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Early History of Plateau Valley, Colorado, and Pioneer Life of the First Settlers, as Related By Them or Their Near Relatives

Our Home Town

MESA STATE COLORADO

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THE COVER: Paul Gray is a 1990 graduate of Mesa State College. He received a B.S. in Biology and has been a freelance wildlife illustrator for the state of Colorado since 1992. He currently lives in Grand Junction.

Contents

"Early History of Plateau Valley, Colorado, and Pioneer Life of the First Settlers, as Related By Them or Their Near Relatives."

By Ada Hall Stewart*

Chapter One

While the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia pealed out the birth of a new nation in July of 1776, several thousand miles away, there was seated around a table in the old Governor's Mansion at Santa Fe, New Mexico, a few Spaniards, eagerly studying a crude map before them, making plans to send an exploring party into what is now Colorado. Their object was not only to explore the region for Spain, but also to find a road which would connect the missions of the Rio Grande with those on the Pacific. It was decided that Escalante and Dominguez should lead the expedition.

Of Dominguez very little is on record. Escalante was a Spanish priest who came to the Americas in 1768 and had gained much experience in desert travel and with the Indians. He was one of the most admirable characters in our southwestern history. He was the real leader of the party of eight, and a painstaking geographer who kept his diary so well that their route may be easily followed even now.

*According to *The Skin and Bones of Plateau Valley*, compiled by Helen Hawxhurst Young (Grand Junction: Printed by Wilson and Young Printers, 1976), 110, Ada Hall Stewart moved to Mesa, Colorado in 1899, with her husband Ezra and son Erwine, and lived there until her death in 1956 at age 89. The Stewart family settled on the Brink ranch on Coon Creek. Historians and genealogists have used Mrs. Stewart's manuscript as a valuable resource for years. As there has been some editing to this article, serious researchers are urged to check our accuracy with the original manuscript, ASC #F-684, at the Lloyd Files Research Library, Museum of Western Colorado, Grand Junction.

The expedition started on July 29th, 1776, and finally entered Colorado, in present-day Archuleta County, camping near the junction of the San Juan and Navajo Rivers on August 5th. They gave the spot the name which translated means "Our Lady of the Snows," and thus it became the first named spot in Colorado, of which the exact date is known. Here, as well as at various other places in his journey, Escalante mentions that the land was good, needing only irrigation to make it productive.

They came to that part of the country containing pit houses, the house remains of a prehistoric Indian culture, which the Colorado State Historical Society has recently explored. Over on the Mancos, they stopped to examine the remains of cliff dwellings and peer into canyons where lay the remains of a vanished race, but our own Mesa Verde lay hidden waiting for discovery in another century. From Mancos they followed the Dolores River through Montezuma and Dolores Counties. They knew nothing about this country they had reached, and from their notes they were evidently lost in the heart of the Utes' hunting grounds. Reaching a spot near the present sight of Norwood, they made camp to rest their horses. The expedition later proceeded east and northeast to the Uncompahgre Plateau, where they were overtaken by an Indian returning from a hunt. Being much in need of a guide, they finally persuaded him to guide them to his village.

He left them a few hours, and returned with his family, two women and five children. The women presented the friars with dried venison and two plates of apple raisins (most likely thorn apples or rose hips) which were very agreeable to the taste.

Two towns in Delta County (Escalante and Dominguez), bear witness to the passing of these explorers. The trail runs nearly north from the Gunnison, passing to the west of Grand Mesa. It then runs northeast, east of Palisade, over the hogback through Mesa, across Plateau Creek and on to the Grand (now Colorado) River near DeBeque. Finally, the trail goes to the White River.

Their Indian guide brought them to the ranchería of the Subugana tribe, his own village, composed of 30 wigwams, near the present site of Mesa. Here the travelers rested and preached to

the Indians, who did not wish to guide them any longer. The natives tried to persuade them to return home, as winter was coming. But the explorers would not leave. They proceeded to the oil shale country near DeBeque, Garfield County, discovering the White River, then Rangely and southward home, reaching Santa Fe on January 2, 1777, after a journey of two thousand miles.

While Escalante failed in his original purpose, the expedition ranks as the outstanding exploration of Colorado by the Spanish, and these were undoubtedly the first white men to enter Plateau Valley. Here the red men lived in this beautiful valley, unmolested by the whites for yet another century.

Chapter Two

Just here, I want to relate some personal experiences of a man of real pioneer spirit. It is Mr. James L. Riland, now editor of the White River Review of Meeker. While he has not lived in Plateau Valley, he has been close around the edges for many years. He says:

> I was placer mining with my father at Breckenridge, in 1876, when a band of Utes came to us for help and medicine, as one of their squaws was taken suddenly very ill. The Utes had been coming in annually, and ordering the miners out, but the miners could hold their own better than the settlers. Our medical supplies were limited, being only St. Jacob's Oil, Red Flannel, Oil, tea and hot water, but we did all we could to relieve the poor woman, who eventually died. After her death, the Indians made a treaty with father and me. We were to let them bury her in our ground. I was to plant grass on the level place and we were to respect her grave. She was prominent in the tribe or group, for they killed four ponies, the same number of dogs, and scattered beads on her grave. They were not to order us out any more. Both sides kept their agreement or treaty. It was most forty years after that when the Tonopah Mining Company ran its big dredges

through that ground, and that I could not prevent.

Perhaps the reason the above incident appealed to me is because I was a resident of Breckenridge when those large dredges began their work, and know well the ground they went over and through.

Since we have the "Meeker Tree" in Plateau Valley, perhaps Mr. Riland's account of the massacre may have some points of interest, and will not be out of place here. He says:

> I was in Fairplay, the day the news of the Meeker Massacre came, but had left for the mine (six miles distant, part of the way through heavy timber) before the courier got in, who was an engineer from the Moose Mine on Mt. Lincoln. Some fellow on horseback by a different trail had beat me to the mine, and I found the buildings deserted and the workers in the tunnel, badly scared and ready to fight. The women and children of Alma, (six miles distant) were brought to Fairplay and placed in the two-story, stone courthouse. All over the state the whites congregated together. They were very excited, and thought the Indians were everywhere. The entire state was thoroughly aroused, because of what had gone before. So many things led up to this massacre and happened at widely separated places, as the Indians had no fixed abiding places, only certain sections of the country at certain seasons of the year.
>
> The murders leading to this were usually freighters, who were delivering supplies to army forts, posts and camps or trading posts, as the Indians secured a variety of plunder and only one or two men to deal with.
>
> This massacre and the Milk Creek battle gave the whites the opportunity to settle the western slope. It was a big price to pay for the privilege.
>
> In 1885 I started the first paper in Garfield County, at Glenwood Springs, and came over here in June to write up the massacre for the Glenwood Echo and see the graves of the thirteen victims. Either six or seven of the bodies had then been removed.

In 1868, the federal government established the Ute Indian Agency in Powell Park, and appointed agents to look after it. More settlers were moving into the area and killing off the buffalo, thereby diminishing the Indian's food supply. Armed resistance was becoming more difficult and the Indians more restless at being compelled to occupy reservations. Often these agents were able men, but knew little or nothing of Indian character.

Nathan C. Meeker, who had been the head of the Greeley colony, was appointed agent of the White River Agency in 1878. He was an educated man of the east, and tried to get the Indians to work and farm more, which they resented. Finally when he had the racetrack ploughed up for a garden patch, the Indians became so enraged that his life was openly threatened. Troops under Major Thornburgh were being sent to Mr. Meeker from Wyoming, when the Battle of Milk Creek and the Meeker Massacre occurred on the same day. The Indians attacked Thornburgh on Milk Creek and attacked the White River Agency on September 29, 1879. All the agency men were killed; Mrs. Meeker and her daughter Josephine, and Mrs. Price and her two children were taken prisoners by the Indians, who started off with them toward the Uncompahgre. Mr. Meeker wrote a note to send to Thornburgh less than an hour before Meeker was killed, which shows that even to the last he did not realize the danger.

After relieving Thornburgh, General Merritt and his troops went on to the agency. He found the Indians gone, buildings burned and every employee killed—their mutilated bodies still lying about the place. Through the efforts of General Adams, special Indian agent, the influence of Ouray, and the pleadings of his wife Chipeta, the women and children were finally given up.

The leader of the massacre was a sub-chief, called Douglas. The women were taken to the home of Ouray and Chipeta on the Uncompahgre, where Chipeta wept for her white sisters who had endured such hardships. Chipeta turned over her house for their use. There, the women found stoves with fires burning, carpets on floors, curtains at windows and everything clean and comfortable.

At Ouray's direct command, Chipeta had ridden over a rough and rugged country to Douglas's camp near Mesa Creek, where our own "Meeker Tree" is located, to plead for her white sisters. Chipeta, being smaller, could ride more easily than Ouray, who was older and larger. Her name has been immortalized by Eugene Field's Poem:

CHIPETA

This bravest and best of a cursed race -
Give her a lodge on the mountain side,
And when she is gone, on the hill provide
The Queen of the Utes' last resting place.

She rode where old Ouray dare not ride -
A path through the wilderness, rough and wild,
She rode to plead for woman and child -
She rode by the yawning chasm's side;

She rode on the rocky fir-clad hill
Where the panther mewed and the crested jay
Piped echoless through the desert day -
She rode in the valleys dark and chill.

0, such a ride as woman can -
By the Godlike power that in her lies,
Or, in inspiration from the skies
Achieve for woman and son of man.

They live, and through the country wide
Wher'er they come, wher'er they go,
Though their hairs grow white as the wintry snow,
They will tell of brave Chipeta's ride.

She is bravest and best of a cursed race -
Give her a lodge on the mountain side,
And when she is gone, on the hill provide
The Queen of the Utes' last resting place

But give her a page in history, too,
Though she be rotting in humble shrouds,
And write on the whitest of God's white clouds
Chipeta's name in eternal blue.

Sub-chief Douglas, who was directly responsible for this massacre, was later taken to Ft. Leavenworth prison. The entire tribe was made to suffer for the acts of the guilty, by being removed far from their favorite hunting grounds and from the lands their forefathers had occupied for centuries. General Adams traveled to the camp near Plateau Creek, to take custody of the captive women and escort them to Denver. Here are copies of the two original telegrams he sent to Washington, D. C., at that time:

Los Pinos, Colo., Oct. 21, 1879
Carl Schurz, Secretary of the Interior,
Washington, D.C.:

Arrived last night at Ouray's camp, and now make preparations to go to the camp of Douglass, between Grand Junction and Gunnison Rivers, with escort of Indians, to secure the captive women and children, who, I have assurance, are safe and will be delivered. Troops should not proceed south from White River meanwhile, as I believe that your conditions to secure peace will be complied with. None of the Southern and only a part of the White River Utes have been engaged in the trouble, and all rumors of depredations off the reservation are untrue, except the driving off of horses from Bear River, and this before Ouray's order to cease fighting was received. Ouray has perfect control of his own people, and the White River Utes are in constant communication with him. All desire peace. I expect to return in six days with the women and children. — Charles Adams, Special Agent.

Camp on Plateau Creek, via Los Pinos,
Oct. 22, 1879.
C. Schurz, Secretary,
Washington, D.C.:

Arrived here this morning, and have succeeded in persuading Indians to release Mrs. Meeker, Miss Meeker, Mrs. Price and two children, without condition, who will leave here tomorrow morning for Lake City and Denver with sufficient escort. I go on to White river to communicate with General Merritt. The Indians are anxious for peace and desire a full investigation of the trouble. —Charles Adams, Special Agent.

Therefore, it was October 22, 1879, when our historic "Meeker Tree" near Mesa, was a silent witness to the captives' release. It has been difficult to refrain from writing much more about the massacre and the events leading up to it. I have only written what I have, in order that the importance of the historic camp near our tree might be better understood.

Chapter Three

Before the first settlers could occupy Plateau Valley, the Utes had to be removed to a new reservation and I hesitate to write a lengthy account of a very great undertaking. But, if you are as much interested in it as I was, I'll not regret including this information. For years I had read and searched for an account of the removal, and at last was rewarded for my efforts.

After the Meeker massacre, due to the insistent demands for revenge upon the Utes, and their removal from the state, a new Indian policy was decided upon: to compel the Indians to exchange their reservation for lands in severalty, and to locate them on lands adjacent to the mouth of the Uncompahgre. The commission favored the mouth of the Uncompahgre and the adjacent Grand Valley as an ideal region in which to locate the Utes.

Here it was that Mr. Manypenny, the chairman, and Mr. Meacham, his colleague (both Quakers), foreordained the new

agency to be located. They later found that Congress had also designated this delta as the new home of the Utes.

Ouray had intelligence enough to know that it was going to be "Hobson's choice" for the Utes, and had enough influence to persuade them to make the best bargain they could. The Indian commission, appointed by the president, consisted of a chairman, Mr. Manypenny of Ohio, Mr. Meacham of Washington, Mr. Russell of Iowa, Mr. Bowman of Kentucky, and Otto Mears of Colorado. The latter was the only one who stood out to the last for Colorado interests—and he won.

In any event, wheresoever the Utes were to be located, it was contended that the project of lands in severalty would improve the condition of Indians and give them a fair chance at civilization. At the same time it would relieve the government from the constant distress of attempting to sustain an impossible policy which consisted of promising seclusion from white people, something that no human power could enforce against the steady advancement of civilization.

When the department negotiated the treaty of 1880, there were 3,000 heads of families to be dealt with; but there were an additional 1,000 of the age of 16 years who were entitled to half of a quarter section of land apiece. In all, 4,000 Indians were entitled to allotments. Certain conditions under the above treaty were imposed upon the Utes, and if they had not signed those conditions, they would have received nothing for their 11,000,000 acres and would have been driven out by the people of Colorado, who wanted them to become wanderers, paupers and vagabonds.

The position of Colorado's representatives in Congress on the Indian question was one of extreme delicacy, recognizing as they did the imminence of further bloodshed and savage warfare if the Utes were not moved out of the state. However, the secretary of the interior, Carl Schurz, submitted a proposition to Congress requesting that the Utes not be deprived of their holdings entirely in Colorado. In deference to their desire to embrace civilization, and out of respect to the Southern Utes, who remained loyal to the government, Schurz believed that the

confederated tribes of Utes as a nation, should not be dispossessed of their holdings and be compelled to leave Colorado without first bringing it to a vote of three-fourths of the tribe. They were willing to go upon lands in severalty, providing they be allowed to go upon a restricted reservation in Colorado. Whites in Colorado wanted them entirely removed from the state. Destiny had decreed that there should be no compromise.

Could it be possible, asked Secretary Schurz, that the people of Colorado would be so heartless as to demand that an entire tribe of Indians should suffer for the sins of a few; that they should be banished from the homes of their fathers, endeared to them by memories from childhood? Nevertheless this was the fate that awaited the Utes, harsh as it might appear.

Messrs. Manypenny and Meacham proposed that, if the Utes stayed in Colorado, they should blend in with white culture. This blending with the Caucasian race would eventually teach these Indians the vital lessons of civilization. The Manypenny and Meacham proposal included the recommendation that the Utes' claims to land adjacent to Delta and Grand Junction not be honored unless the Utes became civilized.

However, the citizens of Colorado would not stand for this. They maintained that the Utes, by their one act of treachery on the White River, had nullified their treaties and thereby forfeited their rights. For that reason, they should be exiled. Nonetheless, when the debates came up in Congress, the attitude of the administration and the secretary of the interior on behalf of the Indians was endorsed. The will of the people of Colorado set at naught. That is to say, that the Utes had not outlived previous treaties and could not be removed without the consent of three-fourths of the tribe. With this understanding, the secretary of the interior was authorized to make an agreement with them.

That fall eleven Utes were ordered to Washington under the charge of General Adams and Otto Mears, to have a talk with the "great father." After arriving in Washington, Carl Schurz asked General Adams and Mr. Mears if they thought they could return to Colorado and bring the perpetrators of the White River outrages to Washington. The captured women had named Chief

Part of the Ute delegation that traveled to Washington, D.C. From left to right: Ignatio, Hon. C. Schurz, Woretsiz, Ouray, Gen. Charles Adams, Chipeta. (Photo courtesy of Indians-Ute file, Lloyd Files Research Center, Museum of Western Colorado.)

Douglas and ten other Indians as murderers at the agency. The secretary was given an affirmative reply to his proposal. General Adams and Mr. Mears returned west, and after a great deal of talk and promises were able to return with the Indians to Washington. In January 1880 therefore, the delegation went there and returned in the month of March of the same year.

On the way to Washington, Chief Douglas was made a prisoner at Kansas City and taken to Fort Leavenworth by General Adams. Mr. Mears then proceeded to the capital with the rest of the Indians. After talking with the president and the secretary of the interior, an agreement was formulated with the Indians that they all be removed to one reservation to be located by a commission "at or adjacent to Grand Junction."

The personnel of the commission, now confirmed by the senate, started at once to do business. Proceeding to the Uncompahgre Valley, they first had a pow-wow with the chiefs to get the tribes together, and, if possible, secure an agreement as early as possible. The time limit in which to perform this duty would expire on October 15 of that year (1880).

Removing the Utes to one reservation was the keynote of the whole proposition; but after holding a council, the Utes refused to sign the agreement, saying that they did not know for certain where they were to be taken. They did not understand what was meant by being located "at or adjacent to Grand Junction." The Indians suspected that it meant somewhere else, and events proved their suspicion well founded; yet the commission needed the signatures of two-thirds of the Indians before it could locate the reservation.

Each head of a family was to receive 160 acres and a promise of the government to pay them the interest on $1,800,000, the price our government had to pay for the Western Slope. Pensions were to be paid to the widows created by the Meeker Massacre; the monies to be duly assessed against the Utes' annuity fund.

At first, the commission was somewhat divided among themselves as to where they should ultimately locate the Utes, a task whose pathway was by no means strewn with roses. Many

stormy debates between Messrs. Manypenny and Meacham and the three remaining commissioners occurred before they determined what "adjacent" really meant. The Quakers maintained that the designation was specific and meant the country around Delta and Grand Junction, while the others claimed that "adjacent" meant either Grand Junction or elsewhere.

Mr. Meacham was the principal debater. He was invariably aggressive, always deriding what the others stood for, and perpetually acrimonious and uncompromising. On one of these occasions the controversy became narrowed down to a clash of words between Meacham and Mr. Bowman. Mr. Bowman, being a Kentuckian possessed with the Kentuckian's natural aversion to all Indians, took exception to being "Meachamized" and very deliberately knocked Mr. Meacham down. This act necessitated Mr. Bowman's resignation, which he eventually tendered, and by so doing he placed the board at a deadlock. The commission adjourned *sine die.*

Meanwhile the Indians, characteristically perverse, steadfastly refused to sign any agreements unless they went to Washington to do it. They viewed with sullen indignation and distrust the attitude of the people of Colorado.

Summer was passing into autumn, an autumn of much importance in the history of Colorado.

Chapter Four

Unfortunately, while negotiations were in progress for the removal of the Utes from Colorado, Chief Ouray died while on a mission of peace and good will to the Southern Utes. He died of Bright's disease, unduly hastened by the malpractice of his medicine men. This most deplorable circumstance occurred at an unfortunate time. Prayers had gone up that the old chief's life might be spared, for Ouray had great influence in controlling and directing the different Ute factions, and the commission had banked on Ouray's help in reaching a safe conclusion to the removal issue.

Autumn, too, was now at hand, as was the time limit

within which the Utes were supposed to sign the treaty. Then that old Colorado patriot, Otto Mears, who knew Indian character better than anybody else, got the signatures by privately paying each Indian $2, which cost him $2,800 out of his own pocket. Chairman Manypenny, on hearing about it, refused to endorse this agreement claiming that Mr. Mears had bribed the Indians and proffered charges against him to Carl Schurz, Secretary of the Interior.

That fall (1880), James A. Garfield was elected president, and after his inauguration the following March, Governor Kirkwood of Iowa became Secretary of the Interior. Mr. Mears was ordered to Washington for trial before Secretary Kirkwood. In the presence of Senators Teller and Hill, Mr. Kirkwood asked Mr. Mears if it was true that he paid the Indians for signing the treaty. Mr. Mears replied that he paid them $2 each as the Indians claimed that $2 in cash was worth more to them than the interest on $1,800,000 which they were to receive in promises. Secretary Kirkwood then asked whether this money was paid by Mr. Mears or the government. Mr. Mears replied it was his own money, and the secretary told him to make a bill for it and he would see that it was paid. He also complimented Mears highly.

The secretary next asked Mr. Mears if he thought he would be able to remove the Indians. Mears answered that if Mr. Manypenny was left in Ohio and Mr. Meacham in Washington, he would move the Utes. Secretary Kirkwood said the government would furnish all the troops needed.

Congress ratified the agreement in the late summer of 1881. It provided for the removal of the Utes to an "adjacent reservation," and reimbursement to certain Indians for agricultural improvements. In the meantime, Secretary Kirkwood appointed Judge McMorris of Colorado Springs to fill the vacancy on the board occasioned by John B. Bowman's resignation, and Mr. Mears returned to the Uncompahgre. The commission at once entered upon its work of locating the new reservation.

The details involved in this project required initiative and business tact of the highest order, as well as a knowledge of the country. Accordingly, Mr. Mears was given the management of it.

He was accompanied by Judge McMorris and later by Mr. Russell, who joined them en route. With an escort of 100 cavalrymen they proceeded down the Uncompahgre on their tour of inspection, which extended past the present site of Grand Junction.

Mr. Mears and Judge McMorris were Colorado men and, with Mr. Russell acting in agreement, they made up their minds that the Utes had to go. They at once saw that, for the benefit of the state, the Indians should be moved out of Colorado, as the lands of the Uncompahgre and around Grand Junction would become very valuable when settled by whites. From Grand Junction, accordingly, they went northwest, striking the Green River, following it to the mouth of the White and Duchesne Rivers. They concluded that the latter stream would be a good place to locate the Indians outside of Colorado.

The agreement stated that the Indians should be located at Grand Junction or "adjacent territory." Otto Mears was a Jew and a very shrewd and capable one. Mears argued that is was self-evident that the Utah territory sat adjacent to Grand Junction; hence, they would be following out the letter of the law in locating the Utes in Utah.

Returning to the Uncompahgre where the soldiers were, Mr. Mears informed General McKenzie, who was in command, that a place had been selected to take the Indians. He also told the Indians that they would have to go.

The commissioners in conjunction with William H. Berry, Indian agent, entered upon the necessary preparations for the removal of the Utes from their historic country, owned by them and their ancestors for generations. First came the government surveys of the new reservation, bridging streams, disposing of the old agency at public auction, proposals for construction of the new agency, corrals and other buildings, and moving the agency beef cattle and other livestock overland.

Mears went to the new location by way of Salt Lake City. The distance from that city was 210 miles, and for 150 miles he found no settlement. He contracted for buildings and other improvements and then returned to Colorado to see what fortune had attended the efforts of General McKenzie in removing the Utes.

In truth the Utes did not like the prospect of being exiled from their ancestral valley and made all kinds of excuses against it, professing injured pride because they could not remain where their forefathers were buried. They also pleaded for more time in which to gather up their stock.

The White River agency had been destroyed at the time of the Meeker massacre, and was not rebuilt. So all the Utes were gathered on the Uncompahgre, although they continually asked to be returned to northwestern Colorado. But, the Meeker massacre wiped out the last chance for them to retain these mountains and valleys.

General McKenzie gave them an additional ten days to gather up their stock. They had already been granted a previous extension. Then the Utes said they wanted to go to the Yampa and White Rivers on a hunt to kill enough game for their winter use, but McKenzie would not listen to their request. Their philandering was at an end. Now it was McKenzie's turn to speak and give them his demands. He presented an ultimatum as if it were a public document. It possessed some verbal characteristics that no public document ever laid claim to, in that it was highly spiced and profusely italicized with expletives.

Denied a hunting expedition to the Yampa River country, they demanded a junket to Cow Creek and the Cimarron, and they were going to take it; however they reckoned not wisely nor well. There was no chance for them to flank McKenzie, whose camps had been strongly reinforced at all strategic points. His immediate headquarters was at a bend of the river, just east of where the town of Olathe, Delta county, now stands. Colorow's band camped there between two bluffs that form the rim of the valley, which at that time was heavily wooded. On these bluffs, McKenzie stationed observation points to report what the Indians were doing.

McKenzie had nine companies of cavalry and nine companies of infantry within a five-mile radius of his headquarters. His code of signals was perfect. In the rear of his camp, about a mile away, was a horde of settlers, waiting for the final word that the reservation had been opened for settlement.

This advance guard would make a garden of the Uncompahgre, the Gunnison and Grand Valleys.

It was a truly historic occasion, those autumn days of 1881, when alert officers watched the Ute camp for signs of suspicious activity. Their system of signaling recorded every significant movement on the part of the Utes; not a straw in its vagaries of flight through the atmosphere or a cloud of dust hovering over the Indian camp escaped the scrutiny of some officer's field glass. Morning, noon and night of watching rounded out a never-to-be-forgotten week of vigils, until at last their perseverance was rewarded. An unusual cloud of dust appeared, accompanied by the sound of loud barking of dogs. It might be well to record that some early day bootlegger had smuggled a lot of whiskey to the Indians. Another cloud of dust and then another, and the ever present barking of dogs, tumult among the Indians—all characteristic of one cause, fighting whiskey. There was trouble brewing, but McKenzie was ready for it when it arrived. Then dazzling signal rockets went up, and bugle calls, loud and strident, marked time from bluff to bluff on both sides of the river, hurrying, waiting bodies of cavalry to the execution of "battalion fronts" straight across the valley. Prompt was the call, and prompt the execution as the companies wheeled into position ready for action.

Splendid tactics characterized these preparations for a fight. Not a ripple of excitement was there to mar the perfect front line that now faced the enemy, who presently came into view around a bend of the river, yelling like so many demons let loose. Evidently the sight that now met their gaze was their first indication of the military reception that awaited them. Its effect was instantaneous. They at once slackened their mad ride and came to a halt to engage in a parley among themselves. They were certainly an astonished bunch of Utes. Before them, silent, impassive and grim, were Uncle Sam's soldiers ready to uphold the majesty of the government. The Indians saw that their famous surprise tactic had failed, the troops were ready and awaiting the attack. They quickly turned about face and beat a hasty and ignominious retreat to their camp.

General McKenzie sent for Mears and McMorris, the only commissioners present at the time, and told them if they would sign the order for the removal of the Indians to Utah, he would execute it with his troops. Receiving the signature of the commissioners to the order, General McKenzie surrounded the Indians and gave them just two hours notice to move. He further emphasized the order by firing six rounds of field artillery into the brow of the hill overlooking the Indian camp.

The Utes still claimed they were to stay in Colorado and did not want to go, but General McKenzie would give them only two hours to think about it. They finally packed up and started on the long trail to their new reservation, finally abandoning, under pressure, their home for many generations. Rations for three weeks were issued to them at the agency to enable them to subsist on their long overland journey to Green River and the Duchesne.

September 1, 1881, was the date when the last band (Colorow's) left Colorado on the long hike, and September 13 was the date of their arrival at their destination. The new agency was at first called the Ouray Agency in honor of their late chief.

Otto Mears again visited the new agency to inspect supplies and pay Chipeta, Ouray's widow, the $700 which the government had provided for her in the treaty. The money consisted entirely of one-dollar bills. Mears had no sooner paid Chipeta, when Cojoe, a sub-chief who was standing near, tried to murder him. Cojoe claimed that it was Mears who had them removed from Colorado.

Other than this, their extended journey was unattended with any mishaps. General McKenzie rendered them every assistance desired. He caused large boats to be placed at the crossings of both the Grand and Green Rivers, with orders that they be put safely across, together with their property and riding stock. McKenzie's boats remained for many years, thereafter serving as a ferryboats for settlers.

The Ute commission continued its friendly supervision over the welfare of the Utes at the new agency until a year and a half later, March 13, 1883, when it was abolished.

Chapter Five

Plateau Valley extends along Plateau Creek, formed by numerous streams flowing from the Grand Mesa. The valley is narrow, being not much more than three-quarters of a mile wide in the widest part, and about sixty miles long. Behind Plateau Valley extend the lower mesas, containing hundreds of acres of rich farming land, which can be easily irrigated from the numerous streams from the Grand Mesa that feed into Plateau Creek.

The Grand Mesa, on the south of Plateau Valley, is the largest flat top mountain in the world. It affords delightful summer outings for the residents of the valley, and the entire state, and much might be written about it alone.

In early days, the settlers could graze their stock anywhere. By proclamation of President Benjamin Harrison in 1892, the Grand Mesa became the first National Forest Reserve in Colorado.

The lower portion of the valley was eliminated from the National Forest as agricultural land. The upper slopes are good timber and grazing land, and are included within the reserve.

Plateau Valley, the most extensive valley on the forest reserve, is in decided contrast with the two mesas which overshadow it on both sides. It is a sportsman's paradise. All kinds of wild game abound, and streams and lakes contain myriads of trout, ducks, and geese.

George Hawxhurst and family, including three sons and a son-in-law, H.G. Dunlap and family, were the first settlers. They started from South Park in July 1881 for New Mexico, but, learning that the Utes were to be moved September 1st, they turned their course via Los Pinos Agency to Lake City. They worked a while somewhere over near Gunnison on the post road, and finally, as it came time, fell in and started for this valley from Hotchkiss. Mr. T.B. Hawxhurst writes that while at their noon camp one day, on the North Fork of the Gunnison, they met Chipeta. The Utes were slow to get ready to start, not having the heart to leave the land of their birth, the garden spot of Colorado, in exchange for the alkali of the Uintah Basin. Many old squaws

kissed the ground before leaving. It is little wonder that the renegade Colorow induced some of the less conservative young braves to attempt a raid on the White River country in 1887. Mr. Hawxhurst says:

> not being quite satisfied, brother John and I were sent ahead to see where we better go and about road and so forth. When we reached Surface Creek, the big trail which leads to the White River Agency was fresh, and as we went down Leon Creek we came to two camps on Grove and Salt Creeks, where the Indians were hiding out; and on Buzzard Creek their fires were still alive, where they had camped the night before. After making a road over heads of Surface and Leon Creeks, we arrived in the meadows October 7, 1881. Started back October 9th to Gunnison, 150 miles for our winter supplies. We were blessed with good weather till we had pulled our loads over the hump on to the head of Leon Creek, when there fell such a heavy snow some of our horses gave out before we could reach home.
>
> On reaching home, we built a cabin, turned our horses out and were dead to the world for six months, 150 miles from any post office and not even a calendar.

Here, on March 7, 1882, Hattie Dunlap was born, being the first white child born in Mesa County and Plateau Valley as well. Her mother, Mrs. Dunlap, was the first white child born in Denver. At this time the Hawxhurst family was alone in the region, except for an occasional traveler in the lower part, and George Howard's band of horse and cattle thieves who frequently used the valley as a hiding place for stolen stock.

"Spring came at last, and we took our horses down lower, on green feed and, on April 19th started for Gunnison for machinery and supplies, resolved not to work the road, unless danger of killing a horse or breaking a wagon." They had come in over the mountain, but could not go out that way because of the snow. Now they went out over the hog back, camping at the narrows where the bridge now stands. They crossed the river there, but it was very bad on account of high water. They were greatly

George, Hanna, Tom and Alex Hawxhurst. (Photo courtesy of Donna Young photos, Plateau Valley Association Historic Preservation Committee, Collbran, and Plateau Valley Homestead Project, ASC #1999.12, Lloyd Files Research Library, Museum of Western Colorado.)

surprised to find Grand Junction, Delta, and Montrose on the map.

Soon after crossing the Grand River, they met Mr. J.F. Brink, who raised his cattle on Green River, Utah. One hundred fifty head had been stolen and were being butchered for railroad camps, and he tracked them to Whitewater where they had a fight, one man being killed. Later in the season the J.F. Brink Cattle Company came to Plateau Valley from Utah, and Mr. Brink took up a ranch on the west side of Mesa Creek, which he still owned when the writer came in 1898. A young man, about 20 years old, came with Mr. Brink to help with the cattle. This young man also took up land on the west side of Mesa Creek, and has ever since made Plateau his home, with the exception of a few years. The man was Mr. George Stoddard. He told me they camped their first night in Plateau under the Meeker Tree, though he did not know its history till later. He still owns his ranch here. Mr. Brink built his cabin very near the Meeker tree as the tree was on his ranch, but that cabin has long since been burned down.

Emanuel Brink, J.F.'s brother, came with the J.F. Brink Cattle Company and took up the place that is now the E.D. Stewart ranch, bought from him the summer of 1899. Emanuel Brink, being a blacksmith, had a shop at his ranch and did work for others, and got coal from the only coal mine in Plateau, located in Shires Gulch. The mine can still be seen from the highway. In 1886, he built the stone house which is occupied by the Stewart family. When they bought it, this house was considered the best residence in the entire valley, but better homes have been erected in the past thirty years.

When the Hawxhursts came back with their supplies, they again came in on the only road over the Mesa. They had plenty of snow before getting over the head of Surface Creek, and had to turn their horses loose down in the cedars, and shovel a trail down the north side of the mountain to pack their supplies through. They got a wagon from home, and by the time they were home and were ready to plow, it was June 2nd. Even with a late planting they successfully raised a garden. One moonlit night, when the men were away, Mrs. Hawxhurst thought she heard a horse in the garden and went to drive it out. But when she came

almost to it, she found it was a big black bear that was digging out the potatoes and eating them. The bear got most of their potatoes that summer, which meant a great deal to them at that time.

Mr. J.P. Brown followed the Hawxhursts in, camping near the present site of Collbran or Plateau City, June 2, 1882. The next morning, Brown spied a green spot about 16 miles below. He said he thought it was a spring and soon started for the spot, and took up the 160 acres around it. This same spring is now the present water supply for the village of Mesa. There, Mr. Brown built the second cabin in Plateau Valley, or the first in the lower valley. I imagine this very spot might have been the site of the Indian village of thirty wigwams of which Escalante wrote in 1776.

Early in 1882, through the influence of Mr. Parker of Iowa, who had shipped in a car load of registered stock and was connected with the postal service at Washington, D.C., a post office was established called Hawxhurst at the mouth of Salt Creek. George Hawxhurst was postmaster and H.G. Dunlap deputy postmaster; the mail route traveled from Delta to Grand Junction via Hawxhurst and then back the same way. Joe King, brother of Mrs. Ewing of Molina, and uncle of Mr. Ollie Bannister, was the first mail carrier, and J.W. Hawxhurst carried the mail during the high water season of '83, fording the Grand when water was very high and dangerous. Emanuel Brink carried the mail the winter of '83 and '84. His pack mule broke through the ice, but he managed to cut the mail sack loose and save it. James Mow carried mail during the winter of' '84 and '85.

There were a number of other early settlers in the area. Mr. Kimble [Kimball] brought in the first stock cattle and wintered them on what has since been called Kimble [Kimball] Creek. He later went to the country above DeBeque and another creek was named for him over there. Mr. Parker, for whom Parker Basin was named, hired his carload of registered bulls herded in what has since been called Bull Basin. The Harrisons came in '83, and built in what has since been called Harrison Gulch. Joe King located on what has long been known as the Joe Bogue ranch, but is now better known as the Platt Ranch near Molina. J.C. Dunlap, Rockwell, Needles and Charles Libby came late in

the fall of 1882. Also Mr. Middleton, his wife and daughter, wintered on Buzzard, and the old Middleton cabins have long been a landmark and furnished shelter for many a belated traveler. Johnnie Owens, a lone trapper came along one spring, stopped at the Hawxhurst ranch, and the next morning was given a Dr. Price memorandum book, in which he at once wrote the date. His untimely fate is yet unknown. When his pack was found on the creek which still bears his name, only one more date had been recorded in his book.

The oil well on upper Buzzard was discovered by Old Man Moore, as he was usually known by in those days. He accidentally dropped a match as he was lighting his pipe. The explosion singed his whiskers. There was some excitement for a time. Some one has used Mr. Moore's name in connection with the Johnnie Owens disappearance. Mr. Moore was proven to have been on Cash Creek at the time and lived for many years after in the valley, and was considered above reproach. Suspicion rested on a man by the name of Sanders, who left the valley soon after and was never heard from again. The only solution to the mystery of the disappearance of Mr. Owens is the story passed down by Mr. Gunderson, who says that Charles Hughes knew Owens and had used his old Sharpes rifle, which he found in the creek near the old Middleton cabins. Mr. Gunderson says that Owens was lost the winter before. Soldiers came through, and they claimed they smelled burned human flesh, having been used to such a smell because they had previously cremated some of their own dead. The supposition was that Moore, who had discovered gas on Buzzard Creek, had killed Owens and burned him in the big fireplace in one of the Middleton cabins.

The summer of '83, an emigrant train arrived from Arkansas with some ox teams being driven by girls. Joshua Barnes headed this company. Mr. Barnes, a long respected citizen of Mesa, lived just north of town, on the ranch first settled upon. He passed away only a year or two ago. His family had the first cook stove in the valley; it had been bought in Gunnison and packed on the back of two mules over the hog back. His sons Frank, John and Jesse still live near Mesa. In this train were the

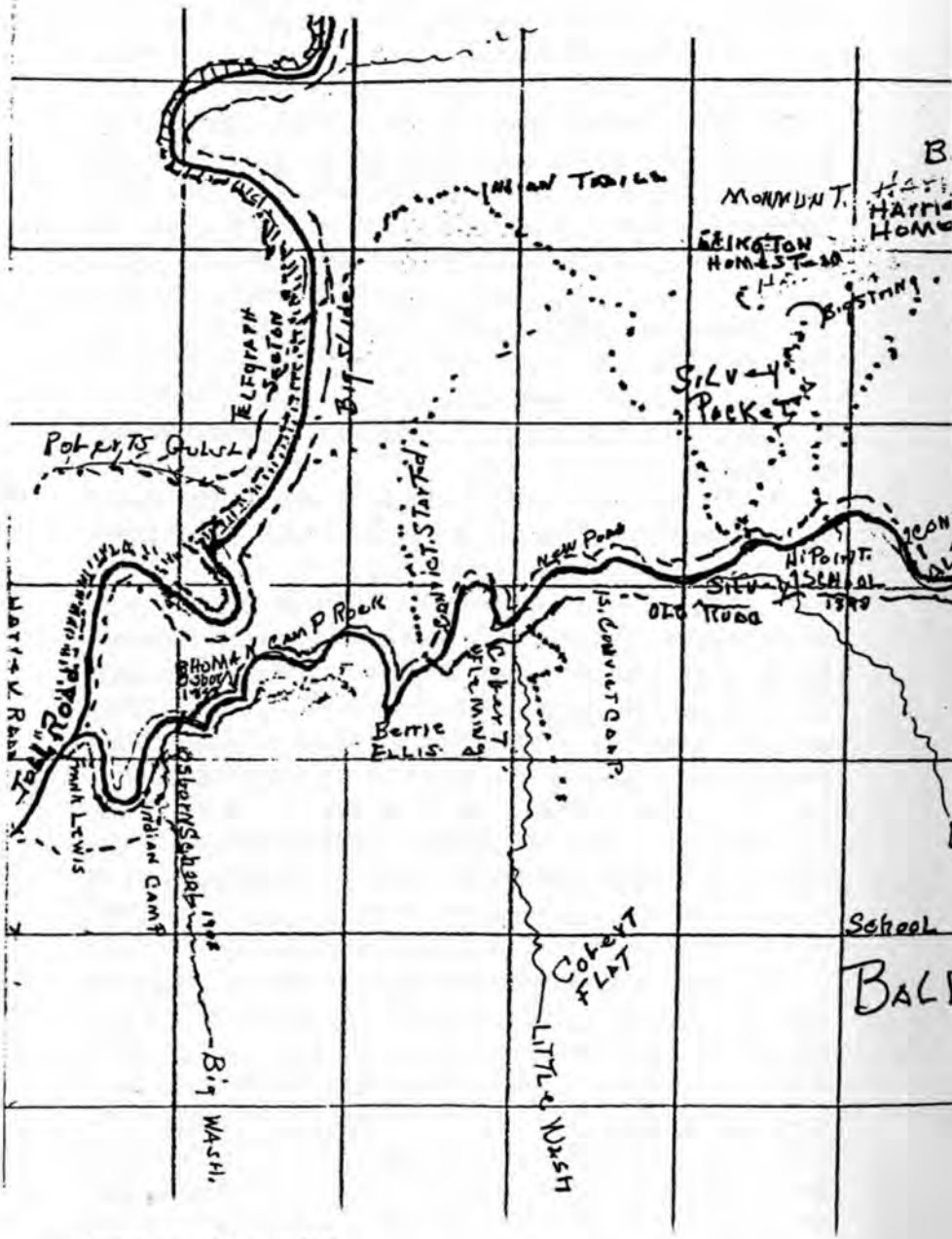
Eskridge family, Mrs. Eskridge being Mr. Barnes' daughter. This family took up land and had their cabin by a small orchard that is now on the eastern side of the Charles Croley ranch.

Also, William Ditman and family came at the same time. Mr. Ditman had been here and taken up his ranch, which was sold only last year to the Bevans family. Mr. Ditman returned for his family, and they were on their way back when they were overtaken on Black Mesa by the Barnes family and train. They all traveled on together. Mr. Barnes wrote back to Arkansas about the Plateau Valley, and Mr. James Griffith and family soon came (Mrs. Griffith being Mr. Barnes' daughter), and they settled on what is now the Ed Rogers ranch west and north of Mesa. The Charles Atwell family, being old acquaintances in Arkansas, also made the trip.

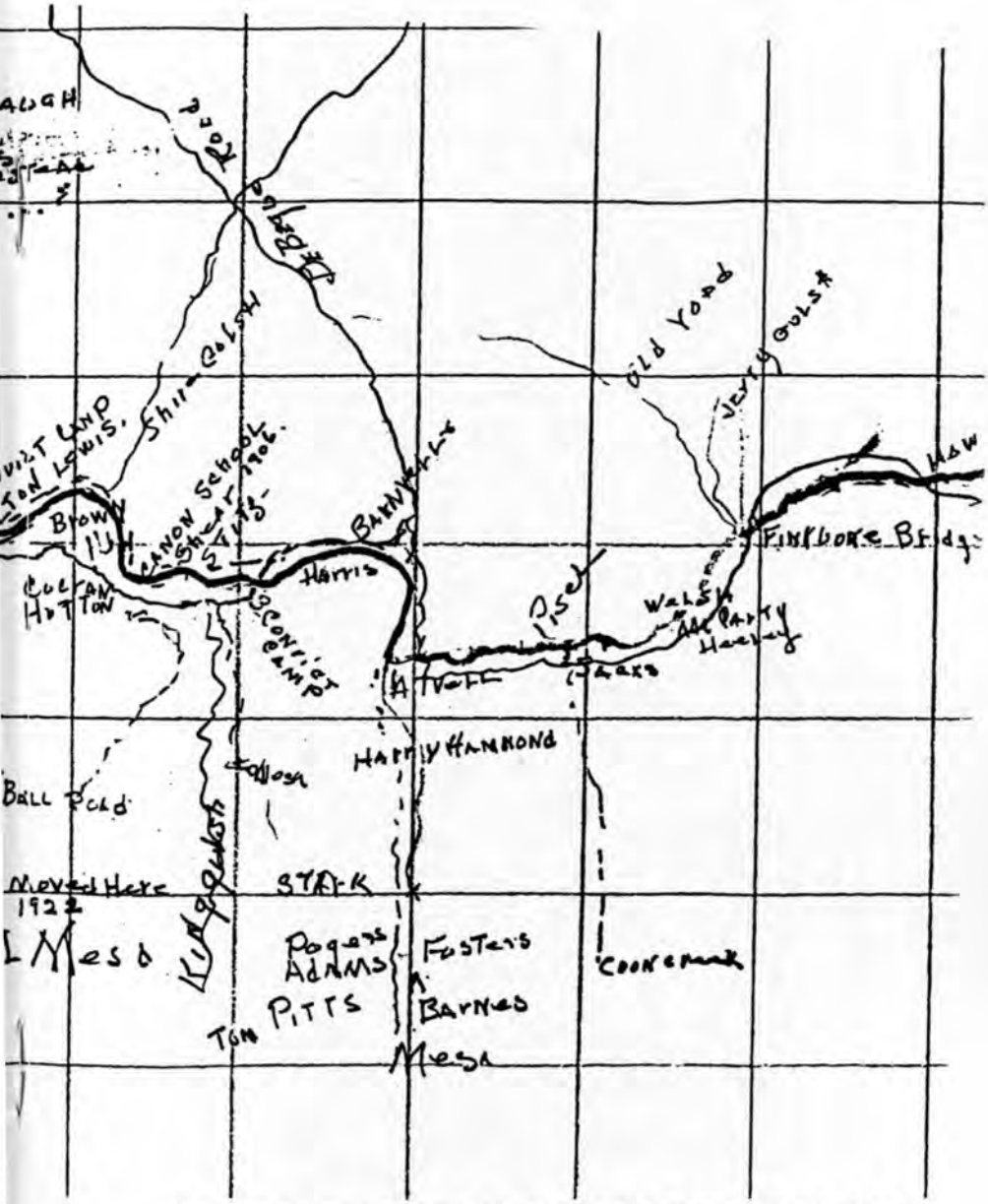
The first 4th of July celebration was on Big Creek. People came from upper Buzzard Creek and the Grand River. Tom Hawxhurst says it was some picnic.

During the fall of 1882, the Hawxhurst's families all moved lower down the valley because of the deep snow the winter before. They made permanent settlement on the present Jesse Snipes ranch at the mouth of Hawxhurst Creek. Horace Dunlap settled on the present Gunderson ranch at the mouth of Salt Creek. John Dunlap moved onto the present Jesse Hittle place; Dave Anderson settled four miles below Collbran on Plateau Creek; John Fitzpatrick took up the land where Collbran now stands; and Charles Libby settled his present ranch four miles southeast of Collbran on Little Creek. Fred Rockwell became owner of the present Y.T. ranch at the head of Grove Creek.

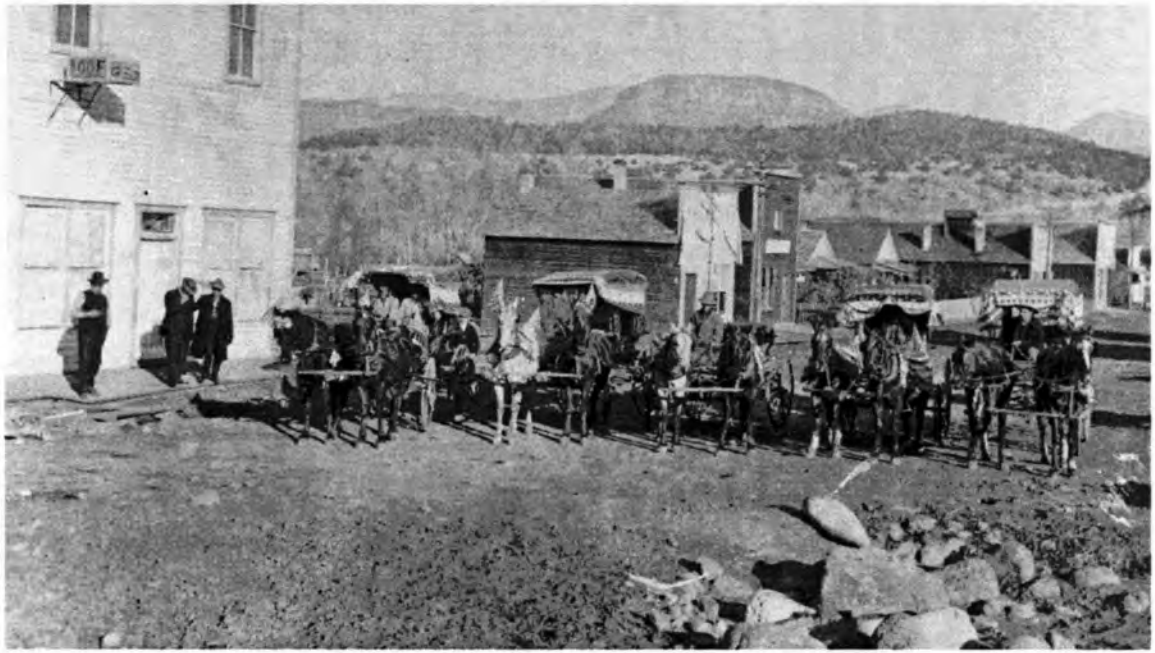
Collbran and Plateau City were the only towns for some time. Collbran was established as Hawxhurst in 1891; Plateau City in 1893. The name Hawxhurst was changed to Collbran in 1894 through the influence of Dr. DeBeque, who founded the town of DeBeque. The town of DeBeque was about to be renamed Collbran, after a prominent and wealthy railroad man of Denver. While this quarrel was taking place, Dr. DeBeque came to Plateau Valley and persuaded the people here to change Hawxhurst to Collbran, thus making sure that DeBeque would



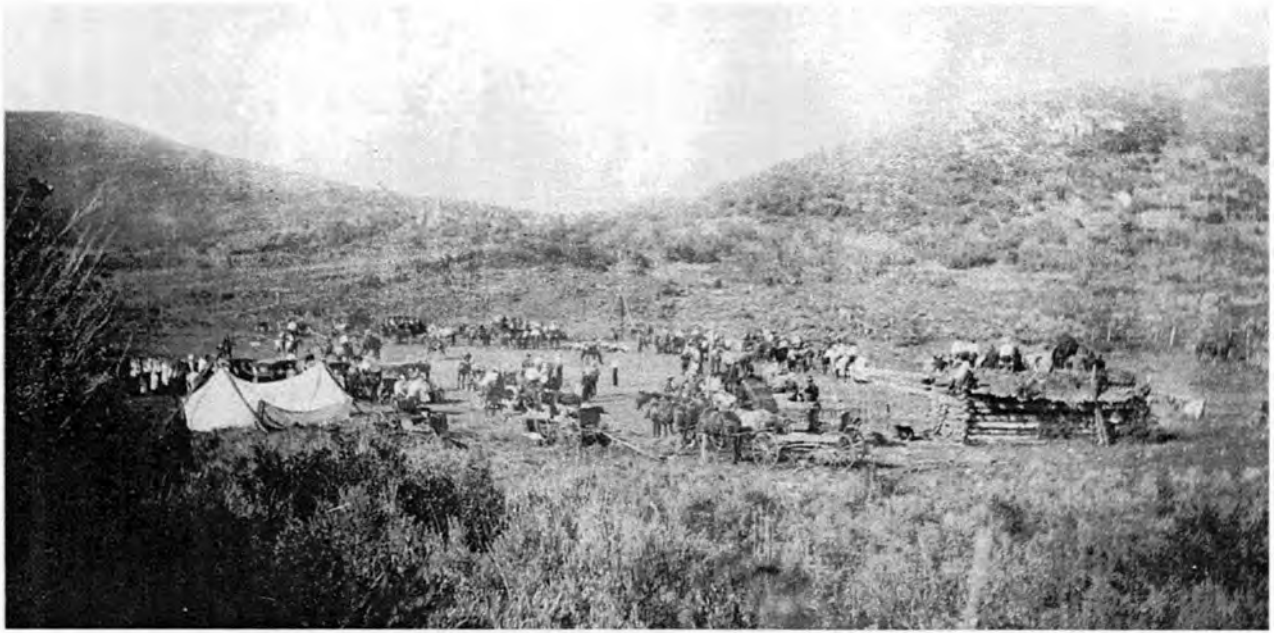
Partial map of Plateau Valley



(Historic map courtesy of Julia Harris Collection, Plateau Valley Association Historical Preservation Committee, Collbran.)



Main Street, Collbran. (Photo courtesy of Annie Anderson photos, Plateau Valley Association Historic Preservation Committee, Colbran and Plateau Valley Homestead Project, ASC #1999.12, Lloyd Files Research Library, Museum of Western Colorado.)



Early 4th of July celebration east of Collbran. (Photo courtesy of Donna Young photos, Plateau Valley Association Historical Preservation Committee, Collbran.)

not have its name changed. But, in the opinion of the writer, Collbran should have remained Hawxhurst to this day, in honor of that worthy pioneer family.

Tradition relates that Kansas Mesa got its name from Bill Stites, who came from Kansas and brought the Kansas grasshoppers with him in his mighty head of long curly hair.

The cattle industry is intermingled with Plateau Valley's early history. Grazing started on a big scale in 1883. Nate Harrison and the Dude Cattle Co. shipped in a large herd that year. For some reason they moved out about 1890, but in that time there were many small herds owned by the settlers. In only a short time, two large sheep outfits drove about 60,000 head of sheep into the valley. Some believed that sheep would drive out all other industries, ruin the valley, and make it a desert place not fit for white men to live in. The ancient feud between sheep and cattlemen began about 1893. Much might be written about this bitter and bloody war unto death. The settlers defended their rights, and in 1894, the sheep were driven out and have never returned.

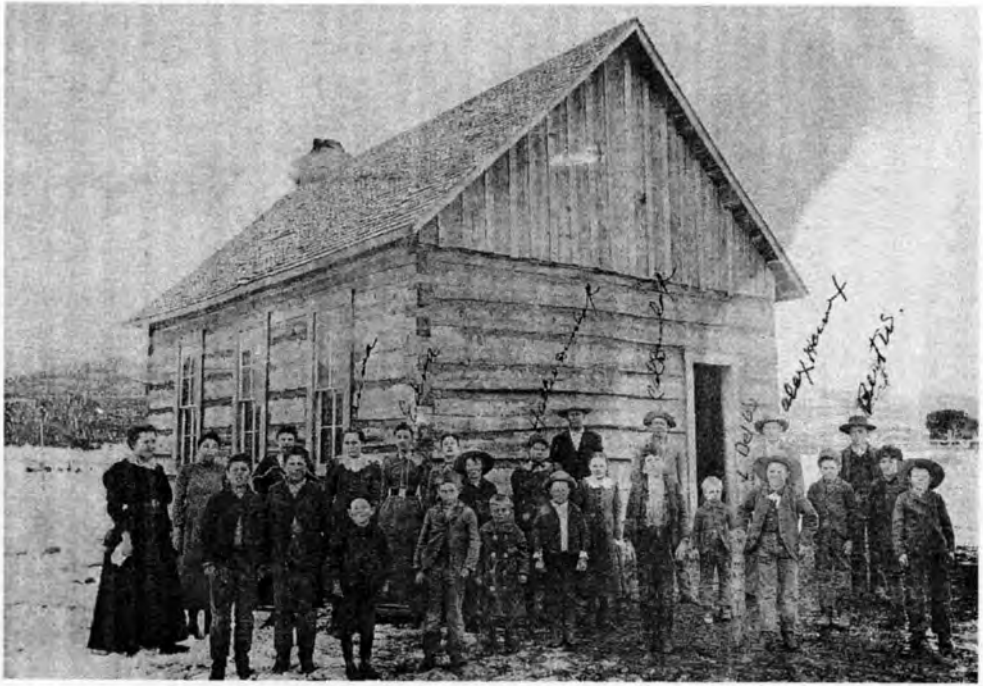
The first little store in the upper valley was started by preacher Babb in a one-room house. He claimed to have $1200 in stock, but kept most of it under the bed. Later, George Hall had a small store in Collbran. In the lower valley, L.N. Shanks and C.L. or Joe King as he was often called, started one on the present Platt ranch, exactly where the present houses now stand. These two men were partners, each taking up 160 acres of the present Platt ranch. They also had the first post office of Carson. They finally closed out and moved the post office to the Reed Place at the present V.P. Bryan ranch. A.K. Hampton started a store in the building on the hill just east of the present Nate Ogden residence on the Barnard place. Since 1900 Mr. Barnard has moved the building back and used it for a barn. Later the office of Carson was moved to the John Snipes ranch and renamed Snipes, then Molina. The first post office near Mesa was at William or Aleck Longs' house and named Mesa; it then moved to Cooks' at the present William Bilser place; then across the creek to the Bannister place; then H.K. Bogert bought out Bannister and moved the store and office to the present location of Mesa.

Log School, Plateau Valley. (Photo courtesy of Annie Anderson photos, Plateau Valley Association Historic Preservation Committee, Collbran and Plateau Valley Homestead Project, ASC #1999.12, Lloyd Files Research Library, Museum of Western Colorado.)

In 1885 two schools were opened. The one in the upper valley was a log cabin built on the old Atkinson place, which served also for public meetings. Miss Elnora Bertholf was the first teacher. She was the daughter of John Bertholf, who came in 1883 and helped complete the first road from Grand Junction to Hawxhurst over the hog back. In 1884, John Bertholf's family, and his brother Zack and his family came to the valley from Winterset, Madison County, Iowa. Mrs. E.S. Coakley is the daughter of Zack Bertholf; and the sister of John and Zack, Rebecca, was Mrs. Sam Kiggins, both early arrivals in 1884. Eva Bertholf, daughter of Zack and sister of Mrs. Coakley, married Link Kiggins, brother of Sam Kiggins, on August 26, 1885. A.C. Thomas, Justice of the Peace, read the ceremony, and Mr. and Mrs. Link Kiggins were the first couple married in the valley. The wedding dinner was cooked on a fireplace, as there were no stoves here then. Their first child died, and was the first to be buried in the Cedar Crest Cemetery at Collbran.

The first school in Mesa District was in a log cabin on the present cemetery site. The first teacher was Miss Mattie Pickard, but she only stayed a short time, as it was found her certificate had run out. Then Miss Elnora Bertholf turned over her school to her twin sister Miss Elmeda Bertholf, and came down and taught at the Mesa District School. She boarded at the home of William Long who had come in 1882. His ranch adjoined that of John Brown. As her home was at Collbran, Mr. Brown proved a good friend, furnishing a horse for her to ride home, and himself going along. Her horse being a rather slow one, prolonged their nice visits, or rather courtship on horseback, and on November 1st, 1885, they were married and have lived here ever since. The entire valley mourned Mrs. Brown's passing on April 13th, 1917. In March 1887, her twin sister Miss Elmeda Bertholf, became the wife of John Hawxhurst. He has passed on some years ago.

Mrs. William H. Long was the second woman in the valley and the first in the lower valley. It is often said that the Dave Andersons were the second family to come into Plateau Valley. However, their wagon broke on the top of the Mesa, and the J.P. Brown family passed around them. Thus, Mr. Brown was



Clover School, Winter 1895-96. Alice Carver, teacher. (Photo courtesy of Donna Young photos, Plateau Valley Association Historic Preservation Committee, Collbran.)

the second, and Mr. Anderson the third, to settle in the valley. Mrs. William Ditman and Mrs. Joshua Barnes came next, having met on the road and traveled on together. Mrs. J.F. Brink had the first shingle-roofed house which stood very near the Meeker Tree, but the house has long since burned down. And Mrs. William Long had the first board floor in the valley, being packed over the hogback by mules. Fred Long, son of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Long, was the second child born in the valley, and the first in the lower valley. He was also a nephew of Mrs. Straud M. Logan, wife of Judge Logan of Grand Junction.

After the first good schoolhouse was built 3/4 mile south of Mesa, Mrs. J.F. Spencer of Grand Junction was the first teacher. Miss Mary Long was also an early day teacher, staying at the home of her brother, where Mr. Logan, also an early day teacher at Mesa and a promising young attorney of Grand Junction, found and courted her. The outcome of the courtship is well known.

While Joe King had the mail contract, a mail carrier, George Nichols, batched with Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown told him one night that he was to get $300.00 the next day in the mail, but Nichols did not show up that next night. He was found several days later near Montrose without his mail sack, acting out of his head. They thought he had been drinking and that the heat of the desert had made him crazy. Brown got his money next mail, and about four years later the lost mail sack was found in a gopher hole on top of Grand Mesa, split open, and people got letters four years old. Nichols hid out for a long time, and never came back here to stay.

When Mr. Brown visited Skyway and Lands End last summer, he remarked that his first visit to that place was July 20th, 1882.

Among the incidents of early days was that of John Carmichael when he was carrying the mail. It was required that all carriers be armed, and, as he lay down to get a drink from Rapid Creek, his gun slipped out of his pocket and shot him through. He lay over and bled well. Later, he stood on his feet while a doctor probed a silk handkerchief through the wound. He recovered entirely.

Dr. Zinke. (Photo courtesy of Rosalie Williams photo, Plateau Valley Association Historic Preservation Committee, Collbran and Plateau Valley Homestead Project, ASC #1999.12, Lloyd Files Research Library, Museum of Western Colorado.)

Grandpa Clark, as he was called, was the first to preach, and traveled around on foot, stopping wherever he was invited. C.W. Noble was the first real minister. He came in March 1894 and organized the first M.E. Church at Mesa in October 1894. Then in November, the first Sunday school was organized, the continuance of which is still "carrying on" at Mesa. Mrs. Emma H. Lasswell was the first superintendent, and served in that capacity at different times over many years. Mrs. Eddy had held Sunday school the summer of '91 and '92, but she died in '93 and was buried in Los Angeles. Davis, called the cowboy preacher, was the second minister at Mesa.

The N.P. Johnson and the Rasmussen families came in 1885, both from Mt. Pleasant Utah; they settled just east of Mesa, on ranches still occupied and owned by members of their respective families. The Johnsons had the first organ in the valley, and the first grain binder. The Jensen family came from Utah and settled on the place now owned by Mr. Mills Whitney.

The Marion E. Lasswell family came October 16, 1893, and located on the ranch now owned by Jesse Barnes. The Lasswell family lived there till the passing of Mr. Lasswell in December 1908. Dr. Craig came from Kansas in 1886 and took up the ranch now owned by the Gasway family and others. Dr. Craig's family came in 1887. He was the first physician in the lower valley; Dr. Zinke of Collbran being the first in the entire valley.

A family by the name of Wallace took up the place two and a half miles south of Mesa, where Clarence Fetters now lives. They lost a child, the first one buried in the present Mesa cemetery, while the log schoolhouse on that plot was still used for school.

S.J. Kiggins came in 1883. He had been a pioneer of Denver, and was there discharged as a Civil War veteran. He went back to Iowa and married Miss Rebecca Bertholf in 1866. Mr. Kiggins saw the first train come into Denver. He located below Collbran and had the first threshing machine, hay baler and saw mill in the valley. He also located and started Plateau City on his homestead. He traveled back to Iowa to get his family, and together with Zack Bertholf and Otis Coakley and their families, started from Madison County with three wagons and 30

cows on May 4,1884. They arrived at Plateau City August 4, 1884. Together with his five sons, he built the first road between DeBeque and Plateau Valley. He passed away at the age of about 85 years at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Hattie Rasmussen, near Mesa in 1929. You will hear more of Mr. Kiggins in an article I shall quote later.

James Smalley built the beautiful Hoosier ditch. The Baldridge Brothers, John Gribble and others, built the Sunnyside ditch, which was considered a great undertaking at that time.

Ed Parkison came in 1887, and moved his family here in 1888. The Parkison home will long be remembered for the many pleasant evenings spent there with music and song. And Mrs. Babb will not be forgotten for her interest in the welfare of the young people and older ones as well. Englehart and Parkison built the large store about 1890, with a hall above. It was the first place in the valley where a crowd could be comfortable. Edith Parkison taught several terms of school and was post-mistress a long time, finally marrying a Baldridge.

The Baldridge Brothers came from Bear River with their cattle, and rented the Libby ranch. They later built the road down the canyon, which was a great help to the valley. One of the Baldridge brothers passed away and left two boys; one being the genial man, now manager of Fruita Coop, who lives with his mother; the other married and lives away from here.

Bill Kenney came in 1885 with a shipment of Rockwell's cattle. Dan Kenney, his brother, came a little later. Bill afterward married Dave Anderson's oldest daughter, Grace, and Dan married the other daughter, Mary. Bill passed away about 1900, and Dan only about a year ago. Their families are still in the Collbran vicinity.

Mrs. Dave Anderson is now the oldest pioneer in the upper valley, and Mr. J.P. Brown Sr., in the lower Valley. The Kennon Brothers on Wallace Creek were early settlers and are still there.

Patrick McCaffrey, or "Patsy," as he was familiarly called, came in the early '80s and located in the basin above Collbran that still bears his name. It is said that he was educated

for the priesthood when young. Sometime after 1900 he lived over on the Grand River below DeBeque, and the cattlemen of Mesa often stopped overnight with him. An article he wrote to the "Old Pioneers" was sent to me from which I'll quote later.

The Campbells came to the meadows in an early day, and the Gundersons settled on Buzzard Creek. Tillman Carter came soon after.

The waters were unusually high in the spring of 1885, and the Bluestone boys came up on the north side of Buzzard, built a burro bridge, and crossed the bridge which the Y.T. Ranch had over Plateau Creek. They had to go by Parker Basin and the hog-back to get to Grand Junction. The same spring, the Nucholls Cattle Company came in over the Divide.

Early in October 1884, John M. King, his wife, and daughter Eva (afterward Mrs. Nichols, and now Mrs. Ewing of Molina), Samp Stevens, Dan Shaeffer, wife and daughter, Nell Nichols and Clarence C. Nichols, Al Snyder and Sarah Snyder arrived in Plateau Valley from New Mexico.

John King settled on a part of the present Platt ranch, which his son, Joe, or L.C. King (being the two names for the one man), had taken up or located together with his partner Lewis Shanks, in an earlier day. Joe came with the first settlers, and at one time encountered the renegade chieftain, Colorow, with a small band of his followers. This group was very hostile and on the warpath. Colorow was not going to let Joe pass until he saw Joe draw his pistols for a fight.

The Bannisters came in about 1887 or1888 and lived on the present Dixon place for about five years. They had a store and post office, and after selling to H.K. Bogert, they went to make their home at Grand Junction.

Joe McGeoch had the log hotel at Mesa, and when Bogert moved his store to Mesa, McGeoch had the post office. Later Bogert sold his store to George Bales, and then Mr. Bales took over the post office.

Mrs. Bannister, Mrs. McGeoch, and Mrs. Eva Ewing, were all three daughters of Mr. John M. King. John King set an

orchard of trees bought from Starks Brother's nurserymen, which is still bearing fruit.

Mr. J.J. Long came with his brother William H. Long, or Aleck Long, as he was familiarly called in 1882, and filed on a part or all of the old William Ditman place; but, for some reason gave it up later and settled on the present T.A. Pitts place. When Mr. Pitts came in 1887, he let Mr. Long have the property, as Mr. Pitt's wife and Mrs. Aleck Long were sisters. They perhaps wished to live near each other, and Mr. Long wanting more land in one body, went to Kansas Mesa, where he has since lived and prospered.

The first newspaper to be printed in the east part of Mesa County was established at DeBeque by Lewis Shanks. The first newspaper in Plateau was *The Plateau Valley Herald* at Collbran. C.M. Danford was the editor and the first issue was printed August 9, 1895. In that issue I noticed a news item copied from the "DeBeque New Era" which reads thus: "The fish are in hard lines [times] on Plateau, and the bears will have to go without berries for a while. A large party started from here for the berrying and fishing grounds on the 10th (August 1895) Mrs. Montgomery and Gordan, Mrs. Sechrist and Miss Jennie Jackson will have charge. J.L. Barnhart and J.E. Harris will look after such matters as cooking, caring for game, etc."

The sequel to the above item is that J.E. Harris and Miss Jennie Jackson were married at high noon the following February 4, 1896, and are now the well-known owners of Harris Ranch Inn on Plateau Creek. The Jackson family came about 1894. They first lived near DeBeque a short time, and later settled on the ranch now owned by Mr. J.E. Harris near Mesa.

The following chapter contains Patrick McCaffrey's article, and because of the beauty of his English language, I am copying it as he himself wrote it.

Chapter Six

To the Pioneers of Plateau Valley:

Dear Old Friends: I have been asked to write a chapter of reminiscences of those days—those great days—when we first

came over the mesas to build our homes and wrest a new empire from "The Great Desert" of Hayden's maps. How gladly I undertake the task! Conscious though I be of my inability to do the subject any measure of justice.

How well I remember my first camp on "Nigger Flat" just above where DeBeque now stands. It was a raw March day and the ice was just breaking up in the Grand River when, on the next morning, we forded and swam our ponies across to the Bonita side and I realized what a chilly reception the new land could give. I began to fear that after all there was something in the old tradition—told so often by campfires—that on being forced to leave this, the greatest of all hunting grounds, the sachems or Big Medicine Men of the expatriated Utes assembled in solemn council and cursed the land and prophesied that never should the hated white men enjoy themselves or prosper in the land thus taken by force from the weakened red man. But this doleful tradition was forgotten when, a few weeks later I dropped into the cabin of a new arrival from Iowa.

This cabin was at that time by far the most pretentious residence in the valley. It was a log house, of course, 16 x 18 feet with a lean-to addition 10 x 12 feet, giving ample room for this hardy pioneer, his wife and their nine children; also plenty of space by the cheerful fire for every wanderer whom chance or business brought their way. I was very tired and awfully hungry—and maybe a little homesick—when I struck this ranch. But the hearty handshake of the rancher, and the kindly welcoming smile, of his wife, soon made me feel entirely at home. And soon, over a royal banquet of roast venison, I formed a friendship which will only end when our eyes are closed for the last time. This rancher was Sam Kiggins, a name long connected with every movement for the furtherance of good citizenship and general progress in Plateau Valley.

Soon afterward, I started on the hard trail you all have traveled and know so well. I located my claim, built my cabin, cleared a piece of ground, and built a ditch. Hope soared high; we were all going to be rich soon. But frosts will come, and hopes, like potatoes, are subject to blight. The best of us knew but little

about farming by irrigation, and oh my! Do you remember our many disappointments, and how many times we were on the point of calling the whole thing a failure and pulling up stakes and quitting? Many a one did. I still remember my darkest day. The frost had killed my corn and potatoes, the seed of which had been brought from Iowa, and presented to me by Uncle Zack Bertholf. All my toil seemed lost and the angel of discontent seemed to be in complete possession. In my grief I went to visit Otis Coakley, and after stealing a big share of his sympathy we both decided to go and attend a Sunday school meeting, the call issued by our mutual friend, John M. Bertholf. Neither Coakley nor I were long on sentiment in those days, and when Capt. John called for recruits we responded—not at all. But a little while afterward when Mr. Bertholf announced a hymn, and a certain little girl sang "Ther's Sunshine in My Soul" Otis joined in and sang the loudest of anybody; for this song was a stray beam of light carried over prairie and mountain, and somehow the sun sifted through that dark cloud and never again did the world look so dark to either of those scoffers.

Then, old friends, you remember our first school house. It was notably unpretentious, yet it marked an epoch; for within those rough log walls were taught those rudiments of American citizenship, of Christianity and of civilization, which today mark the youth of this territory as the best on the American continent. Well, that was a proud day when our first school was opened and dedicated to Progress and Truth.

And memory carries us back to themes of lighter vein. There were the dances, the first one being held, as it should have been, in the hospitable home of Sam Kiggins and family. We read of the "cotillion" and "German" and all the other imported fool doin's of swell society, but we know, dear old friends, that never no NEVER was there just such another good time as that. What though Sam's doors were but gunny-sack and his windows flour sack, and his ballroom floor the bare breast of Mother Earth? We right-handed- to-your partner, alamand-right, swing-y'r partner—and finally, when the oil lamp looked through the dust like the sun at noon through a San Francisco fog, and Otis Coakley, the

Building Church in Collbran, 1903. (Photo courtesy of Rev. Gene Mack photos, Congregational Church, Plateau Valley Association Historic Preservation Committee, Collbran and Plateau Valley Homestead Project, ASC #1999.12, Lloyd Files Research Library, Museum of Western Colorado.)

prompter, yelled "Swing Katie Rannigan the belle of the valley!" I found myself hugging Bill Cook's mother-in-law, the oldest but the dearest old lady that ever blessed Plateau Valley with a laugh. And the musicians of that event! Dan Shaeffer and Mr. Mattingly—well, it was enough to appease the goddess of melody for a thousand years of inharmonious discord. Yet Al McRae told me a secret the next day that once while Shaeffer played "Arkansas Traveler" for a waltz, Mr. Mattingly kept scoring away on "Old Zip Coon."

The years passed, some played a little, some danced a little, and all worked a great deal. And soon it was noticed that where once were sagebrush wastes, now were green corn fields and sturdy young orchards. I remember we rode miles to see the first peach blush at the sun's kiss, in Mr. Hawxhurst's orchard.

And you remember that as cultivated acres were extended, water began for the first time to be a problem, and unlike people who fight, we went to work cooperatively and built the system of reservoirs on Grand Mesa—a work that will remain a monument to your industry and thrift as long as time lasts. For, while other districts were trying to get help from the government through "graft" agency, you accomplished your great work not through government help, but very often in spite of the local administration of the forest service, which seemed determined to place obstacles in your way.

And then you remember that when the water problem was solved we soon had things to sell and Grand Junction began to bid for our trade. You probably have not yet forgotten how they treated us. In ten years of our early struggle Grand Junction never bought a carload of our grain or our potatoes at one time; and after those hard trips over the "hogback"—we had to go in trains in order to double upon that fine old pass—Grand Junction merchants would never take a ton of hogs nor more than a dozen chickens at one time, and two loads of produce would glut the market. If we happened to land five loads in a train it made a surplus which frightened those people nearly to death and we always had to peddle out to the poor ranchmen or sell surplus at a robbing discount to the enterprising merchants.

About this time a big fat kid ran a "freight outfit" on the old toll road. It consisted of one wagon that looked as if it came across the plains in '49, and four of the sorriest looking mules imaginable. When we joshed the kid he good-naturedly answered that he had paid for the outfit and it was his'n. That kid was Bert Stroud, a name inseparably connected with the destiny of Plateau Valley; a man who brought more influence for good in our commercial life than all other agencies combined. For he sold his outfit and bought a business in DeBeque and had the distinction of being the first man to buy a carload of Plateau Valley produce and pay for it.

But you remember that we found that marketing produce direct from the soil was at best a slow trail to wealth, rendering us only a bare living; and—it seems but a few years ago—we began to utilize the public range, getting cattle to summer there and raising alfalfa at home to feed in winter. This seems at last to offer us a chance to save the penny for a rainy day and most of us jumped at the chance; to save the penny, and today we have our all invested in range cattle.* * * Old friends, your conquest has now become history; you now have splendid schools, beautiful churches, comfortable homes, but all rest on this foundation, the livestock industry.

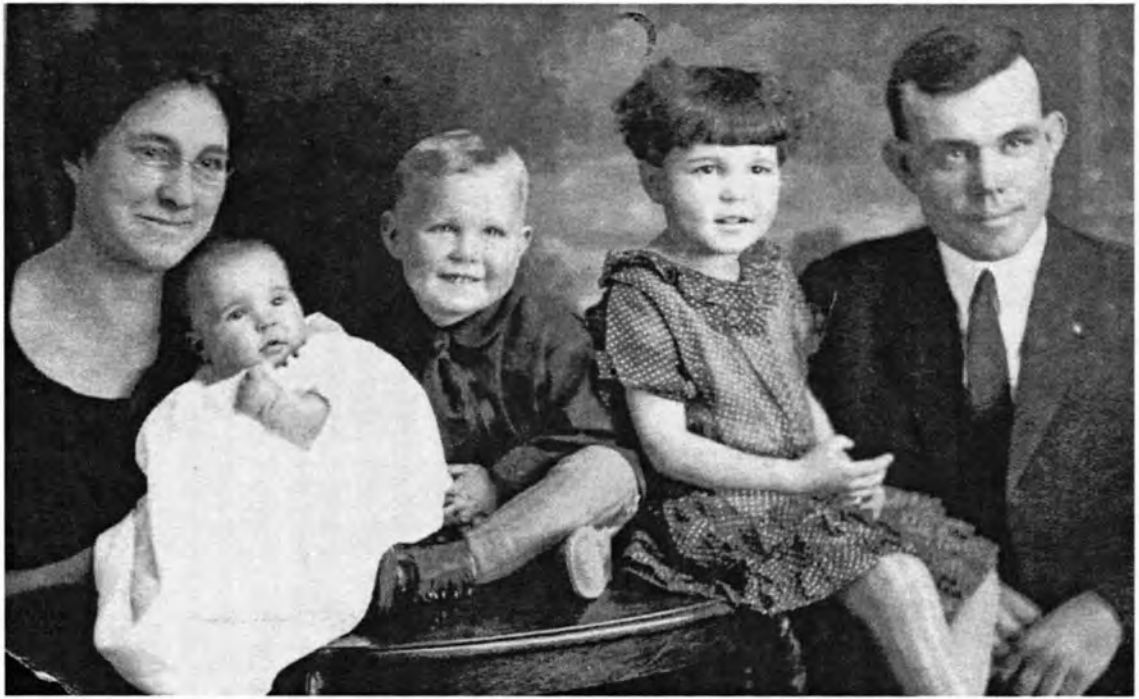
Time has brought its joys and its sorrows. Old age is stealing upon us and we know the angel of death will claim his due. There is hardly a family among you but has a sacred mound in one of God's acres set apart in every district of the valley, and these are the strongest anchors we have to hold us to the good old past. Those were sad days for us when we buried Tam Palmer, big-hearted Bill Kenney and Uncle Zack Bertholf. It was a hard day for us all when we heard that Fred Rockwell—our Fred—was dead in far off Oregon. But the saddest day of all was when we learned that dear old Ma Hawxhurst had fallen asleep to the sad murmur of the little creek that for 25 years witnessed her labors and her many acts of kindness. And now tears of her many friends still attest the love and esteem in which her memory is enshrined.

Old friends, through the lights and shadows of life you get about as much sunshine,—real and figuratively,—as the

residents of any other part of this great land. Your numerous herds of cattle—owned not by a few cattle barons but by your great producing yeomanry—your great stacks of alfalfa, your granaries that would command a premium in Kansas City, Chicago, or even New York City, these bear witness that you are indeed fairly prosperous. And yet, although these riches would have been called visionary, even by the wildest dreamers in the early '80's, they do not begin to be a medium by which to measure your great wealth. Your incomparable climate, soil and water, our remarkable standard of health and longevity—these are the real strongholds of your great wealth, of which none can ever rob you.* * *

Old friends, it has been more than 30 years since you and I, with ax and shovel first started our cabins; in closing let me tell you how proud I am still to call you Friends, and write that I am yours,

Patrick McCaffrey



The Elsberry family, 1924. From left to right: Kathryn, H. Patricia, William T., Dorothy Martha, and William E. (Photo courtesy of the author.)

Our Home Town

By H. Pat Elsberry*

Several years ago, to the surprise of some, my interest in writing "Our Home Town" was rekindled after my permanent return to the Grand Valley in 1999. It was my wish to preserve the memories of our yester years.

It is sad, but our grandparents passed away early. We relied on memories from our parents and our eldest sister Dorothy Elsberry Bray, and images of our grandparents in photographs. Our maternal grandfather, Frank Smith migrated west from Wisconsin to Spirit Lake, Iowa. There he met and married our grandmother Dorades "Dora" Miller Smith. Our mother, Kathryn Smith, was born in Spirit Lake on 19 July 1889. The Smith family later moved to Provo, Utah where Grandfather Smith worked as a blacksmith on a ranch. In 1901, the Smith family moved again, this time to a homestead in Fruita, Colorado. In 1886, our paternal grandparents, William and Martha Spess Elsberry moved from Crawford, Nebraska to a homestead in Mesa, Colorado. William Evert Elsberry, our father, was born there 20 December 1894. Most of the people that lived in Mesa at that time were related in some fashion. Sunday was the big day for gathering and

*Commander H. Patricia Elsberry presently serves as the Commander of the local Grand Junction, Colorado American Legion Post #37. She served on active duty in the Women's Army Corp (WAC) from 1949 to1952. Her assignment as a recruiter took her to various duty stations on the east coast. Pat has also published a book entitiled *Women of the War* which is now housed in the archives of the Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C.

having great meals. Grandfather Elsberry played the violin and sang in a tenor voice. Our dad played the violin and mandolin by ear. Aunt Ethel Elsberry Johnson took piano lessons and she sang and played for all the weddings and funerals.

William Evert Elsberry and Kathryn Smith met in Fruita while Frank Smith was shoeing a horse for dad. Mom and dad fell in love and after their marriage they lived most of their lives in Grand Junction. They were married at St. Joseph Catholic Church located at Third Street and White Avenue on 26 November 1917.

World War I interrupted their marriage. Our father served overseas in Germany with the U.S. Army in World War I, and then returned to Grand Junction to begin his family. Father and mother had five children: Dorothy Elsberry Bray (born 30 March 1920), William Theodore "Bill" Elsberry (born 12 June 1923), Helen Patricia Elsberry (born 8 July 1926), Ruth Marie Elsberry Anderson (born 11 February 1928), and Virginia Elsberry Miller (born 13 April 1929).

In 1929, the Great Depression began, and dad lost his job at the J.S. Brown Wholesale Grocery Merchandise Company when it was sold. For four years he worked at odd jobs, and the Elsberry family lived at seven different locations in and around Grand Junction. In 1931, our mother, tired of the constant moving, bought a house on two acres at 1360 Glenwood Avenue and this became our home. Ruth was two and Virginia was one years of age at this time. Glenwood Avenue, which ran west of the house, was not a through street. The property was located between North Twelfth (City Line) and Fifteenth (County Line). On Saturday night, our parents took Dorothy, Bill and I down to Main Street, where we sat in the car and watched the people while our parents shopped. On the corner of Fifth and Main Street a handicapped gentleman sold popcorn and we always bought some. We also went window-shopping with our parents and admired the beautiful displays in Benge's Shoe Store, which had opened in Grand Junction in 1911. We did not buy our shoes there; we went across the street to Montgomery Wards and purchased more affordable pairs of shoes, sometimes for $1.98.

Our parents were members of the International Order of Odd Fellows. During the holiday season of 1930, Dorothy (10), Bill (7), and I (4 1/2), went to the IOOF lodge with our parents for the Christmas dance. This building, where social events are still held, was erected in 1906 at Fifth Street and Rood Avenue. Things that stand out in my mind were all the steps we climbed and seeing Santa Claus, who gave us popcorn balls and candy. All the ladies wore white dresses and our parents were the best on the dance floor. For this occasion, mother hired a baby-sitter for the youngest kids at home.

When our younger sisters, Ruth and Virginia, were still very small, Bill, Ruth, Virginia, and I went to the movies for $.10. There was the Mission Theatre, the Kibler, and the Avalon. The theatre we went to featured Western movies with stars like Gene Autry, Ken Maynard, Tom Mix, the Lone Ranger, and Roy Rogers. We always went early so we could have front row seats.

There were many stores located in and around Grand Junction, including five drug stores: Mesa Drug, CD Smith Drug, Reynolds Drug, Hilbert Drug, and Linde Drug. Other businesses included LC Cook, JC Penney's, Woolworth's, Kresses, Bannister Furniture, Prinster Brothers, Clymer's Dairy, Sally Ann Bakery, Gordens, Hotel D Hamburger, St. Regis Hotel, Grand Valley National Bank, Public Service Company, Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Colorado Sugar Manufacturing Company, Piggly Wiggly, and the dance hall, Copeco, located on the old road going to Fruita.

I spent my first year of school at Washington Elementary School located between Eighth and Ninth Streets on Hill Avenue. The school was built in 1920. I remember the teachers asked all the students to find out their birthdays and nationality. I went home and asked dad, who said to tell the teacher I was a "Blue Belly Yankee." I am sure the teacher got a chuckle from that answer. The next seven years I walked the mile to St. Joseph Catholic School located on Third Street and Grand Avenue. I knew many of the streets in town and admired all the large houses on North Seventh Street. In my eyes, the homes looked like castles and I daydreamed that we lived there.

Family togetherness was part of growing up, and on Sunday nights the family gathered around the radio to listen to "The Shadow," "Amos and Andy," "Fibber, Maggie and Molly," "The Lone Ranger," and "Jack Armstrong the All American Boy." We ate popcorn and sometimes played card games like rummy. It was a hard time and money was scarce, but our mom was a good cook and we had plenty to eat. Raising five children could not have been easy, and we certainly admired her for keeping the family together. Mother baked seven loaves of bread every other day, and did all the usual things women of modest income in Grand Junction did during the Depression. Mom also worked outside the home. She cooked in the kitchen for the Sisters of Charity and for St. Mary's Hospital on Colorado Avenue. She even served as midwife for Josephine and Frank Prinster.

We stuck together as a family. Looking back over the years, we know we had a happy childhood. Our mom made divinity and fudge at Christmas—that was a great thrill. One year we begged our parents to have Christmas on Christmas Eve. Our dad played Santa Claus, and we received a red wagon. Our parents and our sister Dorothy gave us gifts, and our Aunt Pete (Francis Smith) from California sent fruit, nuts, and fruitcake; but believe me, we never again asked to celebrate Christmas on Christmas Eve because it took the joy out of Christmas day. One time we received coal in our stockings as a reminder to be better-behaved children. It was a great lesson. We never had coal in our stockings again, just candy and nuts. Mother always made a homemade batch of root beer, and it was hard counting the days when we could drink this beverage.

On Fifteenth Street (the only through street) where we lived at the Glenwood address, there were few houses as that area was mostly undeveloped. This street took us to the Grand Canal and the brickyard. Beyond the canal there were only mounds of high alkali earth. We learned to swim and ice skate at the Grand Canal, and we also swam and ice-skated on the backwater of the Colorado River on the Redlands when the river was low.

We spent a lot of time at Lincoln Park. They had free swimming on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, and we also

In the garden at Grandfather Elsberry's Ranch, Mesa, Colorado, 1934. Left to right: William E., Ruth Marie, Kathryn, Virginia E., H. Patricia, and Spot, the family sheepdog. (Photo courtesy of the author.)

enjoyed the animals in the zoo. In the neighborhood, we always had lots of games to play like hide and seek, jacks, marbles, run sheep, kick the can, and hopscotch. We built caves in vacant lots and also had tree houses.

It was not all play; we all had some kind of a job. Our sister Dorothy worked at Woolworths from the time she was sixteen years old. Bill had a paper route, I worked part-time at Woolworths, and Ruth and Virginia, when they were old enough, had jobs at St. Mary's Hospital on Colorado Avenue and at Kresses.

At the two-acre property at 1360 Glenwood Avenue we kept chickens, a cow, ducks, rabbits, guinea hens, and geese. We also had a large garden and sold milk. We had a root cellar and Mother canned vegetables, fruit, meat, and chicken. Each spring, mom and dad would buy 100 chicks and we would raise them until they were big enough to can. By selling milk and extra chickens, mom made enough money to keep us clothed.

During the four years that Bill and I attended Grand Junction High School, our father worked on our Grandfather's ranch in Mesa, Colorado. Our sister Dorothy went up to Mesa to work and keep house for dad during the week. On the weekends, dad and Dorothy spent the weekend with us in Grand Junction. In the summer months, mom, Bill, Ruth, Virginia and myself would spend three months up at the ranch. Grandfather's ranch was three miles from the town of Mesa. Sometimes we walked to town during the week and other times we road bareback on an old bay horse. At Mesa, we kept a pig, a cow, a large garden, chickens, and a variety of fruit trees. There were plenty of chores for us kids, and a plot of ground that we had to keep weeded. The time we spent together made us a very close-knit family.

Grand Junction, our hometown, has become a growing city and has undergone many changes. We salute our sister Dorothy for sharing the history about our young lives with us. We also salute our wonderful parents for their belief that we siblings would live up to the examples set by the generations before us, and those that came afterward. We are proud of the part Grand Junction played in molding our young lives and in molding others of our generation.

H. Patricia Elsberry. Korea Conflict, 1949-1952. Women's Army Corps, U.S. Army. (Photo courtesy of the author.)

BACK ISSUES

Vol. 1	#1	Hard Times But Good Times: The Grand Junction Women During the Great Depression
		Recollections of the Redlands
	#2	Uncompahgre Statesman: The Life of Ouray
	#3	The Grand Junction Town Company and the Land Dispute with William Keith
		The Avalon Theatre
	#4	The Grand River Ditch
		Recollection of Naturita
Vol. 2	#1	The Roan Creek Toll Road
		Harvesting Peaches with German Prisoners of War
	#2	Birds of Mesa County
		Crawford: A Good Little Town
		Chinese in Early Grand Junction
	#3	Reminiscences of Early Life in Grand Junction.
	#4	The Schiesswhol Building: An Economic Barometer of Grand Junction Business Activity, 1908-1934
		The New Deal Programs as Seen from Loma.
		The Peach Festival, 1887-1909: A Celebration of the Land
Vol. 3.	#1	Volunteer to Professional: A History of the Grand Junction Fire Department
	#2	"A Monument for Good in the World and Glory of God": The Parachute Home Culture Club
	#3	Development of Grand Junction and the Colorado River Valley to Palisade 1881-1931, Part I
	#4	Development of Grand Junction and the Colorado River Valley to Palisade 1881-1931, Part II
Vol. 4	#1	The Ku Klux Klan in Grand Junction 1924-1927
	#2	The Schmidt Family Hardware Store and Grand Junction, A Partnership.
		Early History of the Grand Junction High School Band
		Transcendental Twisted Trees and Enos Mills
	#3	The Crawford Mill
		The Survival of Judaism in a Far Western Town: A Brief History of the Jewish Community of Grand Junction
	#4	Archaeological Investigations at Battlement Mesa
		Enstrom's: More Than Just Toffee
Vol. 5	#1	Higher Education and Mesa State College: A Study of Roles and Influences
		In the Spirit of Public Service: Leslie Savage of Western Colorado
	#2	A Reminiscence of Mesa College at the End of World War II 1944-1946
		The Manhattan Project on the Colorado Plateau
		The Plateau Canyon Road
	#3	Grand Junction's City Parks: A History of Community Cooperation
		Reminiscences of an Inveterate Colorado Skier

	#4	A Twentieth Century Stopping Place: The St. Regis Hotel 1893-1990
		Johnson's House of Flowers: A Family Tradition
		Solid Cold: A History of the Grand Junction Ice Houses
Vol. 6	#1	Community Development and Historical Events: Social History and Folklore of the Grand Valley
	#2	Bloody Grass: Western Colorado Range Wars, 1881-1934
		The Life of a Sheepherder: Then and Now
	#3	Hispanic People of Grand Junction
		The KREX Story: A History of Broadcasting in the Grand Valley
	#4	The Civilian Conservation Corps on the Colorado National Monument
		Onion Valley: The Fate of the One-Room Schoolhouse
Vol. 7	#1	A Study of the Retolaza Boarding House and its Role in the Life of the Basque Itinerant Sheepherder
		The Western Hotel of Ouray: A Hundred Year History
	#2	Women Coal Miners, The Orchard Valley Mine, and the Efficacy of Affirmative Action
		Women and Their History in Kannah Creek
	#3	Labor Shortage and is Solution During WWII in the Grand Valley of Western Colorado
		John Lawrence and the Opening of the San Juans, 1869-1882
		The Howard Lathrop Agriculture Center
		Las Immigrantes Mexicanas
	#4	100 Years of Uranium Activity in the Four Corners Region, Part I
Vol. 8	#1	100 Years of Uranium Activity in the Four Corners Region, Part II
	#2	Fort Crawford: A Symbol of Transition
	#3	Cesspools, Alkali and White Lily Soap: The Grand Junction Indian School, 1886-1911
	#4	Shoo Away the Snakes, Prairie Dogs, and Rabbits; Let's Make the Desert Bloom: The Uncompahgre Project 1890-1909
Vol. 9	#1	The Blind Immigrant
		I Don't Even Hear the Trains Run Anymore
		Gandy-Dancer to Shoe Clerk
	#2	Hotel Colorado: Playground of the Rich and Famous
		Grand Junction Clay Products Company
	#3	Whose Water is it Anyway: Bureaucrats, the Animas-LaPlata Project, and the Colorado Utes
	#4	A History of Rapid Creek
Vol. 10	#1	Objective History: Grand Junction, Colorado, Part I
	#2	Objective History: Grand Junction, Colorado, Part II
	#3	William Moyer: The Rise and Fall of a Small-Town Progressive
		The Life of Humanitarian Sabina Veronica Lally O'Malley
	#4	Land's End Road
		Sights on the West Coast But Home in Grand Junction
		Tales of Black Mesa
Vol. 11	#1	"Queen" Chipeta
		Audre Lucile Ball: Her Life in the Grand Valley from World War II Through the Fifties

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Taken Thanksgiving Day 1917. Standing left to right: Mrs. Byran, Mr. Byran, Mrs. Lasswell, Mrs Cline, Mr. Cline, Mrs. Stewart, Fred DeCurry, Paul Deeds, John Byran. Seated: E.D. Stewart, Fay DeCurry, Mary Byran. (Photo courtesy of Erwine Stewart Photos, Lloyd Files Research Library, Museum of Western Colorado.)

PREFACE

(c.1930)

Books, as well as other articles, are often introduced by a preface or foreword, relative to their contents. And so I feel that this little article should have a preface.

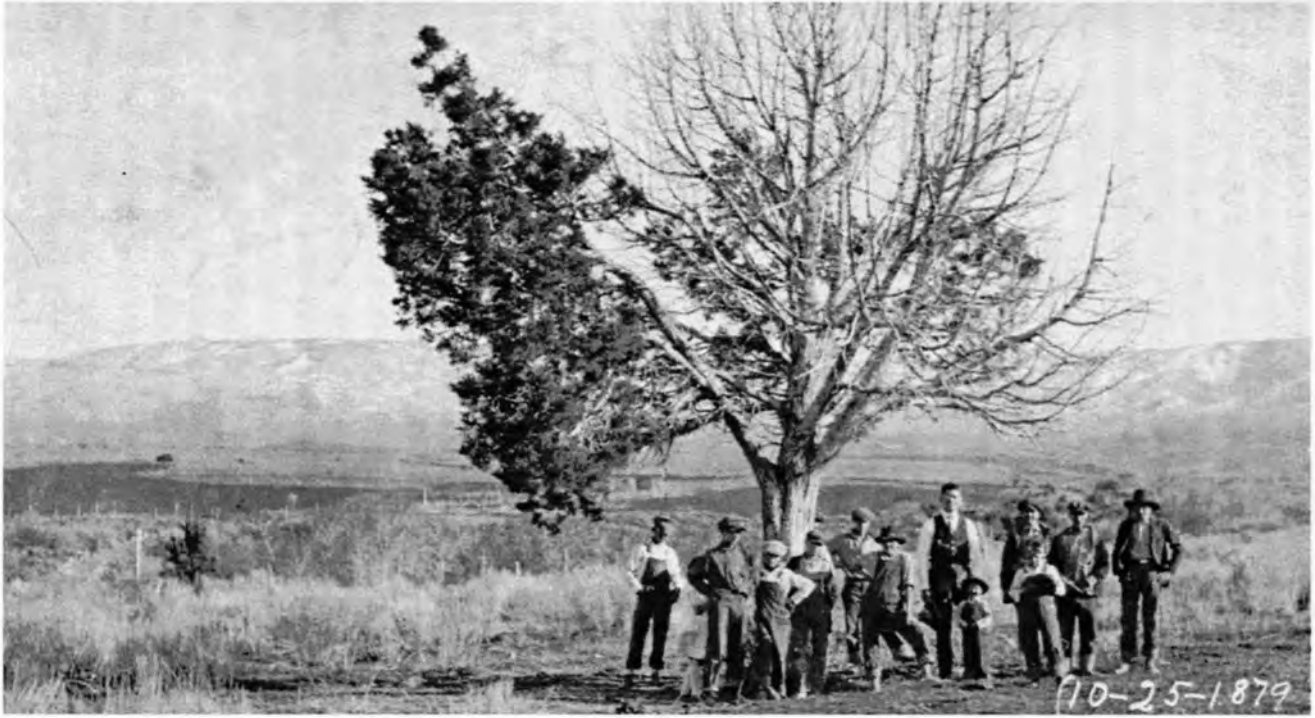
The topic, as at first assigned to me, I understood to be "Early History of the Plateau Valley" and especially its unwritten history. Then later I noticed some reference to the article I was to prepare as being "Pioneers, or Pioneer Life of Plateau Valley;" and then again something else, still different. And so I may have touched upon all of them, and even gone a little outside of many of them, but decided to call it "Early History of Plateau Valley and Pioneer Life of the First Settlers, as Related by Them or Their Near Relatives."

I feel I should have had years instead of weeks, to do justice to such a subject, so that I could talk with pioneers and properly draw out the unwritten history, at opportune moments, and under favorable conditions. Most all of those who are mentioned in this paper, I have been personally acquainted with for years. Had I known I'd ever want to write this, I would have improved my various conversations, and my memory as well. If I had used a notebook, I might have been much better prepared.

You may be led to believe, at times, that I have entirely forgotten my original subject. However, I will proceed with what I have gathered in so short a time.

I wish to thank all those who have so kindly aided me in searching out the events of the early days of settlement of Plateau Valley. I had expected to mention each one by name, but the number is so great, I find this impossible. Again, I failed to use a notebook and would probably leave out someone that was most helpful to me.

Mesa, Colorado 1931
Sincerely,
Ada Hall Stewart (Mrs. E.D. Stewart)



The Meeker Tree, 1924. (Photo courtesy of the Indian-Utes file, Lloyd Files Research Library, Museum of Western Colorado.)

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Robert & Janet Scheevel, Grand Jct.
Robert P. Schulte, St. Louis Park, MN
Steve & Tracy Schulte, Grand Junction
James E. Stafford, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Sternburg, Cincinnati, OH
Bill & Ann Stopper, Grand Junction
Nicholi Sweet, Evergreen
Mr. & Mrs. Tomlinson, Westminster
Mr. & Mrs. Tope, Albuquerque, NM
Kathleen Smith Walker, Kerrville, TX
Mr. George E. Wheeler, Grand Jct.
Mr. Micheal White, Grand Junction
John & Roxana Wolcott, Grand Jct.
Pat & Zang Wood, Flora Vista, NM
Betsy Zollner, Grand Junction