

The Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument

By Richard G. Beidleman*

Colorado's Black Canyon of the Gunnison certainly ranks among the foremost chasms of the world in terms of dimensions and renown. Starting at Sapinero, where the ancient pre-Cambrian rock complex first becomes evident, the Gunnison River has cut an ever deepening gorge to westward for a distance of some fifty miles until, swinging northwest, the river leaves its walled confines and joins the North Fork of the Gunnison River in the North Fork Valley near Delta.

The deepest and most spectacular portion of this chasm, a twelve-mile length, has been included within the boundary of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument, which was established by the presidential proclamation of Herbert Hoover thirty years ago on March 2, 1933. Here the gorge depth ranges from 1,730 to 2,725 feet, while the width narrows to 1,100 feet at the rim and as little as 40 feet at the bottom, at the latter site the river completely inundating the chasm floor. The depth and narrowness of the Black Canyon is emphasized by the sheer, black-stained, lichen-covered, variegated pre-Cambrian walls and the periodic gloom that shrouds the depths.

There are other canyons in the world with greater over-all dimensions, and some whose fame exceeds that of the Black Canyon. Regardless of these competitors, however, Colorado's Black Canyon of the Gunnison is memorable for its narrowness, depth, and impression of somber solitude. It is small wonder, then, that there developed in the past efforts to have

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The author is indebted to Reverend Mark T. Warner, now of Denver, who carefully reviewed this article and made a number of pertinent suggestions and additions. I am also indebted to personnel at the National Archives in Washington who made available manuscript material dealing with the establishment of Black Canyon National Monument. Where documents were not available, the *Montrose Daily Press* was used extensively as a source for historical background. This history in much briefer form was originally prepared for the National Park Service as an appendix to the Black Canyon museum prospectus.—Author.



the most spectacular section of this gorge set aside as one of our country's national monuments.

As early as 1901, the scenic value of the Black Canyon was being publicized. F. H. Newell, Chief Hydrographer for the U. S. Geological Survey, told the editor of the *Montrose Enterprise* in that year that the Black Canyon of the Gunnison "is the grandest scenery on the continent, and that something should be done to invite tourists and sightseers to look on its wonders." Newell thought that the canyon was "unrivalled, even by the Grand Canon of the Colorado."

In the late 1920's local citizens in Montrose began agitating to have the Black Canyon designated as a national monument, with a bridge eventually to be built to span the chasm. This proposed bridge, mentioned as the "highest bridge that will ever be built in the world," would be 1,250 feet in length and extend 1,950 feet above the Gunnison River.

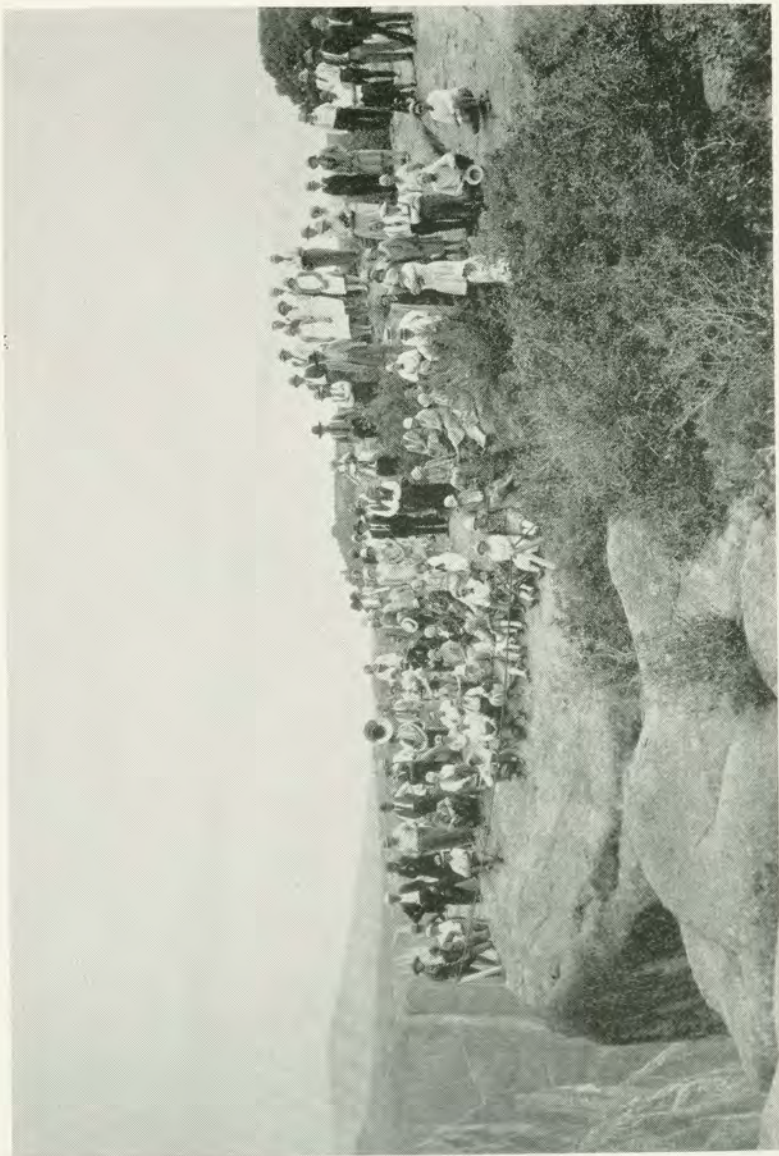
One of the first vocal protagonists was Douglass Lytle, a rancher who lived between Bostwick Park and the canyon's south rim. During the summer of 1928, he told the county agent, Harry A. Ireland, about the existence of the spectacular gorge so close to Montrose and suggested that perhaps the Montrose Lions Club, of which Ireland was a member, could be interested in constructing a "passable road." to the rim.¹ Ireland brought the matter to the attention of the club, which was interested and which set up an investigative committee composed of Ireland, L. J. Foster, superintendent of the Uncompahgre Reclamation Project, and Reverend Mark T. Warner, minister of the local United Presbyterian Church.²

Soon after its appointment, this committee made a reconnaissance trip with Lytle to the canyon, getting a panoramic view of the countryside from Signal Hill and then proceeding to the rim near what later was to become known as Lions Spring. The men were enthusiastic about the possibilities of the area and heartily recommended the road-building project to the club.

On March 8, 1929, the Lions Club voted to sponsor construction of a "scenic drive" to and along the canyon rim. The

¹ Lytle commented that "there was a canyon up there that was worth seeing and a road should be built so people could get to it."—*Montrose Daily Press*, ca January 25, 1934. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

² A great deal of the following information on local activities relative to the establishment of the monument was made available to me by Reverend Warner in a letter of December 31, 1962, or came from a lengthy article, "Black Canyon Drive Is Dedicated," in the September 2, 1930, issue of the *Montrose Daily Press*.



Walker Art Studio

Road Dedication Ceremony at Chasm View
Sept. 1, 1930

committee ran a rough survey for the proposed road, marking the route out with red strings hung on the brush. Work days for the club were designated during the summer of 1929, and members armed with picks, shovels, axes and pruning shears began the job of clearing. Reverend Warner took John Howell, Montrose County Commissioner, and H. T. Reno, resident state Highway Engineer, to the canyon in November and sold them on the idea of building a good county road. Later the board of county commissioners endorsed the project, as did the Montrose city commissioners, the Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations and individuals, including the *Montrose Daily Press* and especially its news editor, Warren F. Wilcox.³

Work was begun on the approach road in May, 1930, the road right-of-way being donated by Lytle⁴; and the road was dedicated on September 1, 1930, a mellow autumn Labor Day, with a gala celebration.⁵ Picnickers from Montrose, Delta and the towns of the North Fork Valley gathered in a clearing near the "bridge site" for a festive feast, topped off with ice cream and cake served by the Lions and delicious coffee brewed by J. H. Bantley. A canvas was erected as protection against the sun, with seats set up under it, and water was provided from a large tank chilled with several hundred pounds of ice. The many cars were directed to safe parking spaces by uniformed men of Company D [Colorado National Guard] under the direction of Sheriff McAnally.

Prior to lunch visitors, even Robert Curtis on his crutches, took the opportunity of viewing the canyon from several vantage points protected by hastily erected railings; and from their "stage" at the canyon rim Professor Loyde Hillyer and his fifteen band members rendered a number of selections to regale the audience. Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Walker were busy taking photographs of the scenery and festivities, and T. Stambaugh of the American Automobile Association was gathering material for an article on the Black Canyon in the A.A.A. magazine. Shortly after one o'clock, only forty-five minutes after it came off the press, copies of the Montrose newspaper

³ Wilcox, among other activities, contacted the man who had built the bridge over the Royal Gorge, wrote Director Albright, took influential authors to the proposed bridge site, and generally boosted the proposed monument "in and out of season."

⁴ Lytle also permitted Lions Spring to be used by visitors and eventually deeded to the government the land he owned within the monument area. Rather obviously, Lions Spring was named in honor of the Montrose Lions Club and not, as many present-day visitors anticipate, after mountain lions which might frequent the spring.

⁵ This celebration was described in detail in "Black Canyon Drive Is Dedicated," *Montrose Daily Press*, September 2, 1930. The following account is based upon that article.



Walker
Lions Club Road Committee: J. F. Warren, "Casey" Jones, and F. H. Posey,
and County Commissioner John Howell (on right).

telling of the dedication, the ink barely dry, were distributed to the gathering.

At 2:00 p.m. the dedicatory ceremony began, presided over by Harry Ireland.⁶ Accompanied by Gene McGregor on the cornet, everyone sang *America*; and Reverend Warner pronounced the Invocation. Ireland portrayed some of the early history of the area and called upon Sam Hartman, the oldest inhabitant present, to relate some of his pioneer experiences associated with the canyon. Then County Commissioner Howell spoke about his impressions of the canyon, commenting "Fortunate indeed are the people of the Uncompahgre Valley both now and in the future in having at their very door this beautiful scenery. Every effort should be made to make it more accessible to the general public."

Howell went on to suggest that an approach road also be built to the north rim and that the Lions Club should seriously begin to make plans for the bridge, ". . . nothing very big or impossible about it, if we all work together." He facetiously continued:

If this is not soon done the men who pushed along the work and built this road this summer, with myself will come up here some dark night and build it for you.

The Long Long Trail on the upper end can be improved so that the most of you could walk down to the bottom of the canyon. . . . And then just above us down the Lone Tree Trail it would be possible to build a power cog railway so that any of you could easily go down and stand close to the perpendicular walls and be near the many cataracts and falls.

It was then Reverend Warner's turn to address the crowd. He reviewed the history of the road development and expressed the hope that the scenic area might eventually be set aside as a national park or national monument. Gus Foster offered a resolution on behalf of the gathering, thanking all who had made possible the creation of the road. And finally with a bottle of Lions Spring water colored with Uncompahgre grape juice which she hurled into the depths of the canyon, Bernice Warren formally christened the road: "In the name of the people of the State of Colorado, I break this bottle of wine and christen this highway the Black Canyon Scenic Drive."

Reverend Warner's suggestion that this newly opened area be established as a national monument was not an original idea. In July of 1929, Warren Wilcox, *Montrose Daily Press* news editor, had called the scenic canyon to the attention of the

⁶ It was Harry Ireland and Warner who one morning, soon after the county road had been constructed, went up to the canyon and gave names to many of the points of interest, later having signs made to mark these points. Many of Ireland's and Warner's names are still in use.

National Park Service with the hope that it might be set aside as a national monument. Then early in February, 1930, the Lions Club through Attorney John L. Bell had made a request of the N.P.S. that the Black Canyon be given such consideration, although no specific area for inclusion was recommended. However, at the time the Park Service did not favor establishment of a monument there.

In May, 1931, the Lions Club, through Attorney L. C. Kinikin, again approached the Park Service with a similar request, this time specifying a smaller parcel for inclusion, most of which was public land. The Acting Director of the N.P.S., Arno B. Cammerer, expressed interest in the request and suggested the possibility that a Park Service representative might visit the canyon in the coming fall or winter. Actually, this visit was to materialize some time later.

The monument idea gained regional impetus in January, 1932, when the Grand Junction Lions voted to assist the Montrose group. During the same month national interest was centered on the Black Canyon by an article on the proposed monument and bridge which appeared in the national Lions Magazine. By October 20, 1932, more than 800 visitors from thirty-one states had ventured up to the south rim on the new road during the course of the year and had signed the loose-leaf register there.

Among the fall visitors was Roger W. Toll, representing the National Park Service, who stopped in at the *Daily Press* office on October 14, and asked if Warren Wilcox would take him up to the canyon. Toll was very impressed by the scenery he encountered, and while in the Montrose area described to the local people the steps they should take in having the area made a national monument. On November 1, he submitted a favorable report to the National Park Service, recommending the creation of the national monument and suggesting that the proposed monument include a small area on either side of the canyon, as well as the canyon itself, from the Gunnison Tunnel river portal to Red Rock Canyon. This land had already been withdrawn from public use by the Reclamation Service which, at the moment having no further use for it, might be favorable to transferring it to the National Park Service.

In his official report Toll commented:⁷

The Black Canyon of the Gunnison is one of the most spectacular gorges of the United States. The land is available. Public sentiment seems to favor the establishment of a na-

⁷ Roger W. Toll, "Report to Horace M. Albright, Director, N.P.S.," November 1, 1932. Nat. Arch. File 2052 (RG 79), Black Canyon.



Lion, Dec Walker

Men most active in building the first road to Black Canyon rim, in 1930. Left to right: C. C. Sheats, John Howell and J. A. Gibson, County Commissioners; Lions, in white shirts, Art H. McAnally, Rev. Mark T. Warner, F. H. Posey, "Casey" Jones, Dr. F. Shermernhorn, W. D. Asbury, J. F. Warren, and Harry Ireland. Sitting are: H. T. Reno, Highway Engineer; L. J. Savage and Sam Hartman.

tional reservation. The area is accessible by road. Scenically it seems to qualify for a national monument and is free from some of the complications that are found in a number of other proposed areas.

Unfortunately, early in the fall, the Montrose Lions Club had disbanded, as a consequence of the depression. Wilcox, undaunted by this loss of organized support, told Reverend Warner of Toll's visit and challenged Warner to "push" the drive for creation of the monument as he had pushed the road-building project.

This challenge Warner gladly accepted. He went directly to Leslie Pinkstaff, president of the Montrose Chamber of Commerce, told him of Toll's favorable impression, and suggested that "the time was ripe for pushing the national monument project." Pinkstaff heartily agreed and named Warner a one-man committee to proceed with the project, since Warner was the only member of the old Lions Club committee still in the community.

Warner, now representing the Montrose Chamber of Commerce, corresponded with Toll about the proposed monument, and Toll, in return, outlined the proper steps which should be taken in presenting the project to the Park Service. Warner decided to prepare "packets of propaganda material" on the Black Canyon to be sent to influential and concerned persons, including Toll, Horace Albright, Director of the National Park Service, Colorado's United States Senators Edward P. Costigan and Karl C. Schuyler, and western Colorado's United States Representative Edward T. Taylor of Glenwood Springs.

The county surveyor, J. E. McDaniel, helped Warner outline the boundaries of the proposed monument and make up a number of blueprint maps for the packets, based upon old Bureau of Reclamation maps. Dexter Walker of the Walker Art Studio in Montrose provided several sets of representative hand-colored photographs of the canyon and Warner wrote a descriptive brochure covering all aspects of the history, natural history, and scenic features of the Black Canyon.⁸ Finally, into each packet went an appropriate letter of transmittal; and the packets were put into the mail by Christmas of 1932. Also, on behalf of the Montrose Chamber of Commerce the Colorado congressmen were asked to take up the monument creation

⁸ Albright was especially appreciative for Warner's contribution: "I wish to thank you in particular for the manuscript which you compiled, giving us in considerable detail, descriptive data on this area."—Letter, Albright to Warner, January 7, 1933. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

with the National Park Service.⁹

On December 5, 1932, Albright finally approved a recommendation by the N.P.S. Branch of Planning, acting on Roger Toll's report, that the Black Canyon "be tentatively approved as a national monument project and that the Reclamation Service be approached to ascertain their attitude on the possibility of this area being used as a power project."¹⁰ The Bureau of Reclamation replied that it would have no objection to the establishment of the monument if this action "would not close for all time any further power and reclamation development."¹¹

The Park Service had received written or telephoned requests for action from many sources in addition to the Montrose Chamber of Commerce,¹² including the Montrose Mayor and City Council, C. E. Adams, editor of the *Montrose Daily Press*, Uncompahgre Valley Water Users' Association, the Montrose Rotary Club, State Senator Lee Knous and Senator Schuyler, Senator Costigan and Representative Taylor.¹³ On January 20 the Western State College Outing Club at Gunnison endorsed the undertaking. And the Montrose County Commissioners, after endorsing the monument, designated the road to the south rim as a public highway.

One state organization especially active in the monument movement was The Colorado Association of Denver which seconded the recommendation of the Montrose Chamber of Commerce on February 2, 1933: "It [Black Canyon] is a sight well worth traveling far to see, and if given the dignity and prominence of being named a national monument many people more than now will visit it."¹⁴

Acting on behalf of the many individuals and organizations supporting the creation of the monument, Director Albright approved on January 13, a recommendation by Conrad Wirth that "a proposed proclamation be submitted recommending the establishment of the Black Canyon National Monument," accompanying the recommendation with a map showing the Black Canyon land status, reclamation withdrawals, power

⁹ Senator Schuyler had received a petition from the Montrose Chamber of Commerce. He commented to Albright: "It appears from the literature submitted to me that this [establishment of the monument] can be accomplished at a very low cost and that it will add materially to the National Park System. Doubtless you have received photographs and descriptive matter of this proposed site and I would appreciate hearing from you and an expression of your views as to whether or not this is feasible at this time."—Letter, Schuyler to Albright, January 10, 1933. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

¹⁰ Letter, Wirth to Albright, January 6, 1933.—*Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² ". . . We have received a good array of petitions and letters from official and unofficial organizations in Colorado, all urging the establishment of this monument."—Letter, Albright to C. E. Adams, Editor, *Montrose Daily Press*, January 7, 1933. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

¹³ Letter, Wirth to Albright, January 6, 1933.—*Ibid.*

¹⁴ Letter, Dudley R. Griggs, Secretary, Colorado Association, to Albright, February 2, 1933.—*Ibid.*

site location, suggested boundary line, and the boundary line recommended by the Montrose Chamber of Commerce through Mark Warner.¹⁵

At this time the proposed boundary line was submitted to the United States Land Office so that a proper description for inclusion in the proclamation could be obtained.¹⁶ On checking the land status, the Land Office discovered that the proposed monument lay within the area subject to the Ute Indian Treaty of June 15, 1888. This might mean that any new disposition of the land under the Public Land Laws would entitle the Indians to a remuneration of \$1.25 an acre, a provision of the Treaty. And if it did become necessary to reimburse the Indians for the land, Albright felt, then the establishment of the monument would require congressional action and an appropriation, rather than just a presidential proclamation.¹⁷

There had been an instance in which a forest preserve had been created on Indian land, and subsequently the Indians had to be reimbursed under treaty provisions. However, Taylor rationalized that forest reserves were a source of commercial return to the government, whereas a monument involved "no return to the Government and it is set aside for the benefit of the citizens of the United States, including the Indians."¹⁸ Thus, in Taylor's interpretation "the Indians would have no claim against the Government for this area," under the circumstances.

With respect to the possible impasse, Conrad Wirth of the National Park Service commented "personally, it looks to me as if the legal interpretation of the Treaty as it affects the establishment of the proposed national monument should be decided by the Solicitor,"¹⁹ while Moskey, also of the Park Service, noted pessimistically ". . . I see no way out. I believe the forest decision equally applicable to the inclusions of these lands in a monument."²⁰ Taylor remained firm in his opinion that the proclamation should be prepared: ". . . It is not our business nor the Secretary's business to anticipate the court's decision. If the area were established and it was contested by the Indians, it would be up to the Court of Appeals to render a decision. If the decision went against the Government, it

¹⁵ Letter, Wirth to Albright, January 6, 1933; approved by Albright, January 13.—*Ibid.*

¹⁶ Letter, Wirth to Albright, February 10, 1933.—*Idem.*

¹⁷ Letter, Albright to Schuyler, January 26, 1933.—*Ibid.*

¹⁸ Letter, Wirth to Albright, February 2, 1933.—*Ibid.*

¹⁹ Letter, Wirth to Albright, February 10, 1933.—*Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

would then be up to [Taylor's] committee to set up a policy to pay for the land."²¹

Wirth and Moskey took the Indian treaty matter up with Albright on February 6, and he felt the only thing to do was proceed with the proclamation, transmitting it through the Indian Service as well as the United States Land Office. Brooks of the Park Service was detailed to prepare the proclamation, together with a letter of transmittal to President Hoover, while Conrad Wirth wrote a letter to the Indian Service explaining "our contacts" and the effect this move might have with respect to the Ute Indian Treaty."²² Wirth also made a special study of the Indian lands problem and on February 10 provided Albright with a three and one-half page report which pointed out all the inherent difficulties.²³

Before the proclamation could be presented to the President, it had to have the approval of the Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur. Hence, on February 17, Albright discussed the matter with the Secretary, expressing his own opinion and informing him that Representative Taylor recommended the monument's establishment by proclamation "regardless of the possibility of imposing an obligation on the Government by so doing."²⁴ Albright noted that whether or not the government would be obligated for \$1.25 an acre was really a matter for Congress and the Federal courts to decide.

The Secretary, after careful review and strongly influenced by the Indian lands situation, finally concluded, however, that he "did not see how he could recommend it to the President for establishment by proclamation."²⁵ Reluctantly, Arno Cammerer (N. P. S.) on February 20, wrote Taylor that "it is apparent that the Secretary wishes to adhere to this decision, and there is nothing we can do to further this proposed monument at this time."²⁶

Representative Taylor, fortunately, remained undaunted. When Wirth visited him the following day, Taylor suggested that the Park Service go ahead and set aside the proposed monument area, despite the Secretary's disapproval, while he would introduce legislation into Congress, authorizing the monument's establishment and payment of \$1.25 per acre to the Indians for the 17,019-acre tract, keeping the bill before

²¹ Letter, Wirth to Albright, February 2, 1933.—*Ibid.*

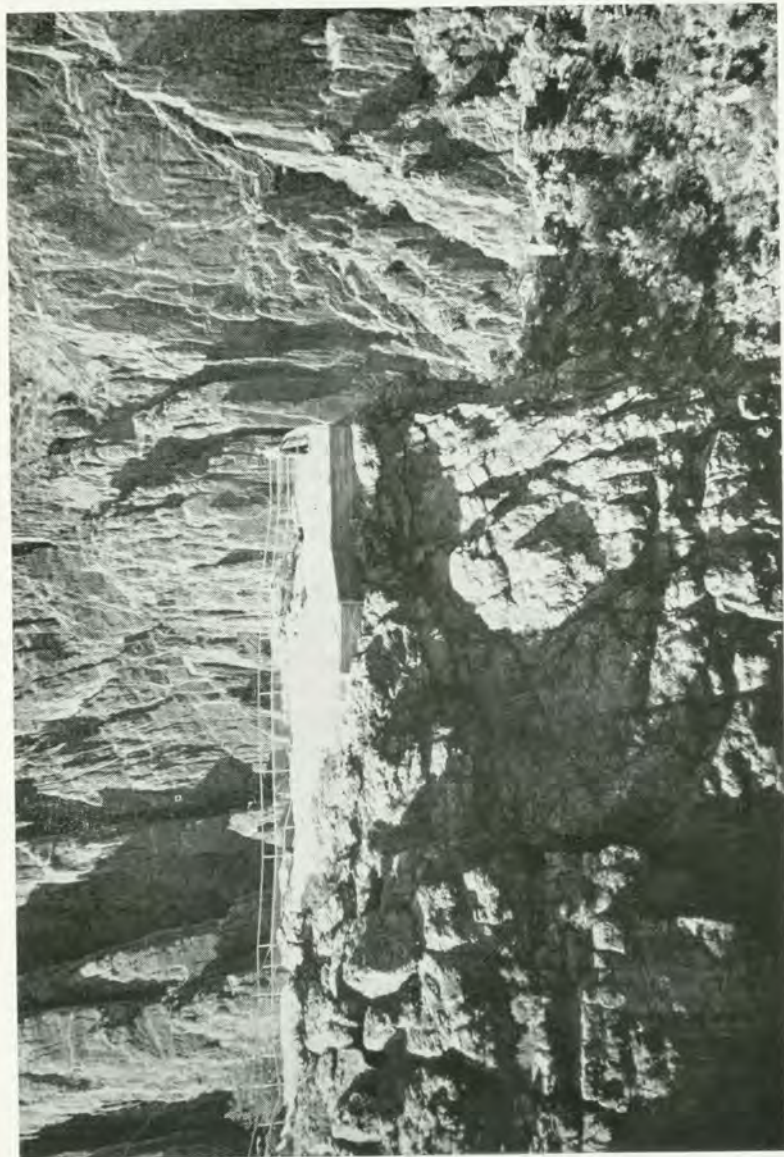
²² Letter, Wirth to Brooks, February 6, 1933.—*Ibid.*

²³ Albright memorandum: "History of the Establishment of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument," March 1, 1933. This represents a good summary of the history.—*Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Letter, Cammerer to Taylor, February 20, 1933.—*Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*



Gunnison Point in Black Canyon

Congress until it was passed.²⁷ Taylor also discussed the matter with Commissioner Rhoads and Assistant Commissioner Scattergood of the Indian Service, and they agreed not to oppose the proclamation.

Then suddenly the Secretary of the Interior changed his mind and offered to transmit the proposal for the establishment of Black Canyon National Monument, and one extending the boundaries of Colorado National Monument, to the President as soon as the proposals were drawn up.²⁸ This new development caught Taylor by surprise. He had at long last decided to give up the immediate fight, planning instead to reintroduce the matter into the next session of Congress and before a new Secretary of the Interior.

The Park Service immediately completed the two proclamations and took them to the Indian Service for approval. That agency, however, did not feel its endorsement necessary, inasmuch as the lands concerned were actually under the jurisdiction of Congress. The Land Office reacted in the same manner, declining to initial the proclamations but not opposing them. This latter agency stated to the National Park Service that "the President had the right to sign such a proclamation although by so doing he would obligate the Government to the payment of \$1.25 per acre."²⁹

The Black Canyon National Monument proclamation and letter of transmittal were then delivered by Mr. Burlew to Secretary of the Interior Wilbur, who signed the letter on February 28, and sent the two documents on to the President.³⁰

On March 2, President Hoover endorsed the following proclamation setting aside the most spectacular portion of the Black Canyon as a new Colorado national monument, "the last executive order he will issue affecting that state."³¹

Whereas it appears that the public interest would be promoted by including the lands hereinafter described within a national monument for the preservation of the spectacular gorges and additional features of scenic, scientific and educational interest;

Now, therefore, I, Herbert Hoover, President of the United States of America, by virtue of power in me vested by Sec. 2 of the act of Congress entitled "An Act For the preservation of American antiquities" approved June 8, 1906 [34 Stat. 225], do proclaim and establish the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument and that subject to all valid existing rights, the following described lands in Colorado, and same are

²⁷ Albright memorandum, *op. cit.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*; also, Letter, Lawrence Richey to Wilbur, March 2, 1933. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

³¹ *Denver Post*, March 3, 1933.

hereby included within the said national monument:
[follows a detailing of the included lands]

Warning is hereby expressly given to all unauthorized persons not to appropriate, injure, destroy, or remove any feature of this monument and not to locate or settle upon any of the land thereof.

The Director of the National Park Service, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, shall have the supervision, management, and control of this monument as provided in the act of Congress entitled "An Act To establish a National Park Service, and for other purposes", approved August 25, 1916 [39 Stat. 535], and acts additional thereto or amendatory thereof.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington this 2nd day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and thirty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and fifty-seventh.

Hoover's signature pen was sent to Representative Taylor who, in turn, presented it to the Montrose Chamber of Commerce through Mark Warner.³²

As soon as Taylor heard the good news, he hastened to telegraph Charles Adams in Montrose.³³

After three days' conferences with secretary of the interior, director of national park service, commissioner of Indian affairs, and commissioner of general land office, President Hoover today signed the proclamation creating Black Canyon National Monument and also an executive order making the addition I requested to the Colorado National Monument. Kindly advise Rev. Warner.

³²The letter of transmittal, signed by Lawrence Richey, Secretary to the President, and dated March 2, read as follows: "I have the pleasure in sending you herewith the pen used by the President today in signing the proclamation establishing the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument in Colorado." Taylor kept the original letter of transmittal and sent Warner a copy.—Letter, Warner to Beidleman, December 31, 1962.

Reverend Warner called to my attention an interesting sidelight on Taylor, who worked so tirelessly for the establishment of the Monument. As a hobby Taylor collected gavels, especially ones made of native materials from projects he had supported in the West. When he called this hobby to Warner's attention, Warner took the matter up with Leslie Savage, a banker of Crawford who, representing the communities of the North Fork Valley, had worked with Warner in promoting the Black Canyon; and they decided to present Taylor with a gavel made from materials collected within the new Monument.

On December 30, 1938, Savage sent out three men, Wes Erickson, Clarence Drexal and John Lynch, with a team and sled to search the North Rim for a wood sample suitable for the head. They spent all day in the search, finally returning late evening with two specimens of juniper and one of pinon. Meanwhile, on January 5, Reverend Warner and D. E. Walker went up to the South Rim, covering the last few miles by ski, to collect samples of mountain mahogany, serviceberry, and Gambel's oak and some pieces of granite. Wes Erickson of Paonia actually made the gavel, using a juniper head, a handle of mountain mahogany, and some polished stones and chunks of pink and gray granite ornamenting the head and end of the handle. The George J. DeVinny jewelry store of Montrose added inscribed silver bands, not made of Black Canyon material but nevertheless representative of Colorado.

When finally completed, this ornate gavel was sent to Senator Ed Johnson who presented it to Taylor on behalf of the Montrose Chamber of Commerce and the Consolidated Chamber of Commerce of the North Fork Valley at a meeting of the Colorado State Society of Washington on March 17, 1939, at the Wardman Park Hotel.

³³This telegram was cited in the *Montrose Daily Press* of March 2, 1933.

After reading the telegram, Adams immediately phoned Warner, asking him to come to the *Daily Press* office.³⁴ Warner, of course, was delighted by the news. The two men stepped out of the office into the street, where they shared the good fortune with a growing crowd of businessmen who were congregating to see what all the excitement was about. During the exchange, Reverend Warner pointed out a dome-shaped hill in the distance, rising above the canyon's south rim, and noted that it was his favorite vantage point in the newly created monument. When Warner "had finished lauding the merits of that particular bump on the canyon rim, Mr. Adams with a big grin clapped his hands together and said, 'By jolly, we'll call that hill Warner Point.'"

Within a month the Montrose Chamber of Commerce, indebted to Warner for his active role in promoting the establishment of the monument, recommended to Director Albright that if a custodian were to be appointed for the new monument it be Mark Warner.³⁵ The Park Service replied that at the moment no custodial services, either part-time or full-time, were anticipated.

Warner and his colleagues, however, were not to be forgotten by the local citizens. On Friday evening, January 26, 1934, the Montrose Chamber of Commerce held its annual meeting and banquet.³⁶ Towards the end of the evening's program, President Hauser casually called upon Attorney Paul Littler to say a few words about the creation of Black Canyon National Monument as "one of the big things of the community the past year." Littler sketched the history of the establishment, including the diligent endeavors of Lytle, Wilcox, and Warner. Then he asked these three men, much to their surprise, to come forward, and presented each with "one of those Walker Art Studio's beautifully enlarged photographs of the Black Canyon, hand colored and beautifully framed, 22 x 27 inches." On the back was a list of the 72 business firms and individuals who had cooperated in financing the purchase of the pictures.

Warner, "being the more accustomed to speech-making before the large audiences conveyed to the meeting the sincere thanks and appreciation of the three, saying that it had been a pleasure to have performed any service on behalf of the

³⁴Letter, Warner to Beidleman, December 31, 1962. The following account was related by Warner.

³⁵Letter, N. M. Fleming, Secretary, Montrose Chamber of Commerce, to Albright, April 5, 1933. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

³⁶The account of this annual meeting and banquet was published in the *Montrose Daily Press* about January 25, 1934. A copy of the article is in Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

monument that had been done.³⁷ The other two endeavored to stammer their appreciation but were well nigh speechless from the surprise."³⁸

So it was that three decades ago this spring Colorado's Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument came into being. Since then the many physical improvements, especially the new, paved south rim road, and the spreading fame of the monument have encouraged increasing numbers of tourists and local sightseers to visit this recreational area. In accordance with National Park Service policy, no bridge has ever been built to span the gorge; nor has any superhighway or maintained trail penetrated its depths. As a consequence, Black Canyon remains today as one of the great wilderness chasms of the world.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Incidentally, after the monument had been created, Warner, together with J. E. McDaniel and Russell E. Hauser, were designated by the Montrose Chamber of Commerce as the "Black Canyon Committee of the Chamber of Commerce"; and this committee "worked together directing and promoting every interest pertaining to the later development of the monument" up to 1940, when Warner left for military service. After the war he resumed his position on this committee until moving to Denver six years ago.



"The Narrows"

Walker Art Studio

Through the Canyon

By Mark T. Warner

About July 1, 1934, Robert O. Davis, topographer of the United States Geological Survey, arrived in Montrose, Colorado, to make an official survey of that portion of the Black Canyon lying within the bounds of the newly-created Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument.

In organizing a party, he invited Reverend Mark Warner and D. B. Walker, photographer of the Walker Art Studio, to accompany him on a five-day trip through the canyon. They readily accepted. Glen Fleming was chosen as a general service man, and the two Kane brothers, Henry and Charles, were employed as "top men" to help transport equipment and provisions into and out of the canyon. Two rodmen, Palmer Bowen and Robert Eykyn, completed the party.

Later, in writing of this thrilling experience, Reverend Warner said in an article published in *The Montrose Daily Press*, October 1, 1934:

The Black Canyon of the Gunnison has always held a strange fascination for those who had the privilege of peering into its awful depths and with the eye following the course of the roaring Gunnison River as it tumbles and foams and dashes its way over and among great boulders to be found all along the narrow river bed at the base of the precipitous canyon walls. But this fascination and the thrill of the Black Canyon is greatly intensified for those who are privileged to traverse the rough river bed, and view the rugged canyon walls from below. There are hundreds of pinnacles, towers and other peculiar rock formations which may be seen projecting into the sky as one follows along the bottom of the canyon but which cannot be distinguished at all from either canyon rim as they blend into the colored granite walls. One will never have seen the Black Canyon in its more majestic and thrilling aspects until he sees it from the bottom. . . .

It was necessary for Mr. Davis and party of the Geological Survey to make this trip through the Black Canyon in order to obtain the necessary data for making an accurate topographic map. Up to the time of making this official survey, very little accurate information was available concerning the canyon as regards depth, width and other pertinent facts necessary for the proper appreciation of this stupendous gorge. The survey authorized by the Denver and Rio Grande railroad and made by Byron H. Bryant and party during the winter of 1882-83 furnished much interesting information relative to the Black Canyon as did the exploring parties of Prof. A. L. Fellows and Mr. W. W. Torrence in the summer of 1901¹ who traversed the river bed of the canyon in the interest of the Gunnison tunnel that was being proposed at that time. This information, while very interesting and valuable because it represents the difficult, pioneering work along this line, will now be supplemented by a large volume of accurate data obtained by Mr. Davis in his recent survey.

. . . Soon after the arrival of Mr. Davis in Montrose, about July

¹ See: Richard G. Beidleman, "The Gunnison River Diversion Project," *The Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 3 (July, 1959), 187-201; *ibid.*, No. 4 (October, 1959), 266-285.



Walker Art Studio
Looking Down The Canyon
Toward Pulpit Rock



U.S.G.S. Party
L. to R.: Glen Fleming, Robert Eykyn, R. O. Davis,
Palmer Bowen, Rev. Mark T. Warner

1, 1934, he came to visit me telling of his mission and work he had come to do in connection with mapping the Black canyon of the Gunnison National monument. He with Mrs. Davis had come here from the Carlsbad Caverns National park, where he had been engaged in similar work. Of course I am always glad to furnish information to anyone interested in our national monument, especially if interested in the development of the park, and so after a reconnaissance trip to the monument looking over roads, triangulation points and other matters of interest, Mr. Davis began his work.

In a few days we met again to make plans for the proposed exploration and survey of the canyon. Mr. D. B. Walker, photographer of Walker Art Studio, and I had talked at various times of making a trip thru the canyon but no definite plans had been made, so when invited by Mr. Davis to accompany the Geological survey party on its expedition this seemed a very satisfactory arrangement as the larger group would in many ways prove an advantage. . . .

In making our plans for the trip we consulted all available information in an effort to ascertain just what we might be expected to encounter by way of danger and hardship, and what equipment and provisions would best serve our needs. Many fascinating stories have been told and written concerning the experiences of men, who in other years had ventured to match their courage and endurance with the treacherous waters of the Gunnison, but we were not alarmed at those stories. We knew that when their explorations were carried on, all the water of the river was flowing entirely thru the narrow Black canyon as there was no Gunnison tunnel at that time, while in our case we did not expect to contend with a great deal of water as most of the water was at the time of our trip being diverted thru the tunnel for irrigation purposes in the valley. Still it was a problem to decide just what to take to be sure that we had all that we actually needed and yet not be encumbered with unnecessary luggage. So we made our selection largely thru the process of elimination.

. . . Ordinarily I do a great deal of culinary work in camp, but on this trip I was charged with the responsibility of providing trout each day for the camp menu. However, I would have accomplished more as a cook, for as a trout fisherman I proved a total failure, catching just one trout thruout the canyon trip. The others who fished met with the same results. We had nothing by way of bait or lure in which they were interested. After the evening meal we sat around our campfire until the embers died out, then retired to our downy beds on our sand mattresses to await sleep which was never long in coming after a day of hard work climbing over granite boulders of all sizes. Really a sandbar mattress can be made most comfortable. It can be adjusted to conform perfectly to the particular size and shape of any individual. If you want a pillow of any certain proportions, all that is necessary is to heap the sand under the head of your blanket to the desired dimensions. If you awaken in the night with a cramp in any part of the body, one only needs to reach under the blanket and either pile up the sand or take it away until the affected spot on the body is comfortable. . . .

. . . I have slept out in the open beneath the stars upon many occasions and in many places, but never in a more elaborately ornamented bedroom than with the spires, pinnacles and towers of the canyon rim almost completely surrounding us and it was a rare privilege we enjoyed of lying on our sandbar bed and watching the morning sun illuminate these various points as it slowly flooded the canyon with its descending rays. And this was an experience that we enjoyed every morning—an experience that

one cannot have except in the depth of a rugged canyon like the Black Canyon. . . .

. . . We were up early Wednesday morning [the third day] and soon making preparations for a hard day. After morning camp duties were all finished one of the rodmen swam thru "the Narrows" for a level reading. We had previously decided to measure the canyon at this point so Davis and Fleming, each holding the end of a string swam to the narrow portion of the gorge, Davis taking the north way with the current. When each reached their respective sides of the canyon, they tightened their string and holding their marks swam back to shore. Upon measuring the marked string we found the canyon at "The Narrows" to be just 40 feet wide. It is the narrowest place in the entire Black Canyon and thru this narrow gorge the mighty Gunnison pours its turbulent waters. The canyon at this point is 1725 feet deep. Every member of our party decided that this portion of the Black Canyon for about one and one-half miles each way from "the Narrows" is by far the most fascinating and thrilling of any part, and from the bottom is much more magnificent and impressive than from the top.

. . . We were rather slow in getting started on Thursday, the fourth morning as we were tired and worn from the hard day before altho we traveled only 1.3 miles. Leaving on the right or north side of the river we only went 200 yards until we had to cross to the south side. This crossing was effected by means of using ropes over large boulders forming a natural bridge. The water runs under and among the large rocks at this point practically disappearing from view. Some very interesting potholes were discovered in some of the rocks of this natural bridge and these, together with the natural bridge can be seen from the Bridge site on both canyon rims looking down the river. This crossing was rather dangerous and difficult as in one instance there was a sheer drop of some ten feet to a small round boulder below with a deep and swiftly moving current of water running by. A few yards below we had to cross the river to the north side, this crossing being accomplished with the aid of our ropes. This was our last difficult crossing as the river widens at this point, and the boulders are not so large, or at least the large ones are not nearly so numerous. Near the last rock crossing we came upon a small waterfall of several feet drop and under a large rock was a cave-like hole filled with mist from the falls and stepping into this was like stepping into a real refrigerator. Beginning at the East Portal of the tunnel, for the first two miles the river drops 40 feet per mile. In the third mile the drop is 75 feet; fourth, 55; fifth, 110; sixth, 200; seventh, 260; eighth, 140; with a 70 foot drop in 700 feet; ninth, 50; tenth, 40; eleventh, 40; twelfth, 50.

The following depths are given covering some of the better known points of interest. Depth of canyon at East Portal, 1880 feet. East Portal triangulation station, 1,850 feet. About 1.7 miles below this station the depth is 1920 feet. Rock point as seen upstream from Pulpit rock, 1820. Pulpit rock 1770 feet. The Narrows, 1725 on south rim and 1718 on north rim. At the Bridge site the canyon is 1830 feet deep from the south rim. At High point about one mile below the Bridge site the canyon is 2300 feet in depth, and at the hill on the rim overlooking Main street, Montrose, the canyon is 2730 feet deep. As a result of the splendid and careful work of Mr. Davis along with that of other parties and members of the U. S. Geological survey, we are now in a position to give authentic information regarding depth, width and other interesting features of the Black Canyon within the boundaries of the national monument.

Memorial to "Father" John L. Dyer

*By John H. Zilch**

Since coming to Colorado from Southeastern Minnesota nearly three years ago, I have been much interested by the numerous articles that have appeared in various state newspapers and magazines describing the early exploits of one Father John L. Dyer, early Methodist circuit rider and missionary, in the mining areas of this state.

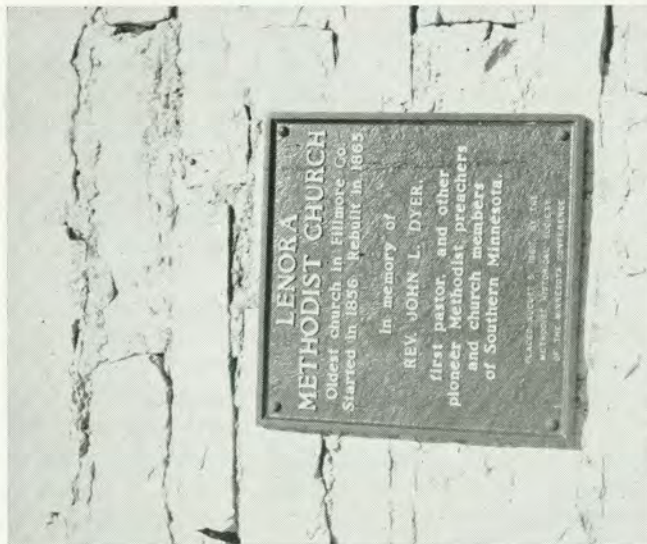
My interest stems from the fact that about three miles from my farm home which was situated about forty-five miles south and east of Rochester, Minnesota, lies a little and almost forgotten town known as Lenora. This town contains only a couple of farmsteads, a few houses, all occupied, an old store building, now closed, a town hall, used occasionally, a school house, now closed, and an old stone church.

It is the church building and the town and its recorded history that have caused my interest in the history of Father Dyer since I came to Colorado. The historical records of the facts pertaining to the early settlement of Lenora should be of considerable interest to Colorado historians. The projector of the town site, Lenora, was Rev. John L. Dyer, who in 1856, set aside the southwest forty acres of a quarter section of land that he owned, in Section 2, Tp. 101, Range 9, Fillmore County, Minnesota, and proposed to sell lots with the proceeds going to the building of a Methodist church at the townsite. The building was to be of stone and in the basement there was to be a school or academy which was to be denominational in its teachings.

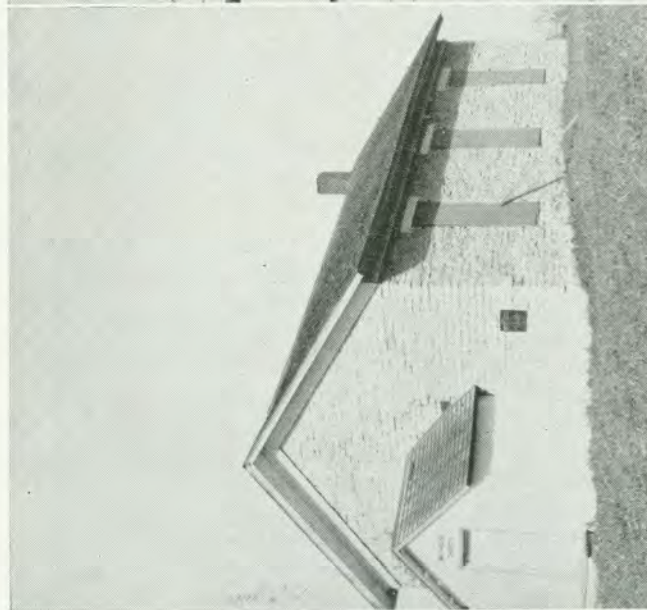
In the winter of 1856 and 1857 stone was hauled for the building and work commenced. The walls were nearly up when the panic of 1857 struck the enterprise and construction was halted.

Later, the present and smaller church was built inside the walls of the half completed edifice. This building was used regularly for religious services until about 1910. During a period of about fifteen years the building was allowed to stand idle and to fall into a bad state of repair. In the early 1920's a group of interested people who knew the early history of the edifice, took it upon themselves to place the building in an excellent state of repair. From that time on church services, of a more or less nondenominational character, were held here

*Mr. John H. Zilch of Harmony, Minnesota, visited the State Historian's office recently and presented this exceedingly interesting account of the little church founded by Rev. John L. Dyer.—*Editor*.



Memorial Plaque to Father Dyer



Lenora Methodist Church

once a year. Then during the Minnesota Centennial year of 1958 the religious part of the Fillmore County centennial events was held at the Old Stone Church at Lenora, with Dr. C. M. Granskou, President of St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, giving the sermon.

It was not until August 5, 1962, that formal recognition was given to the memory of Reverend Dyer, his early works and the landmark he started. On that day, in a fitting ceremony, the Minnesota Conference, of the Methodist church, affixed a plaque to the old stone building which read:

LENORA METHODIST CHURCH
 OLDEST CHURCH IN FILLMORE COUNTY
 Started 1856 — Completed in 1865
 In Memory of
 Rev. John L. Dyer
 First Pastor and other Pioneer
 Church Members of Southern Minnesota

Fillmore County, Minnesota, history records the following: "Rev. John Dyer, rough, uncouth, eccentric, was one of the noblest soldiers of the cross who ever set foot in Fillmore County. He labored in the vicinity for six years. Undaunted by hardships, this valiant Christian, wearing a dilapidated plug hat, presenting with gaunt, strong, rugged physique, a strange picture on his raw-boned horse, rode his circuits enduring untold hardships and deprivations, serving his people wherever he found them. When he came to Minnesota he had \$1,600.00, but in going security for the notes in the upbuilding of the church and of the Lenora village, he lost it all."

On May 9, 1861, he left Lenora for the West. His money and his health were gone and his sight was practically destroyed. His alleged creditors had taken his all, even his personal effects, leaving him a horse with a saddle and bridle and a carpet bag which contained a Bible, a hymn book, a copy of his church discipline, a copy of Loraine's *Sea Sermons*, a change of linen and \$14.75 in gold.

Certainly no prophet seeing this quaint figure disappearing westward could have foretold that his devotions to the miners of Colorado could cause his name to be enshrined in marble along with the names of other pioneer notables in the state capitol at Denver.



Fidelia James Pitkin, c. 1862.

Lainson

Taken from a miniature.

Courtesy of Amy Pitkin Stearns (Mrs. Robert L. Stearns), granddaughter of Governor and Mrs. F. W. Pitkin

First Ladies of Colorado— Fidelia James Pitkin

(Governor Frederick Walker Pitkin, 1879-1883)

By Helen Cannon*

This article on Fidelia James Pitkin, grandmother of Mrs. Robert L. Stearns, is the seventh in a series of articles on First Ladies of Colorado, being written by Miss Helen Cannon, Associate Professor of Home Economics, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado.

In its April, 1963, issue, *The Colorado Alumnus* featured Miss Cannon and this series. It said: "She became interested in the project in the spring of 1960. It began as a study of the costumes of the first ladies of Colorado. Her plan was to pattern a booklet after the one published by the Smithsonian Institution entitled, *Dresses of the First Ladies of the White House*. This book contains a colored plate of a dress, the description of it, a portrait of the first lady and a brief biographical sketch. It soon became apparent that the task would be difficult to find a complete and usable dress of each lady."

Miss Cannon changed her plan and decided to write the biographies of the first ladies of Colorado in as complete form as possible. She has carried on voluminous correspondence with relatives, libraries, historical societies, and elsewhere. She has studied church and cemetery records, checked court house records, and has taken many trips to obtain accurate information. With thirty more ladies, including Mrs. John Love, to be investigated, Miss Cannon says, "It looks like the project will be a lifetime one."—*Editor*.

Fidelia Maria James, the wife of Colorado's second state governor, Frederick Walker Pitkin, was born on November 20, 1839, in New York City. She and her older brother, Robert Henry, were the only survivors of the five children of John and Margaret Creagh James. Her father, John James, was born in Curkish, County Cavan, Ireland, and came to America at the age of twenty-three with his older brother, William James. They arrived in New York City on September 18, 1816, after a fifty-two day voyage from the old country, and soon established the firm of William & John James, Merchants, at 18 South Street, under the patronage of their uncle, William James, of Albany, New York, who had likewise emigrated from Curkish, County Cavan, Ireland, in 1793.¹ Sometime before 1827, probably in New York City, John James married Margaret Creagh who was also born in Ireland in 1806.

About 1845, the John James branch of the family moved to Lockport, New York, then a thriving village located on the recently opened Erie Canal, a project in which "Patroon" Uncle William James was actively interested. Here Fidelia lived throughout her girlhood at 157 High Street in a stately red brick

*Copyright by Helen Cannon, 1963.

¹This William James (1771-1832) was the grandfather of the American psychologist and philosopher, William James (1842-1910), and his brother, Henry James (1843-1916), the novelist.

house surrounded by a large yard. She had a good education for those days which probably ended in a finishing school equivalent to our present-day high school. This education also included instruction in the doctrine of Calvinism as practiced by the Presbyterian faith. So well were these tenets taught that they became an integral part of her philosophy which she never abandoned, though later in life she accepted Methodism. Among her cherished memories of this girlhood spent in Lockport was that of the love and friendship of her Irish nurse, Ellen Murphy, who seems to have been endowed with wit, imagination, charm, and great loyalty.

Neither family records nor recollections reveal when Fidelia James met the Connecticut-born Frederick Walker Pitkin, the son of Eli and Hannah Torrey Pitkin of Manchester, Connecticut, and a descendant of the colonial governor of Connecticut (1766-1769), William Pitkin. It is known that Fidelia was well acquainted with her noted second cousins and contemporaries, William James, the philosopher and psychologist, and Henry James, the novelist, of Albany, New York, for in later life she always referred to them as the "James Boys." So, it might be safe to wager that she met Frederick Pitkin through her Albany relatives while he was studying law at the Albany Law School during the academic year of 1858-1859, after having graduated from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, in 1858. They were married in Lockport, New York, on June 17, 1862, by Reverend William C. Wisner of the First Presbyterian Church.² At the time of their marriage Frederick was living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was a law partner in the firm of Palmer, Hooker, and Pitkin. Their four children were born in Milwaukee, only two of whom survived: Robert James (born May 30, 1864) and Florence Terry (born October 19, 1872).

Destiny in the fall of 1872 took what appeared to be a cruel turn for the young Pitkin family. Because of his health, following a serious illness with tuberculosis, Frederick was forced to withdraw from his law firm. Life during the next six years was a series of hotels, boarding-houses and even camps, as they moved from place to place seeking to improve his health. They spent the winter of 1873 in Georgia. Then Frederick, leaving his family behind, spent the following spring and summer in Lucerne, Switzerland. Deriving no benefit from this change, and on recommendation of his Swiss doctor, he decided to return to the States and try the climate of the Colorado mountains. However on arrival in the States, too ill to make the long

² *Niagara Intelligencer*, Lockport, New York, June 25, 1862.

tedious trip across the plains and risk the rugged mountain life, he spent the winter of 1873-1874 in Florida with his family. Finally in the summer of 1874, the Pitkins reached Colorado, settling first at Pueblo, a potential industrial town of about 3,000 inhabitants located on the newly-completed line of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. Even while living in Pueblo, they spent the summer months in the high San Juan mountains at Ouray, Colorado, a mining settlement opened in July, 1875;



Library, S.H.S.C.
Governor Frederick Walker Pitkin

and finally in the summer of 1877, they moved to Ouray, built a log house, and Frederick entered the cattle and mining businesses as well as pursuing his legal profession.

By the summer of 1878, Frederick had sufficiently recovered his health and made such a favorable impression on the citizens of southwest Colorado that he was nominated for governor on the Republican ticket. The campaign of that year was fought on the slogan, "Pilgrim versus Pioneer."³ Frederick Walker

³ *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver, Colorado, August 9, 1878, p. 2, c. 2.

Pitkin, the Pilgrim, defeated the powerfully entrenched Democratic "Fifty-Niner," William A. H. Loveland. He served two terms as governor from 1879-1883. During his first term, the two-year-old state was confronted with an unusual number of perplexing problems, including: the railroad war in the summer of 1879 between the Denver & Rio Grande and the Santa Fe for the right-of-way through the Royal Gorge; the uprising in September of that same year of the Ute Indians at the White River Agency, historically called "the Meeker Massacre"; and the Leadville strike in the spring of 1880 of the silver miners in which martial law was declared. These problems adroitly handled, he sought and won the governorship for another term on the slogan, "The Utes Must Go."⁴ This campaign promise was fulfilled by the removal of the Utes to the Uintah reservation in eastern Utah in the summer of 1881, opening a large tract of land on the western slope for settlement.

In spite of what the medical profession called an almost miraculous recovery from his illness, Governor Pitkin was not a strong man physically, and the family continued throughout his four years in office the practice of camping-out in the higher mountains during the summer months. Both official and personal entertainment was curtailed and simple, and since they occupied temporary residences, much of it was done in the local hotels. Mrs. Pitkin likewise participated in a limited number of clubs and organizations, including the Denver Orphans' Home Association.⁵ She was an excellent pianist and often performed in public. Both they and the children were active members of the Lawrence Street Methodist Church which later became Trinity Methodist Church. Governor and Mrs. Pitkin were received into the church by letter on November 29, 1874, and she remained a member until 1920 except for a brief period while living in Pueblo. At the expiration of the Governor's second term of office, the family went back to Pueblo to live. Here, three years later, on December 18, 1886, the Governor died at the age of forty-nine.

Mrs. Pitkin returned to Denver to live at the time of the marriage of their daughter, Florence, on April 16, 1891, to Earl Montgomery Cranston (1863-1933), an attorney in the law firm of Cranston, Pitkin, and Moore, and a son of the eminent Methodist bishop, Earl Cranston (1840-1932). She lived in their home at 901 Emerson Street⁶ from that date until she moved with them to Escondido, California, in the summer of 1920.

⁴ *History of the City of Denver and Colorado*, O. L. Baskin & Co., Chicago, 1881, pp. 540-542.

⁵ The name was changed to The Denver Children's Home Association in 1962.

⁶ The remodeled house still stands at 901 Emerson Street, Denver, Colo.



Fidelity James Pitkin and son, Robert James Pitkin, age 10
Courtesy of Amy Pitkin Stearns (Mrs. Robert L. Stearns)

From a now sixty-eight-year-old son of that marriage in whose parental home Fidelity Pitkin lived for thirty-eight years comes this description of his grandmother's personal characteristics and her life after her First Ladyship:

She was small in frame, petite I think one might say, proper and precise, with a strong sense of responsibility and duty, fitting her family station and re-enforced by her dignity as one-time First Lady of the State. Devoted to the old order, and as a senior member of the family, she assumed without hesitation the matriarchal role, encouraging her descendants to be faithful to their respective positions. This involved living in the home of her daughter and joining in guiding its destiny, in accord with the custom of the time. She would be sure that her grandsons were properly and adequately dressed, even to the wearing of overcoats

and rubbers when none of their playmates were doing such, and supervising with expert care the early morning piano practicing year in and year out of our sister, Florence. Being a perfectionist, and having the reputation of having been the best amateur piano player in Milwaukee, Grandma set similar standards for Florence. But she asked no more of others than she did of herself, and at one time when my father, during a quiet argument, asked her whether she had not ever made a mistake, she replied that it was possible, but she could not recall when.

Grandma often would sit down at the piano in odd moments and play with dash and spirit pieces memorized or by notes, especially by nineteenth century composers like Schubert, Chopin, Liszt, and Brahms, making the house ring pleasantly with the music. At times she and Mother would go off for an afternoon of formal calling, usually in a hired Victoria, upon old friends, often wives or widows of the gubernatorial period and/or their daughters, or receive the same in our house in the front parlor, otherwise closed except for the piano playing, with its heavy furniture and gold embossed wall paper. Or the same ladies would come for a formal luncheon.

She dressed always in black, as a widow, and on warm days carried a small black sun-shade, the top of which could be shifted from a horizontal to a vertical position. With this she would walk to and from the Eleventh Avenue street-car for downtown shopping trips, on which sometimes her grandchildren (usually only one) would be privileged to go along, and would return with a box of chocolate eclairs or other delicacies from Baur's or Sells' for which the rest of the family waited in eager anticipation. She would secure her dresses, with two or three or more fittings, from Madame Jackson in the Temple Court Building, upstairs, with check-up appearances when she would emerge into an outer room covered with paper patterns and pins.

She had her own chair in the living room beside a table-lamp, oil-burning long after that style had gone out, until finally the rest of us persuaded her to substitute an electric standing table-lamp. She was quick-witted, with a small but at times sly sense of Irish humor, and never appeared to us to be forbidding because of her deep interest and concern that we all do the right thing, and appear to be doing it, and her real and constantly manifested affection for us all, often leading her to defend and comfort a grandchild who was receiving well-deserved parental admonition. In her later years when other powers were beginning to fade, her love seemed to compensate by increasing, until she moved into the state of quiet confusion at the end. She was a strong personality, loyal, consistent, and devoted, a perfect representative of her era and station.⁷

Death put an end to "the state of quiet confusion" for Fidelia James Pitkin on May 29, 1929, at the age of eighty-nine, in the home of her daughter, Florence Pitkin Cranston (Mrs. Earl Montgomery Cranston), in Escondido, California. She is buried in Fairmount Cemetery, Denver, Colorado, with Governor Pitkin and their son, Robert James Pitkin, who died at the age of ninety-three on June 18, 1957. Florence Pitkin Cranston, like her mother, died at the age of eighty-nine on January 28, 1962, and is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery, Escondido, California.

⁷ Written by Dr. Earl Cranston of Claremont, California, a grandson of Fidelia James Pitkin, on January 22, 1965.

Colorado Letters of Marion Cook

By Daphne Weston

Daphne Weston (Mrs. Perry D. Weston), niece of Marion Cook, has preserved through the years a number of letters written by her uncle, which describe life in Colorado and New Mexico in the 1880's. She has made these letters available to *The Colorado Magazine* and has written the following biographical sketch of Marion Cook. Mrs. Weston, a widow, is Director of Nursing at the Mary Laning Hospital, Hastings, Nebraska. She makes her home with her two bachelor brothers on the land near Shelton, Nebraska, which she says, "my grandmother bought with her \$400 inheritance when she came to Nebraska in 1880. She paid \$21 per acre for the land . . . today it is part of one of the best irrigated farms in the Platte Valley."—*Editor.*

Marion, the youngest son of Chauncey and Lucy Allen Cook, was born at West Oneonta, New York, August 24, 1864. His father, who was a drover and farmer, died in 1875, when Marion was eleven years old. Most of his life the father had been well to do and was known as a man of business acumen and good judgment, but due to failing health for a number of years he died bankrupt.

The mother and aunt of the boys wove carpets in their home for a living and the boys earned what they could "working out" for neighboring farmers. In 1880, with four hundred dollars which Lucy Cook inherited from the estate of her father in Erie County, Pennsylvania, she came to Nebraska with her three sons, Chauncey, Allen, and Marion. She purchased eighty acres at Shelton, where the family made their home.

Marion farmed and taught school in Nebraska for three years and in 1883, when he was nineteen years old, as he had acquired a persistent cough, he went to Georgetown, Colorado, in an attempt to improve his health. His uncle, Sam Allen lived in Georgetown.

For the next thirty-two years Marion remained in the Georgetown, Silver Plume, Empire, Idaho Springs, Ouray, and Leadville areas, in addition to being for a time in New Mexico, where he made his living working in the mines. He developed silicosis (miner's consumption which causes chronic inflammation of the lungs due to the inhalation of mineral dusts) and because of impaired respiratory function due to the condition was no longer able to do work of any kind. At that time, as he had never married, he returned to Shelton, Nebraska, and made his home with his brother, Chauncey and family for three years until his death on October 21, 1915, at the age of fifty-one years.

For twenty years in Colorado, Marion was a member of the Fraternal Order of Red Men, in which he took great interest and an active part, serving in the highest offices of the order

and as a delegate attending national meetings. He enjoyed a wide acquaintance, possessed a remarkable memory, was a lover of books, and kept well informed in regard to events of public importance.

Marion Cook is buried beside his mother in the Cook plot in the cemetery at Shelton, Nebraska. By his grave grows a cedar tree transplanted from his birthplace, West Oneonta, New York. Meadow larks call from the branches and the wind sighs softly through the boughs, reminiscent of the sound of the wind above and below timberline in the Rocky Mountains, which Marion loved and where he spent the productive years of his life.

Georgetown May 10th 1883

Dear Mother: I arrived here all safe and sound at noon yesterday. They did not expect [me] till today so there was no one at the depot but I found him [Uncle Sam Allen] all right. Aunt Helen is about as full of fun as one person can be. I believe they are the happiest couple I ever saw. We got into North Platte 20 minutes before eight and stopped 20 minutes for breakfast. I improved the time in looking over the town. It is larger than I thought it was. There is no land west of Kearney fit to farm. It is all buffalo wallows. They were all full of water and ducks. Buffalo Bill's ponies were on the track and the train slowed up just as it got opposite his house so I had a good view. He has a very nice white house and good buildings. He was sitting out near the track on top of a board fence made by putting the boards up and down.

We passed Joe and Clarence about ten o'clock. They did not see me as they were about 40 rods from the track. I wish you could see the cattle, sheep, and ponies that I did. It is just one continual string of cattle from North Platte to Denver. There were hundreds of dead cattle strung all along the road. The country that we went through was what would be called level till we got this side of Denver. I saw Longs and Pikes peaks before we got to Denver.

We got into Denver 25 minutes past six Denver time which is 35 minutes slower than our time and as the Georgetown train does not leave till 8 o'clock in the morning I had to stay all night. And as I did not know anything about the town I had to get a carriage to go up town in.

I presume there were 25 carriages at the depot and all yelling the best they could. Everyone asked me where I wanted to go. I finally told one fellow I wanted to go to the Saint James hotel. He said his was a St. James carriage, so I got in. It was about ½ mile there. When I got out he said, "This will

be 50 cts, if you please," so I paid him. He wanted to call for me in the morning but as I had kept my eyes open I thought I [could] find the way.

The reason I put up at the St. James was I had seen a Denver paper with all the hotels advertised and this one had more guests than any of the rest. They set 15 tables and everything is carried on in the best style. A guest is not allowed to do anything. There are waiters in every part of the house. I went in to supper. A waiter stepped up and pulled back the chair. I stepped to my place and he shoved the chair under me and when I got through he pulled the chair back. It was a little the best supper I ever ate. I would like to send you a bill of fare. I did not look at it much for supper but for breakfast there was 17 kinds of bread, 4 of potatoes, 4 of eggs, 8 of drinks, and 37 kinds of meat. I had 3 kinds of bread, one of eggs, 5 of meats and chocolate. My room was furnished with a very large bed, two marble top bureaus with keys for the drawers, wash bowl and pitcher, towels, two common chairs and a rocking chair, two Gas lamps, a very fine mirror and a telephone. The waiter lit and turned off the gas 10 times to show me how and then had me do it about as many more times. The washing room has two faucets to every bowl, one turned on cold water the other hot. There is a bath room and barber shop free of charge. I had my boots blacked and it cost nothing. The boot blacks are paid by the proprietor. My room was in the fourth story, we went up in the elevator. My bill was \$2.50. Denver has over 70,000 inhabitants. I spent an hour at night and an hour in the morning looking over the town. They have finer buildings there than I ever saw before. The Windsor hotel, run by Senator Tabor, is the largest building I ever saw. I am willing to believe the story Uncle Sam told about the man trying to walk from Denver to the mountains before breakfast for it looks as though a man could walk there in 20 minutes easy, but it took the train 1½ hours to get there.

Denver was all under snow when I got there. Coming from there up we followed a creek. Trains are not allowed over 12 miles an hour in the mountains. There is no soil on the hills—just bare rocks. Those rocks down by Uncle Dennis' would look like gravel stone by the side of these. Uncle Sam and I went up about 400 feet yesterday to look at a mine. The foot of the hills is about 15 rods from the house. A man could no more climb straight up the side of the mountain than you could the side of a house. There are several peaks in sight. Above timber line the snow was quite deep yesterday, but it is all gone now but there is plenty of it in sight. The sun



2011. SILVER PLUME AND MINES, COLORADO

Silver Plume and Mines, Colorado

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rose this morning 15 minutes before eight and it sets a little after 4. I don't notice much difference in the air between here and Gibbon. I saw ten jacks packed ready to go up the mountain this morning.

The train stopped 20 minutes at Sterling, Colo., where I saw Albert Slattery. He showed me all over town and offered to buy me some dinner. Uncle Sam has spoke for a job for me running an express wagon in Georgetown, he thinks I will get the job. He just called me out to see a jack train of lumber one end dragging on the ground. Write soon

Marion Cook

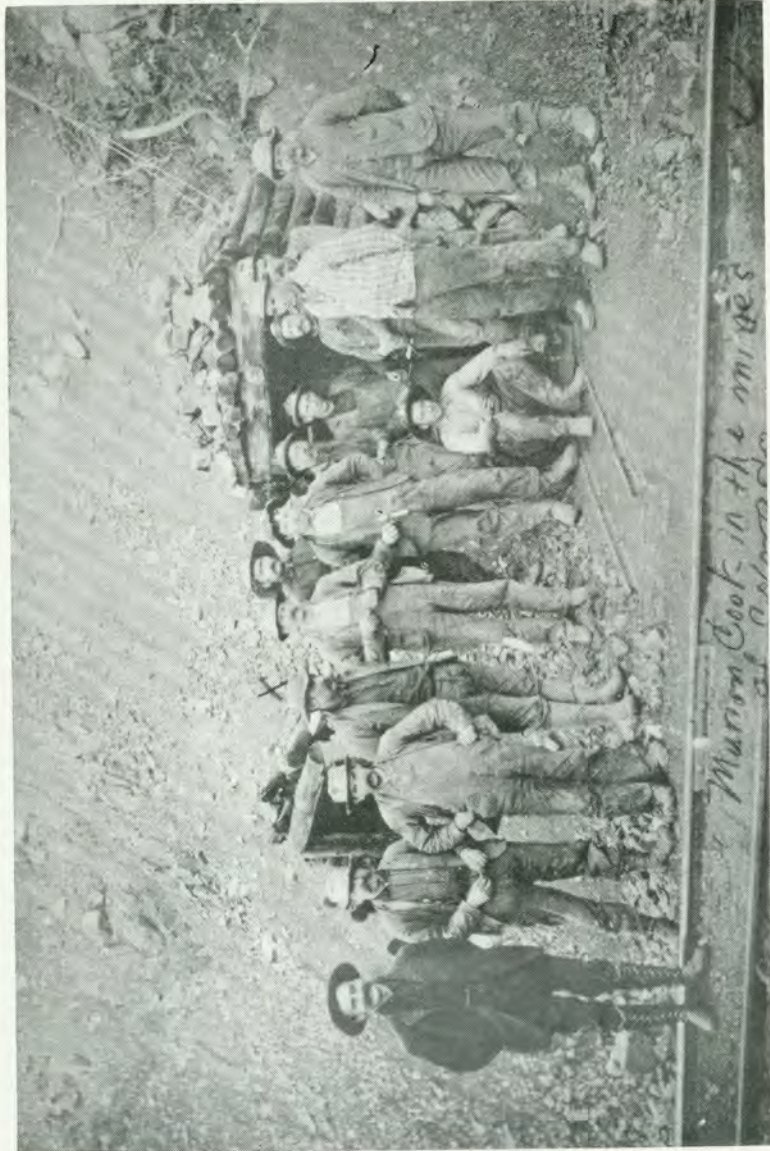
* * * *

Empire City, Col. July 11, 1884

Dear Mother

I received your letter last Monday but have had no time to answer it before. I am working at hydraulic mining at present. I work nights, go on at six P M and come off at six A M. Edgar has a job in a mine here. He boards within forty rods of where I do though I do not see him very often as he works days. He likes the country first rate but I don't think he will like the winters. Unless I have a job inside I shall not stay here another winter. I have not been very sick though I did not feel very well for some time after I quit work on Argentine. If I had the money should have come down in your country but I could not get it so staid here and paid out over \$60.00 board bill or will when I get paid. I am out \$78.00 on my winter's work but have placed my account in a lawyer's hands and think I will get it in a short time. The man I worked for has been trying to pick a fuss out of me ever since I quit so he could have some excuse not to pay me. He got it into his head I was afraid of him. One night last week about a dozen of us boys were standing on the street corner in Georgetown when he came along and took his coat and vest off and began to abuse me and the first thing he knew I was right on to him he tried to clinch me but he found the old man at home there, and I whipped him so quick that he thought he was always whipped. The police come around and collared him but the boys that I was with crowded around me so they could not tell who it was, but as he had his coat off and a white shirt on he showed up plain. I notice he wears his right eye poulticed since, but he does not make any more of his threats around me.

Those two persons that I wrote were coming down there,



In The Colorado Mines
Marion Cook fourth from left

Marion Cook in the mines

names are Hurkee and Parsons, they are in Kansas now. They made quite a little money here the past year and are going to put it into land and they said they were going to Kearney and look around and thought they would go down and see you. I am well acquainted with them and they are very fine boys. Well it is nearly time to go to work and I shall have to stop. Write soon

Marion Cook

Sunday morning 6:30 have got my night work done and just been to breakfast. Edgar is going to Georgetown this morning and I will send this by him. I shall change my boarding place today and will now board where Edgar does so that he will not have to buy blankets.

* * * *

Georgetown, Colo

Sept 11th, 1884

Dear Brother

I received your letter last night. I have been out on the hill pounding a drill for the past few days but quit last night. I have an offer of \$13.00 a week and board which I am going to accept. I am to commence in two weeks. It is up on the Argentine. The reason I was so long in answering your other letter was because I was sick. I was sick abed just a week. I went to Golden to get into lower altitude. I had a touch of mountain fever. I fell off 23 pounds in the week I was in bed, but I am all right again now. I expect Edgar over Saturday night and we will go up to the pass Sunday. I have not been over to Empire for some time but expect to go over this afternoon. Uncle Sam is still working.

If Homer is coming out here I wish he would come now as I will have time to show him around for a short time but if I once get to work I shall not stop as I have not been out of debt since the middle March. My board and doctor bills amount to a nice little sum, but I will soon wipe them out if I get steady work. I am very sorry it is so I can not visit with Aunt Harriet. Tell her she had better stay there this winter anyway and I will be down if it is possible, but I do not think I can get down there before February or March anyway, and perhaps not then. The weather is very fine here now. The evenings are just cool enough to make a fire a necessity and a person can sleep all he wishes, too. There has been one light snow storm this month. There is a very lively vigilance committee two miles from Georgetown. The superintendent of the Baltimore mine

was warned to take back an order he had given or he would be hung. Another man was given 24 hours to get his business settled and get out of the country. They both done as they were told to do. The Colorado State Convention is in session now. [H. A. W.] Tabor is dropping lots of money trying to get the nomination for Governor. A number of the boys are going to New Orleans this winter. It is only \$30.00 for the round trip from Denver. Six of the boys are going over to Middle Park on a hunt. They start next Monday and are to be gone four weeks.

Give my best regards to Aunt Harriet, and write soon.

Sincerely yours,
Marion Cook

Do you know what Uncle Erastus address is? M C

* * * *

Georgetown, Colo
Oct 29, 1884

Dear Mother

I got back to Georgetown at dark tonight found Chauncey's letter waiting for me. It took me a little longer to finish my job than I expected. I commenced work the middle of September driving jacks for the same man I drove for last summer. The 6th of Oct I commenced to drive on contract. I took ten jacks over the range and delivered thirty cords of wood and 600 bushels of char coal to a mine owned by Warner of Patent Medicine fame. I cleared \$15.00 per week and finished yesterday. I commence tomorrow again at \$40.00 per month. The cabin I stopped in was a little above timber line. There were only two families in ten miles one was just across the gulch from me. Monday morning as I was hunting jacks the man came out and told me his baby 18 months old had died in the night. I went in and staid a short time then went up to the mine to tell the boys. Several of them went down and one built a coffin. Arrangements were made, and the next day a wagon came. The child was put in. The whole family got in and drove five miles to bury. All of the boys at the mine were at the house when they left. It looked to me to be a little the most lonely funeral that I ever attended. There were no services of any description either at the house or burying ground.

I have not seen Uncle Sam's folks since I last wrote, but a man told me tonight that he was moving over here to stay this winter. I saw Edgar just before I went over the range

he had the blues pretty bad. They don't allow him to stop at all. He had not a day's rest since the middle of July. He wants me to go down into Kansas with him this winter and I want him to go to Mexico. I don't know which way we will go yet and perhaps we won't go anywhere.

I received a letter from Mary Potter tonight she is in Buffalo being treated by Dr. Pierce she said she would be very glad to hear from you her address is 179 Dearborn St. She thinks Jim's wife is one of the finest women she ever met and the best cook.

The Secretary of the Interior [Henry M. Teller] speaks in Georgetown tomorrow night. I shall go to hear him. There is also going to be a grand torch light procession. Politics are running very high here. Well I will close now as it is getting late and I have got to go over the range tomorrow with a load both ways and get back in time for the speech.

Hoping to hear from you soon I remain Yours as ever
Marion Cook

* * * *

Georgetown, Colo
Jan 2d 1885

Dear Brother

Received your letter Wednesday and as it just one year ago tonight since you carried me to Gibbon I thought I would write. I intended then to have come down again this winter, but find it impossible I did not go to work on my lease on account of the fall in price of silver and the raise in mill charges. All mines that carry low grade ore have been compelled to shut down. I am working up on East Argentine again for two dollars a day and board. I had just money enough earned at noon today to pay my debts. It is the first time since last April that I have been out of debt for board. I have not been to town for nearly a month and do not expect to go down for several weeks to come. I only have to work nine hours and Saturdays, eight. The mine is named the Independence. It is in 736 feet and not out of frost yet. Every seam in the rock is full of ice. The last time I saw Edgar he was pretty homesick. He said he would quit work and go home about the middle of this month. Said he should go through Kansas if he does. I will probably not see him again.

Uncle Sam's boy will be two months old next Wednesday. He seems to want to name it after Leander Allen. The last time I was in town I heard a Catholic Priest from St. Louis lecture about Rome. He was the finest talker I have heard in some time. After we got back to the boarding house the



Library, S.H.S.C.
Marion Cook
about 1890

Catholic boys and the Protestants had a very warm argument on doctrinal points which lasted until two o'clock in the morning and as both parties were well posted it made it very interesting.

Sincerely yours
Marion Cook

How is mother's health this winter. You are liable not to get this for some time as I have no way to send or receive mail only as Dick come up with the jacks and I don't expect him up until next week.

* * * *

Georgetown Colo
Feb 22d 1885

Dear Brother

Your letter was received yesterday noon and as the boss is going to town some time this week will write today so

as to send it to town by him. The past few days [it] has been very warm here. It has been perfectly comfortable sitting outdoors in short sleeves, but is a trifle colder today. I am feeling the best at present I have for three years. I don't expect I can get away to Neb. this winter. Every place that has level ground enough to hold a skating rink here has got one. Georgetown has a very large one. I have not been to town since I wrote before but will probably go down some time next month.

The ore we are taking out runs in Gold, Silver, and lead. The last mill run went first class 516 ounces silver per ton and 50 per cent lead, second class 152 ounces silver and four ounces Gold per ton Silver is worth about \$1.07 per ounce gold \$20.00 an ounce and lead \$3.65 per cwt. The Legislature of this state had a great time electing a United State's Senator there was a great deal of money used but finally Teller got there he resigned his seat in the senate to become Sec. of the Interior and now he is going straight back to the senate.

The man I am working for is a graduate of Eastman's Commercial college, the same place Ruthven (?) Hunt went too, and also a graduate of some college in Maine. He spends his evenings mostly reading Latin and Greek.

The other boys are working today and I have got to stop writing now and get dinner Write soon

Sincerely yours Marion Cook

2.30 P. M. it has been snowing a little nearly all day but it melts as fast as it falls this has been much the mildest winter I ever saw. I see by the paper that Uncle Sam has a law suit on his hands. Someone has jumped one of his claims at Empire. I don't know whether I will stay where I am more than this week or not but I can stand quite a siege of idleness now without any danger of running into debt.

* * * *

Georgetown Colo
March 26th 1885

Dear Brother

Your letter was received today at noon and as the boss is going to town Saturday I will answer it now so as to send it by him. I went to town two weeks ago last Friday and staid one week then came up and staid until the following Tuesday, then went down and staid until last Saturday.

The trouble was rheumatism in my left arm from the tips of my fingers to my shoulder was swelled full. I have worked every day this week though it nearly kills me every morning and keeps me awake about half the night. I could not work at all only for tight bandages from my wrist to elbow but it is root hog or die with me at present.

I went over to Empire and saw Edgar one week ago last night he has not missed a day since Christmas not even a Sunday. He has over \$300.00 laid up. He says Edwin is coming out in the spring. I was at Uncle Sam's a short time last Friday afternoon. They were well. He has quit work at Empire for the winter says he is not going over again until May. He wants me to stay at his place when I am in town but he will not take anything for it, so I won't stay there for he is fully as hard run as I am and more so now I guess.

The boy preacher of the rockies and a singer named Miller have been holding revivals in Georgetown. I was down a few times the preaching was of no account at all, but the singing was the best I ever heard. They had a great time trying to convert the best lawyer in Georgetown. They got him into the church one night when he was so drunk he could not stand alone and as soon as the preaching was over and a chance given to talk he got up and said, "Brethern that was a pretty d---n good sermon and I feel better already for it." One night some boys got a jack and tied him to the door knob and then



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Jack train like Marion Cook bought in 1885 at Silver Plume, Colorado

threw stones against the church but those inside finally got the door open far enough to cut the rope but the next night the boys done the same trick only they fastened the jack with wire and the congregation had to stay inside untill someone came along and untied the jack, for the jack would have been pulling as hard as he could yet if he thought they wanted him to go the other way.

There was a great scare in the papers about a dynamite band in Georgetown its object being to blow up the railroad. The

boys played the old snipe trick on a lad a short time ago. He did not catch on the first night so they took him out again and then nearly scared him to death telling him the sheriff was after him for hunting snipes on protected ground, and as he was running away as fast as he could, three fellows overtook him and accused him of being a dynamiter and he thought they were going to lynch him. He goes by the name of Snipy now. . . .

Johnny Conway, the York State lad that I wrote you had struck it lately, offered to lend me money to buy a half-interest in two teams and a jack train at Silver Plume. I had the bargain made and the fellow came to Georgetown to draw up the papers and then backed out. Johnny had given me a check for the amount \$600.00 and now he wants to buy out Dick's train. He offers to put up the money if I will do the work for half, but I think I will get in at the Plume before long. Write soon M C

* * * *

Silver Plume Colo
May 23d 1885

Dear Mother

Your letter was received Thursday evening and I was very glad to hear from you again. I have at last got to work for myself. I took possession here the 20th of April and the 12th of this month I bought out the other half so now I own one saddle mule, twelve jacks and four draft horses. One team is a trifle lighter than Kit and Doll (?) but the other team would make them look like young colts in comparison. Edwin Allen arrived here about three weeks ago and is working for me. I keep two men and a boy, pay the men \$2.50 a day apiece, and the boy \$1.00.

I am owing \$1193.00 on the train² and have already paid \$107.00 and will have it all paid for by this fall if work keeps up the way it has been since I have been here. This week I have loaded four cars and taken 20 tons to Georgetown besides delivering 1000 feet of lumber. One train load of rails, one train load of provisions, and 1000 lbs. of coal on the hill, so you see we [do] not have much idle time. I had a letter from Bessie a short time ago. She and Emanuel have bought an acre of land of Lizzie Niles next to Chittenden's. They paid \$300.00 for it. It tickles Uncle Sam a great deal to think of paying

² Marion Cook's billhead stated that he was proprietor of the Georgetown and Silver Plume Pack Train and Express Line. "Transferring of ore and merchandise to and from the mines promptly and carefully attended to. Coal and logging kept constantly on hand. Rates reasonable. Corral at Fisk's Barn, Silver Plume."

\$300.00 for an acre of ground in that country. I shall expect to see you or Chauncey out here this summer either in July or August as that will be as soon as you can see anything. I will pay your fare back and if I can possibly spare it, will pay your fare both ways, but I want you to make your calculations now so you will be sure to come. Edwin and I went up the gulch a few days ago. He wanted to see Grey's Peak. We rode as far as possible, and then walked over the snow for two miles and then he concluded he did not want to see the peak anyway, so we came back. Edgar was over two weeks ago and a person had to look several times before he could tell them apart a great many of the Georgetown boys came up and shook hands with Edwin and one fellow that has worked with Edgar for six months came along and pushed Edwin off the side walk and when he saw his mistake he was the worst surprised man you ever saw. I have not seen Uncle Sam for some little time but the last time I heard from there they were all well.

Well I will bid you goodbye for this time Write soon

Marion Cook

* * * *

Georgetown, Colo

Feb 9th 1886

Dear Brother

Your letter was received last Sunday. I have been working a little to hard and the consequence is that I have to take a rest. I have not worked any for a week but hope to be able to go to work next week. I made \$151.00 clear of expenses last month and expect to do better this. We have about \$1000.00 worth of ore out now. We took out between \$1800.00 and \$1900.00 last month.

We have done nothing but drift so far when we get ready to stope we expect to make some money. Uncle Sam said



yesterday that I had over \$2000.00 in sight for my part.

Byers is working for me now. He seems to think because I worked for him once that he ought to run me now but I have him to understand that I was running this concern. We have two of the liveliest kids sorting ore for us to be found. Byers was singing one day when one of the kids turned to the other and said, "Tim go and dig a worm for the canary," and John has been mad at that boy ever since.

Johnny has quit his place. He found another with more money in it. He has only made a little over expenses since he came back.

Edgar left for Iowa the first of this month. He expects to be gone about two months. Said he would come back through Shelton. He went via the B & M. He said he would not wade snow this winter. The past few days have been warm but it turned cold last night and has been very cold all day. The snow has not been very deep this winter so far but the worst is to come. The boys say I am not competent to express myself on the weather as it is the first winter in the country that I have spent below timber line.

If I could only raise about \$200.00 (more than I can without borrowing it) I should go down to Neb. or Kan. and work on a farm, for a month or two and see if it would not put a little life into me.

Give my best wishes to Sam and Ernie and write soon.

Direct to the Plume

As ever Marion Cook

* * * *

Georgetown Colo

April 17th 1887

Dear Mother

Your letter was received last Friday. I quit my job on Argentine last Wednesday and expect it is the last time I will ever winter up there. I have bargained for a half interest in one mule, twelve jacks, two heavy teams, and three wagons. I am going to pay \$600.00. I expected to take possession today but there was some mistakes made in the papers so that I cannot get possession until next Monday. Johnny Conway is going to let me have the money and take a mortgage on my interest. I have paid enough to bind the bargain and have Johnnie's check for \$650.00 and don't think there is any loop hole for them to crawl out of this time.

My partner is a Cornishman. . . .

I had this picture taken this forenoon to send to you Aunt Helen says it is too poor to send anywhere but as I have got it will send it Write soon

Marion Cook

A Rococo Victorian House: Bloom Mansion

By Frederick Doveton Nichols

Frederick D. Nichols, Professor of Architecture at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, contributed this article on the architecture of Bloom Mansion, with the following comment: "As a native of Trinidad, I have long been interested in the fine old Bloom mansion, and I am delighted that it is being restored as a museum. I have written the following article with the assistance of Arthur R. Mitchell, Resident Curator of Baca House, the Pioneer Museum, and Bloom Mansion. The photographs were taken by my uncle, H. B. Doveton."—*Editor*.

The old Bloom Mansion on East Main Street in Trinidad, Colorado, has been called by experts the finest rococo Victorian house in Colorado. In this opinion Dr. James Grafton Rogers, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the State Historical Society of Colorado, concurs. It is doubtful if a finer example of its period can be found in any of the Rocky Mountain states. If the Paris Opera, designed by Charles Garnier, is the masterpiece of the French Second Empire, the Bloom Mansion is a provincial reflection of its influence in the American Old West. Other pioneer towns in Colorado boast of examples in the style: the Opera House at Central City, Colorado, has simple detail after the manner of the Second Empire; and there are numerous wooden stores and saloons with false fronts and quoins to simulate stone made of wood; but there are few buildings in which the rococo Victorian is carried out with such elegance and completeness. It has French console brackets, cast-iron ornaments, plaster interior cornices, painted-and-grained woodwork; all topped with a tower with a mansard roof.

The old frontier town in which it stands became a settlement on the mountain branch of the Santa Fe Trail about 1860, where the old trail parallels the Picketwire or Purgatory River. Picketwire is a Yankee corruption of the French for Purgatoire, which was the short name the French trappers of the region gave it. Earlier the river had been named by the Spanish, El Rio de Las Animas Perdidas en Purgatorio in memory, so an old legend has it, of soldiers who had been massacred by the Indians along its banks.

In the 1880's, Trinidad prospered as a trading center and from numerous cattle outfits and sheep ranches in Las Animas County, but its main growth was triggered by the development



← Front and Side View of Bloom Mansion
Trinidad, Colorado
1963

H. B. Doveton

of coal mines beginning with the arrival of the railroad in 1878. The mining boom, resulting from the coming of the railroad, produced building activity in various styles: Richardson Romanesque, Eastlake, Roman Revival, Edwardian, Craftsman, and Pueblo Revival.

The *Trinidad Directory* of 1888, lists at least three architectural firms, and numerous individuals were listed as architects, all attesting to the sudden growth of this important frontier town. The Columbian Hotel, originally called the Grand Union, was built by John Conkie about 1880. It is also an excellent example of the style of the Second Empire with quoins, fine cast-iron balconies, well-proportioned fenestration, and details.

The mansion at Main and Walnut streets was erected by Frank G. Bloom, who had come from Pennsylvania in 1867. Two years later he married Miss Sarah Thatcher, sister of Mahlon D. Thatcher and John A. Thatcher, prominent Pueblo bankers. He became a merchant, a coal mine operator, then a rancher, a banker, and finally the head of the Bloom Land and Cattle Company, and an important figure in the cattle business of that day.

According to Mrs. W. S. Iliff, the only surviving child of the Blooms, the house was completed in 1882, by a builder named Innis. The plans were adapted from a magazine by the owners.

On the exterior the house is rigidly symmetrical, even to the rear entry. It is built of brick with Trinidad sandstone used for quoins, lintels, and door trim. This is a native stone. Fine brick has always been made in Trinidad, as there are excellent clays in the vicinity, so it is natural that this new mansion was built of brick. The wooden veranda is enriched with an elaborate cornice in which consoles alternate with lintels, and it still boasts its original gray paint. It is surmounted, as are the roofs and the tower, with cast-iron finials. The mansard roof, which is steep on all four sides and flat on top, and named after the French architect, Francois Mansard, who first used the design, is covered with metal. This material also roofs the tower.

Although the exterior is symmetrical, the plan is not. The veranda is on the front and sides of the house, and there is a small brick entry at the rear. One enters through elaborately ornamented double doors at the front porch, which are painted and grained like all the woodwork. The doors lead into a small entry at the base of the tower which is floored with buff and

blue tile. The inner doors, side by side, lead into the front rooms, or parlors, which are not symmetrical. The room on the east has a sunny bay window, and behind it is a dining room.

Each of the parlors has a fireplace, similar in design, which are of stone, painted. There are unusual small niches at each end of the mantels. The cornices are of plaster, as are the rosettes in the ceilings, whose Eastlake motifs suggest that the chandeliers, probably of gas, were also embellished with similar rectangular motifs. The sliding double doors which open the rooms into each other, were characteristic of many house plans in America, which gradually became more open from 1840 on, culminating in the freely organized and flowing plans of today.

Behind these parlors, on axis, is the stair with the finest woodwork in the house. Of typical, Victorian design, the balusters and rail are of black walnut. To the left is the dining room with a room to the porch, and to the right the kitchen, with a wainscot in tongue-and-groove, in the manner of the period.

Upstairs there are four bedrooms—one on each corner, which are not symmetrical. There are numerous closets, indicating the gradual growth of conveniences during the late nineteenth century. In the hall is a wainscoted corner lavatory with its original fittings. The bath is fitted with wood wainscot and a large tub with claw-and-ball feet.

On the third floor, which is not part of the museum, are bedrooms and a ladder which leads to the tower. Most of the materials used in the house are native, and were produced in the area.

Behind the house is a grape arbor, leading from the back door to an elaborate Victorian garden where once stood the stable for the buggy horses and for the milk cow. According to Mrs. Iliff there were two urns in the front yard. [She also says that when the Blooms lived in the house that the weather-vane—a cow—was on the stable, not on the house as it is today.]

It is the plan of the State Historical Society to restore and furnish the Bloom Mansion as nearly as possible as it was in its heyday, including wallpaper, woodwork, and furnishings. Once this plan is completed, the house will be one of Colorado's most important monuments to the history of good taste, and the appreciation of fine things brought to the raw, new West by its pioneer women.

(Note: Bloom Mansion was opened to the public on May 30, 1963.—*Editor.*)

Negro Rights in Colorado Territory

(1859-1867)

By Harmon Mothershead*

The period, 1859 to 1876 saw two of this nation's greatest constitutional and political conflicts—Civil War and Reconstruction. At the heart of this conflict was the Negro. Kansas had already, in the 1850's, set the stage for the great national struggle. Originally a part of Kansas, the embryonic state of Colorado, six hundred miles from the nearest seat of government, perhaps even further removed in a common economic endeavor, found it necessary to administer to its own political needs. In so doing, however, it reflected much of the national attitude toward the colored race. This is especially true in politics. Throughout the war Colorado supported the Union cause, but not without considerable political maneuvering on the part of local civil and military officials. In the minds of most Coloradoans of this period, the Negro's cause was secondary to that of the preservation of the Union. The sole exception to this came at the close of the Civil War when the Territory made its strongest bid for Statehood. The years of 1864 and 1865 saw two such attempts, the fate of which was based on the rapidly shifting political philosophy in the national capitol and local political power struggles. In Colorado's case the basis of the conflict was a black minority of not more than one hundred fifty prospective electors. Such a minority in a territory the size of Colorado would hardly seem worth comment; yet because Colorado's Statehood aspirations hinged on them they are of considerable interest.

Colorado's colored pioneers have been the subject of much local history. A survey of this material indicates that the Negroes were good citizens with a strong social, political, economic and moral interest in their community. During their life time they were highly regarded and respected by the white majority. Upon their death they became the subject of local editorializing. In a twenty-five year period Colorado's colored population grew from some 150 to 6,000. It was estimated that by 1890 the few Negroes in Denver alone had amassed property worth \$2,000,000.¹

Various reports were made of Negroes working in the mines of Colorado as slaves. This was, however, an obvious

*Mr. Mothershead is a native of Missouri. He received a B.S. from Northwest Missouri State College, Maryville, 1953; an M.A., University of Colorado, 1959; and at present is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Colorado. He has been a teacher of history at Lakewood High School, Jefferson County, Colorado, since 1955. This paper was written in 1962, for Dr. Robert G. Athearn's seminar in Problems of the American Frontier.—Editor.

¹ *Chicago Daily News*, March 11, 1890.

exception, as most contemporary accounts indicated the reporter was struck more by the rarity of the fact than by anything else.

Aside from the few Negroes in the mines and scattering of a family or two in various other cities or localities in the State, the majority of Negroes in this early period of Colorado history lived in Denver and immediate vicinity. The exceptions to this were so few that reference to Negroes in other areas were rarely made, and, if made, were not done so because the subject was black. Not until the migration of the 1880's were there Negro settlements scattered around the State. Denver became the center of the Negro's social and cultural life as well as his business. Churches and prayer meetings were common social functions of the Negro and, generally as did all their social events, included the entire colored population of the city. Cole's Hall was the center of most of the social activities and meetings. Numerous references were made to celebrations and social affairs at the conclusion of the war and the death of Lincoln. A lodge of colored Masons was organized in Denver in 1868.² Three churches were administering to the spiritual needs of the colored people by 1890.³ The barbering profession in Denver was dominated by the Negroes,⁴ although Negroes were obviously employed in nearly all the trades from mining, freighting, Indian fighting, ranching and in enterprises of their own. In the Market Street "parlor houses," Negroes were employed as maids, porters and in other domestic functions connected with the establishments. Later a "black belt" developed as a part of the local tenderloin area.

From the very beginning the social and business life of the Negro community was separate from that of the white. This was due, in no small part, to the preference of both races, and to common experience and habit. There was little persecution of the Negro and as "they observed in their quaint dispatches that *things* were better in Denver or Rochester than in Memphis or Birmingham. They did not mean working conditions when they said things."⁵

As commendable as the condition of the colored Coloradoan was, his legal status was still definitely limited by statutory provisions. In the mining community, the Independent, Hawk-eye and Cooper Districts, all barred the Negro from the elective

² *Colorado Tribune*, December 9, 1868.

³ *Denver Republican*, March 17, 1890.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Anna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *They Seek a City* (Garden City: 1945) p. x of prologue.

franchise.⁶ The Larimer County Claim Club Association, organized in 1860, excluded Negroes, even before any arrived there, "The feeling at that time just before the great struggle between the North and South reaching out to a place where the people of the African race were not resident."⁷

The provisional government of the Territory of Jefferson erected, on paper, an extensive system of statutes, only two of which directly concerned the Negro. Chapter XX of the Civil Code contained in the section on marriage, a proviso "that no white person shall be married to any person being a Negro or mulatto of one eighth Negro blood."⁸ The Territorial Legislature voided all such marriages in its Third Session,⁹ and the provision was retained when Colorado became a State.¹⁰ These were common restrictions, yet the inclusion of them in the "Jefferson Territory" laws indicated the influence of the large number of southerners in the Territory, in 1858-1860. The manner in which it was tacked on to the section as a proviso, hints that it was done to satisfy a particularly interested group.¹¹ Yet there were very few Negroes in the area at this time and like all other classes the great majority were men.

The election laws of Jefferson Territory declared that the legal voters in the elections of county officers and others should be the "white male citizens of the county over the age of twenty-one years."¹² The Criminal Code of the same laws made it a misdemeanor for a person to vote "knowing himself not to be qualified," and made such an offense punishable by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars or imprisonment for not more than a year.¹³ In the face of such a fine it is doubtful that any unqualified person, but especially a Negro, would have attempted violation of the law. Color would have been the most easily distinguishable qualification of all. These laws, coupled with those of the mining districts, indicated rather rigid restrictions on a small numerical portion of the population; a considerable percentage of which were slaves, or generally regarded as not having the usual rights of citizens.

The Organic Act of 1861 for Colorado contained the same

⁶ Thomas Maitland Marshall, *Early Records of Gilpin County* (Boulder: 1920), 181, 223, 295.

⁷ *Fort Collins Express* (Industrial Edition), 1894, p. 1.

⁸ *Provisional Laws and Joint Resolutions . . . of Jefferson Territory*, Part II, Ch. XX, Sec. 121.

⁹ *General Laws . . . Third Session*, 1864, p. 108.

¹⁰ *General Laws . . . of the State of Colorado. First Session*, 1877, p. 611.

¹¹ See Billie Barnes Jensen, "Confederate Sentiment in Colorado," *1957 Brand Book of Denver Westerners*, pp. 85-117, for an account of Southern sympathies in Colorado during the war period.

¹² *Provisional Laws . . . of Jefferson Territory*, Part III, p. 198.

¹³ *Provisional Laws . . . of Jefferson Territory*, Part I, pp. 18-19.

restriction: "That every free white male citizen of the United States above the age of twenty-one . . ." who was resident in the territory was entitled to vote at the first election.¹⁴ It continued, however, with this grant of "squatter's sovereignty," "but the qualifications of voters and of holding office at all subsequent elections shall be such as shall be prescribed by the legislative assembly."¹⁵ The first session of the Territorial Legislature made "every male person of the age of twenty-one or upwards" who was a resident, a qualified voter and office holder.¹⁶ The Third Session of the Legislature in 1864 amended this by inserting after the word "upwards," "not being a Negro or mulatto."¹⁷ That same Session extended to the "volunteer white soldiers of Colorado Territory in the service of the United States," the elective franchise.¹⁸

Another discriminatory act passed by the Legislative Assembly during its First Session included a section which made it possible to tax property which belonged to Negroes for the support of public schools and, at the same time, it prohibited Negro children from attending. The law requested that "a record, a list of the names of all white persons in the district between the ages of five and twenty-one years"¹⁹ be kept. This was the list of students, and on this number the County funds were apportioned; therefore, the Negro was automatically excluded from the school, or at least if he attended, the district was not paid for his attendance.

One other act concerning the rights of the Negro may be mentioned. "An act concerning jurors" limited jury duty to "all free white male taxable inhabitants."²⁰

No major revision in the laws took place until the Fifth Session in 1866. Governor Alexander Cummings received a message from a committee of colored citizens requesting that the law of 1864 be rectified. They informed the Governor "that many of our people emigrated to this territory with a knowledge of the law of 1861, . . . and that we are now suffering from the unjust law of 1864." They further reminded His Excellency of the unjust school laws.²¹ The Governor transmitted the message to the Legislature, stating the substance of the various acts involved, and recommending a correction in the existing

¹⁴ *Revised Statutes of Colorado 1868*, p. 31.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *General Laws . . . First Session*, 1861, pp. 72-73.

¹⁷ *General Laws . . . Fifth Session*, 1864, p. 180.

¹⁸ *General Laws . . . Fifth Session*, 1864, p. 77.

¹⁹ *General Laws . . . First Session*, 1861, p. 159.

²⁰ *General Laws . . . First Session*, 1861, p. 334.

²¹ *Council Journal*, Fifth Session, 1866, pp. 91-92.

laws. In his recommendation Governor Cummings found it "incredible that such a measure could have been adopted . . .,"²² at a time when the colored people were eagerly and actively supporting the government, and at the darkest period of the nation's history. "It is a fact worthy of notice, that this was the only case in the whole nation where public sentiment retrograded during our fearful struggle."²³

During that session of the Assembly only one of the grievances was corrected. The Second Annual Message of the Governor to the Legislature commended the legislature on correcting the law taxing Negroes for schools. The Fifth Session passed a supplemental act requiring school district secretaries to keep a "separate list" of all colored persons in the district of school age, and warrants would be issued "in favor of such colored persons, *pro rata*, for educational purposes."²⁴ The Governor, however, noted with regret that the election law had not been changed.²⁵ The act prohibiting the Negro from jury duty also went unchanged.

The pioneer Negro in Colorado fared quite well, with the not unusual exception above mentioned, until 1864-1865. Colorado's chances for statehood increased rapidly with the upcoming national elections. The Republican Party believed it had need for the "loyal" votes of Colorado in the presidential election and the vote of "loyal" Representative in Congress to conduct its policy. The *Weekly News* believed that the passage of enabling acts to such territories as Nebraska, Nevada and Colorado, "with their deficiency in population," for sending representatives, ". . . known and understood by all, shows great confidence in the loyalty of their people, and proves there is important work for them to do in the councils of the Nation." Colorado, by sending its best and most loyal men to the Constitutional Convention would make statehood a "foregone conclusion."²⁶

Colorado's struggle for statehood in 1864 then became a party issue. Republicanism and statehood were synonymous. "Show us a copperhead and we will show you an opponent of State organization."²⁷ The *News* added a few weeks later that "universally, the Union party sees the creation of a new Free State and rejoices. The opposition sees the same thing and

²² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

²⁴ *General Laws . . . Fifth Session, 1866.*

²⁵ *Second Annual Message of Governor Cummings to the Legislative Assembly of Colorado*, December 13, 1866. (Sixth Session) pp. 11-12.

²⁶ *Rocky Mountain News* (Weekly), March 26, 1864.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, April 6, 1864.

mourns."²⁸ The Constitution, created in 1864, was done rapidly and was copied after that of the State of Iowa. The Constitution did not provide for Negro suffrage. It was overwhelmingly defeated, but not for its suffrage provision. The people believed Colorado would be better off as a Territory, with the national government footing the bill than as a State sharing in the tax load of reconstruction. The opposition was not as the *News* had earlier indicated, as all copperhead. It was instead a universal feeling of the majority of miners and property owners. Also the financial future of the Territory in the summer and fall of 1864 did not look bright."²⁹ Colorado lost its chance for statehood in that year because she failed to ratify the Constitution.

Immediate agitation for a new attempt at statehood began within weeks of the failure of the first. This was enhanced by an economic upturn in the spring of 1865. Those politicians and party organs who had in 1864 opposed statehood now favored it.³⁰ Negro suffrage became an issue in the campaign for statehood in 1865. This appears to be the only time in the decade of the 1860's when the Negro became an object of public comment.

The *Daily Mining Journal* of Black Hawk and its nearest competitors, the *Miners Register* of Central City, conducted an editorial battle on the issue during the spring and summer of 1865. References to the merits of Negro suffrage were necessarily made on the national scope since there were few in Colorado. It was anticipated, and rightfully so, that Negroes would migrate to Colorado in sufficient numbers to make their suffrage an issue.

The *Register* kicked off the campaign by stating it did not believe that the "masses of the colored population of the south from whose limbs the fetters of slavery have just fallen" were prepared for equal rights, which necessarily involved the elective franchise.³¹ The next day the *Journal* declared that the "Negro fights and pays; it would be less than a man who would not allow him to vote," and emphasized the point with—"It won't do. It ain't fair; it ain't right; it ought not and will not prevail."³² The destiny of the Negro was beyond "human control," he

²⁸ *Ibid.*, April 20, 1864.

²⁹ *Daily Mining Journal*, July 3, 1865 (Black Hawk).

³⁰ *Daily Mining Journal*, July 3, 1865 (Black Hawk).

³¹ *Miners Register*, May 3, 1865.

³² *Daily Mining Journal*, May 4, 1865.

“. . . who really fears contamination of his blood or being distanced in the strife of life by acknowledging the Negro's manhood, furnishes the strongest proof of the righteousness of such action; he only feigns to fear it is a hypocrite."³³

The *Register* defended its view of not allowing the Negro to vote on the grounds of his being unqualified to do so. If the act of voting required the knowledge of right or wrong it followed, "that he who is to-day ignorant on this point, neither owes it to his country or his God to cast a vote."³⁴

Shortly after the convention met to write the 1865 Constitution, it was suggested that the question of Negro suffrage be left to the Legislature where it properly belonged. This was an issue which did not "particularly effect Colorado, except in its relations to the Union of the States, . . ." anyway.³⁵ The issue was left for the people to decide by voting, for, or against, Negro suffrage, when they voted on the Constitution.³⁶

The election was held September 5, 1865. The Constitution was adopted by a majority 155 votes out of a total 5,895.³⁷ Negro suffrage was rejected by a majority of 3,516 out of a total 5,668.³⁸ Colorado had adopted a Constitution, disenfranchised the Negro, and requested admission into the Union under the 1864 Enabling Act. The local press had, in recent election campaigns, concerned itself little with the moral issue of Negro suffrage, however, following the adoption of the Constitution with its anti-Negro suffrage provisions, the press and the politicians attempted to justify the verdict.

The Governor had just requested a change in the various territorial laws regarding the status of the Negro at the time that position became an issue. Governor Cummings, who seemed to constitute a minority of one in Colorado, did not believe that Negro disenfranchisement was consistent with the public sentiment of the country.³⁹ The question arose as to the constitutional status of the Negro before 1864. Cummings argued that the Negro had been a citizen according to the 1861 act and that,

"the fact is, that under the act of 1861, Negroes did vote in Colorado; it was the clamor about their voting which led to the enactment of 1864; and the men who made that law determined there should no longer be any doubt, . . ."⁴⁰

A petition, signed by 137 Negroes of Denver, and presented to

³³ *Ibid.*, May 5, 1865.

³⁴ *Miners Register*, May 12, 1865.

³⁵ *Daily Mining Journal*, August 8, 1865.

³⁶ *Daily Mining Journal*, August 14, 1865; August 18, 1865.

³⁷ *State Department Territorial Papers, Colorado Series*, Vol. I, items 133-134.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Governor Cummings, *Second Annual Message . . .*, p. 12.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Congress, stated that the colored people had voted in Colorado prior to 1864; and requested the national government not to admit Colorado to statehood until "the words white be erased from her State Constitution."⁴¹ The *News* announced that Colorado's Delegate to Congress, A. A. Bradford, had presented a petition "signed by Wm. J. Hardin and one hundred other 'niggers'."⁴² This is the only instance by the local press of the colored race in Denver being referred to as "niggers" that has been found.

John Evans, Senator-elect from Colorado and Governor of the Territory when the 1864 Act was passed, attempted to correct the "several false impressions" made by the petition. He told the Senate committee that "the clause 'Citizen of the United States' in the franchise law, not having been construed to include them, the colored people did not vote," before 1864. Secondly, that he, as Governor, had not been instrumental in the law; that the question of Negro suffrage was never raised in changing the law, and "no practical change was made in that respect."⁴³

If the Negro did vote in Colorado before the 1864 Act, as both they and Governor Cummings claimed, then Evans was not presenting a true picture. On the other hand, if what Evans said was true then the 1861 law would have distinctly given the Negro the elective franchise with the passage of the Civil Rights Act and later of the Thirteenth Amendment. In either case the 1864 Act appears to be an obvious and intentional effort to distinctly bar the Negro from voting.

President Johnson did not issue the proclamation making Colorado a State as he was entitled to by the Enabling Act of 1864. His reason in this case was that he was not sure that Colorado met the conditions of the Act.⁴⁴ The convention and ratification of the present Statehood Constitution were unorthodox and possibly illegal. During the spring and summer of 1865 the action on Colorado's statehood passed before the Congress. Its changing fortune depended upon the suffrage provision in the State Constitution and on the shifting tide of national politics; namely whether or not the Republican Party needed the votes of Colorado.

A memorial to President Johnson by Colorado's Congressmen-elect Evans, Chaffee, and Chilcott attempted to clarify the

⁴¹ *State Department Territorial Papers, Colorado Series*, Vol. I, items 77-78.

⁴² *Rocky Mountain News*, February 28, 1866.

⁴³ News item in *Rocky Mountain News (Weekly)*, February 14, 1866, from the *New York Tribune*.

⁴⁴ Elmer Ellis, "Colorado's First Fight For Statehood," *The Colorado Magazine*, Vol. VIII, No. 1 (January, 1931), 27.

suffrage issue in Colorado's Constitution. The memorial declared that the petition from the colored citizens of Colorado, referred to above, was without signature, and the names printed to it was done so without their "consent or knowledge."⁴⁵ This, however, was not the case as the original petition, handwritten and signed by 137 people, was in the State Department papers.⁴⁶

The memorialists pointed out that the Constitution had received universal acceptance except for its suffrage provision; and, that it did not exclude colored children from public schools.

Nor is there anything in its provisions restricting the colored man from full enjoyment of the immunities, rights, and privileges of the elective franchise; and for this, and all of its provisions, the constitution provides a ready mode of amendment.⁴⁷

It concluded the "privileges sought to be secured to the colored men of Colorado . . . can be more readily and speedily attained by the present admission of the State than by its rejection."⁴⁸ They also noted that there were probably not more than 100 to 150 colored men in Colorado at that time.

In this memorial there was an obvious contradiction. First, the memorialists declared that none of the Negro's rights including suffrage had, in any way, been restricted. They then state that for this (the Negro rights) and all other provisions the Constitution could be amended and finally concluded that the Negro's privileges could be better secured by the admission of Colorado to statehood than by rejection. The Constitution definitely restricted the Negro from voting and the decision of the voters in 1865 was certainly not an indication that the status statehood would change the Constitution in that respect.

The Constitution of 1865 did not bar Negroes from public schools. It did, however, exclude the Negro from voting. Senator Sumner found this to be inconsistent with a republican form of government and with the Declaration of Independence which was stipulated in the Enabling Act.⁴⁹ Sumner quoted the section on suffrage in the proposed State Constitution and challenged "a reply from any Senator" on the floor "that such a Constitution does not comply with the requirements."⁵⁰ The Senator opposed recognizing the Constitution as republican in form unless amended so that it might not take effect "except upon the fundamental condition" that there would be "no de-

⁴⁵ *Congressional Globe*, First Session, 39th Congress, p. 1327.

⁴⁶ *State Department Territorial Papers*, Colorado Series, Vol. I, item 78.

⁴⁷ *Congressional Globe*, First Session, 39th Congress, p. 1327.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Congressional Globe*, First Session, 39th Congress, p. 1328.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1329.

nial of the elective franchise or any other rights, on account of color or race."⁵¹ At the time Congress acted on the Enabling Act for Colorado its Territorial laws granted the Negro the right to vote and the Senate had presumed that the same conditions would exist under statehood. The unamended bill for Colorado's admission to the Union was rejected in the Senate by a vote of 14 to 21 on March 13, 1866.⁵² The amended bill was rejected, 7 to 27, on April 25, 1866.⁵³

The national Congress was attempting to legislate Negro suffrage into Colorado at a time when nineteen of the free states excluded the Negro from the right to vote.

The third reading of the Colorado Statehood bill came before the House on May 3, 1866. An amendment to strike the word "white" was defeated and the unamended bill passed the House that day.⁵⁴ Senate Bill S. 462, "Colorado Statehood," was amended January 9, 1867, as follows:

"That this Act shall take affect with the fundamental and perpetual condition that within said State of Colorado there shall be no abridgement or denial of the exercise of the elective franchise or any other right to any person by reason of race or color, excepting Indians not taxed."⁵⁵

On that same day the Organic Acts for the Territories of Nebraska, Colorado, Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho, Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico were amended, that no citizen of the United States could be denied the right to vote.⁵⁶

Senate debates on whether or not Congress could impose Negro suffrage—or any other kind—on a new State such as Colorado or Nebraska, perhaps laid the groundwork for requiring the seceded states to ratify the Fourteenth, and later the Fifteenth Amendment before admission to the Union. The decision that Congress could legislate Negro suffrage into the new territories by making it a prerequisite to admission was in no manner inconsistent with the Radical's reconstruction program. Introducing such requirements in territories with insignificant colored populations, insured the success of the program and established valuable precedent. The Civil Rights Act of April 9, 1866, had made the Negro a citizen of the United States by Act of Congress. This was legalized by the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, July 28, 1868. This two-year period saw a bitter controversy between the President and Congress. The latter body successfully exerted its will

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 1365.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 2108.

⁵⁴ *Congressional Globe*, First Session, 39th Congress, p. 2373.

⁵⁵ *Congressional Globe*, Second Session, 39th Congress, p. 360.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

over the former. The nature of the controversy was basically a political question, with a Democratic President supporting the rights of the seceded states to legislate for themselves, and a Republican Congress determined to dictate its will to a vanquished foe.

The Johnson-appointed governor of Colorado, Alexander Cummings, and the party he represented came under the condemnation of the Republican press in the Territory. The *News* editorialized that if the people were to follow Cummings and the Democratic party, they would within six months,

"find themselves in the same position that the colored citizens, on account of the same policy, now occupy, the most ashamed set of individuals that ever existed."⁵⁷

A reply from the colored citizens of the city denied they were the tools of Cummings and stated they doubted that their rights were any safer in the hands of a party who believed them such fools, than in the hands of the Democrats.⁵⁸

The criticism of Cummings and Negro rights grew more heated. The Governor was described as the friend and supporter of Johnson's program; a would-be leader of the copperheads; and a "Moses to the colored citizens of the Territory, . . . by opposing any measure which does not give them the fullest rights of citizenship. . . ."⁵⁹

State Republican opposition to Negro rights in Colorado at a time when the national party was the champion of such rights is difficult to explain. The answer is perhaps more in political opposition than in Negro suffrage. Whatever Cummings favored the local Republicans opposed with vengeance. To them ". . . a more dishonest man, politically, morally, socially, and we believe financially," did not exist.⁶⁰ The local opposition faded rapidly with the shift of politics. The amended Statehood Bill and Organic Act forecast the immediate recognition of the Negro to the rights of citizens and within four months the *News* was applauding "impartial suffrage" as an established fact.⁶¹ The Negroes were voting; some with "fear and trembling" but most with a "manly demeanor." Discovering no opposition at the polls to their exercise of the franchise,

. . . a gleam of pleasure would spread over their swarthy faces, and for the first time, a realization that they were recognized human beings, possessing rights in common with the rest of humanity, enabled them to walk away with that calm, quiet dignity that every man should possess.⁶²

⁵⁷ *Rocky Mountain News* (Weekly) November 22, 1866.

⁵⁸ *Rocky Mountain News* (Weekly), November 28, 1866.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, January 23, 1867.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Rocky Mountain News* (Weekly), April 3, 1867.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Why should there be any opposition since only one hundred and twenty or thirty Negroes voted?⁶³ There were only some three hundred Negroes in Colorado in 1870, and certainly not more than one-half of these could have voted.

The Negroes in Colorado were a distinct minority. They came as both free men and slaves, and found a variety of occupations and opportunities awaiting them. Some of the frontier individualism became a part of their life. The fact that many a free Negro came to territories like Colorado speaks for initiative and individualism. They proved to be active, diligent and intelligent members of the frontier community. Locally they were well treated and their legal status was as good as could be found anywhere in the nation and better than most places. Not until the closing phases of the Civil War and the beginning of Reconstruction did the colored people of Colorado become an issue of public concern. This was not due to an increase in southern sympathies nor in defense of a white minority. The Negro and his rights became a pawn in local politics for statehood and national politics for Reconstruction.

First Colorado Republicans, then, in 1865, both parties, Republicans and Democrats, drew up Statehood Constitutions and enacted Territorial legislation which was discriminatory to the colored race. The only apparent reason for this was that it seemed consistent with legislation in the states and in other constitutions. There was no ill feeling toward the Negro locally, nor was he the object of social discrimination. A mild effort was made to create some social distinctions but this was of little success and appears more humorous than harmful.

When the radical Republicans fell heir to the Congress they sought every opportunity to impose a new social order on the seceded "territories" and formed their format of legislation in the existing territories of the Federal government. The Congressional legislative program of racial equality began in the territories. Political fortunes shifted so fast in the years 1864-1865 that Colorado's Statehood Constitution was out of step with the new order. There was no reason for Colorado to recognize Negro suffrage at a time when practically no one else did. To do so would have been "radical," and this was not popular in Colorado. Once the "radicals" were in control of the national government and the Reconstruction program underway, Colorado fell into line as the seceded territories were forced to. Colorado found this easy and accomplished the recognition of Negro rights almost voluntarily.

(Note: Mr. Mothershead submitted three pages of bibliography comprised of unpublished and published materials.—*Editor*.)

⁶³ *Ibid.*