over the world, seeking work in the black holes of Northern New Mexico." They came from places like Germany, Austria, Greece, Italy, Japan, China, Mexico (to name a few) with their diverse customs, religion, language and culture. <sup>32</sup> Raton became the railroad's first company town, incorporated in 1891 before becoming the county seat in 1897.

The Raton coal mine at the top of the pass where trains would be serviced was the first to open. Articles of Incorporation were filed for the Raton Coal and Coke Company (RC&CC) in later summer 1881 by a group of incorporators which included officials of AT&SF and Frank Springer, among others. Their mission statement was straightforward: "The company includes active and energetic men, who will push matters and develop the vast coal fields of the Raton Mountains, and put an excellent quality of coal on the market at low figures."<sup>33</sup>

## **Blossburg**

Blossburg, situated northwest of Raton, was established by Colonel Ed Savage, general manager of RC&CC, who hailed from Blossburg, Pennsylvania. By the fall of 1881 the Blossburg and Savage mines were increasing output, despite a shortage of miners. Prospects were excellent and expectations high "as soon as all the arrangements are perfected, the erection of coking ovens will be commenced, and the coal industry in our vicinity will be one of the greatest industries of the West." <sup>34</sup>

Key to the early success of Blossburg was the importation of Pennsylvania coal miners, who by early 1882 had “built up such a thriving place in so short a time.” The town already had a newspaper, the *Blossburg Pioneer*, which proudly represented “Blossburg, one of the grandest little towns in New Mexico”.<sup>35</sup> Blossburg, situated in Dillon Canyon, was assigned a post office and granted a railroad branch to facilitate enhanced operations.



Despite early labor problems, mining operations steadily grew and by 1885 approximately 500 miners were working in and around Blossburg. RC&CC began selling coal in New Mexico not long after commencing operations as evidenced by this 1882 *Albuquerque Journal* ad. The AT&SF had been extended to Albuquerque by 1880.

By 1890 the town boasted a school, the Blossburg Band, a baseball team, two churches, several business establishments, a hotel and boarding houses which serviced a population of approximately 1,200. By 1892 mine inspectors reported RC&CC employed “241 miners and fifty-one ‘day hands’ and their out-put is 1,200 tons daily.”<sup>36</sup> Coal mining, of course, wasn’t without its hazards.

On the evening of November 24, 1892, one of the Blossburg mines caught fire as “the stable of the mines at the mouth of the Wire Line mine was consumed with ten mules and 120 tons of hay.”<sup>37</sup> Miners escaped harm but it would take a day or two before the fire was completely extinguished. Occasionally, a miner was killed while tunneling through large banks of coal. Of course, any mining town with one or more saloons could expect “shooting affrays” from time to time.

As mining production steadily increased so did the potential for disasters like the explosion which occurred on February 22, 1894. Fortunately, fatalities and injuries were low – five men and one boy killed and three men injured – owing to February 22 being a Federal holiday since 1879 in observance of George Washington’s birthday.

Disputes arose, however, as to the cause. Finger-pointing immediate ensued as a coroner’s jury “found the explosion was due to criminal carelessness on the part of the officials of the coal company.”<sup>38</sup> Despite the mine inspector’s insistence it was untrue, several published accounts claimed the explosion occurred upon removal of a drum which furnished air to the mines. Whether or not it was related to his inspection and conclusions, J.C. Spears was relieved of his duties by early April.

Shortly after the new mine inspector visited in June a delegation of Blossburg miners attended the coal miners convention in Pueblo, Colorado, ostensibly to settle grievances with mine owners. On July 1 a series of events set in motion a confrontation between striking miners and federal troops:

## **NO TRAINS MOVING**

### **Troops from Fort Marcy Finally Reach Raton – U.S. Marshals for Las Vegas Fifteen Freight Cars Wrecked at Dillon Junction**

*The railroad situation to-day is just about what it was three days ago, so far as the A., T. & S.F. is concerned, and is almost as bad as possible not to be characterized by actual riot.*

*The two companies of U.S. troops that left here at 6 o'clock on Tuesday morning for Raton were detained three miles east of Las Vegas until yesterday afternoon, when the engine was finally patched up and the train started east with a soldier serving as engineer. The troops reached Raton at 6:30 last evening, leaving the train in the vicinity of Dillon junction and walking into town, a distance of some two miles.*

*The had to cover this distance on foot because of obstructions on the track. A freight car, said to have been wrecked by strikers on Sunday last a mile or so west of Dillon, was the first obstacle met with, but right at Dillon station, which is the junction of the Blossburg coal mine branch with the A., T. & S.F. main line, a much more formidable obstruction was placed across the track yesterday.*

*From Dillon junction up to Blossburg the coal branch mounts a steep grade. Yesterday fifteen freight cars were turned loose at Blossburg and sent flying down the branch until they struck the main track at Dillon and there they were wrecked, piling a mountain of kindling wood over track and right-of-way. It is alleged that the cars were turned loose by miners at Blossburg who are in sympathy with the railroad strikers. <sup>39</sup>*

While striking a symbolic blow for workers' rights, not to mention causing an illegal track-blocking, man-made train wreck, miners would ultimately pay the price as newspapers turned against them as the strike continued until late summer. Blossburg production resumed and by May 1897 RC&CC had big plans for increasing output to 2,000 tons per day.

In a move to modernize production the company planned to construct new coke ovens which would be run by steam-powered electricity. Blossburg, Raton's "suburb", remained a "very pleasant little town" with a population of approximately 1,500. The Blossburg Mercantile Company was a thriving well-stocked store, capable of supplying "almost anything a person could think of to eat or wear." With good schools and the town's "spiritual welfare ... guarded by resident clergy and priests", by all appearances Blossburg was prospering, as was Raton, where "there is not a vacant house in the town and a number of residences are under construction."<sup>40</sup> What could go wrong?

Despite hopes for a prosperous, stable future, reports began to emerge in September indicating all was not well, and hadn't been for some time. Coal miners were again on strike after a pay cut of twenty percent in their wages. Many had not worked a full week for quite some time, two years in fact, according to the *Albuquerque Journal*.<sup>41</sup> By early October one newspaper reported that "many people are leaving Blossburg daily, and that by the time winter fairly sets in, the town will be almost depopulated. The miners failing to secure work, are compelled to seek other fields."<sup>42</sup>

Clearly, this was a rocky season as news reports waffled between disaster and recovery. Certainly, the new coke ovens had every prospect of increased production, which meant full employment, yet reports of labor unrest and miners leaving lingered. In early February 1898 one newspaper reported the town was nearly deserted. Whether or not it was true, the blows kept coming.

In September 1898 a mysterious fire occurred at the Blossburg mine, destroying machinery vital to operations. The loss was said to have been between \$30,000 and \$50,000 and mine

operations would be shut down for at least a month, a “calamity to the entire Territory.” \* For the next three years production remained sluggish until a revival which held promise of a “rehabilitated Blossburg” which would be “larger in population as well as in production than the old Blossburg.”<sup>43</sup> In the meantime, increased production had shifted to the nearby Gardiner mines while Blossburg was suffering a shortage of workers.

By 1903 the town’s population had indeed dwindled considerably to 100 residents. As a sure sign it was time to fold, the post office closed in 1905, despite the fact Blossburg mines were still producing. A new owner brought improvements and increased production (for a time), although by this time the town of Blossburg had faded considerably. An explosion at one of the Blossburg mines in October 1906 inflicted more economic damage and within the next ten years new mining operations would shift to sites like Swastika and Brilliant.

## **Brilliant**

Unfortunately, there is probably little, if any, of this once-bustling coal mining town left to see. You could perhaps view the town site if you can afford a \$2,000+ per night stay on media mogul Ted Turner’s hunting preserve. The sites which were once the towns of Gardiner, Brilliant, Blossburg and Swastika are now part of the Vermejo Park Ranch. Most of the existing structures are said to have been bulldozed by Mr. Turner, although one might occasionally see an old coke oven here and there.

However, in the early twentieth century around 1905 the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain and Pacific Company was organized and the first coal mine opened in January of 1906. Brilliant was company-owned and located on the AT&SF Railway, supplying coal for their locomotives as well as coke for the nearby ovens in Gardiner. It is believed the town got its name from the unusual sheen of the coal in nearby Tin Pan Canyon.

In 1907 three hundred and fifty residents lived there and the town had quite a few businesses and services, including, a telephone company, school, Japanese Hotel, Brilliant Hotel, Brilliant Electric Company, Blossburg Mercantile, a boarding house, recreation hall, Brilliant & Raton Stage Line, saloons, a sheriff and one doctor. <sup>44</sup>

The schoolhouse served as a church on Sundays and the sick in need of hospital services were transported to Gardiner or Raton. There was plenty of low-rent housing available and the company held a yearly Christmas party with presents for every child in the school.

In the fall of 1907, however, the nation began experiencing what came to be called the Panic of 1907. Starting in mid-October and continuing for three weeks, the New York Stock Exchange fell almost fifty percent from the previous year. A recession had been underway and when runs on banks and trust companies began occurring, the panic soon spread across the nation.

Some financial aspects of the Panic centered around the United Copper Company and the collapse of the Knickerbocker Trust Company in New York City, which paid out \$8 million in cash before closing on October 22. Fear spread to other city banks and trusts and then on to regional banks and soon hundreds of people were withdrawing their money from those regional banks.

J.P. Morgan stepped in and pledged his own money and somehow convinced New York bankers to do the same; this would shore up the banking system enough to stem the tide at

least temporarily. Another crisis occurred in November when a large brokerage firm, which had leveraged its holdings against Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company as collateral, began to collapse.

J.P. Morgan again came to the rescue and his company, U.S. Steel Corporation, executed an emergency takeover. Before the Panic of 1907 there was no central banking system like we have today, but owing to the teetering financial system during that period, the Federal Reserve System was created in 1913.

As a result of these financial machinations and uncertainties, the Brilliant mines closed in early 1908. In September of 1912 the camp re-opened and continued to boom well into the 1920s. During the early Twenties the “history of Brilliant began to merge into that of Swastika, another coal town owned by the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain and Pacific Company”. For a time the two towns operated side-by-side until the Brilliant post office closed in 1935, although at one point experts thought Brilliant would turn out to be the largest mining town in northern New Mexico. Not long after the post office closed, the Brilliant mine ceased operations. <sup>45</sup>

For obvious reasons, during World War II, Swastika changed its name to Brilliant II. In 1939 very few residents remained. As noted above, there is little, if any, evidence of the Brilliant town site today. However, most of the area has been returned to its original state by Mr. Turner, with the wildlife population (bears and coyotes) dramatically increasing.

## Swastika

A funny (and purely coincidental) thing happened just as I was beginning to research and write this article. Someone from California called me about his supposition that perhaps this mining camp was somehow tied to Nazi treasure. Apparently he had viewed the original blog article for Swastika and became intrigued enough to call and see if I concurred with his theory. I assured him I had never found any connection to Nazis, although, as you’ll see soon the town changed its name once Hitler made the design a symbol of his own brand of fascism.

Today, of course, this would be an unfortunate name for a town, ghostly or not. However, believe it or not, years ago the swastika symbol was widely used, world-wide as a matter of fact. In early twentieth century newspapers references to “swastika” were numerous. Native American tribes like the Navajos, Hopis and Apaches featured the symbol in Indian curio stores. The 45th Infantry Division of the United States military used the symbol until the 1930s. Apparently, it was in wide use in the state of New Mexico, and not just by the Native Americans.



## DEVOTEES OF THE SWASTIKA

New Society for the People of the Arid Regions of the United States.

## SYMBOL IS ADOPTED

Signifying "Fortunate Being, and Comes From the Hindoo Race... Ex-Governor of Idaho Ordained Therein.

The Santa Fe New Mexican, 15, Jun 1905

In 1905 John Morrison, ex-governor of Idaho, founded a society featuring the symbol for the “people of the arid regions of the United States” (whatever that meant), whose high priest was someone by the name of F.H. Newell. One article accompanying the announcement referred to the society as a “cult”, claiming the “swastika” to be “older than history”. <sup>46</sup> Government buildings (post offices, etc.) included the symbol in their design, often inlaid in floor tiles. The federal building constructed in Albuquerque in 1930 and now on the National Register of Historic Places, featured radiator grates in the foyer which consist of several swastika blocks.

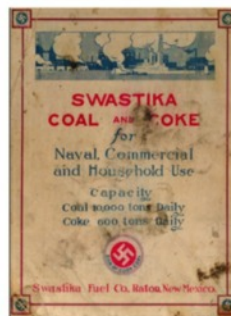
Interestingly, the New Mexico State yearbook was named the *Swastika*, beginning in 1907. In May of 1983 the Board of Regents officially voted against the symbol's use, saying “It is the responsibility of the board when an issue becomes of this magnitude . . . not because of logic but because of the impact on the university.”<sup>47</sup>



Therefore, it wasn't anything unusual when the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain & Pacific Railway Company (successor to Raton Coal & Coke Company) proudly called their subsidiary “Swastika Fuel Company”. Frank Thomas, general sales agent for the railroad, “which had the happy intuitive to adopt the Swastika, the Navajo good luck emblem”,<sup>48</sup> was proud to introduce the emblem as his company's trademark. The company's offices were located in Raton and its products were distributed throughout Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. The coal mined was also used by AT&SF, and gradually other uses were found as the market opened up to include a large portion of the Southwest.



A SWASTIKA FANCY LUMP  
Weight 2755 Pounds



**Swastika Fuel Company**  
General Office: Raton, New Mexico

STEAM AND DOMESTIC	FOUNDRY & DOMESTIC
<b>COAL</b>	<b>COKE</b>

Mines at:  
Brilliant  
Blanchard  
Van Houten  
Kochler  
NEW MEXICO

Coke Ovens at:  
Gardiner  
Kochler  
NEW MEXICO

**Capacity [ 10,000 tons coal | Daily  
1,000 tons coke ]**

**J. C. LARKIN, Sales Manager**  
RATON, N. M.

AGENCIES

Axtree & Sample, El Paso, Tex.  
J. L. A. Thomas Coal Company, Dallas, Tex.  
Jackson-Walker Coal & Material Co.,  
Wichita, Kan.  
Southwestern Coal and Grain Co.,  
Amarillo, Tex.

Swastika first started out as a camp and grew into a company town. In 1919 a post office was established and as workers arrived, plots were laid out and homes began to be built for the miners and their families. Many of them, like those working mines throughout that area, were immigrants – Italians were prominently represented. The Italians brought their love of soccer and challenged neighboring camps to play against them.

Interestingly, as the so-called “Swastika Route” began to open up with regular shipments, Cimarron experienced a revival of sorts as a terminal. Coal production influenced a number of industries. Later, with increased oil exploration in Texas came the need for more coal to provide steam power for the drilling operations. By 1929, Swastika had reached a population of around five hundred – oh, and Raton built the Hotel Swastika (later renamed the Yucca), “at the foot of beautiful Raton Pass”.



When Brilliant closed in the mid-1930s, and with Hitler and his Nazi regime beginning to make itself a menace throughout Europe, the name Swastika no longer seemed appropriate.

*Swastika is to disappear as the name of a post office in New Mexico. Patrons of the post office and the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain and Pacific Co., owners of the Swastika mining camp, have petitioned the post office department for change of the name to Brilliant.*

*At the outset of the invasions of Adolf Hitler of Germany and due to the unpopularity of the name because it had become the emblem of Nazi Germany, the company changed the name of the Swastika Coal Co. to the Raton Coal Co., and now approval is being asked of the post office for changing the post office name.*

*The change will bring back to New Mexico the name of a post office that first appeared in the 90's and flourished for 35 years where there was activity in the coal camp there. The original town of Brilliant was seven miles up the canyon from Swastika, and in its heyday was a community of 1000 persons. It had the only dry washer for coal in the United States. The mine was abandoned, the washer that was built at a cost of several thousand dollars sold for junk.*

*It's only the unpopularity of Swastika that revives the name of Brilliant at a different location. 49*

The Hotel Swastika had already changed its name to the Yucca Hotel. Raton had also changed "Swastika Avenue" to "Brilliant Avenue". However, just because the name change had been petitioned didn't mean that the wheels of government would immediately take notice and act. The subject came up again when Truth or Consequences, formerly Hot Springs and renamed after a popular game show, petitioned the post office to known simply as "T. or C." In 1950 the post office was balking, but it shouldn't have been surprising since the U.S. Board on Geographic names was just considering approval of Brilliant as the town's legal name. State maps continued to show "Swastika". 50

It was just as well since by the early 1950s the town of Swastika/Brilliant/New Brilliant had been abandoned.

## **Dawson**

Because one of the themes of this issue is how people made their way to New Mexico, the *Land of Enchantment*, it seems appropriate to repeat the story of Dawson (March 2018 issue) and add a few more details, beginning with the man for whom the town was named. Most accounts related to Dawson's history barely mention him, but John Barkley Dawson's story is a compelling one.

While there is no dispute as to being a Kentuckian by birth (November 10, 1830), it's unclear where in Kentucky he was born. According to most family trees (which have no doubt been copied from other trees) he was born in Carter County (eastern Kentucky) or possibly Bourbon County (according to his 1918 obituary). It may have been neither, although his family had links to Bourbon County.

According to *A History of Christian County, Kentucky*, John Barkley Dawson was descended from Thomas Dawson, a Revolutionary War veteran born in Virginia in 1759. Thomas was also an early Kentucky pioneer who married Mary Ann Clay, daughter of Dr. Henry Clay of Bourbon County (and a cousin to Henry Clay the Kentucky statesman and three-time presidential candidate).

Thomas, a large landowner in Bourbon County, heard about western Kentucky opening and in 1816 went to Christian County (later Trigg County split off). At the time of his death in 1829 (Trigg County) he owned sixteen hundred acres of land. His son Thomas Henry Dawson was most likely born in Bourbon County in 1809 and most certainly went with his family to western Kentucky. 51 Christian County marriage records indicate Thomas Henry Dawson married Letitia (Louann) DeGraffenreid in 1829. 52 Unless his father returned to Bourbon County, John was born in Christian County (or Trigg), his obituary and perpetually-errant trees notwithstanding it most likely wasn't Carter County.

It's unclear when Thomas Henry left Kentucky, but in 1850 he and his wife Louann and son "Barly" (Barkley) were living as a farm family in Franklin County, Arkansas (personal estate value of \$500). By 1860 the family of three was living in Buchanan County, Texas (later renamed Stephens County). Interestingly, John was a "trader" with a personal estate value of \$9,000 while his father was a farmer with a personal estate value of \$2,500. It seems likely John was a cattle trader. He was also an Indian fighter and Texas Ranger, serving under the command of Captain John R. Baylor. In June 1860 while fighting a band of Indians who had murdered a settler, John was wounded slightly, "shot through the hand". Captain Baylor's account published in *The State Gazette* (Austin) is worth a read, proof of the dangers our early pioneer ancestors faced. <sup>53</sup>

Years later the 1860 campaign was still a part of epic Texas history as Captain Baylor and his men (including his brother George, John and John's brother-in-law Thomas Stockton) "had a desperate encounter with a large party of Comanche Indians on Paint creek, in Baylor county, in June 1860, and followed them over one hundred miles. . . Returning they met seven Indians, killing six of them and recovered the scalp of Josephus Browning."<sup>54</sup> Eight years later the account was published in another newspaper, noting John B. Dawson was by then "a wealthy cattleman in New Mexico". <sup>55</sup>

John must have done rather well for himself since by 1870 he was living in Colfax County, with a personal real estate value of \$40,000, having acquired 24,000 acres of the Maxwell Land Grant in 1869. In a 2005 book review published in *The Daily Sentinel* (Grand Junction, Colorado), mention was made of John "who had partnered with [Charles] Goodnight in cattle drives from Texas". <sup>56</sup> Obviously, cattle ranching was in his blood . . . more on John Barkley Dawson in a future issue.

For several years Dawson was a successful cattle baron and sheep rancher. Because Lucien Maxwell had sold out to an English company in 1870, the subsequently re-organized company sued Dawson in 1891 claiming he only held rights to 1,260 acres. Meanwhile, Dawson had lived in peace during the Colfax County War as he and his family were using coal found on the land for heating and cooking. The new company saw an opportunity to make a deal with the railroad, thus the lawsuit instituted against Dawson.

Ultimately, John Dawson prevailed after a protracted court battle eventually decided by the New Mexico Territorial Supreme Court. In 1896 Dawson signed away the land's mineral rights for \$450,000. Serious suitors were exploring in earnest by early January 1901. Between March and June 1901 the El Paso and Northeastern Railway and the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad purchased 20,000 acres with the intention of extracting coal and laying track between Santa Rosa and the coal fields.

By June 1901 the deal had been consummated and John Dawson had been paid \$100,000. In addition \$5,000 was paid to Dawson for a town site, "outside of which Mr. Dawson reserves his home, farming land, orchard and some gracing land." Accordingly:

*The supposition is that this sale amounted to at least \$400,000. The town-site will be located just across the river from Mr. Dawson's house on the Vermejo. This immense coal mine will be opened on a twelve-foot, two-inch vein cropping out on the surface. A large saw mill is being erected for getting out props, ties and the constructing of buildings. The public is yet at sea as to whether the road will run to Las Vegas or go down through the Ute Creek and Tesequite country, east of Springer, intersecting the Rock Island. <sup>57</sup>*

The Dawson Fuel Company was incorporated with capital of \$1,000,000 and headquartered in Alamogordo. By November 1901 the new town of Dawson was “being built up very rapidly. . . A coal washer, long lines of coke ovens and dumping houses are being constructed as rapidly as possible as well as dwelling houses for miners and others. Mechanics and laborers are in great demand.” 58

A developer working with the railway companies was highly confident of the Dawson district’s prospects as more than 300 miners were employed by February 1902. Completion of the railroad branch from Tucumcari to the Santa Fe line would allow for increased production, and with that, more jobs for miners who would immigrate from around the world in years to come.

*The coal deposits in the Dawson district are the largest in the territory; operations have merely begun, but already an output of 1,000 [tons] daily is possible. There are three tunnels now being pushed in on the vein, which has been traced for four and one-half miles. I expect the Dawson Fuel Company to become one of the greatest coal producers in the Southwest. A model and up-to-date plant is in course of construction, which when completed will be operated by electricity. Coke ovens to the number of 250 are ready to fire.* 59

One month after becoming president of the newly organized Citizens National Bank in Raton, John Dawson sold the rest of his property to the Phelps Dodge Corporation and purchased 2,400 acres in the Yampa Valley of northern Colorado. He once again built a successful ranching operation, and as luck would have it, made another fortune after large coal deposits were discovered on that land. He sold out, moved to Los Angeles and died there in 1918.

A fire at mine no. 1 in early September 1903 made headlines around the nation as two Mexican miners and a Negro known only as “Phil” perished. Someone had set fire to a curtain at the mine’s entrance; a terrible explosion followed. Coal mining is, of course, not without risks.

Three years after opening mining operations, the town of Dawson was home to “one of the largest and most successful mining companies in the territory.” Good old-fashioned American ingenuity was largely responsible:

*The Dawson camp is especially remarkable for the fact that although built in a mountain canyon over twenty miles from the nearest railroad station so that every pound of the machinery had to be conveyed over a rough road by wagon, it was entirely constructed and equipped with the most modern devices and machinery which American ingenuity has produced; this was all transported and put in place in the mines and on the tipples before the railroad was being built from Tucumcari to Dawson was completed, so that the same day on which the first train reached the new camp the mines began operation and the coal was ready to be taken to market.*

By April 1904 the mines were producing 2,000 tons of coal per day, an increase of 700 to 800 tons since the fall of 1903. The mines hadn’t yet reached maximum potential of 3,000 tons, however. Over six hundred miners were paid by the piece, 55 cents per ton, “and steady workmen take out from seven to eight tons per day.” Most miners made up to \$180 per month, but with extra effort might make over \$200. Miners, paid by the ton, could choose to work one hour or ten. Someone willing to put forth sufficient effort could expect to live quite comfortably, while “the shiftless ones earn only enough to keep the wolf from the door.” One newspaper reporter observed “sober, industrious, and contented” workers. At the time this

was especially good news for company officials, since “disaffection in the Colorado camps” had not yet brought fear of a violent strike, owing to the camp never having unionized. <sup>60</sup> A decade later the so-called Colorado Coalfield War would tragically culminate in the Ludlow Massacre.

When Dawson was founded in 1901 it was strictly a company town – the Dawson Fuel Company owned and ran it. No one had been allowed to purchase a home or start a business. It was a form of corporate censorship, as “political, religious or business freedom [had] been unknown in Dawson.” However, once the company was sold to Phelps-Dodge in 1905 the town was essentially “reborn” as the new owners had no interest in managing a town.

Instead, the town of Dawson would “be surveyed into town lots and sold to the public, the company reserving a sufficient amount of ground for operating purposes and all mineral rights on the 22,000 acres of land they own. There will then be opportunities for business men to enter Dawson.” <sup>61</sup> This was, of course, welcome news for Dawson and Colfax County.

Except for one tragedy involving dynamite killing one miner, the news out of Dawson was upbeat in 1906. Phelps-Dodge was working aggressively to increase output while building a railroad to connect its New Mexico coal fields to the company’s Arizona copper mining interests. Over four hundred homes were occupied by miners while over one hundred were currently under construction.

The town had two saloons (both closed on Sunday), although gambling was banned. By mid-year over two thousand men were on the payroll. Dawson was “a mighty fine camp . . . by far the best and most thriving mining camp anywhere on this part of the globe.” <sup>62</sup> By the close of 1910 production was higher than ever as 125 cars full of Dawson coal were departing the mines, thanks to round-the-clock work of 1,800 miners.

Dawson, by necessity, had become a thriving town which served the growing number of men, women and children. It wasn’t just a company town, destined to fold after only a few years’ existence. Most mining towns of any size had a company store and Dawson had one too – the Phelps Dodge Mercantile. The store sold everything from food, furniture, clothing and jewelry to ice from its own ice plant. The town had a community swimming pool, hotel, schools, churches, a modern hospital, opera house, bowling alley and even a golf course. Phelps Dodge apparently spared no expense in building a model city for its employees. The company also built a steam-powered electric plant which furnished electricity to Dawson, as well as Raton and Walsenburg, Colorado.

Immigrants from Germany, Hungary, Austria, Italy, Greece, Finland, Yugoslavia, Ireland, Mexico and Poland came to America to work the mines. One Italian immigrant, Louis Andrea Savio, worked for Phelps-Dodge as a musician and later opened the Dawson Bakery. In 1921 Dawson’s Junior and Senior High School gained a new faculty member as “Mr. Savio was asked to become band master and he showed his good spirit and interest in the Dawson schools by accepting this office and moreover of giving instruction free of charge.” <sup>63</sup> This was typical of Louis Savio, who wholeheartedly supported his community as a proud naturalized American citizen (1909).

*The Dawson News* was published weekly from 1921 to 1929, highlighting the comings and goings of a tight-knit community. Several businesses and organizations regularly advertised

their services.

**DAWSON BAKERY**  
 Louis Savio, Proprietor  
 Italian, French or American  
**BREAD**  
 Pastries of All Kinds  
 Fresh Baked Every Day  
 Candies—Tobacco—Soft  
 Drinks

Amusements for the Week at the  
**DAWSON OPERA HOUSE**  
**Program**  
 MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7—  
**CHARLIE CHAPLIN**  
 "ON EASY STREET"  
 This is considered a very good two-act Chaplin Comedy, and those of you who like "Charlie" will enjoy it. AUGMENTED BY  
**"The Dangerous Paradise"**  
 BY EDMUND GOULDING  
 "The Dangerous Paradise" is full of delicate humor with sometimes just a touch of satire, but it is a production that will register 100 per cent as entertainment. It was directed by William P. S. Earle, whose splendid work with Selznick Pictures has made him one of the foremost directors of the day.  
 ADMISSION 36 cts.; War Tax 4 cts.

*Phelps Dodge Mercantile Co.*  
 DAWSON, NEW MEX.

The Dawson  
**BARBER SHOP**  
 E. F. SCOTT, Prop.  
 SANITARY AND  
 UP-TO-DATE  
 Children's Hair Cuts a  
 Specialty  
 HOURS—8 A. M. to 7 P. M.  
 Saturdays, open to 9 P. M.

**Dawson Hotel**  
 John Hixenbaugh, Mgr.  
 American Plan  
 Electric Lights—Steam  
 Heat  
 Single Meals 75c  
 RATES \$3.00 per day

Vernese Lodge No. 36  
 A. F. & A. M.  
 Regular communication on  
 the first and fourth Thursdays of  
 each month at 8 o'clock  
 in the Lodge Hall in Dawson  
 Home Building.  
 Visiting Always Welcome  
 G. W. THURSTON, W. M.  
 O. F. WASHINGTON, Sec'y.

**THE DAWSON GARAGE**  
 A. M. VAN DYKE, Manager  
 Twice-a-Day Auto Service to Raton  
 Auto Lovers Garage at 9 A. M. and 3 P. M. Closed Cars.  
 WELL EQUIPPED MACHINE SHOP  
**Full Line of  
 Automobile Accessories**  
 Itiner Service to All Parts of Camp, Night or Day  
 Baggage and Transfer—Prompt Service

The man who does not  
 and can not  
 save money can not and will not do any-  
 thing else worth while. The best way to ac-  
 cumulate money is to resolutely save, and  
 bank a fixed portion of your income, no  
 matter how small the amount. Open an ac-  
 count with  
**The Bank of Dawson**

Dawson City Lodge No. 30  
 KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS  
 Regular meetings every Wednesday  
 night at 8:00 o'clock  
 Visiting Always Welcome  
 EARL DUPONT, C. C.  
 HARVEY SPRINGER, K. R. S.

A sampling of Dawson businesses and organizations which regularly advertised in *The Dawson News* (1921-1929).

Clearly, Dawson wasn't a typical flash-in-the-pan mining town. Courses were offered free of charge to "various groups of workmen in the special trade in which they are employed. That the work is appreciated by the men themselves is shown by the large number now availing themselves of their opportunities", *The Dawson News* reported in 1921.<sup>64</sup> Of course, like any mining camp or town it wasn't immune to tragedy, despite efforts to educate miners by offering vocational classes which taught safety and mine rescue courses.

The 1903 explosion and fire which killed only three people (while several hundred escaped unharmed), paled in comparison to the devastating explosion and fire which occurred on October 22, 1913. Newspapers across the nation reported on the tragedy which would go down in the annals of United States coal mining history.

## ALBUQUERQUE MORNING JOURNAL.

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR  
 1407 PAVAN No. 23.

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1913.

1913-14

# EXPLOSION IN DAWSON COAL MINE ENTOMBS TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY MEN

Two hundred and eighty-six miners were trapped; ultimately, only twenty-three were rescued. Initially, black damp, "a carbon dioxide mixture occurring as a mine gas and incapable of supporting life or flame" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) was suspected. By 2:00 a.m. of the 23rd fourteen bodies, seven still alive, had been removed from the underground tomb. All workers were called to rescue duty as townspeople waited anxiously for word of their friends' or family member's fate.

As one might imagine rescue efforts were a delicate and arduous operation. One week later over forty bodies had yet to be found. Of those whose bodies had been taken out many were placed in coffins and pathetically marked "Unknown". Meanwhile, the aforementioned

Colorado labor unrest at Ludlow was making headlines even as Dawson rescue operations continued.

# *Anarchy and Riot Reign in Strike District of Colorado*

Albuquerque Journal, October 27, 1913

Was there any connection with the Dawson tragedy and the ongoing unrest in Colorado? Veteran journalist and war correspondent William G. Shepherd may have suspected something other than “black damp” as the cause. A startling headline appeared in a Santa Fe newspaper on the morning of October 30:

## **Was Dawson Simply Murder? Shepherd Thinks Latest Mine-Horror Shows Why Colorado Strikers Are Fighting “26 Broadway”**

At the time of the explosion Shepherd, who had a history of witnessing history firsthand (he was an eyewitness to the horrific 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City), was living, apparently in sympathy with striking coal miners, in a Ludlow tent city.

*Tonight, as I write this on a deal table in my tent God’s stars are shining above me and John D. Rockefeller’s eye is on me.*

*It is a great, huge, white eye, and its beams flash over our camp and pass through the canvas of our tents. This eye will fall on the little children of the camp as they say their prayers tonight; it will shine on their faces and on the faces of their fathers and mothers as they sleep through the night.*

*I wonder what God’s stars think of it.*

The searchlight situated on a hilltop two miles from camp was encircled by a trench where “John D. Rockefeller’s strong hands, two machine guns” stood ready to quell any unwanted agitation. That evening he had dined with a family from Breathitt County, Kentucky, the father having just completed a 90-day sentence for carrying a revolver.

That night word of the Dawson tragedy was delivered to Shepherd by messenger, placing him in a pensive frame of mind, well aware miners with whom he lived were striking against being likewise tragically killed in a devastating mine accident or explosion. It all seemed like a dream (or nightmare). An American flag flew over the camp, but was Colorado in America? Was William Shepherd jumping to conclusions?

Immediately after Shepherd arrived on the scene in Dawson he was made aware of a scenario which had yet to make its way into newspaper accounts. Was there a cover-up? Was it murder?

*I got these facts immediately after my arrival here from Colorado, from Lois Lakas, a Greek, who, in spite of the efforts of mine officials to keep all outsiders from the scene, entered Stag Canyon and hid in the home of a dead Greek miner while the mine guards were hunting him in vain. Lakas questioned eight Greek miners and several miners of other nationalities concerning the explosion.*

## *Do the facts prove murder?*

At 6:00 a.m. on the morning of the explosion a mine guard reported to superintendent William McDermott that dust gas had filled the mine. A half hour following the explosion the same guard rushed to the scene where scores were gathered. He would not take any responsibility for the tragedy – “My shoulders are clear. I told the officials this morning that the mine wasn’t safe to work in!”

Was McDermott complicit? Hardly, it would seem, since he was also killed in the explosion as he investigated the report of dust and gas. His job was to keep the mine working safely and efficiently to ensure output would be maintained. Still, mining operations had ramped up in response to the coal strike in Colorado. A number of additional mining machines were employed, all of which more dust than usual. Additional fans should have facilitated removal of excess dust, but apparently failed. <sup>65</sup>

Mine inspectors delivered a verdict on November 4 to New Mexico Governor W.C. McDonald as to the cause. While very little methane was found to be present, clearly “coal dust was the predominant force that propagated the explosion throughout all the mine”. \* What ignited the dust had not as yet been determined.

In conjunction with a coroner’s jury it was ultimately determined the explosion was “caused by a shot having been unlawfully fired by an unknown employee of such company at the time working on pillar No. 27, ninth west entry, No. 2 mine, which employee met his own death in such explosion.” <sup>66</sup>

In 1923, another 123 were killed. Some of those killed in the 1923 explosion were children of victims of the 1913 disaster. All of which indicated many of these immigrant miners had roots in the community. For more on the victims of both disasters, see the March 2018 issue of *Digging History Magazine*.

Despite these tragedies, mining operations continued until production finally decreased and demand declined. In 1950, Phelps Dodge closed the mine and sold the town. Most of the town was demolished, although some houses were moved to other locations.

The town was largely forgotten until in 1991 two brothers (Dale and Lloyd Christian) were exploring the area with metal detectors and discovered the abandoned and dilapidated cemetery. In 1992, through their efforts, the cemetery was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places.

The site is now part of a working ranch, but the cemetery is still accessible to the public. Every other year on Labor Day former residents and their families return for a picnic.

While re-researching this story I came across an excellent web site, complete with photos and stories: [https://www.chuckspeed.com/Dawson\\_Association/index.html](https://www.chuckspeed.com/Dawson_Association/index.html)

There are also a number of videos on YouTube which might of interest, short vignettes of what Dawson looks like today as well as memories of its heyday. For assistance in researching Dawson:

[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Dawson,\\_Mining\\_Camp,\\_Colfax\\_County,\\_New\\_Mexico\\_Genealogy#Post\\_Office](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Dawson,_Mining_Camp,_Colfax_County,_New_Mexico_Genealogy#Post_Office)

# COMING TO NEW MEXICO . . .

## THE FRED HARVEY WAY



by Sharon Hall

It's unlikely it could happen quite the same way today – two businessmen settling on a long-term, highly-successful partnership with only a handshake. That's how the oft-told story goes:

*Mr. Harvey knew the Santa Fe Railroad was expanding and needed to develop a robust passenger business to finance the growth. With his knowledge of the restaurant business, he believed he could help accomplish this. When Harvey met with Santa Fe officials in 1876, the entrepreneur was confident he could personally change the miserable reputation of railway dining and increase passenger service. On a handshake with the president of the Santa Fe Railroad, an agreement was reached, and the first restaurant chain in the United States was launched.* <sup>1</sup>

Following his death on February 9, 1901, tributes were printed in newspapers across the nation. Quite simply, “there [was] no name in America better known to travelers than that of Fred Harvey.” What he had accomplished was nothing short of amazing in the quarter century since convincing the president of the Santa Fe Railroad he could increase their business by ensuring passengers had access to fine dining while making their way across “the Santa Fe road”. Harvey did it by establishing (or taking over) eating houses along the Santa Fe line, “transform[ing] what [was] generally the worst place on earth to get a good meal into dining stations that are recognized as unequalled the wide world over.” <sup>2</sup>

Frederick Henry Harvey was born in London, England on June 27, 1835, the son of Charles and Ann Harvey. In 1843 Charles was a struggling tailor who was forced to publish his intention to appear before a Court of Bankruptcy “praying to be examined touching my debts, estate and effects, and to be protected from all process upon making a full disclosure and surrender of such estate and effects for payment of my just and lawful debts.” <sup>3</sup> The 1840s were more than a bit rocky for England and Charles was not alone in his financial struggles. A number of businessmen – a horse dealer, a woollen draper and a slopseller – were among those who had made similar declarations and would be appearing before the same Court of Bankruptcy. Apparently the clothing business was especially hit hard (woollen draper - a retail merchant of cloth; slopseller - a merchant who sold cheaply-made clothes).

Although Charles was merely insolvent and not entirely bankrupt the stigma was all the same. He had never been a man of means and now he would need to start from scratch in order to provide for his wife and three children (Fred, Annie and Eliza). Fred would eventually live for a time with his widowed Aunt Mary, she an industrious businesswoman with servants to care for her own children. Precisely when Fred left England for America is a bit muddled as most accounts of his early life use 1850 as the date he left his native land at the tender age of

15. However, he was enumerated in Mary Harvey's household in 1851. Charles Harvey was enumerated that same year living with his three daughters (Agnes born around 1845). Ann Harvey was missing, however, perhaps due to her occasional flings "with a coachman", according to family lore. <sup>4</sup>

According to the 1900 United States census Fred immigrated in 1855, although one biographer purports the date to be 1853. Most accounts seem to imply Fred came alone to America, but one obituarial account stated he had come with his parents. However, his mother Ann died in 1855 of tuberculosis. Fred, after becoming an American citizen, brought his father and sister Eliza back to America (in 1860 Charles was enumerated with Fred and his young wife Ann in St. Louis).

Nevertheless, when Fred landed in New York he needed a job. The one he secured, working for Smith & McNell's, was without a doubt the most influential one he would ever have, given how his fortunes were made years later. Fred was fresh off the boat and Smith & McNell's was a newly established hotel and full-service, 24-hours-a-day restaurant.



His first job was quite menial, a dishwasher, or "pot walloper", as they called it in England. Still, it gave him a bird's-eye-view of the nuts and bolts of running a restaurant. Its location at the center of the Washington Street Market, reeking of everything animal, vegetable and mineral, was strategic. Fresh food, the best available, was nearby and purchased on a daily basis.

According to a Fred Harvey biographer, Henry Smith and Tom McNell didn't believe in credit, and neither did they waste time with written records. Business deals were sealed by handshake, and at the end of each day accounts were settled and profits divided.

The restaurant was unique, servicing two separate clienteles. On the main floor one could purchase a hearty meal for fifteen cents, while upstairs more sumptuous fare was available "for wealthier patrons expecting prime cuts and a more refined gustatory experience." <sup>5</sup>

By the time Fred left the employ of Smith & McNell's he had worked his way up to line cook, and it was time to broaden his horizons in New Orleans, a culinary center in its own right. However, Fred could already see the handwriting on the wall – the South would be embroiled in conflict in the not-too-distant future. With a disdain for slavery in general, he certainly didn't want to be conscripted to fight for the South.

Instead, he chose St. Louis to continue his pursuit of the American dream. Abner Hitchcock, owner of the Butterfield House, hired him – and later sponsored Fred's application for United States citizenship. Following citizenship came ownership of his own restaurant.

The Merchants Dining Saloon was already a successful establishment, offering "inducements to business men and the traveling community" <sup>6</sup> who even then were criss-crossing the nation via whatever means available at the time. After managing it on his own for a year Fred was ready to take on a partner who would run the restaurant while he visited family in England in later 1859.

Charles and Eliza returned with him, as did Fred's new wife, a Dutch woman named Ann. Charles' American sojourn was short (but not before being enumerated in their

upstairs living quarters in 1860) and he returned to England. Fred and Ann had their first child, a son named Edward, in early 1861, not long before Abraham Lincoln would take the nation's helm. Missouri delegates were meeting to decide which side to take in the coming war.

While delegates elected to remain in the Union, the state's governor had argued for secession. After the governor established a Confederate camp north of St. Louis, Fred Harvey's fortunes began to sour. His partner took everything the two had worked hard to save and joined the Confederate Army. Left penniless with limited options as a newly-minted American citizen who really didn't have a dog in this fight, Fred took up the offer of a job in St. Joseph.

Captain Rufus Ford operated a packet boat business on the Missouri River and had recently contracted to ferry settlers on their way to Nebraska Territory across "The Big Muddy", as the Missouri was familiarly known by. As far as the Civil War and future migration westward, St. Joseph was fast becoming a busy hub with more than enough challenges for the Harvey family.

St. Joseph, although significantly smaller than New York City, New Orleans or St. Louis, was nonetheless a burgeoning business and transportation center. In April 1860 the short-lived Pony Express was established, and "St. Joe" was the jumping-off point for those trekking to Oregon.

Fred had the misfortune of contracting typhoid fever, most often the result of drinking contaminated water. The disease attacks the gastrointestinal system with a vengeance and Fred's health struggles dragged on for some time.

By the time he returned to work, Ann was pregnant again so he took on a second job as a government postal clerk in early 1862. Because his work required him to sort mail

on a train, he gained knowledge crucial to future endeavors.

After his second child, Charles, was born, Ann died following delivery complications. As was so often the case on the frontier, a man widowed with children needed to find a suitable mate as soon as possible. Four months following Ann's death he married Barbara Mattas, a recent Czechoslovakian immigrant. Harvey's biographer believes Barbara, or "Sally" as she was more commonly called, may have been a waitress at Fred's restaurant in St. Louis – and their marriage may have been arranged.

The postal clerk job led to a position with the railroad as a ticket sales agent. Following the Civil War, he migrated fifty miles downriver to Leavenworth, Kansas. By early spring 1865 he had established himself as a sales agent for the Northern Missouri Railroad with offices in the Planters' House. He was welcomed to the city with the warmest of regards, his business reputation having preceded him:

*Mr. Harvey has had an extensive railroad and steamboat experience, and is a courteous gentleman, whom we can confidently recommend to travelers. For two years past he has been connected with the Missouri river packet office at St. Joe and is well and favorably known to many of our Leavenworth merchants. We heartily commend Mr. Harvey and the North Missouri to our readers.* <sup>7</sup>

Tragically, not long after arriving in Leavenworth, Eddie and Charley contracted scarlet fever. Charley died on March 2 and Eddie in early April. A year later Ford Ferguson Harvey was born and Fred and Sally settled into a comfortable life in their new hometown. Fred was also working as a sales agent for the *Leavenworth Conservative*. His ticket sales business shifted, however, after Leavenworth was passed over for a major railroad line in 1866.

By then he was essentially a traveling salesman, and a highly successful one at that. Fred began putting his money into various investment opportunities, and in the years to come made a name for himself as railroads expanded across the nation.

As railroad service became more widely available, innovations such as the Pullman sleeper made train travel more enticing, save for one glaring issue – feeding passengers along the way, and something Fred Harvey would have experienced personally. It was a problem as old as the railroads themselves. In 1857 the *New York Times* published a lengthy harangue (Victorian prose worthy of quoting in its entirety):

*RAILROAD REFRESHMENTS. If there is any word in the English language more shamefully misused than another, it is the word refreshment, as applied to the hurry scurry of eating and drinking at railroad stations. The dreary places in which the painful and unhealthy performances take place are called “Refreshment Saloons;” but there could not be a more inappropriate designation for such abominations of desolation. Directors of railroads appear to have an idea that travelers are destitute of stomach; that eating and drinking are not at all necessary to human beings bound on long journeys, and that nothing more is required than to put them through their misery in as brief a time as possible. It is expected that three or four hundred men, women and children, some of whom must, of necessity, be “feeble folk” and unaccustomed to roughing it, and all of whom have been used to decencies and comforts of orderly homes, can be whirled half a day over a dusty road, with hot cinders flying in their faces; and then, when they approach a station and are dying with weariness, hunger, and thirst, longing for an opportunity to bathe their faces at least before partaking of their*

*much-needed refreshments, that they shall rush out helter-skelter into a dismal long room and dispatch a supper, breakfast, or dinner in fifteen minutes. The consequences of such savage and unnatural feeding are not reported by telegraph as railroad disasters; but if a faithful account were given of them, we are afraid they would be found much more serious than any that are caused by the smashing of cars, or the breaking down of bridges. The traveler who has been riding all night in a dusty and crowded car, unable to sleep, and half suffocated with smoke and foul air, will be suddenly roused from his half lethargic condition by hearing the scream of the steam-whistle, which tells of the near approach to a station; but, before the train stops, the door of the car opens, and the conductor shouts at the top of his voice: “Pogramville – fifteen minutes for breakfast!”*

*Here is a prospect for a weary and hungry traveler to whom fifteen minutes would be brief time enough for ablutions. But washing is out of the question, even if all the conveniences were at hand, and he rushes into the “saloon,” where he is offered a choice of fried ham and eggs, or tough beefsteak soaked in bad butter, tea and coffee, stale bread; the inevitable custard pie and pound cake, are also put at his service; but half the fifteen minutes allowed for breakfast having been lost while waiting for a turn at one of the two wash basins, the bewildered traveler makes a hasty grab at whatever comes within his reach, and hurries back to his seat, to discover before he reaches the end of his journey, that he has laid the foundation for a fit of dyspepsia, which may lead to a disease of the lungs or a fever.*

*A Company that expends thirty millions of dollars in building and equipping a road, ought not to begrudge a few hundred dollars in furnishing a suitable place for travelers to refresh themselves at, nor deny*

*them the necessary time to do it in. Refreshment saloons ought to be under the charge of the Railroad Company for passengers ought not to be put at the mercy of grasping and ignorant men, who are regardless of everything but their own profit. There are very few roads in the whole country on which there is a station where a comfortable meal can be obtained, or where the necessary accommodations are to be found which passengers require when they stop. The Erie Road has the most comfortable and spacious cars of any railroad in the country, and we have no doubt that it would have a great accession of travel if there were decent station-houses on the line for the refreshment of passengers, and the arrangements of the time-tables were such that they could be enjoyed. As our great lines of railroad are laid through wild and half-cultivated [sic] regions, where the common refreshments of City life are not to be looked for, the railroad managers should themselves make the necessary provision for the refreshment of passengers which they have a right to expect. As affairs are now arranged, a few days of railroad traveling are sure to end in a fit of sickness to all expecting those who have hardy constitutions, and are accustomed to the very roughest and toughest manner of living. 8*

I can't help but wonder if Fred Harvey, a well-read English gentleman, had occasion to read this opinion piece in 1857. As the article forcefully argued, poorly prepared food notwithstanding, there was simply no time to properly consume it in a civilized manner without taking the risk of missing the "All Board" call.

According to Harvey's biographer Stephen Fried, "food preparation was often deliberately dragged out so diners wouldn't be able to finish – or sometimes even start – their meals before the half-hour meal break was over. As soon as the caboose was

out of sight, restaurant employees would scrape the uneaten food back into containers to be served to the next unsuspecting victims." 9 Ewww!

Having dined at some of the better depot restaurants available in the East, Fred Harvey knew it was possible to serve good food, even in some out-of-the-way place in the far-flung (and often wild) West. He also knew what a satisfying array of food could be offered, but first he would need to test the waters before giving up his lucrative career as a traveling sales agent.

Fred and his partner Colonel Jasper "Jepp" Rice made a deal with the Kansas Pacific railroad (KPR) to provide food service at three eating stations, none of them in close proximity to Leavenworth – Lawrence (34 miles); Wallace (400 miles) and Hugo, Colorado (500 miles). It would mean more travel for Fred, but he was also able to hire capable managers for each restaurant. Instead of the Smith-McNell way, records were kept and Fred kept a close eye on operations.

It paid off, even though KPR wasn't the easiest company to deal with. Still travelers were pleased with the results:

*The Wallace hotel, Harvey & Rice, proprietors, is an establishment that would do credit to many of our eastern cities, their building being a two story frame of enormous size, and is as neat as a palace, they set a first-class table, and also furnish as neat and comfortable beds as any hotels on the American continent. They are men of unlimited experience in the hotel business, and spare no pains to make their guests comfortable and happy. The Railroad hotel is a very neat and comfortable establishment and is largely patronized. 10*

After failing to convince the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroad that Harvey & Rice could service their eating houses in

Illinois, Missouri and Kansas, they were referred to an up-and-coming railroad – the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (AT&SF or “Santa Fe”). AT&SF was just beginning to lay track, with plans to expand across the West. Over five hundred miles of track already stretched across Kansas and the Atchison, Topeka connection was in operation. Still, the company dreamed of extending their line along the Santa Fe Trail.

Fred approached Santa Fe superintendent Charlie Morse, someone he was already acquainted with, and worked out quite a deal. Whereas, the Kansas Pacific required him to purchase everything in advance and then invoice back to the railroad, Fred negotiated a deal for free rent – and the Santa Fe would cover all utilities. The railroad would also handle shipping of all supplies and provide free transportation to Fred’s employees.

The two shook hands and as the saying goes, “the rest is history”. The railroad’s Topeka offices were just across the street so executives would be sampling the eating house’s fare on a regular basis, ensuring quality. Fred Harvey’s Topeka eating house was an instant success:

*Yesterday in passing through Topeka we saw the familiar face of our old friend Guy Potter, at the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Depot Eating House. He looked like a gentleman. He invited us in. We went in and found the neatest, cleanest dining hall in the State, everything bran [sic] new. The crockery, cutlery and silverware of the choicest patterns, and the table supplied in the best of style. It was a luxury to set down to such a table. A man who takes such pains to serve the public ought to be rewarded with a liberal patronage. Guy never does anything by halves. Success to the new enterprise. 11*

Guy Potter was likely the manager, but Fred Harvey was the genius behind it all even

though he wasn’t mentioned. That would change. Topeka was a well-documented success and Fred Harvey was just getting started.

Topeka was his “test case” with the Santa Fe as Fred continued to manage the three Kansas Pacific eating houses. AT&SF was still expanding across Kansas, and in 1877 the railroad ventured into Dodge City. In conjunction with laying track the railroad also built large stock pens and a shipping center at the depot. Kansas Pacific had also built pens and a shipping center at Ellsworth, a town perhaps even more raucous than Dodge City (Wild Bill Hickok once ran for Ellsworth County sheriff and lost).

Before the Santa Fe established its cattle depot in Dodge City, Texas ranchers herded their cattle to Ellsworth. The difference in distance was significant – Dodge City was about 125 miles closer. When AT&SF offered lower shipping rates, the Kansas Pacific then had a serious competitor. While the Santa Fe was on a roll it made yet another bold move by luring a talented executive of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy.

Fred Harvey knew William Barstow Strong, having worked with him at various times past. Strong hit the ground running with plans to transform the railroad from a regional line to one which stretched all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Meanwhile, Fred had a deal to manage the Florence, Kansas eating house, the first of several the Santa Fe would hand over to his management.

Coming out of Kansas the Santa Fe would expand through Colorado first, then down through New Mexico Territory. By early 1878 one railroad trade journal, the *Chicago Railway Review*, made a bold prophecy:

*The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe road under the management of Mr. William B. Strong, is developing into a road of*

*national importance. The company last week commenced to tunnel Raton Pass, and we understand it is their intention to push their road through immediately to a junction with the Southern Pacific railroad now past Fort Yuma, on its way through Southern Arizona to Tucson. . . Boston capitalists have promised sufficient funds to complete the road to Santa Fe this year. From Santa Fe they will move down the Rio Grande river and connect with the Southern Pacific in Arizona. The whole work can be accomplished inside of two years.* <sup>12</sup>

Raton Pass was a well-known and oft-used passage on the Santa Fe Trail. Although a daunting task, it would seem appropriate that a railroad which was commonly known as “the Santa Fe” would be the one to tackle it, especially given its “Strong” leadership. The first obstacle to overcome was convincing Richens “Uncle Dick” Wootton, the private owner of the land known as Raton Pass, to allow the Santa Fe to build their line across it. In late February 1878 they did just that – just ahead of their competitor, the Denver & Rio Grande (D&RG).

Meanwhile, back in Kansas, Fred Harvey had taken over the depot hotel in Florence and garnered his first “rave” review:

### **Florence Railroad House**

*The railroad eating house at Florence – the proprietor has no cards and we don’t know his name – but he sets a square meal all the same. Everybody takes breakfast and supper there.* <sup>13</sup>

The following year Fred, owing to his success in transforming the eating house, decided to take it one step further by engaging the services of a fellow Englishman and well-known chef, William H. Phillips, who debuted his talents at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Fred was also proposing “to enlarge his

buildings and have more room for the traveling public” after turning away travelers for lack of sufficient accommodations.

Not only was the hotel enlarged, its ambiance was dramatically transformed into a fine dining establishment. Samuel Nugent Townshend, a correspondent traveling the West and writing for a British sporting magazine (*The Field*), observed:

*Florence is perhaps the very best centre for the intending emigrant to stay at, for he has trains going in four different directions, and has by a long way the best hotel in Kansas to put up at. The Clifton Hotel has an English manager, and of course a bath-room. Its apartments and its cooking are very good. No more jovial or attentive host than W.H. Phillips and his good wife ever lived in “merrie England,” or left it for the far West . . .* <sup>14</sup>

It was regularly mentioned (with well-deserved pride) in the local newspaper:

*“The best breakfast I have had since I left home,” was the remark of an intelligent old gentleman, as he came out of the Clifton Hotel the other morning; a companion declared a better could not be had in Kansas. – Good for Phillips.* <sup>15</sup>

*The bill of fare at the Clifton Hotel next Sunday will be one of the best so far as yet gotten up. If any of our people are desirous of a first class meal we advise them to go down and take it there.* <sup>16</sup>

Despite criticism of its “border charge of seventy-five cents a meal”, the hotel’s reputation was solid and in 1880 plans were underway to expand again. In early April workmen began the remodel : enlarging the dining room; converting the old lunch room into a billiard parlor; adding a laundry, barber shop and bathrooms; adding 22 rooms and more. Mr. Harvey’s hotel was quite simply “without equal in the State”. <sup>17</sup>

Simultaneously, Fred was also transforming another depot hotel in Lakin, Kansas. Before expanding his expertise into Colorado, he ended his relationship with the Kansas Pacific. His future was solidly with AT&SF which continued expansion under Strong's leadership.

William Strong was making the most of his tenure at the helm of the Santa Fe, laying the groundwork for the railroad's future success by utilizing a shrewd and progressive business model. His confidence in Fred Harvey was well-placed:

*President Strong is cleaning up things generally along the line preparatory to transferring the active management to another . . . While here, among several other things, he organized a new coal and coke company which is practically identical in its management with their similar companies in Kansas, and which is intended the cheapen the coal supply. At Las Vegas he organized the Hot Springs business, placing the conduct of that important property into the hands of Fred Harvey, whose management of the eating houses along the line is a constant evidence of his ability in that direction – that he knows how to keep a hotel. 18*

Fred took charge of three eating houses by early 1881: Raton, Las Vegas and Lamy. However, the Santa Fe clearly had set its sights on something more luxurious in Las Vegas, although a temporary restaurant was set up at Las Vegas before a depot was built. While it wasn't much to look at on the outside, opening the box car door revealed something altogether unexpected:

*One veteran railroader remembered them as "the worst-looking box-cars ... the company and Harvey could scare up ... [but] when travelers entered the big side door ... they gasped with wonderment at what met their gaze. The walls were shiny with fresh paint in the gaudy Indian colors,*

*the tables were spread with heavy milk-white Irish linen and napkins the size of pillow slips, the silverware shone like a French plate mirror, the clean clear glass goblets were filled with ice and nice clear water, and on the tables were large vases filled with wonderful fresh flowers." 19*

April 17, 1882 "was a field day for Las Vegas and the hot springs. . . . [as] waves of the grand excursions which are to visit this favorite resort during the coming season reached this place. Everything has been put in readiness for their coming at great expense to the A. T & S. F. Railroad." 20

No expense had been spared in designing the Montezuma Hotel, "a magnificent affair" situated at an altitude of 7,000 feet above sea level near the Montezuma Hot Springs six miles west of Las Vegas.

*It is a Queen Anne design four stories high, and contains two hundred and twenty-five rooms, not counting the tributary buildings, which would raise the number to nearly or quite three hundred rooms, which makes it the most capacious building in the territory.*

*Fred Harvey, the general manager of the Springs, has furnished this hotel in a gorgeous manner . . . The rich Axminster carpet, bordered to match, is very beautiful. The window hangings are exquisitely fine. The hangings of each window costing over one hundred dollars. The large mirrors, easy chairs, steel engravings in quilt frames, and a fine Steinway piano make a place where queens could rest their wearied limbs. 21*

The hotel featured a bowling alley, billiard rooms (one for the gents and one for the ladies) and was the first structure in New Mexico to feature electric lights and an elevator. Two hundred guests arrived in time for the grand opening and later feted at a banquet fit for royalty, featuring

sumptuous fare. Fred Harvey was the keynote speaker that evening.

**MENU.**

**Blue Point Oysters.**  
 Green sea turtle—Consonne printaniers.  
 California salmon, a la Joinville—Mountain trout a la Colbert.  
 Potato croquettes.  
 Cucumbers, olives, radishes, sliced tomatoes.  
 Spring lamb, French peas, tenderloin of beef with truffles, stuffed tomatoes.  
 Sweet-breads, braized with mushrooms.  
 Asparagus, butter sauce—Punch a la Cardinal.  
 Faté of goose liver.  
 Blacktail deer, currant jelly—Spring chicken, water cress.  
 Broiled teal duck, Maitre d'hotel, lettuce salad.  
 Queen's pudding—Charlotte russe lemon, cocoanut and apricot pie.  
 Carlton club jelly—Celestine jelly, Muscatine ice—Vanilla cream.  
 Cheese—Dessert—California fruit and Cafe Noir.

The Las Vegas Gazette, 18 Apr 1882

The Montezuma was an idyllic location, advertised as “America’s great resort for health, pleasure and rest.” A spur built by the Santa Fe provided easy access from Las Vegas. The hotel would be compared to European hot spring resorts, capable of treating a wide range of ailments and attended by a resident physician:

*Rheumatism, gout, stiff joints; skin diseases as a class, scrofula, ulceration and enlargement of the glands, general physical debility, mental exhaustion, spinal diseases, sciatica, lumbago, paralysis, St. Vitus dance, catarrh, dyspepsia, early stages of Bright’s disease, blood poisoning, and the devil knows what else.* <sup>22</sup>

New Mexico statehood was still three decades away and the territory wasn’t known at that time for such refined accommodations. Still, it served as a draw not only for tourists traversing the nation but also those seeking better health. New Mexico would one day become a “Mecca” for health-seekers, tubercular patients in particular.

Fred Harvey, as was common throughout the West, employed black men as waiters in his restaurants. This was a problem, especially in parts of the West, New Mexico Territory in particular. Former Confederate soldiers and sympathizers who came to the territory as cowboys, ranchers and miners had little regard for black people in general. Apparently, many black workers felt threatened and often carried a gun in case a belligerent customer accosted them.

A Las Vegas newspaper reported one such incident:

*“A colored waiter at the Depot dropped a huge revolver from his hip pocket to the floor of the dining hall at the supper hour last evening . . . It is being discovered daily that hotel waiters are a persecuted class, and to keep off their enemies they are required to pack big guns around with them.”* <sup>23</sup>

Fred would need to intervene in a similar situation in early 1883 upon receiving word of a brawl amongst his colored wait staff wherein “several darkies had been carved beyond all usefulness.” <sup>24</sup> He jumped on the next train, taking along a young family friend, Tom Gable. Fred fired the restaurant manager and the entire wait staff, whereupon he offered the job of manager to his young friend.

While Tom had no restaurant experience whatsoever, he agreed to take the job if Fred would consider one change. What he proposed would be a pivotal point in restaurant history. Instead of hiring male staff he instead wanted to employ young women. In the West, however, the ratio of men to women leaned rather lopsidedly toward the gents.

Fred decided to allow Tom to give his idea a try and the Raton Harvey eating house would be the first to employ women who would come to be fondly referred to as “Harvey Girls”. Tom would later reflect

back on his radical idea, explaining how he “brought civilization to New Mexico. Those waitresses were the first respectable women the cowboys and miners had ever seen – that, outside their own wives and mothers. Those roughnecks learned manners!” <sup>25</sup>

Rather than hire local women Tom would bring young and respectable women of Kansas to Raton. Waitresses would be paid a generous salary of \$17.50 per month, plus tips, and Fred Harvey provided room, board and free train transportation. There would also be rules of conduct and a contract guaranteeing their service for a minimum of six months – and remain single during said term.

These young women would live in a dormitory, chaperoned by an older female. Except for Friday night when the town held a weekly social Harvey Girls were expected to be in bed by eleven o'clock each night. Waitresses were required to dress in a modest uniform – “a plain black long-sleeved, floor-length woolen dress with a just-short-of-clerical ‘Elsie’ collar, along with black shoes and stockings.” <sup>26</sup> The dress would be covered by a crisply starched white apron – and immediately changed should one single spot be made upon it during their twelve-hour shift (which might be split depending on railroad schedules). Another perk – laundry service was paid for by the company.

Minnie O’Neal departed Leavenworth in December 1884, headed to Raton and accompanied by her mother. She donned the uniform, followed the rules and worked two six-month terms before being asked to work for Stephen Dorsey at his family’s sprawling estate. Dorsey, a former United States Senator from Arkansas, was born in Vermont and raised in Ohio. Following his Civil War service he was named president of the Arkansas Railway Company where he resettled before serving in the Senate for one term (1873-1879).

Dorsey’s legislative career was tainted with scandal, accused of defrauding the federal government via the so-called Star Route Scandal. According to the National Postal Museum:

*The legislation establishing new mail service in 1845 called for contractors to carry the mail with “celerity, certainty, and and security.”*

*Weary of repeatedly writing these words in ledgers, postal clerks substituted three asterisks – \*\*\* – and the phrase “Star Route” was born. <sup>27</sup>*

At the height of Reconstruction, politics was more than a bit complicated – and, unfortunately, corrupt. The Dorsey gang, as they were referred to in newspaper accounts, was roundly criticized. The *Inter Ocean* (Chicago) had nothing good to say about Stephen Dorsey in particular, basically referring to him as a scheming carpetbagger (with more than a bit of exaggeration of fact):

*Only a little over three years ago he [Stephen Dorsey] was a farmer in Vermont, an ignorant, stupid specimen of humanity. He was not so stupid that his more brilliant brother [J.W.] could not use him as a cat’s paw to pull gold from the public treasury, and he was brought out to Washington for this purpose. <sup>28</sup>*

Dorsey built a sprawling thirty-five room “mansion” (still referred to today as the “Dorsey Mansion”, a registered historical property) in Colfax County in 1878 and in 1880 was enumerated as a stock raiser. He and his wife would raise five sons. Clayton, New Mexico would be named for his oldest son after Union County was carved out of Colfax County in 1894.

Not only did Minnie agree to work for the Dorsey family, she eventually fell in love with ranch foreman George Washington Gillespie, who would later become one of

Colfax County's leading citizens. No doubt her life would have been very different had she not become a "Harvey Girl". She was one of many through the years who traveled across the plains and prairies for a chance to work for Fred Harvey and earn a decent living in a profession which became increasingly more respectable for women.

The contract provided for a minimum of six months of service, the caveat being the young woman must remain single. In an oft-repeated scenario, a Harvey Girl would meet a railroad man, fall in love, get married, settle down and raise families in small towns and cities along the Santa Fe route. It was just one of the ways women, in particular, would make their way to the Land of Enchantment up until the Fred Harvey chain was sold in 1948.

Tom Gable's experiment fabulously succeeded, leading Fred Harvey to implement it across his growing empire of eating houses and hotels. While a certain number of women could be hired locally and trained, Fred would need a system which kept a constant stream of employable young women.

They might undergo training at one Harvey eating house only to be transferred to another "down the line", sometimes to railroad towns situated in the middle of nowhere. Despite a location's remoteness, Fred Harvey standards had to be maintained, however. With perhaps more rules and regulations than other restaurant establishment at the time, each employee, especially the Harvey Girls, were well-versed in executing them. Travelers knew what to expect when opening the door to a Harvey House.

The Fred Harvey system developed and evolved through the years, and when executed properly, allowed staff to efficiently serve a trainload of passengers in

the usual thirty minutes allowed for a meal stop. For instance, there was the "cup code":

*Harvey Girls didn't write down a customer's beverage order. Instead, they repositioned the cup at its place setting so that when the "drink girls" descended on the table, they knew exactly what to pour. For coffee, the cup was left in its saucer. For milk, it was flipped and put on the table next to the saucer. For iced tea, the flipped cup was leaned against the saucer. There were also three possible variations for hot tea: The flipped cup was placed on the saucer and, depending on which direction the handle was pointed, the customer wanted black, green, or orange pekoe.* <sup>29</sup>

There was little, if any, "free time" even after passengers departed and the next train wasn't expected for hours. There were chores like polishing silverware (each piece embossed with Fred Harvey's name), emptying and polishing coffee urns, resetting tables and so on.

Obviously, taking care of passengers in a limited amount of time was quite a challenge. In the early years (pre-Harvey Girls) it was considerably more complicated – by time itself. Prior to November 18, 1883 the United States utilized what the *Chicago Tribune* called "fifty-three kinds of time". On that day "Standard Time" as we know it today was set across the nation. I wrote about it in the January-February 2020 issue (at the end of the article entitled "The So-Called Calendar Riots and Modern Day Genealogical Research").

Harvey eating houses and hotels would continue to be added along the Santa Fe route. Curiously, however, the Montezuma hotel struggled after its grandest of grand openings in April 1882. After being widely advertised as a type of "health resort" for people with all kinds of ailments – according to advertisements, some quite serious – tourists appeared reluctant to

visit, presuming the hotel was filled with sick (perhaps contagious) people.

On the morning of January 18, 1884 Las Vegas newspaper subscribers were reading about the hotel's former glory:

# LOST!

## The Splendid Montezuma Reduced to Ashes.

Most Destructive Fire  
in the History of  
Las Vegas.

A Quarter of a Million  
Dollars Go Up in  
Smoke.

Las Vegas Gazette, 18 Jan 1884

Amazingly, the first Las Vegas “fire laddies” were on site in just ten minutes after being alerted by telegraph and telephone. Meanwhile, guests with no time to pack their personal effects were closing trunks, tumbling them down the stairways. “Loose garments were tied into sheets and thrown from the windows, while the panic-stricken people flew down the stairs and through the halls to fresh air.” Attempts at removing elegant furnishings were futile – “the only thing accomplished was to strew several acres of ground with smashed walnut, crushed marble and flakes of quicksilver from powdered mirrors.”

The hotel, being predominantly a wood structure, was engulfed in flames. Despite heroic efforts the losses were staggering – early estimates predicted “the company will lose in the neighborhood of \$150,000 over and above the insurance [\$100,000]”, making it a quarter of a million dollar fire.

Spectators arrived from the city to a view an apocalyptic scene:

*A bed of coals an acre in extent, bursting cans of fruit where the store house stood, feather beds and pillows floating down the muddy river, exhausted workers dropping to rest on the rocks, people of impoverished wardrobes camped on the hillsides and in the cañon, and a general spectacle of havoc greeted those who had driven out from the city.* <sup>30</sup>



THE MONTEZUMA BEFORE THE FIRE.

In less than an hour the entire structure, except for two chimneys, burned to the ground despite heroic efforts to save it. Under one of the article's subtitles (“Liquor Leaked Out Somewhere”) it was reported how, after the fire was extinguished, firemen were “rescuing” bottles of liquor from the hotel's wine cellar. The hotel manager demanded his liquor stock returned.

Fred declined the oversight of rebuilding the hotel, however. In actuality it had been an emotional and physical drain on him, and with low occupancy numbers the Santa Fe certainly wasn't making money on their luxury resort hotel. Less than two months later the Santa Fe announced they would rebuild with a different style of architecture, and a grander one at that. The new one would be fireproof.

Las Vegas was home to the first luxury hotel and also the home of the first hotel to be situated trackside. The Castañeda, built in Mission Revival style, opened in 1898 – the

same year America fought a “splendid little war” in Cuba. The regiment known as the “Rough Riders” was formed by recruiting skilled Indian fighters throughout the southwestern part of the nation, a number of them from New Mexico Territory.

Thus, it would seem entirely appropriate for the regiment’s first reunion, held in June 1899, to be held in New Mexico – at none other than the newly constructed Castañeda Hotel in Las Vegas. Quite possibly many of these Spanish-American War veterans had already sampled Harvey eating house fare as troops were transported across the country to Florida before heading to Cuba.

Although several cities, El Paso, Texas in particular, were clamoring for the reunion, it was quite a coup for the Santa Fe and Fred Harvey to have secured the event. Understandably so, Teddy Roosevelt was extremely popular at the time and the war’s success had elevated his political stature across the nation.

In his gregarious, “dee-lightful” style, Teddy Roosevelt arrived in Las Vegas on June 24:

*“Boys, I’m glad to see you,” said Colonel Roosevelt as he literally fell from the platform of his car into the arms of a mob of cheering, yelling “Rough Riders.” Everybody in Las Vegas knew that Roosevelt had come, for every resident of Las Vegas who could get there was at the station, and there were 2,000 or 3,000 visitors besides who cheered and pushed and cheered again as they tried to get near the ex-colonel of volunteers. . . He was almost carried from the train to his room in the hotel, and once there it was necessary to station a guard of “Rough Riders” at the foot of the stairs to hold back the crowd. <sup>31</sup>*

The Santa Fe and Fred Harvey rolled out the red carpet. The restaurant featured a number of distinct southwestern dishes, served by Harvey Girls dressed in special uniforms for the occasion – “a western

version with long denim cowboy skirts and matching vests.” <sup>32</sup>



The Castañeda was so successful that in 1902 another “trackside” hotel, The Alvarado, was built in Albuquerque. The city, anticipating the opening of their very own world-class Fred Harvey hotel, eagerly awaiting the grand opening:

*Of all the railways in the world it may be said that none of them can compare with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad in point of hotel accommodations. From Chicago to the Pacific coast at every freight and passenger division point there is located an eating house that is conducted by the Fred Harvey system, and at each place any person can get anything he wants to eat at any hour of the day or night – a privilege seldom enjoyed by travelers along the lines of other railroads. In Albuquerque during the past year the railway company have [sic] expended about \$150,000 for a new hotel building and depot. The hotel is known as “The Alvarado,” and will be equipped with as fine a lot of furnishings as can be found in the most prominent hostelryes of the world, and any visitor coming to New Mexico can receive as good service in this hotel as he or she could command in the big cities of the states. <sup>33</sup>*

As an homage to New Mexico’s long and storied history and its Native American culture, The Alvarado would also feature something no other hotel to date could boast – “an extensive ethnological and archeological museum is to be established at Albuquerque, N.M., by the curio

department of the Harvey company, as an adjunct to the new hotel Alvarado. This museum will undoubtedly be the largest and most complete of its kind in the world.”<sup>34</sup>

The Harvey company had already amassed a significant collection of southwestern artifacts “relating to the life, customs and environment of the western American Indians”, estimated to be worth thousands of dollars.

Built at a cost of \$200,000 and said to be the finest hotel in the southwest, The Alvarado officially opened on May 10, 1902. Like the Castañeda it was architecturally modeled in the style of the old Spanish missions.



In addition to a large staff ranging from desk clerk to pastry girl, the new hotel was also home to yet another of the company’s laundry facilities throughout the Fred Harvey chain of hotels and restaurants. Throughout the entire system over one million pieces of laundry were processed each month. One of the “perks” of being a Harvey Girl was the luxury of having the company pay for laundering their uniforms. Remember, if one spot came upon it the uniform had to be changed.

While most other Harvey restaurants were still employing use of the distinct black-and-white Harvey uniforms (although no longer angle-length and wool), the Alvarado Hotel utilized a more festive uniform in its dining room (separate from the lunchroom and

coffee shop) with a southwest flair – “long, full, tiered skirts with peasant-style blouses.”<sup>35</sup>

Another distinct feature of the Alvarado was meant to attract the patronage of traveling salesmen. Sample Rooms were set aside in order for salesmen to display their wares and make potential business connections. Through the years the Alvarado would see a number of salesmen, politicians and celebrities pass through its doors.

The Montezuma, Castañeda and Alvarado hotels were Fred Harvey showpieces. But what about the Harvey House situated in one of the small New Mexico towns along the line?

### Coolidge

This cow town situated twenty miles east of Gallup was originally named Crane, later changed in honor of Thomas Jefferson Coolidge, AT&SF president (and director) who preceded William B. Strong. According to Rose Latimer (*Harvey Houses of New Mexico: Historic Hospitality From Raton to Deming*), not much is known about this early Harvey House (opened in 1885), except it didn’t live up to Fred Harvey standards. The company dispatched a young German immigrant, sixteen year-old Herman Schweizer, to bring it up to Harvey standards.

Herman remained with the company and eventually managed the Fred Harvey Indian Department. While stationed in Coolidge he would spend his spare time developing personal relationships as he rode through nearby Navajo and Hopi reservations.

Like most frontier cow towns, Coolidge had its share of crime – an occasional murder and for sure, train robberies. In 1893 the Harvey eating house (closed in 1889), as it was still called, was robbed by one “cool-headed criminal”:

## COOL-HEADED CRIMINAL

### A Lone Highwayman Does Up the Harvey Dining Station at Coolidge

*A lone highwayman, in true dime novel style, held up the Harvey eating house at Coolidge, on the A & P railroad, on Sunday morning. He walked clear through the house, accosted the manager, Mr. Jenkins, on the back porch, ominously clicked back his revolver and demanded Mr. Jenkins' purse. This was handed over.*

*On his demand the safe was then opened, and he compelled the manager to neatly tie up between \$200 and \$300, which he coolly deposited in an inside pocket. He then paid his respects to the girl waiters in gentlemanly style and discussed whether he should wake up the cook to show him how a neat hold-up was done, then mounted his horse and fled toward the San Mateo mountains. All the men, horses and arms were off in pursuit of the late train robbers and the highwayman had plenty of time. <sup>36</sup>*

A couple of dogs took up the thirty-two hour old scent pretty well, however. "They followed it across a box cañon near the Mormon settlement near Ramen [Ramah] and then doubling back toward the H. H. Ranch took up a new trail and finally ran down a man who proved to be the robber of Mr. Jenkins." Those were some great hounds!

Eventually, the town "dried up and blew away" after the railroad moved its depot down the line to Gallup.

### Vaughn

I have passed through this little town many times over the years but never curious about its history. As many small New Mexico railroad towns were so christened, Vaughn was named for Major George W. Vaughn, a civil engineer for the Santa Fe. If there's

been rain and the grass is green, the long drive from Roswell to Vaughn doesn't seem like the near 100 miles it is. At certain times of the year you might see antelope.

Before it was a railroad town the area around Vaughn was known as a rest stop on the Stinson Cattle Trail. Originally established as a stop along the Southern Pacific Railroad in the early 20th century, Vaughn became a two-railroad town when a subsidiary of the Santa Fe, the Eastern Railway of New Mexico (running from Belen to Clovis), established a depot there.

In 1910 a smaller version of the Mission Revival style of the Castañeda and Alvarado opened in Vaughn. The Harvey House included a lunch room, dining room and fewer than a dozen hotel rooms. The Los Chavez, as it was named, more commonly housed Harvey Girls and local school teachers. Never what anyone would call a "must-stay" destination it would be a welcome respite nonetheless.

Anyone traveling through via any other means than a train might just blow on through (literally). In 1916 a group of Kansas musicians stopped at Vaughn. They provided a short concert in the reading room (most Harvey House locations featured these) for other guests. One musician was heard to remark of his experience, "All day Saturday the wind at Vaughn was exceeding the speed limit, sand peppering one's face with stinging effect."<sup>37</sup>

Even as the Los Chavez was being built residents were squabbling over town boundaries. The Santa Fe was spending a considerable amount to build a depot (\$40,000) and a Harvey House (\$65,000) – and a YMCA (\$45,000). The YMCA was in the center of what was called "New Vaughn". Vaughn and New Vaughn were about equally divided, save for a strip of land between them which couldn't be used for town lots. Such a hardship it was as

children had to “walk one mile from the new town to school . . . the people also have to walk the same distance for their mail or to get a postage stamp. People who wish to locate are coming here every day, but on account of the situation they go on.”<sup>38</sup> Ah, small-town politics!

Nevertheless, Vaughn had one advantage as the brand new Harvey House was “one of the handsomest on the cutoff, which is saying a good deal.”<sup>39</sup> Maybe it brought the town(s) together as there seems to have never been a mention of “New Vaughn” ever again.

Remote as it was, Vaughn managed to host at least one celebrity. In late July 1928 Charles Lindbergh was forced to land in the small railroad town due to engine trouble. Instead of using a cleared landing field, perhaps to avoid attention, he decided to touch down on the open prairie a short distance from town. As might be expected his surprise visit caused quite a stir as a crowd had gathered – “more than 100 automobiles .... coming in constantly from Corona, Santa Rosa, Fort Sumner and nearby towns.”<sup>40</sup> So much for anonymity in the middle of nowhere!

While Lindbergh didn’t lodge at the Los Chavez, he took his meals there – where the Harvey Girls argued over who would serve him. One young woman, nineteen year-old Elisa (later changed name to Elizabeth Alice) Garnas, an Austrian-Hungarian immigrant, was chosen by the manager. Elisa was born in 1909 and her family immigrated in 1911 where her father had been employed in a German-owned coal mine in Gibson (McKinley County, New Mexico). After her father lost an arm in a mining accident, Elisa quit school and worked as a maid to support her family.

One of her employers was a former Harvey Girl and suggested she might apply to work at The Alvarado. She interviewed and was

offered a job in Vaughn. Elisa fit right in, and despite the location’s remoteness, she loved Vaughn (and her job).

When her father passed away Elisa returned to Albuquerque and later found work at the Belen Harvey House. In 1929 she, like so many other Harvey Girls, met and married a railroad worker.

## **The Horny Toad Division**

Officially the Santa Fe branch which ran from Albuquerque to El Paso was called the Rio Grande Division since much of it ran parallel to the river. It was also known to be one of the hardest stretches of track in the entire system of main and branch lines.

It was a fairly easy grade along the river, which “could be a blessing or a terror depending on the river’s mood, which varied with the seasons.”<sup>41</sup> This particular stretch was more familiarly known, by railroad men in particular, as the “Horny Toad Division”.

A Deming resident, the daughter of a Harvey Girl who worked at various locations throughout out the system for twelve years, explained the reasons for the epithet:

*The Santa Fe line from Albuquerque, to San Marcial, Rincon, Deming, and Silver City was called the Horny Toad Division.*

*This is how it got its name. Between Albuquerque and El Paso they would run into hundreds of horned toads along Crocker Flats and Engle. The wheels of the little engines would lose traction on the rails which were made slick by the grease and moisture in the bodies of the little critters. Many conductors were known to say, “My tallow-pot doesn’t know much about keeping up a full head of steam, but give him a broom and he’s shore a mighty fine Horny Toad Man.”<sup>42</sup>*

“Tallow-pot” apparently refers to the locomotive fireman whose job would often entail clearing the tracks of toads.

She explained how people who lived alongside the line viewed the railroad, calling it the “Giant Devil at Work.” Many of them were either of Indian or Mexican descent. “They felt the air would be poisoned, birds killed, not be a jack rabbit, a roadrunner or an form of life along the railroad. They further believed in no time at all that cows would stop giving milk, and horses would get distemper. At the terrific speed of fifteen miles an hour, a cow would wander on the track or the engineer would get sick, they couldn’t help wondering who would stop the blasted thing. It was an invention of the devil.” 43

Her father worked for the railroad and the family traveled quite a bit. One of her mother’s Harvey Girl stints was along the Horny Toad Division at San Marcial. Many of the Harvey Houses along this line were opened in the 1880s. The one in San Marcial was a two-story building situated close to the depot. The restaurant was on the first floor and above was the living quarters for the manager and approximately a half dozen Harvey Girls.

From its early history the town was plagued by the potential for disastrous flooding. Originally built on the east side of the river near where the Civil War battle of Val Verde took place in 1862, San Marcial would experience a number of disasters. In 1866 a flood destroyed the town; the town was relocated to the opposite side of the river – only to continue to experience the same disastrous flooding. In 1874, “more disasters are reported as a consequence of the Rio Grande . . . People in the Socorro Valley are moving to the hills for safety; having, in most cases, lost their entire crop.”44

By 1880 the Santa Fe was conducting a daily round-trip run from Albuquerque to San Marcial – seven hours down and seven hours back.

**Albuquerque to San Marcial.**

Stations.	North,	South
Albuquerque.....	6:10 a m.	9:30 p m
Las Lunas.....	5:13	10:27
Belen.....	4:36	10:54
Socorro.....	2:32	1:08 a m
San Marcial.....	1:10	2:30

Las Vegas Gazette, 14 Oct 1880

In October 1880 San Marcial was the end of the line, although track was being laid south at the rate of about two miles per day. Full service to El Paso was expected by early 1881.

As train service spread down the territory it would be easier not only to transport people and goods, but it meant news – eyewitness reports – traveled faster as well (with the help of telegraphy). On November 18, 1880 a passenger arrived in Las Vegas after having witnessed “the shooting of two desperadoes at San Marcial on Monday evening.” He vividly described the “shooting bee”, an incident of “frontier justice”:

*The two fellows had been loafing about San Marcial for some time and had threatened the lives of several people. It is not known how many men they killed in that country but there are several charges laid up against them.*

*A short time ago they “rolled” a man on the streets and got away with \$170, but were finally captured and taken to Socorro by the deputy marshal. But such fellows do not hanker jail fare and prison accommodations and in some way succeeded in making their way back to San Marcial, reaching there nearly as soon as the man who had taken them up.*

*The desperadoes, who passed by the names of Billy White and Bill Johnson, swaggered*

*into the saloon kept by an old fellow, whom they “held up”, ran the bar to suit themselves, and then standing their host up against the wall began firing at him to see how near they could come without hitting him. Fortunately for him they missed every time.*

*The people of the terminus began to think that it was about time they were rid of the presence of such a crowd and when they had openly threatened the lives of three or four men they thought that the time to act had come. Monday night a dance house man heard them talking and arranging their plans to rob a man of \$60 and then light out for the Indian Territory the next day. They also sent word to Dr. Cunningham that they intended to take his scalp or leave their own behind with him. The vigilantes who organized a few weeks ago, caught the pair on the streets and immediately opened fire on them. Each house in the neighborhood had a sentry posted at the door ready to fire at the desperadoes if they made a break to enter. The carcasses of the two characters were found to be well riddled with bullets, one having received twenty-four shots and the other eighteen. 45*

San Marcial was by no means a sleepy little town situated on the Rio Grande. Before the end of 1880 Americans at Socorro were threatened, “in danger of being exterminated by the Mexicans” and requesting a standby engine with two flat cars at San Marcial. 46 The following month it was Indian depredations in the Black Range where miners had been killed. San Marcial volunteers were recruited to assist the besieged miners some eighty miles distant, although a number of Apaches were camped outside San Marcial.

*The butchering Apaches are still at their murderous deeds, marauding the country and killing, or attempting to kill, all whose path they cross. San Marcial is the nearest*

*point on the railroad from the Apache-infested country, and the reds evidently hover within convenient distances of the town, lying in wait for any one who may venture out. They are evidently aware of the fact that the town is the most convenient supply point for the Black Range and Mogollons. 47*

A Harvey House opened in San Marcial in 1883 and soon established itself as “the finest on the line” (which is what was always said about just about any Harvey House) with a lunch counter seating twenty-seven. Approaching the twentieth century and beyond, San Marcial continued to boom as a railroad town. At the turn of the century it was the second most populated town in the county behind Socorro, the county seat. By 1929 over one thousand residents were served by a bank, mercantile, drugstore, schools, a number of churches and a spacious opera house.

Pearl Ramsey heard about the Harvey Girls in 1923. She was interviewed in Kansas City and offered a position at the San Marcial Harvey House. For someone who had never been outside of her home state of Missouri, she found San Marcial to her liking. The pay was good – by that time Harvey Girls were making \$60 per month – room and board and laundry service still included. With tips she might make as much as \$90 per month. After about a year of service she married railroad telegrapher William Ramsey. 48 Since he transferred to Rincon soon afterwards, they were not on hand for the disastrous flood which would eventually (and literally) wipe San Marcial off the map.

Besides the devastating flood of 1866 the late nineteenth century had been punctuated with flooding along the Rio Grande, sometimes known as the “Nile of the Southwest” – at least before it was (thought to be) tamed by measures undertaken to control annual spring runoff. The Rio Grande, with a number of

tributaries along the way, begins its long and winding course high in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado.

In 1917 a series of dams strategically placed along the river's New Mexico course began with construction of Elephant Butte Lake. Other dams were later built at Cochiti, San Acacia and Caballo. In 1929, however, San Marcial, situated above Elephant Butte was as yet at the mercy of the mighty Rio Grande.

A new set of Harvey Girls was working there in 1929 at the Harvey House. While the Harvey House remained in San Marcial, the Rio Grande Division headquarters had just been relocated to Albuquerque, and with it a number of Santa Fe employees.

On August 13 early reports indicated roads on both side of the river between Belen and Socorro were closed. At least two bridges had been washed out and "it was feared that the flood may drive from the town [San Marcial] nearly all of the 125 residents who were left after the removal of the division offices." <sup>49</sup> Telephone lines were down and the opera house came crashing down under the pressure of flood waters.

Once the highway bridge at San Acacia washed away, a five-foot wall of water headed downriver. Were it not for the quick work of railroad telegraphers, Socorro and San Marcial residents wouldn't have had time to evacuate. The railroad was able to bring up trains from El Paso to evacuate residents of San Marcial, historically the most vulnerable place along the river. Amazingly, the Santa Fe depot and Harvey House weren't swept away. The restaurant's manager remained calm, ushering staff and patrons to the second floor to wait out the storm.

The following month another series of heavy monsoonal storms inundated the region, beginning in the San Luis Valley of Colorado, where the Rio Grande also flows through after coming down from the high

country. At that time there was nothing in the way of flood control to stop the surging floodwaters which raced down the river. Massive flooding inundated Albuquerque and Belen. Rain in the mountains west of Socorro propelled swollen tributaries into the already flooded Rio Grande. Railroad track was swept away, stranding survivors until travel was restored. Socorro remained without mail and telegraph service for six days. The news wasn't good for the Santa Fe either – it would be weeks before service was restored.

However, the second flood had all but finished off the town, especially the rail yards, roundhouse and workshops. Most every building, including the Harvey House was sinking under the weight of river silt.

Because Elephant Butte was full at the time there was nowhere for flood waters to go. Some parts of San Marcial remained under water through the winter months. By then, however, the Santa Fe had decided to shut down operations in San Marcial. The Harvey House was officially closed and later demolished.

## **Deming**

The first transcontinental railroad was famously commemorated in Promontory, Utah with a golden spike in 1869. In March 1881 another spike, a silver one, commemorated the completion of the second transcontinental railroad when the Southern Pacific joined the AT&SF at Deming, New Mexico.

Once the Southern Pacific arrived on December 15, 1880, a number of tents and shacks were thrown up near the tracks. When the Santa Fe arrived a few months later the town of Deming would be established. This despite a group of "some of the worst characters in southwestern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona [banding] together, and taking up a tract of land adjacent to the section house and water tank

of the Southern Pacific, [announcing] their intention of holding it and laying it off in town lots.”

*The Las Vegas Gazette* continued with a vivid account of the would-be depot and its colorful denizens:

*Notices of warning were posted up in all quarters, marked by the significant symbols of skull and cross bones, ordering all persons to keep off. A saloon town sprang up in a night almost, tents and rough buildings rolling up mushroom like where the vilest of all vile liquor was sold for whisky. Woe be to the man with a few dollars in his pocket who fell in with such a crowd . . . . The man who “ran” the town is known all through that country by the sobriquet of “six-shooter” Smith owing to his fondness for shooting at people to see how close a miss he could make without killing them. Smith had the cheek to circulate a petition to have himself appointed a deputy sheriff, and he secured many signatures. Those who acceded to his demands for signatures probably did so in self-defense, for “six-shooter” has been regarded as one of the gang of cow boys of the San Simon valley, who have terrorized that region. Without waiting to be given authority to act as a peace officer, Smith abrogated himself the right, and is likely to be arrested ere long for personating an officer. But luckily the junction was not made in the immediate vicinity of Smith’s realm. 50*

That honor would instead fall to a place to be named Deming, in honor of Mary Ann Deming Crocker, wife of railroad executive Charles Crocker. In early 1881 passengers were already getting off the Southern Pacific in Deming before “staging it” to connect to the AT&SF. Soon that wouldn’t be necessary as “two great lines will cross, one on its way to Tucson, the other to El Paso”. Nearing the end of January the Southern Pacific had been built out forty miles on the

way to El Paso, “and to Deming the graders of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific are in sight of each other.” One passenger estimated them to be within four to five miles of one another. As soon as grading was completed and ties and rails were in place, the second transcontinental railroad line would be in full service. 51

John J. Valentine, general superintendent of the Wells Fargo Express, rode the train from San Francisco to Deming. His timing couldn’t have been better as the stage coach preceding the one he took from Deming was brutally attacked by Indians. On the evening of January 14 a stage running from Mesilla (near Las Cruces) to Fort Cummings was stopped by Indians. The bodies of three passengers and the driver were found, all horribly mutilated and burned. Whether or not travel by rail would prevent Indian attacks remained to be seen, however.

Finally, on March 7 the *Chicago Tribune* announced the news everyone had been anticipating:

### **JOINED AT LAST**

*To-day the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific Railroad will join hands at a point in New Mexico called Deming about 100 miles north-west from El Paso. The completion of this second Pacific route is an event of more importance than is generally given it.... 52*

On March 8 it was “semi-official”:

### **‘TIS DONE.**

#### **Junction of the Two Overland Roads.**

*At 5:50 o’clock yesterday afternoon the junction of the two great overland routes was effected at Deming station. After all the surmises and rumors, the A. T. & S. F. R. R. and Southern Pacific have at last been linked together. . . For three weeks Dick Coleman, engineer of track of the Santa Fe road, has had in his possession*

*the legendary silver spike, which when driven home should mark the consummation of the great railway project which many considered would fail of fulfillment. The affair was a quiet one the enthusiasm, if any there was, being confined to the track layers. It was noticeably different from the completion of the first overland route, when a great hurrah was raised, and the explanation of the absence of anything like a celebration is due to the fact that the officials of the lines are up their ears in business, carrying out other railway projects. The formal ceremonies over the junction will be here sometime next week.*<sup>53</sup>

Schedules were set and a train depot awaited passengers. Since the depot represented the junction of two major railroad systems, Deming's depot would be a union station – although unlike the big cities in the East with massive union stations, this one was considerably more isolated and out-of-the-way. Still, it would be an important stop and one worthy of a Harvey House. The Santa Fe would occupy the east end of the depot and the Southern Pacific the west end with the two-story Harvey House hotel, lunchroom and dining room in the middle. Harvey Girls occupied the second floor.

Just five years after the first Harvey House opened in Topeka in 1876, Fred Harvey was immensely successful despite occasional criticism. He, of course, had competition. "Competing restaurant owners resented Fred because they knew he got better, fresher ingredients than they did – and paid less for them, because the railroad waived his freight charges. There were often break-ins at the eating houses or the parked refrigerator cars: not for cash, but to steal those gorgeous aged steaks."<sup>54</sup>

Fred Harvey's eating houses, specifically the dining rooms, maintained strict dress codes requiring men to wear a jacket. That didn't

necessarily go over well in New Mexico, however. The Deming Harvey House opened in early August and by the following month it made some unsettling headlines. Any problem arising in Harvey's operation made great fodder for newspapers. *The Las Vegas Optic* took a series of jabs at Fred Harvey:

## **EATING ESTABLISHMENT EXCITEMENTS**

### **Whooping It Up in Sad Shape for a Well-Known Hotel Proprietor**

*Fred Harvey, proprietor in power of the eating houses along the Santa Fe road, is having a terrible time of it and seems to be gaining an unsavory reputation. Immediately upon his return from New York on Saturday, Mr. C.C. Cunningham, manager of the Depot hotel, resigned, and Charlie Prindle, the ever-popular, over-worked, never-complaining night clerk followed suit yesterday. At the Hot Springs hotel, Harvey is said to have acted so outlandishly "off" that Manager Keller, the best man in his employ, kicked over the traces and packed his trunk. At Deming things have gone wrong and Callahan, the manager, was tossed out onto the platform and the dining room equipment followed after him in quick order. Inquiry unfolds a tale. It is stoutly claimed that the houses have been poorly supplied with provender and that Harvey is to be blamed all around for not running his houses in better shape. The grub was poor – so poor in fact that the beef stake [sic] was fairly alive with little crawling things commonly called maggots. A conspiracy was entered into last week to gut the Depot hotel dining hall, but the manager "got onto" the racket in season to prepare such a good supper that the kick couldn't be made consistently that night and the house was spared. We are not the one to charge Harvey with any misdemeanor, but think he shows a lack of proper decorum, and hope, for the sake of*

his reputation, that things will run smoother in the future and that his name will not be contaminated by town talk, as it has been for the past forty-eight hours.<sup>55</sup>

Fred Harvey was not at all accustomed to this type of commentary on his eating establishments, and the following day he had his say in a terse rebuttal:

### Harvey Heard

*As is quite natural Mr. Fred Harvey, proprietor of the railroad eating houses, after receiving the mild impeachment in last night's Optic, comes to the front with his side of the story. Out of justice to the man, we are disposed to give all the space he desires, having no particular fight to wage against him. He says that the trouble is incited to chronic howlers and it's only a question as to whether he, or the railroad employees, shall dictate the management of his houses. To go into details, Cunningham was let out on incompetency, Prindle was discharged by somebody named Snyder for disobeying orders and Keller left of his own accord, arising from instructions in the kitchen, given by Mr. Harvey. Of the trouble at Deming, Harvey has no official notification and could say nothing about it. The gentleman states that it's no easy task to operate half a dozen of hotels here in New Mexico, where the market is so far distant, and believes he has ability to get along with detrimental circumstances about as well as the next fellow. That's all.*<sup>56</sup>

Despite its early issues with food and personnel, the Deming Harvey House received special recognition in 1892 as the company's traveling auditor noted "the Deming house is the most important of the system".<sup>57</sup> A well-run restaurant strictly following the Harvey system meant travelers knew what to expect once they walked in the doors of any Harvey House.

This was a boon not only for Fred Harvey and his family but also for the railroad.

By 1922 the Santa Fe and the Harvey family had maintained their successful partnership for almost 50 years and the railroad couldn't have been more pleased with "The Harvey System", calling it

*. . . one of the most remarkable business institutions in the world . . . There were no dining cars in those days, and the wretchedness of the eating-houses, with their canned meats and vegetables, rancid bacon, oil-clothed tables without napkins, and incompetent service, was nothing short of amazing. . . The Harvey House as an institution steadily developed into a haven of refuge for the emaciated western traveler, until today the Harvey system is without question the most wonderful chain of hotels and eating-houses in the world, with a dining-car service which had never been excelled and seldom equalled.*

*Wherever the lines of the Santa Fe extend, there, in dining cars or dining rooms or lunch-rooms or hotels, may be had food as good and service as good as can had in any city in the country.*<sup>58</sup>

The Harvey House not only served the "emaciated western traveler" but was also favored by local residents. A sampling of sumptuous fare offered at the Deming restaurant on Thanksgiving Day 1893 included:



Deming wasn't exactly civilized in the early years – it was “a rough place to live . . . Sandstorms were unfamiliar to those coming from other parts of the country and the desert heat was a deterrent for many. In addition, the outskirts of town were controlled by various bands of cattle rustlers and native tribes who had territory disputes with the town.”<sup>59</sup> In August 1904 a man, wearing a dress, robbed the Harvey House lunch counter of \$22.50. Ed Scarborough had borrowed a dress from a female friend (who wondered whatever did he want with a dress). He wore one silk stocking as a cap and used the other as a “receptacle” for his ill-gotten booty. <sup>60</sup>

As one woman approaching the century mark reflected on years later, it took nerve and courage to be a Harvey Girl. Leafy Bond was born in 1896 to Homer and Elsie Bond. Two years later the family migrated to Oregon where Homer farmed for seven years before returning to Texas. There she would meet and marry her first husband, Zack Crain, a man over twenty years her senior. They moved to South Dakota and after lightning struck and burned their house on July 4, 1917 they next moved Deming.

About five years later Leafy volunteered to work for free at a local Chinese cafe in order to learn waitressing. One of her friends, a housekeeper at Harvey House, told Leafy the restaurant was hiring waitresses. She got the job and worked as a Harvey Girl for about two years, during which time Zack left her. He was said to have gone to visit his mother in Texas and never returned. She had two children and earned \$35 per month plus tips, grateful to have a secure job during a trying time.

Leafy eventually left Deming and moved to California, with fond memories of her Harvey Girl experiences:

*“We had to make a nice spread with the food on a marble counter. We wanted the guests to feel like aristocrats. The customers used to rush in so fast from the train that I was afraid I couldn't handle them. They had to catch the train, and I was afraid they would miss it . . . .”*

*“We always had good crowds and a lot of fun. The price was a little higher but still within reason. None of the waitresses ever left their shift without tips.” Leafy left Deming and went to California. “I never had trouble finding a job when employers found out I had been trained as a Harvey Girl.” <sup>61</sup>*

Women who worked as Harvey Girls had varied backgrounds, although most of them likely grew up in traditional homes and families. When it came time to decide what she wanted to do with her life, some young women were of a mind to try something more adventurous. Being a Harvey Girl would not only provide a good steady income, but also propelled many a young woman “out West”. Many would marry a railroad man, have families and fondly remember their time serving as a Harvey Girl. At least one in particular, a Deming Harvey Girl, would chart a decidedly different life course.

Willette Angela Fantetti was born in Kentucky of Italian immigrant parents, David and Magila. She would later be known by the name Mildred, or more familiarly “Millie”. She and her older sister Florence worked on the family farm and helped with household chores, even at a young age. When her father lost the farm the family rented a small place located near Kansas City, Missouri.

Sadly, Millie's parents were among the millions who died during the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic – first her father and then her mother a week later. The sisters – six year-old Millie and ten year-old Florence –

were placed in separate foster homes, neither of which proved to be suitable.

To escape their shared misery Millie and Florence fled to Kansas City's Italian sector. On their own and in need of a way to survive Millie took a miserable job plucking chicken feathers. The two girls lived in an abandoned tenement where they were bullied by local hoodlums. Police took notice of their situation and alerted authorities who, of course, placed them once again in separate foster homes.

Interestingly, the presiding judge for their case was Harry S. Truman, a haberdasher and future United States president, who in his first political foray had been elected a judge in Jackson County. By this time Millie's future would seem to have been shaped by the foster family of a police officer who mistreated her. Millie found a way to survive – and likely save money for yet another escape – by running errands for local prostitutes.

The sisters were eventually reunited and lived with a Greek family. After Florence was diagnosed with tuberculosis, doctors recommended a drier climate and Florence was sent to Catholic sanitarium in Deming. Out of a sense of duty Millie insisted on accompanying her sister. It was up to Millie to take care of her older sibling and earn money to pay for her medicine. By this time Millie had attended a Catholic night school and graduated high school in September 1926.

Her Greek foster family was acquainted with a woman who worked in the employment department of Fred Harvey. The rules for Fred Harvey employees were to be strictly enforced. Harvey Girls had to have reached their eighteenth birthday before being considered for employment. However, Millie lied about her age (she was only fourteen at the time) and worked for a short time as a Harvey Girl. While most

girls were able to earn a decent wage adequate enough to maintain a modest lifestyle, Millie's situation was considerably different since she was also supporting Florence.

Medicines and the cost of her care were more than a Harvey Girl salary could cover, however. Millie, having already been exposed to the world of prostitution, out of pure financial need turned to the life of a "soiled dove" as a part-time prostitute in El Paso at the age of sixteen (she'd had Florence transferred there as well). Despite later being the victim of a violent beating and brutal rape, Millie chose prostitution as her life's work. Sordid though it be, it was the only profitable way she could afford Florence's medical care.

This introductory paragraph written for her biography, *Madam Millie: Bordellos From Silver City to Ketchikan*, sums it up quite well:

*The story of Silver City Millie is the story of one woman's personal tragedies and triumphs as an orphan, a Harvey Girl waitress on the Santa Fe railroad, a prostitute with innumerable paramours, and a highly successful bordello businesswoman. Millie broke the mold in so many ways, and yet her life's story of survival was not unlike that of thousands of women who went west only to find that their most valuable assets were their physical beauty and their personality. Petite at five fee tall and with piercing blue eyes, Millie captured men's attention by her very essence and her unmistakable joie de vivre. 62*

Andrew Gulliford wrote the introduction for the story of a woman author Max Evans had interviewed many times over the years. To understand Millie's story, Gulliford makes a salient point. Before anyone condemns her too severely, he advises the reader to step back and consider "full context".

“Prostitution was like motherhood and apple pie. It was expected, condoned, and appreciated, if segregated.” <sup>63</sup>

It was a familiar cycle in the American West – cattle drives, mining, homesteading – which for the most part was “man’s work”. Men considerably outnumbered women, necessitating a certain amount of what Gulliford called the “sporting culture” of getting drunk and frequenting the local bordello. In the West it was a long era stretching from the 1870s to the 1960s. Millie made the most of that stretch.

Since Millie was living and working in El Paso she took the opportunity to cross the border into Juarez where she sang with an eleven-piece orchestra. In the meantime Florence’s condition had worsened and she needed an expensive surgery.

She, of course, would need more money to pay for her sister’s care. At the suggestion of someone she met in Mexico, Millie arranged to meet a woman by the moniker of “Madam Billie”, the owner of a bordello in Carrizozo, New Mexico, where business had recently picked up considerably with a road construction project in the area. Billie’s girls had to be eighteen, and once again Millie lied about her age (sixteen).

Working for Billie, and later Emma Sevier in Roswell, taught Millie the tricks of the trade she would need to know to build her own business empire. Emma, a former Oklahoma Indian Territory school teacher, had discovered there was more money to be made as a prostitute. She and two other teachers lived in a tent they shared with two prostitutes. Teaching didn’t pay a whole lot and the teachers soon discovered the prostitutes made more money in one month’s time than the teachers made in an entire year.

By the time Millie arrived in Roswell she had amassed quite a savings – six thousand dollars. She was saving that for her own

business some day. At one point after going to work in a Silver City brothel, the local constabulary discovered she was underage and had her removed. She told him she would “come back, buy the whole block and run it to suit myself” – and that she eventually did when she purchased three houses in the 500 block of Hudson Street which became known as the “500 Club”. <sup>64</sup>

She later established a house in Deming, with a twinge of nostalgia, in the late 1930s. By then she had married and lost both her first husband and Florence (1936). She had also branched out considerably – running five houses in the area around Silver City and one in Laramie, Wyoming. An astute businesswoman, she would travel to Deming each night to check receipts.

Millie married for the second time to Ben Hacker, a drunk with whom she had a volatile relationship. He severely beat her more than once, requiring surgery after one incident. She divorced him and later married James Cusey, with whom she remained married to until his death in 1991.

She would not only own several “houses of ill-repute” during her long and storied career, but also branched out with beauty parlors, bars and restaurants. She was featured in a 1954 issue of *Good Housekeeping*. She died in 1993 and was laid to rest at Fort Bayard National Cemetery (James was a World War II veteran). She wins the prize, hands down, for the most colorful (and successful) Harvey Girl.

The law finally caught up with Madam Millie in 1969 following a long and tedious administrative hearing when she accused Silver City police officers of misconduct. She freely admitted to being a “Silver City bawdy house operator”. <sup>65</sup> Clearly, by then she’d had a long history with the city and its police department, and an even longer

history as one of New Mexico’s infamous “soiled doves”.

Fred Harvey most likely wouldn’t have approved of her life’s work, although both had ultimately left a mark on the American West. By early 1901 Fred Harvey was a very sick man, despite his efforts to find medical relief. Following a sojourn to California in search of better health, he returned to Leavenworth, Kansas where he died on February 9, 1901.

While it wasn’t the end of Fred Harvey the business, the *Los Angeles Times* headline announcing his death, seemed appropriate for the man who had transformed both the restaurant and railroad industries:

## **FRED HARVEY IS NO MORE**

### **Railroad Eating-house Man Passes Away**

#### **History of Upbuilding of Big Business** <sup>66</sup>

He had succumbed to intestinal cancer at the age of 65, leaving behind his wife and five children. By that time his son Ford had been working alongside Fred for a number of years and had gradually taken the reins of Fred Harvey.



The business had been and always would be simply Fred Harvey – not Fred Harvey & Sons, Fred Harvey, Inc. or the Fred Harvey Company, as one biographer noted. This is how the railroads advertised and how the public knew what to expect

when walking through the doors of a Harvey House.

*At the restaurants and hotels, menus and other printed materials would make a point of noting “Your host is Fred Harvey.”*

*The decision, while semantically tricky, was unambiguously brilliant. For the rest of Fred Harvey’s life, and for decades afterward, patrons would feel as if they were being taken care of by Fred Harvey himself.*

*And, in a way, they were.* <sup>67</sup>

The long and storied history of New Mexico simply can’t be told without including Fred Harvey, Harvey House and the Harvey Girls. After all, the company was responsible for bringing numerous people, men and women, to the West, and New Mexico in particular.

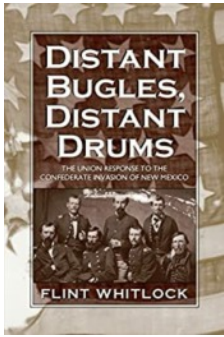


I hope you’ve enjoyed this broad-based article which not only included stories about Harvey House operations throughout New Mexico, but a generous dollop of New Mexico history. If you’re interested in reading more about the company’s storied history, see the bibliography at the end of this issue.



## May I Recommend . . .

### **Distant Bugles, Distant Drums: The Union Response to the Confederate Invasion of New Mexico**



When we think of the Civil War we assume the conflict's basic demarcation was North vs. South. It's certainly true the majority of that war's costliest and bloodiest battles were conducted in places like

Gettysburg, Antietam, Shiloh, Vicksburg and General Sherman's "March to the Sea", meaning most of the action took place east of the Mississippi River.

There were very few battles fought in Texas, although the state contributed significant numbers of soldiers to the Confederate cause. However, as author Flint Whitlock emphasizes, one shouldn't presume the imaginary line from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas down to Brownsville, Texas is an accurate depiction of the conflict's boundaries. Several hundred miles northwest of Brownsville a number of battles took place, drawing in troops from the Colorado and New Mexico territories.

These two territories came under the jurisdiction of the federal government, the North. For the South, however, a campaign which would allow Confederates to break through federal strongholds and lay claim to the rich goldfields of Colorado – and continue marching westward to the Pacific Ocean – was strategically conducted.

The federal government, of course, maintained a military presence in both territories, but unprepared for serious

Confederate incursions like the one led by Henry Hopkins Sibley, described by Whitlock as a "professional soldier, cantankerous inventor, and hard-drinking regular, whose campaign plans ranged somewhere between strategic vision and besotted reverie."

Sibley's Union counterpart, Colonel E.S. Canby, was nowhere near as colorful although he possessed a solid record of faithful service. His subordinates weren't exactly "rag-tag" but presented challenges nonetheless, including a "fiery preacher" trying to make a name for himself.

Volumes (and volumes) have been written about Southern and Northern campaigns. Conversely, very little has been written about this small campaign conducted from 1861-1862, said to be the second smallest of the entire Civil War. This should in no way diminish its significance, however, since had the Confederates been successful the war might have had a different ending.

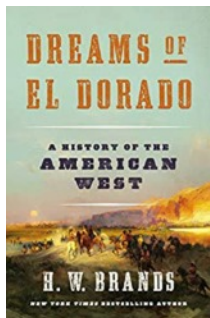
The book covers Sibley's march up the Rio Grande, and more notably, the Union's response at the Battle of Glorieta Pass in northern New Mexico. Sibley's victory was significant in its southern New Mexico territory, but his stinging defeat in the North said more about the Union's resolve. Confederates had no choice but to accept the defeat, making an "agonizing retreat – a true death march – back to Texas."

For anyone interested in the Civil War and its more obscure campaigns, this book is highly recommended. Not to be missed is Whitlock's description of "exploding mules".

### **Dreams of El Dorado: A History of the American West**

While I'm no stranger to the writings of H.W. Brands, having read various articles published in *Texas Monthly* over the years,

I had never read one of his books. I picked a great one to acquaint myself with his work in this impressive treatise of storied American Western expansionism.



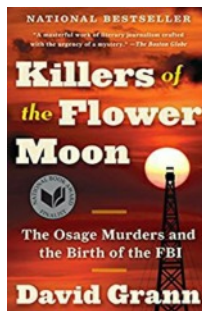
The American West drew adventurous souls from near and far, most dreaming of finding their very own “El Dorado”, which translated from Spanish means “the golden one”. Although all dreams weren’t exclusively about physical gold, many a seeker dreamed big only to fall on hard times. The West was not a place for the faint of heart.

Theodore Roosevelt is a great example of a big dreamer. He loved the West, and for awhile during his self-imposed hiatus from public life following the untimely death of his beloved first wife, he seemed right at home in Dakota territory. Reality set in, however, after a brutal winter decimated cattle stocks across North and South Dakota (and beyond).

As Brands points out, the West’s “elusiveness simply added to its allure” as “Dreams of El Dorado inspired one generation of Americans after another to head west.” *Dreams of El Dorado* starts where the American West really began – the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, and continuing through the early twentieth century even as more Western dreams awaited future generations.

A good deal of this book has been highlighted for my own personal reference. I enjoyed the book so much that I purchased it for my own collection of important American history resources. Even though the book is over 500 pages, you won’t be bored – not for a second!

## Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI



Today it’s no big secret how Native Americans have been regarded both before and after America’s founding. As the white man ventured farther west the federal government required that Indians be conquered and assimilated.

Such was the case of the proud Osage tribe, who along with many other tribes, was forcibly placed in lands foreign (and often inhospitable) to them. The Osage were first sent to Kansas and then later removed to the northeast part of Oklahoma on land that, at face value, seemed to be fairly worthless. That is, until oil was discovered.

Suddenly Osage headrights were valuable enough to make members of the tribe millionaires, practically overnight. Newspapers reported how Osage millionaires would buy cars, and some might have more than ten.

In the early 1920’s murders and suspicious deaths of the Osage began, eventually garnering the attention of the federal government and the fledgling department which would come to be called the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Indeed, parts of this book cover those early years and how J. Edgar Hoover shaped the FBI. One of their early cases was uncovering the mystery of the systematic deaths of the Osage in Oklahoma.

As it turned out the case was full of twists and turns, but in the end it was all about greed, or more specifically, white man’s greed.

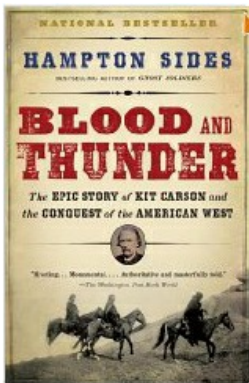
Killers of the Flower Moon is a long-forgotten story about what might be one of the nation’s biggest serial murder case, with

the early years of the FBI as a backdrop — brought back to life with a suspenseful storyline by author David Grann.

Editor's  
Note

While this book was reviewed two years ago in the September 2018 issue, I thought it appropriate to highlight it again after discovering the masterful detective work of James Alexander (Alex) Street during the Osage murder case. Prior to his FBI career, Street helped found the city of Tucumcari. His story, originally planned for this issue, will be featured in the next issue which continues the New Mexico theme.

### **Blood and Thunder: An Epic of the American West**



Kit Carson was illiterate yet he learned to speak Spanish and French, as well as various Native American languages. In our minds we imagine this legendary American being a tall, swaggering, tough-talking scout and Indian fighter. Instead, he was none of those things. He was a small, soft-spoken man, and although he spent months away from home at a time, he was a loving husband and father.

His legendary life was the subject of many a "pulp novel". Once he was shown a book just published with his supposed image on the cover, his arm around the waist of a slender and buxom young woman, surrounded by the bodies of vanquished savages. He took the book, put on his glasses and looked at the cover. He put the book down after studying it and said with a wink, "Gentlemen, that thar may be true, but I hain't got no recollection of it."

Christopher Houston Carson was born in Kentucky in 1809, the same year as the 16th

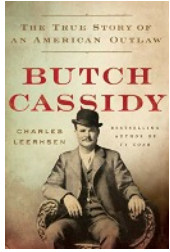
President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. His family headed west to Missouri the following year, becoming neighbors of the sons of Daniel Boone. His father, Lindsey, was killed in 1818 when a large tree limb fell on him killing him instantly. Some of the children were already grown, but Rebecca Carson was left with ten children to provide for. Kit was only seven but he had to quit school and help his family by hunting and working in the fields.

When he was able to surreptitiously sign up to work with a large caravan heading to Santa Fe, his life would change forever. He worked every kind of job — hunting, cooking for the caravan, fur trapper, scout and in later years employed as a United States military officer in the Indian wars. After Carson finished his assignment as a scout for John Fremont and his expeditions to California and Oregon, a significant portion of the book is then centered on New Mexico history.

The book contains fascinating details about the life of Kit Carson — pulp fiction it's not. The author, Hampton Sides, is careful to treat his subject with respect and dignity (and maybe a little awe). The use of actual accounts of Carson's life from his oral interviews and the diaries of those who served with him throughout his lifetime are meticulously woven throughout the book.

Every other chapter or so, the author writes about the Navajo people and their struggles with the invasion of their land and the attempts to get along with the white man. The book is long (624 pages) but I never felt that it was tedious. The author's writing style is what one reviewer called "friendly". His writing flowed easily in describing Carson's life, intertwining it with the events surrounding the "manifest destiny" of the country and those who played a part in the expansion westward. If the conquest of the West is something that interests you, I would highly recommend the book.

## Butch Cassidy: The True Story of an American Outlaw



After reading this book I'm really happy I never saw the movie. I don't think I would have enjoyed this book had I seen the fictionalized version of Robert LeRoy Parker, alias Butch Cassidy, and his sidekick Harry Alonzo Longabaugh, alias the Sundance Kid. The book's title says it all – the "True Story".

If I want to know about someone or some event, I much prefer the true story, although I have read plenty of historical fiction which is quite good. Author Charles Leerhsen has obviously packed this book with a good deal of research, and takes the time to compare the "true story" to what was depicted in the movie version (which is how I know I like the real story better).

Along the way Leerhsen punctuates the historical record with voluminous newspaper accounts, as well as more than a few innuendos which are not presented necessarily in a tawdry or unseemly way – just something to think about.

To say that Butch Cassidy was possessed of a complex personality would be an understatement. He was a drifter, but also a leader who didn't mind admitting his guilt when he was caught. Each time he ended up in jail he served out his term with good behavior and kept on outlawing.

Along the way he worked with some of the more well known outlaws of the day. As soon as one job was over it was time to lay low and start planning the next. It's quite amazing to see their ability to mobilize across the West in a time when most travel was on horseback.

I found it a fascinating read about someone I've long heard of, but didn't necessarily know the real story. My kind of book!



Here are some recent books which have been read, are being read, or planned future reads scheduled for reviews in future issues of the magazine (you might want to check them out as well):

*The Kidnap Years: The Astonishing True History of the Forgotten Kidnapping Epidemic That Shook Depression-Era America*, by David Stout

*Citizen Reporters*, by Stephanie Gorton

*Imperfect Union*, by Steve Inskeep

*Imperfect Union: A Father's Search for His Son in the Aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg*, by Chuck Raasch

*The Women of the Copper Country*, by Mary Doria Russell

*American Sherlock*, by Kate Winkler Dawson

*Edison*, by Edmund Morris

*Every Drop of Blood*, by Edward Achorn

*The Burning: Massacre, Destruction, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, by Tim Madigan

*Sweet Taste of Liberty: A True Story of Slavery and Restitution in America*, by W. Caleb McDaniel

*The King of Confidence: A Tale of Utopian Dreamers, Frontier Schemers, True Believers, False Prophets, and the Murder of an American Monarch*, by Miles Harvey

*Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier*, by Benjamin E. Park

*Revolver: Sam Colt and the Six-Shooter That Changed America*, by Jim Rasenberger



# ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL FAMILY RESEARCHER

by Sharon Hall

## There Goes My Research: Broken Links

We all run across these in our Internet research – broken links, “Page Not Found”. We think – “why, oh why, didn’t I print that page instead of just saving the link. Now it’s gone forever!” Maybe, maybe not.



One of my favorite web sites, Internet Archive (IA), has a feature called the “Wayback Machine”. According to the IA blog, the average “life expectancy” of a single web page is between 44 and 100 days. Of course, there are sites which keep extensive searchable archives, but for genealogists relying, for instance, on private family history web sites which have been taken down this is a problem. One such site I revisited recently had been taken down, redesigned and is now back up. However, the one link I needed to access gave me a “File Not Found (404 Error)”.

Thankfully, I had installed the Wayback Machine plugin for my preferred browser (Firefox, and also available for Safari). Immediately after receiving the error the Wayback Machine automatically popped up to offer assistance:



I clicked the link (Click here to see archived version) and the missing page popped up. I was able to confirm the family line, but the pictures included with the original page were missing. This time, however, I received a message the photos had not been included in the archive.

So, it might be a mixed result sometimes, or in the case of the missing pictures a single page may never have been archived. Still, it’s worth a try to possibly retrieve vital information.

To install the plugin for Firefox:

Select Tools, Add-ons. At the top of the page search for “Wayback” and locate the Wayback Machine plugin. Select, and on the following page click “+ Add to Firefox”.

To install the extension in Safari:

Go to this link to install: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/wayback-machine/id1472432422?mt=12>

Note: Originally, IA announced there was an extension for Chrome but it now appears to have been taken down. That, of course, may change later.

Although not an automatic pop-up you can still use Wayback by saving this site for direct access: <https://web.archive.org/>

## **Blame it on Indexing (e.g., Human Error)**

We all have ancestors who appear to have been “lost”, either completely or with significant record gaps. While our ancestors were nowhere near as mobile as we are today, it was still possible they moved elsewhere between censuses. It’s always a good idea to search either the entire county where you have a record of them having last lived, but also check adjacent counties as well.

Possibly the hardest obstacle to overcome, however, has nothing to do with our ancestor’s mobility. Rather, it’s a twenty-first century problem – human error in transcription. Admittedly, census (and other) records can be difficult to read. Some years ago I volunteered to help with indexing at FamilySearch.org, so I know firsthand how it can happen. Volunteers are given a set of records to decipher as best (and quickly) as they can, often with subsequent disappointing results for researchers.

When you’re fairly certain an ancestor should appear in a particular set of records, there are some techniques which might help:

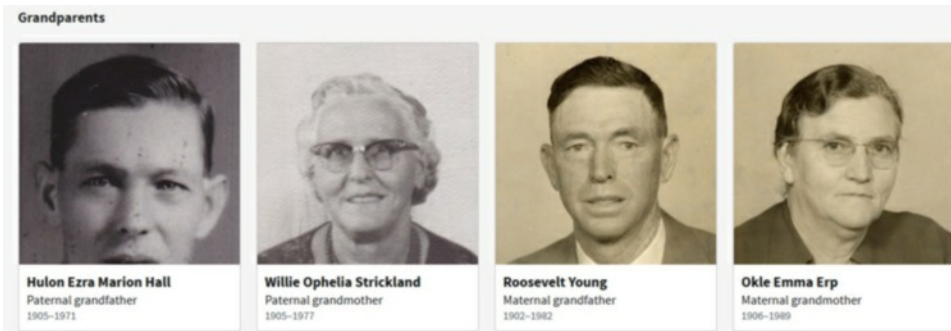
- Try alternate surname spellings. I run across this frequently while conducting newspaper research. A recent example was a family by the name of “Greear”. In order to find as many instances of the name as possible in Quay County, New Mexico, I had to search for “Greer” as well.
- Try searching the first name only, even though this technique might be quite time-consuming if your ancestor had a common forename like “John”.
- Try searching by initials. This technique applies to newspaper research as well. When you can find “Charles J. Davis” or “Charles Davis”, try “C.J. Davis” instead.
- Albeit the most time consuming, you might need to physically search for yourself to find a missing ancestor. If you happen to discover a name which was mis-transcribed, the May-June 2020 issue outlines the steps for submitting alternate spellings for Ancestry.com records.
- Scottish and Irish ancestors often had names preceded by “Mc”, “Mac” or “O”. Try both “Mc” and “Mac” and even consider that in the indexing process “Mc” or “Mac” may have been parsed into a separate search field. “O” followed by an apostrophe may present similar challenges as characters like apostrophes, dashes and commas are sometimes ignored in broad searches.

Obviously, genealogy research requires more than a modicum of “think-outside-the-box” strategies. Don’t give up – just try a little creativity!

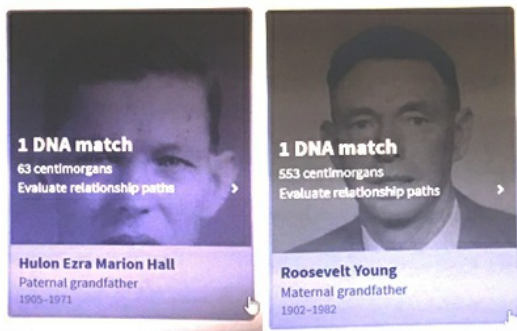
## **ThruLines® vs. True Lines**

Ancestry.com continues to innovate and fine-tune their DNA matching system. Last year they introduced a feature called “ThruLines®”. It’s a great way to aggregate your DNA matches vs. looking through TONS of potentially dubious links. I don’t know about you, but I tend to pass on the 3rd through 5th and 4th through 6th cousins (at least for the time being). With ThruLines it’s somewhat easier to sift through matches, however, so I may have to try going out a little farther to see if anything useful pops up.

I recently came across a blog article which aimed to explain what ThruLines® was all about – and what it wasn't about. One of the author's points was the mistake some might make in equating "ThruLines®" with "True Lines". My analysis of ThruLines® reveals a nice feature which groups together common ancestors for your DNA matches vs. having to slog through hundreds (sometimes thousands) of matches. For instance, I selected the "DNA" at the top of my Ancestry account and selected "ThruLines®". There I get an aggregate look at my ancestors. These are my grandparents:



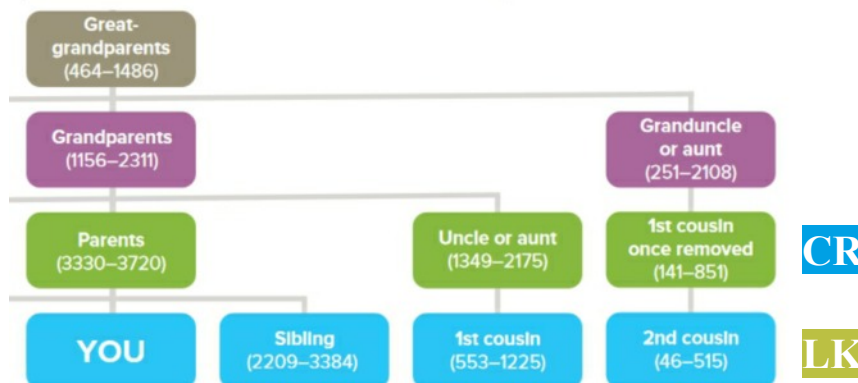
When I mouse-over each image I see more information about matches. These are my paternal and maternal grandfathers:



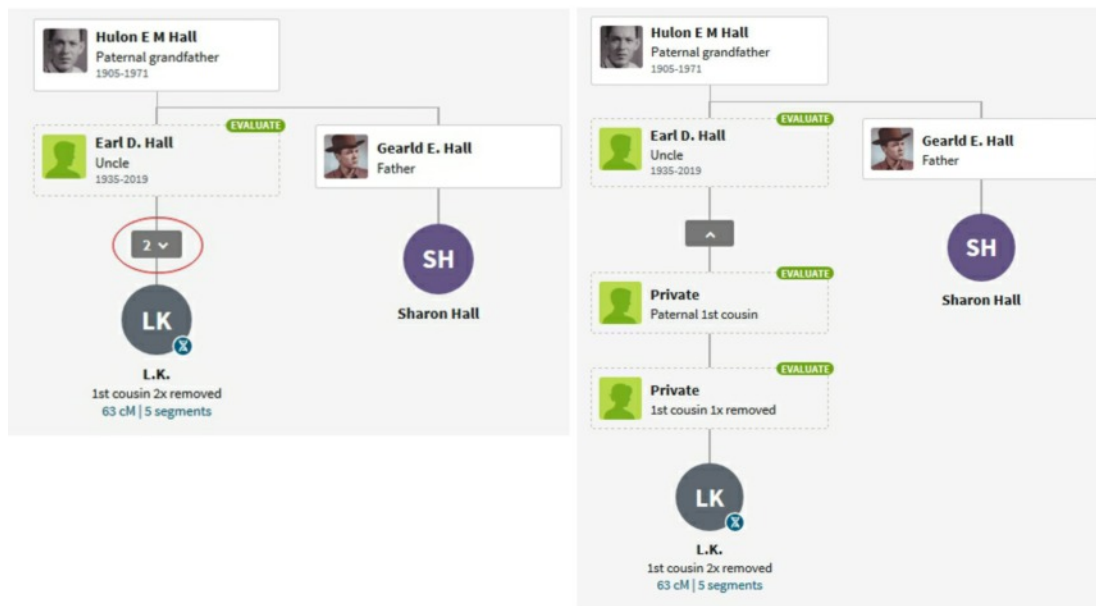
Each links me with 1 DNA match. For Hulon Hall someone shares 63 centimorgans of DNA and for Roosevelt Young we share 553 centimorgans. What does this mean? By selecting "Evaluate relationship paths" I found out more about the match.

For Hulon Hall I found someone who I never noticed on the massive list of DNA matches. From the screen name I (eventually) surmise this is the grandson of my first cousin, son of my Dad's twin brother (LK).

For Roosevelt Young I found someone I was already aware of – the daughter of one of my maternal first cousins has been conducting research for quite a while (CR). Neither were surprises as far as DNA matching. I found a handy DNA chart (which is attached to the end of this issue) – here's the portion pertaining to these results:



Using this particular chart makes it a bit clearer how DNA works. After selecting “Evaluate relationship paths, I could see more detail in two steps:



The first screen shows my grandfather, my Dad and his twin, Earl D. Hall. Of note there are two generations to view under Earl Hall. When I click to open up the “hidden” generations, I get the second screen result where I can see my first cousin, his daughter and her son LK.

I have no doubts about either of these results, but is ThruLines® the “be all to end all” in terms of finding valid DNA matches? Yes and no – sometimes it will help with brick walls, or perhaps finding names of missing ancestors. However, at least for my own tree, the farther out I go (4th or 5th great grandparents and beyond) the more “iffy” it gets. While I may very well be related to these DNA matches, the thing people may not realize is Ancestry is also making suppositions based on tree data.

To their (sort of) credit Ancestry marks these questionable matches/conclusions as a “Potential Ancestor”. When you take a closer look you are prompted to “Evaluate” with a look at other trees, which may or may not be correct with or without sources.

Anyone who has performed genealogical research is well acquainted with how difficult it is to break through brick walls. However, just because ThruLines® shows my 4th great grandfather (who I’ve thus far been unsuccessful in finding with valid records) is William “Wiley” Thomas, doesn’t necessarily mean I should I believe it.

Some people, I’m quite sure, would just accept it and keep copying other Ancestry family trees until they fill out their own. “Cut-and-paste” is not genealogical research. The problem with these “assumptions” is there are no sources to back up their claims – other than “Ancestry Family Tree”.

Should you use ThruLines®? By all means, I would say “yes” but follow up with more research to prove (or disprove) “Potential Ancestors” suggested by other Ancestry trees.



# THE DASH

**Martin Van Buren Corn (1841-1915)**

by Sharon Hall

Editor's  
Note

*This article was featured several years ago in a "Tombstone Tuesday" article. Since then several comments have been made by Corn family members and descendants. This article will refresh the original with more information about Corn family origins.*

I came across the story of this New Mexico pioneer while researching a ghost town article. In 1991, the *Roswell Daily Record* called his family one of Roswell's oldest and largest. Since the late 1870s several generations of this family have lived and thrived in the Pecos River Valley, and it all began with Martin Van Buren Corn.

Martin Van Buren Corn was born on October 16, 1841 in North Carolina to parents John Roland and Elizabeth (McMinn) Corn. John was the son of Peter and the grandson of John Peter Corn, a Revolutionary War veteran. John Peter (born in 1752), son of Mathew, enlisted in February 1776 and "was a member of Gen. Washington's commissariat, charged with securing supplies for the troops."<sup>1</sup> While on a foraging detail into Virginia John Peter visited one farm and became enamored with the farmer's young daughter. Once the war ended he returned and married the young lady, Elizabeth Parr, in May 1782. After first residing in Virginia for several years the couple moved to North Carolina, settling along the Green River.

John Peter and Elizabeth began the tradition of large Corn "quivers" with fifteen children. Their son Noah was one of Henderson County's first Baptist preachers, trekking on foot through the mountains spreading the Good News to Cherokee

Indians. Peter Corn, born in 1792, was the father of John Roland.

From Henderson County, John Roland and his family migrated to Cherokee County, Georgia and later to Kerr County, Texas. In 1855 the United States government embarked upon an experiment of sorts. The most pressing issue for President Franklin Pierce's Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis (later President of the Confederate States), was a frustratingly longstanding one – how to quell Indian attacks so that settlers were free to travel unmolested through what most considered to be uninhabitable territory.

The idea of using camels in Indian campaigns had been around since the 1830s, but it wasn't until March 1855 when Congress made a \$30,000 appropriation "for the purchase and importation of camels and dromedaries to be used for military purposes."<sup>2</sup> The experiment failed, however, considered to be a bit of quirky pre-Civil War Texas history.

Martin joined Texas Confederate forces, enlisting in San Antonio in the spring of 1862 and serving under Captain Lewis Antonio Maverick's Company of Woods' Regiment 36th Texas Cavalry. During the summer of 1862 this regiment patrolled the Texas coast, "protect[ing] cotton wagons going into Mexico to sell to English traders at Matamoros."<sup>3</sup> Confederate services records indicate Martin was regularly paid, having signed up for three years or until war's end. He was apparently captured and held as a prisoner of war, paroled in San Antonio on August 28, 1865, "permitted to return to his home, not to be disturbed by the United States Authorities, so long as he observes his parole and the laws in force where he may reside."<sup>4</sup>

Younger brother Robert and father John were also conscripted to serve the Confederacy in 1862, Robert serving in Kerr

County's 3rd Frontier Texas Cavalry and John served as a private in Company E of the 36th Texas Cavalry. Robert and John served brief terms – John for five days in April 1864 (\$2 per day for \$10) and Robert for ten days in February (\$2 per day for \$20). Both died of disease in June of 1864.

Martin returned to Kerr County and later married Mary Jane Hampton, widow of fellow Confederate soldier Jim Hampton, on April 13, 1867. Her son Jim was born in 1862 and raised as Martin's son. To their marriage were born nine more children, eight living to adulthood:

Mary Elizabeth (1868); Armenta (1869); Zilpha (died in infancy); John Roland (1873); Robert (1875); Martin Van Buren (1876); Eva Rosetta (1877); Sarah (1878) and George Washington (1882).

In 1869 Martin was serving as county commissioner. In the late 1870s Martin left Kerrville and migrated to New Mexico, looking for plenty of land and room to accommodate his growing family. They traveled in a caravan of six covered wagons with a few other families, five hundred head of cattle and one hundred horses. Before starting their journey west the family had their first tin-type picture taken.

According to Martin's oldest daughter Mary the family originally planned to migrate to Salt River, Arizona after an uncle sent back glowing reports of rich farm land. Their journey would be long with plenty of potential perils as settlers more often than not encountered Indian treachery along the way. Despite the risks, the children, "who had never been as much as twenty miles from home, thought it would be great to make a long trip to another state or territory."<sup>5</sup>

Martin, however, knew very well the way would be treacherous and had prepared in advance by appointing bosses to watch over his cattle and horses. After making the

journey safely across the Staked Plains the caravan traveled along the Pecos River until they came to a small settlement called Seven Rivers.

In the mid-1850s native Tennessean-come-Texan John Simpson Chisum began sending his herds to New Mexico Territory, eventually owning a large ranch situated along the Pecos River south of Fort Sumner with well over 100,000 head of cattle. The well-situated location, along with a partnership with fellow cattlemen Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving, made Chisum a wealthy man. Fort Sumner was a customer and provided a measure of protection, although incidents like this 1873 incursion still occurred:

*The Indians have left the Fort Stanton reservation and are committing depredations around here. They have killed Huggins, a buckboard driver, who used [sic] his nose off. This occurred near John Chisum's place. They also killed a man down at Seven Rivers and scalped him. They have been seen with a few miles of this place, and we are in dread of their paying us a visit. We have some good stock here but keep it under lock and key. They have left nearly all the herders that are down here afoot, and have fought a party of twenty-five men for two nights, but did not get away with any of their stock, etc.<sup>6</sup>*

Indian depredations continued:

*Seven Rivers, N.M., August 2, 1874.*

*This section of New Mexico is now infested with bands of hostile Indians, who are driving off all the horses they can capture. They commenced their depredations at John Chisum's one hundred miles above here from whom, after considerable fighting, they captured a good many horses and killed a Mexican boy . . . Sixty five have been counted in one band and they are well armed, for where they have been fought the*

*shells of needle gun cartridges have been picked up in large numbers.*

*It is very dry in this section, not having rained for three months. Grass is sorry, but the crops look well.*<sup>7</sup>

In late 1875 Chisum sold his ranch to Robert Dickie Hunter, a wealthy entrepreneur who had dabbled in the mining business in Colorado before turning to the cattle business, for a hefty sum:

### **A LARGE TRANSACTION**

#### **John S. Chisum, the Veritable Cattle King of all the Territories, Sells his Ranche and Stock Cattle, on the Pecos, to Col. R.D. Hunter of St. Louis, for a Third of a Million.**

*During the past week, one of the largest sales of stock cattle of this or any other Territory or State, was consumated [sic] between John S. Chisum of Bosque Grande, and Col. R.D. Hunter of St. Louis. The purchase included Chisum's Ranche on the Pecos, with his brand and all the cattle now on the range, estimated at not less than 30,000 head. The consideration is named, at the nice little sum of three hundred and nineteen thousand, nine hundred and thirty dollars . . .*

*The Chisum Ranche is situated on the Pecos River New Mexico. It extends South, along the river, from near Fort Sumner to Seven rivers, a distance of one hundred and fifty miles. This is the extent of the range north and south. East and west it reaches as far as a man can travel, on a good horse, during a summer; practically, as far as stock can range from the river without water. The country on both sides of the river, is high rolling prairie, covered with a thick set, heavy growth of black grama, the most nutritious of grasses. The grass is knee high on every hill and mesa this year. The river is the second in size in the territory, and is fed from the snows and*

*springs of the mountains on the west. To the eastward extends the Staked Plains from which side there is not a single tributary to the Pecos. The plains fall gradually to the east and the water from the rains flows to the eastern border, thus, giving rise to nearly all the rivers of Texas. The climate is singularly equable, mild and healthy, throughout the year. Cotton can be grown as far north as Fort Sumner . . .*<sup>8</sup>

What wasn't there to like? After traveling for weeks up the muddy Pecos before reaching Seven Rivers, Martin saw thousands of acres of land with plenty of irrigation, so instead of continuing on to Arizona Territory he decided to explore the area, leaving some of his men in charge of the women and children and taking a group of men with him.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, some of the men left behind began quarreling and Ike Teeters was killed and buried in the small Seven Rivers cemetery. Nevertheless, the decision was made to remain in the area after Martin returned. The group settled about six miles east of Roswell and the men set about to begin building a dam and irrigation ditch system. At the time Roswell consisted of two buildings, one a combined store and post office and the other a hotel.

Martin and the other men labored through the fall and harshly cold winter, finishing in time to begin planting crops in the spring. Since there was little or no timber, sod houses were erected while they waited for the first crops to come in.

According to May Corn Marley, another rancher (John Chisum, who had moved down the road a-ways) approached Martin in 1890 ([sic] perhaps 1880 although reported as 1890 – Chisum died in Arkansas in 1884) and offered to procure some trees to plant along the ditch system if Martin would plant them. Martin agreed and Chisum sent two ox wagons to Alpine, Texas

which returned with cottonwood and willow trees. Martin had also planted several acres of apple trees and later garnered prizes and blue ribbons for his garden crops and his family cared for the trees planted along the river, referred to locally as “Lover’s Lane”, “a beauty spot and favorite drive for young people, especially lovers, for nearly sixty years.”<sup>10</sup>

After alfalfa was planted and successfully harvested, Martin purchased seed and planted a wide green field of his own on the south side of “Lovers Lane”. He also planted one of the first apple orchards in the valley, yielding blue ribbons for years to come.



Martin’s cattle and horse herds increased in size.

According to May her father loved horses and a very special one named “Black Hat” was sold to Pat Garrett and used by Billy the Kid following his escape from the Lincoln jail in 1881. Garrett had also contracted with Martin to make the adobe and walls for a spacious home for his burgeoning family. While they waited the family lived in a sod house along the South Spring River.

By 1881 the children of Martin and Mary Jane Corn attended school three miles east of Roswell, the area’s first adobe school building. Nine months after giving birth to her son George, Mary passed away on May 25, 1883. Three years later on October 14, 1886, forty-five year-old Martin married sixteen year-old Julia McVicker. To their marriage was born eleven children:



Minnie Catherine (1887); Anna May (1890); Wade Hampton (1892); Lee Berry (1894); Charles Schriener (1896); Jesse William (1898); Roe Alfred (1901); Clarence Ray

(1903); Herbert Milton (1906); Poe (1909) and Lillian Caroline (1913).

In 1893 Martin sold the original property to J.J. Hagerman and the following year established his new ranch called “Eden Valley” twenty miles north of Roswell. There he lived the remainder of his life until his death on September 30, 1915. He was buried on the property near his ranch home. Julia died in 1939.

Besides becoming a successful farmer and rancher, Martin Corn and his family helped settle Chaves County, and to this day his descendants remain a part of the community. As the *Roswell Daily Record* noted several years following Martin’s death, “the Corns came in 1879 and they have never found a better place in which to live and have been the one crop in the valley which never failed.”<sup>11</sup> In 1930 the family was still growing – with “the littlest Nubbins still in the hospital” and always well represented for annual events like county fairs and the annual Old Timers’ Parade.

Descendants of Martin Van Buren Corn, many of them farmers and ranchers, are understandably proud of their rich heritage.

**Editor's Note**

The New Mexico issue was originally planned to be the July-August issue only. However, time got away from me, and with multiple schedule interruptions in August, the theme will continue in the September-October issue.

Look for more stories on how and why people came to New Mexico, plus an “adventure in research” (or two), a good old-fashioned feud, an outlaw story, a legendary lawman – and more. Stay tuned!

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