LOUIS SUMMER
A Routt County Pioneer

Louis Summer feeds cattle using a horse-drawn sleigh during a Yampa Valley winter.
Photo courtesy Tread of Pioneers Museum.

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Louis Summer’s original memoir is in the archive of the Tread of Pioneers Museum.
INTRODUCTION

John and Philapina Summer immigrated from Austria and Germany, respectively, to Denver, Colorado in the early 1870s. John became a successful saloon owner in several mining towns: Georgetown, Big Chief, and Empire. As the mining boom slowed, John began to look towards a move and a change in profession. Philipina wanted her husband to consider ending his saloon days, and move to a ranch, which she felt would be a better life for the children. John Summer and two neighbors made the difficult trip in wagons over Berthoud and Gore Passes into Northwestern Colorado. He took over a homestead relinquishment in Sidney in 1889. At that time, Sidney consisted of a saloon, post office, and only a few homes. Two local men were hired to build the family a home in the tiny settlement of Sidney, eight miles south of Steamboat Springs.

Two of John’s sons, Louis and John, arrived in the valley soon after, making a dramatic trip from Empire, Colorado. Louis was only 13 years old. The young boys arrived before the rest of the family, and helped their father prepare the new home for their arrival. Philipina and the other children arrived later that fall.

After the land was cleared of sagebrush, the large, ambitious, and hard-working Summer family produced oats, barley, wheat, and potatoes. They also raised cattle and began a dairy farm. Here, the Summer children learned about hard work and good farming practices and wrested a living from the soil.

Years later, Louis, his wife, May, and their two children, Evelyn and Vernon, took over the original homestead property. Vernon shared a love of the land, passed down from his grandfather and father. Vernon was tall and athletic, and thrived in this rural life. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, and riding horses. Vernon became an iconic connection between the old homesteading, ranching days and the newer ski industry in Steamboat Springs. He was a ski patrolman for years. He often hiked up into the mountains, to get the “wide view” of the Yampa Valley. Vernon remained a part of the ranching community and won awards at rodeos for calf roping. He was also a swimmer, ski jumper, and an accomplished downhill and cross-country skier.

The story of the Summer family of Routt County is one from the “wild and wooly” West, transitioning into ranch life, anchoring his family to “the Mesa” and the Yampa River Valley they all loved.
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John Summer Sr. came to the United States from Austria in the 1870s. After some time in the gold towns of Colorado, his family made their way to the Yampa Valley.

The Summer and Radford families met in Fairplay, CO, at the Radford’s saloon and boarding house. While they did not come to Routt County together, they were in contact, as one of John Radford’s sons married a niece of John Summer Sr. The Summers came in 1889 and the Radfords purchased neighboring land in 1903.

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![Image of John Summer Sr. family, circa 1885](image)

John Summer Sr. Family, circa 1885 (four more daughters were born after this photograph was taken)

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### Summer Family Tree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John (Johann) Summer Sr. (1844-1936) + Philapina Specht Summer (1845-1907)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Josephine (Summer) Eickoff (1872-?) + Wm. Eickhoff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- John Summer Jr. (1873-1964) + Vada Thomas (d.1920, John Jr. remarried)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Joseph Summer (1875-1900)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Louis Summer + May (Radford) Summer (1876-1955)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vernon Summer + Edythe (Chritton) Summer (1917-2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Henry Summer (1879-1968) + Mattie Elmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adolph Summer (1880-1928)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- August Summer (1881-1901)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Emma (Summer) Bowman (1883-1968) + Algia Bowman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Edith (Summer) Merrill (1885-1981) + Fred Merrill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pauline (Summer) McDermott (1887-1967) + Alexander McDermott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bertha (Summer) Whistler (1889-1988) + A.C. Whistler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Leila (Summer) Overtree (1892-1968) + Guy Overtree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reno’s first wife died in 1940, leaving behind four children. Reno married Evelyn Summer in 1942, the two had no children. Edythe, Reno’s daughter married Evelyn’s brother, Vernon, in 1962. Vernon and Edythe had no children.
Radford Family Tree

John Radford family, Fairplay, CO, circa 1880s
(l to r) May, Rosamund, Ellen, John

John and Ellen (Harmon) Radford and five of their six children came to the United States in the early 1880s from London, England, to New York. After a long train ride, the family settled outside of Fairplay, Colorado. The family raised livestock and produce, however, the country was wild with bears and wolves, and the 10,000 foot elevation was challenging. In 1903, John, Ellen and youngest daughter May (the other two daughters were married by this time) moved to Routt County where they took up meadowland along the Yampa River, four miles south of Steamboat Springs (the land is now the Mike Holloran Ranch).

On February 14, 1907, May Radford married neighbor, Louis Summer. May and Louis had two children Evelyn and Vernon (see above tree).

- Frank Radford + [wife’s name unknown]  Frank & Jack were from John Radford’s first marriage. Frank stayed in England.
- Jack Radford + [wife’s name unknown]
- Harry Radford + Louisa (Summer) Radford
- Emeline (Radford) Hill + Bill Hill
- Rosamund (Radford) Clugston + Joe Clugston
- May Evelyn (Radford) Summer [1876-1968] + Louis Summer

Louis Summer: A Routt County Pioneer
From Vernon Summer: Photo taken about 1920. The community of Sidney can be seen at back (west). The largest white building was the Sidney Store and Post office. Light colored fields are mostly grain fields.
These journal writings of Louis Summer, father of Vernon Summer, were found in a trunk upon the closing of Vernon’s estate in 2013. There are several handwritten versions of his story that Louis first began writing on March 12, 1945. It appears he restarted from the beginning several times refining as he went.

Jane McLeod
Friend, Neighbor, and Co-executor of the Summer Family Estate

In transcribing the notes and stories of Louis Summer, the goal of the staff of the Tread of Pioneers Museum was to convey Louis’ life and stories as closely as possible to the original diaries. Paragraphs were arranged and grammatical changes were made only when necessary for readability and cohesiveness. Chapter titles were added, some labeled as Louis did, for story breaks by topic. Louis’ own words and expressions were used as often as possible. Redundant stories were combined, adding details as given in later writings. Certainly, additional research and fact-checking may uncover inconsistencies. However, only the spelling of names and towns were researched and corrected in order to honor Louis’ intentions and keep his amazing pioneer stories as colorful and exciting as he remembered them.

Cheri Daschle
Tread of the Pioneers Museum
Louis Summer with coyote pelts, 1908; photo courtesy Tread of Pioneers Museum
LOUIS BEGINS HIS STORY.....

It is now 5 p.m., March 15, 1945. Evelyn Chritton (my daughter), is teaching school at Oak Creek. My wife, May, and Reno (Evelyn’s husband) are in town delivering eggs and buying groceries. Our son, Vernon, 27 years old, is at Aaron Wingett’s, helping with his work every other day as Aaron is not very well. They have 150 registered ewes on the old John Hart ranch. It is six miles from here. The snow is three feet deep and crust is very hard to break. Evelyn just got off the train and asked me to go on with my story.

Steamboat Springs, Colo.
April 30/51

I read the *Tread of the Forest Service* by Mr. Pickford, since it was taken over by the government and was asked to give an account of my experience and add a few facts that come to my recollection from 1889 until the present time. This will include the Forest Service, as well as all phases of Pioneer life, such as timber, roads, game, fishing, freighting, farming, cattle, sheep, and much more.

Steamboat Springs, Colorado
August 25, 1952

... I have watched the march of civilization since I was old enough until the present time.
BEGINNINGS

I was born in Georgetown, Colorado on September 10, 1876. I have always been very proud of being born in that year as it was in 1876 that Colorado was admitted into the Union as a State and was called the Centennial State. And that year was just about 100 years after the Declaration of Independence of the United States was signed.

My father John (Johann) Summer was born in January of 1844 at Weiler by Feldkirch, Austria. My mother, Philapina Specht, was born May 27, 1848 at Baden, Germany. My father came to the U.S. in the early ‘70s. Arriving in Denver with some friends, he worked for the P.H. Zang Brewing Company. His trade was a cooper, a person who makes and repairs the beer barrels. My mother came to the U.S. sometime later. My oldest sister, Josephine and brother, John, were born in Denver. The silver mining camps were going full blast: Central City, Black Hawk, Silver Plume, Georgetown, and many others. My father decided to go to Georgetown, which looked the most promising. His brothers, Leonard and Joe, went to Fairplay, where they built a brewery and a saloon, the “highest brewery in the world.”

My father’s other brothers, Ignatz and Jacob, moved to Dubuque, Iowa. Ignatz had a wagon factory called the Eagle Point. Jacob was a painter by trade.

Our family moved to Georgetown in 1875 when my brother, Joseph Frances, was born. I was born next, then came Henry, Adolph and August. Twelve children would be born to John and Philapina, six boys and six girls.

My father and his brother, Louis, bought a brewery from Mr. Selack. Their brewery was located on the west side of Georgetown and supplied beer to Silver Plume and all the nearby mining camps during the boom days in the early 1870s.

Our neighbors, the Trevillions, had a baby girl born April 1st, 1888. My mother said, “That is just too bad; it is an unlucky day. They will not have any luck with her.” On April 1st, 1889, my baby sister Bertha was born. She is still going strong, as I write this, on August 29th, 1954.

South of the brewery was a wood slide where cord wood was slid down the mountain at a terrific speed. The cord wood was used for fuel to fire the boilers to brew the beer. One bright Sunday morning, the man who fired the boilers was whistling and singing as he went to get some cord wood. For some unknown reason, a stick of cord wood came down the slide killing him instantly.

I was a small boy at that time, very mean and had a nervous disposition. I was adventurous, and an ornery cuss, as you will see. As a boy, I was bound to sleep with my father. For playthings, I had some marbles that I took to bed with me. My father would
lay on them. They would roll under the bed and I would cry until he would crawl under the bed and get them for me.

On one occasion, my sister and brother were playing at the city dump which was near where we lived. They were putting tin cans into an express wagon, and dumping them. I started to help them. They refused to let me help them, which made me very unhappy. I picked up a tin can; the can was cut through the top, leaving very sharp points. I threw the can at my sister, cutting a large gash in her temple nearly causing her to bleed to death. I was not a bit sorry for what I had done, as she had it coming. Not until later on when I realized what a tragedy it might have been. I was too young to realize what I had done.
OUTLAWS AND OTHER UNDESIRABLE CHARACTERS

There were always some undesirable characters around my father’s saloon. One evening, a man by the name of Lomax said, “I am leaving on a freight train, on the Colorado and Southern this evening.” No freight was due to go out that night. A peace officer, Danny Irish, and his deputy were notified. The deputy was Lafe Hanchett, son of the merchant, Silas Hanchett. There were a few inches of snow on the ground. Officer Irish and his deputy followed Lomax’s tracks toward Berthoud Pass where he had his horse parked. They hid in the brush. Soon they saw him come out riding one horse and leading two more. They halted him and he admitted that the horses had been stolen in Middle Park. Lomax was captured and served five years in the penitentiary at Cañon City.

One morning, before my time, the folks saw men gathering around a barn that was under construction. A vigilante committee broke into the jail and took a man out and marched past our house about midnight. The man had been caught cheating at a poker game. They had a necktie party, and hung him to the rafters of that barn partly built. His body was still hanging there next morning. A stick and handkerchief were stuck down his throat, so he could not make a noise. His hands were tied behind him, and his feet were tied together. Some hogs were in a pen in that barn, beneath the man who had been hung. The hogs were covered with blood that dropped down on them. This man who was hung was said to have shot another man at the slaughter house some time before. The barn belonged to Selack, who had sold my father his saloon. Selacks were our neighbors. Albert Selack, one of the sons, later had his throat cut by a man in a card game. He lived for some time before he died.

We heard of a man who was driving his horse and spring wagon near a house where people were confined with contagious diseases in Clear Creek. Three men asked for a ride. One man got in the seat; the other two stood behind. One man seized the driver by the neck and choked him to death. They took his watch and seven dollars. His body was found hidden in the willows near a creek. The murderers were caught near Golden, working in a brick yard a short time later.

The County Jail was just below our house. Three men killed and robbed a man on the road below Georgetown. They were caught and put in jail waiting for trial. When we kids went by they would look out of the small iron-barred windows and talk to us. One cold damp morning, we were going by the jail when we noticed a hole burnt out large enough for a man to crawl through. There was one man still in jail. We asked him what had become of his partners. He said they took turns over several months burning a hole in the wall with a hot stove poker. The other two got out the hole, but the hole was not large enough for him so he had to stay there! These men were later captured near Golden, Colorado, returned for trial and only received a few years’ sentence in the pen at Cañon City.
One of the convicts, that was one of the men that murdered that man in my story, served his time. Another man, by the name of Brad Cole, belonged to a gang of burglars and gamblers. Cole was in my father’s saloon one evening, and was the last to leave the saloon that night. My father locked the saloon and carrying his day’s money in a box, started for home. He noticed a man darting from tree to tree in the grove between the saloon and our house. He saw another man dodging between houses. My father walked very fast and got to our house first. A man knocked on the door and said, “Say, John, I left my overcoat in the saloon, am leaving and want it.” My father never answered; the man kicked and pounded on the door, using very bad language and making threats. My father had his revolver in hand. Mother, and all the kids, woke up scared half to death. My father had a time keeping us quiet. After a lot of pounding and cussing, the men left, and were never seen again. They had intended to rob him before he got to the house. Dad said if they got any rougher, he was going to shoot.

There were some Cousin Jack [Cornish] miners who got it in for Dad. They quit patronizing him, and went into Georgetown to get drunk. Then they came to Dad’s saloon one night and created a disturbance. One big bully, the leader, done a lot of cussing. Dad had a kid’s baseball bat with a buckskin strap that he wore on his wrist. He tapped the old boy on the noggin and cold cocked him, and said to the others, “Come and I will give you the same!” The man’s companions carried him out, never to return.
...AND OTHER DANGERS

Living in a mining town could be very dangerous. One evening in the spring of the year, we five small boys were eating supper. My sister waited table. She stepped into the kitchen for more food when a large boulder came bounding down the mountain, going through the roof of the house just missing my sister. Her apron strings caught in the door as it was slammed shut. The rock missed her by only a few inches and landed in the room only a few feet from us boys who were sitting at the table. Everything was dark. We were all very much frightened and stunned. The next thing we knew we heard the folks pushing a window to one side. It was a half window. They took us out one at a time, unharm ed. We were unhurt but badly scared. That was on a Saturday evening. Sunday morning two of our neighbors who were miners came with a single jack, hammers and drills. They broke the boulder in pieces and tossed them out of the window.

Sometime after that we had a cow with a young calf. We were all eating dinner. One of the children said, “There goes our cow and calf down town.” We went out to find that a huge boulder had come down the mountain, knocking one side of the barn out, and enabling the cow and calf to walk out unharmed.

One week from that day, Mr. Schuyler, one of the miners, was working in a mine on the mountain further up. He was caught in a cave in, and he broke his back. He was carried down the mountain by four men. He lived about six weeks before he died. In later years, Mr. Schuyler’s son, John, became a Catholic priest. The other miner who helped us was a very good friend of my folks. His name was August Zuverney. My youngest brother was named after him.
LIFE IN A MINING TOWN

My father had lived in the bachelor quarters at the back of the saloon before his family arrived to Georgetown. We rented a house for a time before we built our own. That was about 1883; I was about eight years old. We were very industrious – kept a cow or two, sold milk. We had a very fine milk cow, white as snow. One day we came home; mother said, “I sold the cow.” We were heartbroken and felt very bad. She took us in the other room and showed us $75.00 in gold; the cow had been replaced with a cheaper one.

I can remember when a man by the name of Mr. Forgey drove a jack (mule) train. Forty or fifty jacks belonged to a Mr. Forrest whose barns and corrals were on the road to Silver Plume. They went past our home every morning packed with provisions and lumber tied on each side, with supplies dragging behind the mules. They had stoves and tools of all kinds for the miners high up in the mountains. They returned in the evening loaded down with one to three hundred pounds of ore. Ox teams were also a common sight and were often taken to the village blacksmith to be shod. Mr. Forgey was our neighbor when we moved to Routt County years later.

A friend of ours gave my oldest brother a jack mule. The man came back some time later and said, “If you feed and water your jack, someday, the offspring from this jack will be yours.” And sure enough, for years the offspring from that jack was our family’s only transportation.

The hill below our house was very steep and a glare of ice in the winter. John, one of my brothers, and some more boys were coasting down the hills “belly buster” style. John’s sled left the road at the foot of the hill and went under a large ore wagon. His head was split open, and he was bleeding hard, which almost caused his death. He was carried to the house in a very serious condition, but recovered.

There was a grove of evergreen trees between our house and the saloon. I was passing by and, being a good shot with rocks, I threw a rock at a red-headed woodpecker on the wing and killed it. Another time I threw a rock at a camp robber. It fell to the ground. I felt sorry and carried it home. It appeared dead. My mother said I was a bad boy. I revived it by putting water on its head. When it came to, it flew at our bird in a cage and my mother finished it with a poker!

While I was going to work one early morning, the chipmunks were sitting up on their hind feet, paws to their mouths. I threw a rock and killed some of them. I always felt very sorry although they were very destructive rodents. We often saw wildlife near our home, including mountain sheep and mountain lions, in the rocky cliffs nearby.

About that time, the narrow gauge Colorado and Southern Railroad was built up Clear Creek to Silver Plume. A bunch of us boys were walking along the track near a bridge that crossed the track just before the passenger train was due. We found a pile of rocks...
on the track near a bridge that crossed the track. We removed the rocks which surely averted a wreck.

On Clear Creek, there was an abandoned stamp ore mill. There was a dam on the creek and a wood pipe made with wood staves and iron bands to hold it together. The boys would take a sharp pick and punch holes in it and watch the water shoot up in the air. The mill was two stories high with lots of windows in it. We would see who could break the most windows with rocks. There were large wooden vats, 10 to 12 feet in diameter. We would wreck them and use the bottoms for rafts in the creek.

My brother John and I wanted to make a little money. Mark Wright had a pile of wood he wanted sawed. He said he would give us five dollars to cut the pile of wood. We started with a will; however, he kept adding wood to the pile! We protested. He said, “You can quit.” He gave us fifty cents for what we had done! Then he gave the job to a blind boy named Hugh McCabe. Hugh gathered wood on the mountainside and hauled it home on a cart pulled by our jack.

One day my brother, Joe, and I were spearing trout with a homemade fish spear. Joe hid in the willows while I tossed pebbles in the water to scare them to him. I said, “There is a dandy!” Just then we heard a few shots. Several bullets hit the water between us! We were badly frightened and made a hasty retreat! Several years later, Mark Wright with his wife and a few friends, came to Routt County on a hunting trip. We were around the campfire telling stories. Mark said, “One time I was down on the creek. You boys were down there spearing fish. I fired a few shots into the water between you! You boys never stopped running until you got home!” He had a good laugh saying he fired the shots to scare us. A good joke on us! Mark later became the town marshal and game warden.

The Morris family had charge of the placer mines, belonging to the Lombards. An explanation about placer mining [the mining of alluvial deposits for minerals]: There was a wooden flume that passed through Empire where gold was caught. It had a solid smooth bottom. Inside this flume, round wood blocks were placed four or five inches high, wedged in with rocks to fill in the spaces. When the flume was filled to the upper end, quicksilver was poured in. The water scattered the quicksilver from one end to the other.

A ditch was built in the higher mountains from some stream of water. The water was turned into large iron pipes that tapered to six inches and a hose was attached to the pipe with a nozzle. The pipe went down a very steep mountain to get pressure. The water came out of the nozzle with extreme force which was turned toward the hillside. As this muddy mess went through the flume, the quicksilver caught gold. Water went down the flume from the creek, washing down gravel, rocks and dirt which contained particles of gold.
This was kept up for several months, changing shifts night and day. One man operated the hose, washing down the gravel on the side of the mountain. When the cleanup crew came, the water was shut off to just a little trickle. Men got in the flume with rubber hip boots on and threw the blocks and rocks out. The gold caught by quicksilver washed to the lower end of the flume where it was dipped out and put in iron jars called retorts. It was then put in iron kettles and heated over a fire. The quicksilver came to the top and was poured off to be reused. In the bottom of the kettle, the gold was in a solid chunk. The gold I saw was valued at $20,000 which was sold at the mint for $20.00 an ounce. Now gold is worth $35.00 per ounce. Placer mining pollutes the water and makes it unfit for livestock or irrigation, plus is very injurious to fish in the streams.

My father’s brewery business went very well, delivering beer to the various mining camps, until about 1877. When the Colorado and Southern Railroad (C & SRR) narrow gauge was built, it put them out of business. Beer could be shipped in, cheaper than my father and uncle could make it. We moved downtown, a short distance from the brewery. One night my mother woke us kids; the brewery was on fire and soon burned to the ground.
MOVING TO BIG CHIEF

Soon after that time there was much excitement about a new mining camp that sprung up about one mile above Empire, Colorado, called the Big Chief. Billy Eickhoff’s father was the promoter; you will hear more about Eickhoffs later on in my story. In the mid-1880s, my father moved near the Big Chief Mine where he started a saloon there. A large tipple was built at Big Chief and large boilers were installed to process uranium. A gang of several hundred men were employed cutting cord wood on Berthoud Pass to fire the boilers. They floated the logs down Clear Creek to the mill where dams were built. The logs were then taken out and put in long piles. William Eickhoff’s father was one of the promoters. Billy Eickhoff later became my brother-in-law, marrying my sister, Josephine.

My sister, Emma, was born in Georgetown in 1883 before the family moved to Big Chief. Before the family moved, I once told my mother I wanted to visit my dad. I was only eight years old, and an adventurous cuss as you will see. My mother got me up bright and early. I walked downtown to the Ennis Hotel, where passengers met the stage. A span [pair] of horses was there hitched to a buckboard. I felt very important. I took a seat next to the driver. We drove over Empire Pass through Empire, then to Big Chief, a distance of five miles. This was a very treacherous road where you could look down on the C & S Railroad and the road to Idaho Springs. At the stage station in Big Chief, I was having a nice visit with the man who helped change horses. Pa and some men thought I was lost and Pa started to Empire on foot hunting for me. I ran down the road and overtook him. He was sure mad. I returned, with my father, to Georgetown that Saturday evening.

My father used his span of horses, Pete and Prince, when he delivered beer in kegs to Silver Plume and other mining camps. While at the Big Chief, we boys kept the team on a little flat meadow below the mine. We called this flat The Prairie. My father had the horses picketed (staked) there part of the time. When he went to get them one day, they had mysteriously disappeared. Apparently some horse thief stole them.

The majority of people at Big Chief went to a place high up in the mountains called Dead Timber that had been burnt over. We would go there to pick black currants, gin grapes, huckleberries, and raspberries; it was a mile or two from town. Red currents, they said, were “not fit to eat.” Other berries were plentiful and we used a rake to harvest the huckleberries, too small to harvest by hand. Every season we picked and sold berries, besides some for our own use. Mason jars were unknown. Instead, we got beer bottles, heated an iron ring and cut the bottle below the neck. We would then hit it with a hammer; the tops would break off. The washed bottles were then filled with jam and a cloth or paper was pasted over the opening, which kept preserves real well.

One day at Dead Timber, some of the boys got into an argument, got unruly and started to fight. They were stopped by older boys and told to wait until evening. They were then
taken to a place called The Battlefield, where you could fight it out before going home. Their differences were settled with fists! Many a bloody battle took place there. Many came out with black eyes and bloody noses, but there were no knockouts.

The “big boom” at Big Chief did not last long, and soon faded out of the picture. We lived at Big Chief for only about nine months. The ore had quickly played out and the camp was abandoned. Most of the buildings were destroyed by fire.
EMPIRE AND TIME FOR SCHOOL

Our family moved back to Empire to another mining camp in the spring of 1885. My father started another saloon; this business lasted for about four years. My sister, Edith, was born in Empire in 1885. Pauline was the next to make her appearance, born on March 21. I better not say what year; might cause a commotion. Grandma Guenella was midwife for all eight of us kids; we had no doctor at all.

Our living quarters were provided just north of the brewery a short distance away, near a small stream of cold clear mountain water. The first child born to our family while we lived in Empire was my sister Edith, born on July 9th. When she was a few years old she was taken very sick, with inflammation of the bowels. Mrs. Eickhoff, a doctor’s wife, had a lot of experience and came to the rescue. By taking turns putting hot hop poultices* on her stomach, Mrs. Eickhoff, no doubt, saved her life.

My mother was a very religious woman. Being a Christian woman, she never neglected the teachings of the Bible. Every morning at home, all of us children gathered around her to repeat the Lord’s Prayer in German. Every Sunday she read a few chapters in the Bible while the children surrounded her. We also made our confessions and the older ones took Holy Communion and studied catechism of the Catholic Church. While we lived in Empire, we attended the Catholic Church in Georgetown four miles away. My mother was very faithful. On Sundays, we walked, rode, or drove a burro to church four miles over Empire Pass which was a narrow and dangerous road. One day my brothers and I were walking along the road on the pass. I got too close to the edge but caught myself just in time to save being dashed to pieces several hundred feet below on the jagged rocks. No doubt a guardian angel warned me just in time to save my life.

When we had first arrived in Empire, I met the Peck and Trevillion brothers working on an old mine. I said, “Howard Peck, are you a claim jumper?” He raised his pick and swung it at me. I picked up a rock and was about to let him have it between the eyes. He dropped his pick. We became friends and always were after that. The Peck boys invited me to come and have ice cream if I would help turn the freezer crank that day which I gladly did.

* “A hop poultice is often a fine remedy for removing the pain of toothache or neuralgia, and in any cases of nerve trouble this has been found very beneficial. To make it, take one cupful of hops and one cupful of ground linseed. Bring the hops, covered with water, to a boil, then mix in the linseed. Apply in the same fashion as a linseed poultice. Another way of making a hops poultice is to put the hops up in a flannel hat and to heat the hat in the oven.”

(From an edition of the Bendigo Advertiser, Victoria, Australia, dated Saturday 12 August 1916)
We started school in Empire that next fall. Our school mates were Howard and Russell Peck. Their family had a hotel, the Peck House. Mr. Frank Peck worked at Georgetown in the court house as an official. The Peck boys were not too fond of work. They often invited me to turn the crank on that ice cream freezer. My compensation was a lick of ice cream. The Peck boys have now passed on to their reward. There was also a daughter, and one more son had been killed in a mine several years back. Jim and Tom Trevillion were also our school mates. Their father was mine superintendent or foreman. Tom became an engineer on the Moffat Railroad. Jim Trevillion later had a welding plant in Arvada, Colorado. He was very successful; he retired and moved in Denver, where he “lives the life of Riley.”

I must also mention families with girls: Petersons, Andersons, and Lindstroms. When I was eleven years old, my folks considered the Lindstroms very dear friends. The Lindstroms had a farm a short distance north of Empire. They had me go to work for them through the summer vacation. An alarm clock was placed on a stand, set to go off at break of day. I would go to their place before breakfast, work all day, or what I could at my age. I weeded the garden, gathered wood on a nearby hillside, helped with housework and more. All I got was my meals. I often wonder why I was compelled to work so hard at my young age, while other boys were swimming, fishing, and having a good time. Since that time, I have been unable to sleep after daylight. No doubt that was a blessing in disguise that came in handy in later years. I often got up early to go hunting for small game and large. Also, when doing chores, taking care of horses and milking cows, rising at daybreak often got me ahead of the game. When I was small, my father was always the first one up in the morning. He would build a fire and sweep the kitchen floor. Maybe I inherited this early-riser tendency from my father as well.

Mrs. Lindstrom’s mother was Mrs. Guenella, a motherly, good old soul. She was a midwife who brought myself and my four brothers into the world, and my four sisters. Fifty years later, I was going to Denver on a cattle truck with Perry Gray and Ed Myers. I had the pleasure of stopping in Empire for a visit with her sons, Joe and Paul, and two daughters who still live there. I asked them about the old sawmill and about the old fish pond where they put up ice. They said the boys still fish there.

When I was a boy at school, one of our studies was Hygiene and Physiology. We learned the effects of tobacco and strong drink on the human nervous system. One day, some boys gave me some money and told me to go to the store to buy some chewing tobacco. We then went to a barn, and all took a chew, me included. I took a big chew and swallowed the juice. By the time I got home, I was pale and sicker than a dog. My mother put me to bed and doctored me. I never told her what I had done. That was the only tobacco I ever tasted. I never smoked a pipe, cigarettes, or cigars. I did drink whiskey and very little beer.

One year during the school term, a member of the school board came to repair the stove pipe. Our school house was an old church, with two rooms, two openings for
stoves. The opening that was not in use started to smoke. A member of the school board filled the opening with rags. He should have known better. That night the building caught on fire and burnt to the ground. Kids all rejoiced, which did not last long. An old school below town was reconditioned and we were back in school once again. Our next school was on a hill south of town.

I must have been a very good scholar. My teacher gave me a pearl-handle pocket knife, which I took great pride in. It was in a buckskin bag with a drawstring. I admired both very much, and showed it to my friends. I kept it in our bureau drawer at home. My brothers were jealous of me. One day after we relocated to Routt County, they took it out and bet it on a horse race….and lost it.

I recall several others who also resided in Empire at the time: Mr. Smith lived near Empire, raised a fine garden, and drove a fine team of spirited horses. He would take his team and wagon to meet the passengers at the Empire station, and he also carried the mail. His team was trained to dance. He would say, “Dance,” and they would, as pretty as you can. Mr. Smith always carried his loose change in his mouth. He liked his beer, and would say to my father, “Give me a glass of sauerkraut.” My father filled his glass with kraut, saying, “You Dutch hog!”

Dr. Elliot was our doctor; I believe he had a drugstore. Silas Hanchett had the grocery store. He grubstaked some miners, who opened up the Lambertine Mine. That mine was a fine producer. Mr. Hanchett was killed, driving a horse and buggy while inspecting his mine. His son moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, and was a successful mine operator. He wrote a book called The Old Sheriff.

We had a nice body of water with a sandy bottom in the willows nearby home, where we went splashing. We were the same as any bunch of boys, doing a lot of playing and paddling in the sloughs and creeks. The Mays, Schnarrs and many more played in this favorite swimming hole. One day I slipped ahead of the boys, undressed, hid my clothes in the willows, put my hat on with just my head above the water. The boys came and saw me and thought I was drowning. They made a run for me to save my life. I grabbed my clothes and made a hasty retreat. Of course, I took to the tall and uncut. If they had found my clothes, no doubt I would have gone home in a barrel.

My father came in possession of a race horse named Bally, steel grey, with a white face and four white feet. One morning my sister, Josie, wanted to ride him to the berry patch. Josie always wanted to be first in everything. She put on a sunbonnet, and tied some lunch and some pails onto the saddle. She was helped on by my brother, John, who said, “Are you ready to go?” The pony started out as though in a race; Bally made a run for a quarter of a mile. Luckily, Josie did not fall off. Years later, we brought Bally to Routt County where he ran on the race tracks in Steamboat Springs. Bally lived to a ripe old age. When the railroad was graded through our ranch near Steamboat Springs, Bally
walked to the railroad grade one half mile south. He then came back on the country road and dropped dead in front of the barn! This was in the fall of 1908.

While we were in Empire, my father decided to give the family a vacation. We hired a horse and spring wagon from the town butcher. My father, mother, five boys and three sisters, Edith, Pauline and baby Bertha, all got into the spring wagon with the bedding, cooking utensils and provisions. John stayed home to tend bar; Josie stayed home to keep house.

We started over Berthoud Pass. Mr. Hamil, a wealthy mining man at Georgetown, had bought the Berthoud road. It was kept under lock and key with a large white timber to be raised before you could go through. This was a toll gate where you had to pay a fee. The fee was $2.50 for a single team and wagon and stock. There were 15 or 20 miles of corduroy to go over. There were some very steep places. One hill called Big Blue and another, Little Blue, were dreaded by the freighters. Generally, you had to put four horses on each wagon to climb. These hills were near Atlantic House, above the Big Chief Mine. Going uphill, the boys all pushed. Going down we pulled back to keep the wagon from running over the horses.

We spent a week in Middle Park and called it a picnic. We arrived at the Frazer River late one night, and camped with a Jim Ganson, known as Skipmunk Fritz, whose ranch was on the Frazer River. He was a German man with long hair and whiskers. He had an Airedale dog which he used for a pillow. While we were there, this man went out to get a pail of water. As he stooped over to pull it up, his buck sheep he called John Henry gave him a butt off of the bridge and he landed in the icy creek. He had some lambs. He picked up a nice fat lamb, and cut its throat for our meat. It made us kids feel very sad.

Fritz was also the mail carrier. In the winter he used one horse pulling a toboggan to carry the mail sacks, and always got through. When we moved to Routt County, Skipmunk Fritz hauled a load of household goods for us. Fritz was a drinking man, took on too much booze, and later froze to death in a shed during the winter.

The roads were very bad, about 13 more miles of corduroy, poles laid down together, very rough. We walked up the steep road and rode down. We ended our vacation by spending a day or two at Hot Sulphur Springs, where we all enjoyed the hot baths in the warm pool.

While we lived at Empire and Big Chief, large herds of cattle would often go by, including Texas longhorns of all colors. The cowboys driving the cattle told us there were 1,000 head or more in that drive going to Northwestern Colorado. We kids used to tag along behind the herd, and ask the cowboys questions. The steers we saw were then returned to market, prime beef, as they were called, having been fattened on native blue stem and wire grass in Routt County. One time we saw 1,000 head of horses.
heading to the same area. A cowboy driving the horses said, “Are you boys all brothers?”
“Yes,” we replied.
“How many boys are there in the family?”
We said, “Seven, with the old man.”

We often bought butter in ten pound wooden pails. It came from Grand and Routt counties peddled by farmers because that was their only market. Wild game was also brought from Northwestern Colorado and sold at the mining camps. They sold frozen suckers from sleds in fall and winter that were caught in Middle Park. One time, Henry Lehman, an old hunter from Middle Park and two other men, were riding horses and pulling 20 or more deer on a trail through which they went to the mining camps. A grizzly bear, that weighed over 1,000 pounds, was brought to be sold as well.

One day back in 1888, while we lived in Empire, a man, wife and little girl came driving on the road from Middle Park. They stopped by our house; the man seemed to be very excited. He pitched a tent and carried a bed roll into the tent. My mother said those people are having trouble and went to see what the trouble was. The lady was ready to be confined. My mother gave all the assistance she could. After everything was over, my mother said, “That lady has a little girl.”

In 1889, I was thirteen years old, and my brother John was a few years older. We went to Middle Park to help Leopold Miller in the hayfields. His ranch was where the Frazer River empties into the Grand. He was a dirty old German bachelor with long hair and whiskers; he never shaved nor had a haircut. Mr. Miller always spoke German to us. He was well to do; he had cattle and a bunch of horses. Miller also had some fine shorthorn cattle; their range was some distance from the house. Every Sunday morning, he would go out on the range, and call the cattle, bringing with him loose salt in a sack. Rock salt was unknown at that time. He would call his cattle and they would come to him. He would put little piles of salt here and there. When his steers were three years old, he drove them over Berthoud to the mining camps to sell.

Our diet while working at the Miller ranch was mostly sour dough biscuits and corn mush; what was left over from the corn mush, we fried with sow belly. We also milked two cows, which helped. We carried water one quarter to one half mile from the Grand River through the tall grass to the ranch house; water was very precious. Seeds and grasshoppers had to be fished out of the water before we could drink it or use it to cook. Water was so far to carry we had to be very conservative. Sometimes there was not enough water. Then old Miller would cuss a blue streak in German.

Mrs. Miller did the mowing, John raked, and I shocked (shocks were standing bundles) what hay I could. Then John and Leopold helped me catch up. We had a scythe to cut hay when it was too thick to mow. We had a grindstone that turned with a crank. John turned the stone and Leopold did the grinding. My job was to pour water on the stone.
Sometimes John turned too fast, then too slow. All the hay was raked and shocked, then hauled in a hay rack to the barn. My other job was to rake the scatterings with a long-handled rake with wooden teeth. We always dreaded to be far from that house after dark. Near the house on a knoll there was a grave and monument where Mr. Webber, the former ranch owner, was buried. He had been killed at Grand Lake where several others were killed in a political feud.

The hay at the Miller place was all stacked by hand. I used a wooden rake to pick up every spear and rake it in little bunches. Summer quickly slipped by and it was time for us to go home. One Sunday morning, we got up at about three in the morning; the stars were still shining. John and Leopold saddled three horses. I rode a tall, long legged, thin horse bareback. When they galloped, my horse went on a stiff trot, which about shook my liver loose. I had to hang onto his mane to keep from falling off. Mr. Miller left us at Spruce Lodge on Berthoud Pass. There were no signs of any kind, only a little blue sky now and then showing though the forest. John and I took a short cut, walked a distance, then cut through uncharted timber in the high mountains, arriving back home that evening at about nine o’clock. Our compensation for three weeks work was the magnificent sum of $5.00 handed to my father. In later years, the Miller ranch was owned by Murphy, Blamey and myself.

One day, while the brewery was operating, two young men were walking along the railroad track, and stopped at the brewery. They were both hired. One’s name was Dave Holtsworth; the other’s name was Herman Shull. After the brewery quit operating, Dave went to Grand Lake, no doubt some of his ancestors are still there. Herman went to Williams Fork and took a homestead. He had spotted a homestead for my father in Middle Park, where we intended to locate. One day my father got a message that Herman died with pneumonia. Our plans were all shattered. Herman’s brother, Albert, came from Cheyenne, Wyoming, and took over his holdings. Albert became a prominent rancher in Middle Park. He is now retired and living at Kremmling, Colorado.
HOMESTEADING IN SIDNEY

Moving to Northwestern Colorado

My mother said, “We will save our berry money, and what we get for milk we will use to pay for a ranch. Your father, being a saloonkeeper, and all this time in town is no place to raise a lot of boys.”

Ambitious Family

In the spring of 1889, my father and his brothers, Joe and Adolph, and a butcher by the name of Stutz, headed for Routt County to look for a homestead. My father had previously traveled to Ogden, Utah to find a new location but prices were too high on the farms he saw.

Jock Phillips, a big broad-shouldered Nova Scotian, and George and John Lang were our neighbors in Empire. John Lang was Superintendent of the Lambtine Mine, partly owned by Silas Hanchett and son. Phillips and Lang had purchased ranch land in Routt County. They said it was fine country and all kinds of fruit could be raised there. After my father and party arrived, they found things much different than they expected.

The weary travelers started to make camp the first night. Aul Milner had a homestead ranch south of the John Laramore ranch. My father and uncles camped on that little flat meadow on Milner’s place, picketing their horses there. Milner came down and made threats and ordered my father and his companions off. Milner made a pass for his pocket knife and gave them orders to pull stakes and get out. He then threatened to draw a gun. Stutz started for the wagon to get his rifle and said, “Two of us can play this game!” Stutz beat Milner to the draw and said, “I will take a hand in this.” Seeing that they could not be bluffed, Milner drew in his horns, got real friendly, and offered his relinquishment for $1500.00. My father looked it over and would not take it.

After scouting around and interviewing several ranch men, my father bought a relinquishment for $750.00 from a Frenchman, Eugene LeVene, in June of 1889 on the ranch at Sidney where my family and I would live. This homestead was 160 acres, with good water rights. It was located about one mile south of Lang and Phillip’s place, eight miles south of Steamboat Springs on the Yampa River. A relinquishment was a homestead that someone else had taken up, but did not want to keep. My father had to go to Glenwood Springs to file on these homesteads. My father later bought an additional 160 acres of upland ground a half mile to the west.

My father, and his brothers Joe and Adolph borrowed Stutz, the butcher’s, spring wagon once again. Jim Ganson (Skipmunk Fritz) and Mr. Lumke helped haul our household
goods from Empire. The price paid to them was $3.00 per hundred. Mr. McCoy provided a boat, near where State Bridge is now on the Grand River. Livestock, horses and wagons were ferried across the river.

**Milk, the Magic Cure**

The first week in September 1889, Brother John and I headed for our new home in Routt County. I was just about 13 years old at the time. We accompanied our new neighbors, Jock Philipps and Aul Milner, who were bringing supplies from Empire to Sidney. Usually, it took four horses to pull a wagon over the pass. Philipps and Milner had only single teams; both wagons were loaded with provisions for the winter. Jock had a few head of cattle. We had two milk cows, and a two-year-old burrow, black in color. John rode his saddle pony. We all started over Berthoud Pass. The burrow would not lead so had to be pulled behind the wagon; he was not broke to lead, and pulled back. Jock said, “I cannot put up with that.” Jock made a hackamore out of a lariat rope and tied him behind the wagon. The road was very steep and rocky with many short hills to pull. At times, I rode the burrow, with no saddle or bridle. He was very unruly, but I helped drive the cows. We passed through the toll gate run by Mr. Avery and family.

We finally arrived at the Gardner ranch at the foot of Berthoud Pass, where we camped for the night. We then stayed a night near Cousins’ ranch. In Middle Park, we picked up six cows; each cow had a heifer calf. My mother had bought these with the money we saved, from selling raspberries and milk. That was our start in the cattle business.

It was very hot and dusty. We ate beans and sow belly, and a little dried fruit. All we had to drink was alkali water and black coffee, which did not agree with me. I got very sick and could not eat anything for a day or two. I clung to the donkey as best I could; I was too sick to walk. The unbroken animal was alternately sullen and frisky. We camped that next night on the Gore Range. Jock said something must be done, at once. They thought I would die if they didn’t do something for me. This was my birthday, September 10. One man thought a heavy slug of whiskey might be just the thing for a 13 year old. The situation was so desperate that no one voiced any objection to the idea. He brought out a jug of whiskey which was carried by most freighters. They filled a cup two-thirds full and forced this down me. I drank it; it went to my head. They decided that they must get the boy onto his feet and keep him walking. The supplier of the whiskey said, “Now you walk and keep walking.” I walked and walked between two of the men. I objected as much to the walking as I had to drinking the whiskey. I wondered why I couldn’t die, but I started walking farther, in the wrong direction. By the time they had breakfast, I had walked some distance. John got on his horse and forced me to back track. By that time, the whiskey gave me the desired effect. All that alcohol in the empty stomach of a 13 year old took immediate and startling effect. It was obvious to the men that they had
administered an overdose of the remedy. I was too sick to walk any more. I was helped into the wagon, drunk as a fool.

Near Toponas, my brother saw some cows and conceived the idea that a drink of milk might help me. John roped one of the cows and milked her. I wasn’t much interested in nourishment, but I drank a cup full of that warm cow’s milk, which also had the desired effect. At last, I snapped out of it, felt better, and drank more milk. My older brother decided he wanted me to be taken home to the ranch quickly and put to bed. I still credit that drink of milk with making a magical cure. Perhaps that had something to do with the family’s later decision to take up dairying.

We went by Toponas. A man was sitting on the porch in front of his house. Jock said that is Mr. Newcomer. I said, “He has known the best of me.” There were only a few buildings in Yampa: a store and a blacksmith shop owned by Mr. Arnold. Mr. Arnold, the village blacksmith, stood in front of his shop, wearing his leather apron.
SETTLING DOWN IN SIDNEY

We arrived at the little country community of Sidney in the evening. Jarred Lyon was the postmaster; he had named the post office Sidney. There was a small saloon there, where the cowboys gathered to drink. Soon after, with the coming of more homesteaders and “civilization,” the saloon was closed and this tiny building was converted into the community’s first schoolhouse.

Then we came to the corner of our ranch, a quarter mile north of Sidney. There was a cabin with a dirt roof at the foot of a hill. The cabin was small, only one room about 12 feet square. A log barn and a shed were a short distance to the northwest. There was a small corral. A two wire fence ran on the west side, extending south and east to the Canyon on Ferd Jochems’ ranch. The fence then went north then east to the river. This was the only fence in the valley to keep range cattle out from the west. There was also a spring or shallow well there, near the Oak Creek. There was a small stack of hay, about 15 tons put up from a natural meadow near the river.

Dad was told in Steamboat that there was no doctor there. He did not want to take chances with so many children. He was told that people in Routt County are so healthy, that only one man was buried in the Steamboat cemetery; he died, not having enough blankets to keep him warm. However, our first doctor, Dr. Kernaghan, located that fall to Steamboat.

The small cabin was not big enough for mother, father, and eleven children. My father got a contract to build a house with a dirt roof as was all the go those days. My father gave Jock Phillips a contract to build a three room house for our family. Lang and Phillips built a great many cabins in the valley. George Lang helped build the house, also, and they began the job right away. The house was supposed to cost $250.00. The logs and building material were hauled from the Suttle Sawmill on Burgess Creek at the foot of Storm Mountain. Munson and Burgess had a mill on Priest Creek. Suttles also had a mill on Walton Creek. Ernest Campbell had a saw mill on McKinnis Creek. Mud was hauled from nearby Steamboat Springs near the Soda Springs to daub the cracks, as was the custom. We all worked hard because we were very ambitious.

Lang’s and Phillips’ ranches were located one mile north of our ranch. My brothers and myself boarded with them, and went back and forth, while building the house. Lang’s father did the cooking. My father sent a couple of grubbing hoes over with some teamsters; my brother and I cleared several acres of sagebrush for the home site, before the rest of the family arrived.

We moved the homestead cabin next to the house, leaving a space between the two buildings for a kitchen. We used this old cabin as a bunk house for the boys. I dropped my bed roll on a bed consisting of springs and a mattress. My brothers, Joe and Henry,
always slept together. They deliberately threw my roll on the floor which was absolutely against bunk house rules. They put their roll on my mattress and springs, which made a very nice bed. We held a pow wow and compromised by piling in the same bed, three in one. It was a very cold night, of course, but I was real comfortable in the middle. They done a lot of grumbling without any results.

We made a ruling that I should be chief cook and bottle washer; they were to take care of my horses. I suspicioned something when they went to the barn as usual to get the horses ready. I washed the dishes and put everything in the grub bag and put it on the wagon all set to go. I done a little eavesdropping outside the door and heard Henry say, “Well, Joe, let’s throw the harness on Louis’s old scrags without needing to bother about currying them.” I stepped inside the barn and said, “What did I just hear?” Like two good little boys, they never made a whimper, but gave my team an extra good combing and brushing that morning to meet my approval.

Our ranch was all covered with sage brush and willows, only a small natural meadow. Jock Phillips and Lang cut and stacked our hay. About 15 tons; it cost us $75.00 or $80.00. That was all the hay we needed to feed 17 head of stock. We also got busy getting out a set of logs for a barn for the horses and for a cattle shed. We did not feel it right to have stock stand out without shelter.
THE FIRE OF 1889

My first exciting experience in Routt County happened one night in about the middle of September. On our return from having dinner at a neighbor’s ranch, we noticed a lot of smoke rolling across the valley in the west, fanned by a stiff wind. By the time we got home, a forest fire had started west of Sidney and the whole country was a mass of flames. A large fire in the Oak Hills was driven by a west wind which threatened to wipe out the entire valley, from Oak Creek north to Steamboat Springs. The flames were very near our place. Deer and antelope were running ahead of the fire, toward the river and out of danger. Terrified rabbits ran to escape the flames. Sage hens and willow grouse were seen flying ahead of the fire. It was only by the desperate and heroic efforts of the settlers that the valley was saved from destruction. No doubt the fire was started by careless hunters. The only way to get outside help was by horseback which was a slow process. There were no telephones, game wardens or forest rangers. In remote places, fires were often left burning to their own free will to be put out by early snows or hard rains. However, all the neighbors for miles around met at the Sidney post office, bringing horses and plows. All bedding was carried to Oak Creek to keep it from burning. They plowed fire guards in furrows, west of the buildings. Some brought pails of water to the edge of the fire; others fought the flames with wet gunny sacks.

One family south of our ranch was expecting a new baby. Two neighbor women were in attendance. The father rushed to our house; bedding was carried into the yard. Pails of water and wet sacks were on hand to protect the mother, and create a safe perimeter. The baby was delivered safely. During all the excitement, all of their hay was burned. Good neighbors later donated hay to see them through the winter.

The flames were finally held under control and that evening the fire died down. The dense forest nearby had been burned to the ground. In the end, very little damage was done around our area, except Howard Carpenter’s hay was all burned. Bill Booco was at the John Suttle ranch and saved his hay. For several days after, porcupines were seen wandering around with their quills burned off and eyes burnt and blinded. We killed several a few days later.
Homesteading the Yampa Valley
By Robert Rowe

“Flames raged eastward over the Oak Hills toward the Yampa river, and the valley homesteads south of Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Every homesteader was out with a team of horses and a walking plow, breaking fireguards between the advancing fire and the new cabins.

Horses snorted and plunged when the smoke swirled down around them. Their eyes rolled wildly in the direction of the onsweping flames, but the heavy plows biting into the sod kept the teams from bolting.

John Summer Sr. was one of those homesteaders and he was fighting to save the three-room house and the log barn he had built that summer. It was September, 1889, and the Oak Hills were dry as a hot stove lid. Apparently some camper had let his fire get out of control. Now it leaped forward through the dry meadows.”

Wind Fans Flames

“In the second house down the valley, the young homesteader’s wife was momentarily expecting the arrival of a baby. Neighbor women who had come in to assist her were panic-stricken by the danger that the house would be burned with all of them in it. They moved the young wife and her bed into the yard and brought tubs of water to be used to fight back the flames. The resourceful women were able to keep the flames out of the yard, and there the baby was born.

Louis Summer, John’s son, was 13 years old at the time and plenty scared. ‘As the flames swept east,’ he recalls, ‘they were fanned by a west wind. Deer and antelope were running ahead of the flames. Grouse and sage hens were flying toward the river bottoms.’

The plowed fireguards successfully stopped the advance of the fire and it was brought under control. ‘Porcupines, scorched and blinded, were found creeping around several days afterward,’ Louis Summer relates.
The rest of the family arrived in Routt County on October 19, 1889. Bertha was only six months old. All our cows had gone dry after the long trip to Empire. We got milk from our neighbor, Mr. Lyon, from his cow which was necessary until our cows freshened the next spring. His cow supplied our little sister Bertha with a quart of fresh milk from the same cow every day.

The large, hard-working Summer family developed their ranch rapidly. Wheat, barley, hay and potatoes were the field crops. We traded deer hides to peddlers that came around, selling dry goods like gloves, socks, and shoes. Beef was the main production of the ranch, with a hill pasture of 280 acres furnishing good grazing. We ran beef cattle and began building a dairy herd. The herd increased until we were milking 30 cows daily.

Our cream was turned by hand, in a barrel churn. We also sold a lot of butter to F.E. Milner, a banker and merchant in Steamboat. Milner then shipped butter on the stagecoach to Hahn’s Peak, a mining town and the County Seat. At times, the stage would pick up our butter at home and take it to Hahn’s Peak. In order to keep from getting confused with other people’s butter, we had a mold made. It was 2 ½ by 4 or 5 inches, with a cow printed on it. The cow had our brand (57S). We used a container that held fifty pounds of butter, with a compartment in it for ice.

In later years, mining slowed down at the Peak; there was no longer a market for butter there. Mr. Lyon, our new neighbor, started a cheese factory. We sold milk to him. He made cheese; we were to get one pound of cheese for every eight pounds of milk. We delivered milk every morning to Mr. Lyon. We hauled the milk in a wooden barrel, in a kids’ wagon. One boy steadied the wagon and two pulled. In the fall, we went to get our cheese. Mr. Lyon’s cheese molds were round, four or five inches high and about fourteen inches in diameter. He placed them in a cool place on shelves. They had to be rubbed by hand and turned over every day for 30 days. The cheese making and sales were successful. My father traveled as far as Craig to dispose of it, and sold it all. We cashed in that fall; Dad took a load of cheese with a wagon and team of horses and peddled it in around the county. Actually, two counties: Routt and Moffat Counties had not been divided at that time. We were paid some in cash and some in farm produce, including wheat. We also received a live pig. Mr. Lyon then purchased more cows of his own. A Mr. Palmer was the main cheese maker. He was a very large man, 250 pounds. Mr. Lyon hauled cheese to Utah and brought back honey to sell. On a trip to Denver, his wagon upset. He was severely injured, which eventually caused his death. I worked for Mr. Lyon several different times. He thought a great deal of me. I had been staying with him the night he passed away. I went to the home of Mr. Bashor, the undertaker. He lived on Burgess Creek, later known as the Dr. Gilmore ranch. Mr. Lyon was buried at his old home in Kansas.

We soon dug a well south of the house. We were very lucky to get a good flow of water, digging 25 feet deep. We rocked the bottom up about eight feet, and cribbed up the rest of the way with balsam poles that had been burnt in the fire.
The Summer family started to plant a garden. The neighbors said, “You can’t even raise lettuce here. It’s too cold. Furthermore, your chickens would eat it up.” We planted anyway, and our first garden was planted on top of the dirt roof house. Irrigation was a sprinkling can pulled up by a rope. The garden was planted there to keep chickens and rodents out. Chicken wire was not to be had. It was a large garden and all took an active part in it: watering, hoeing, and weeding. You had to be very careful not to use too much water or else the roof would leak. It was a success. Along with deer meat and fish, this garden supplied our family plenty to eat. Potatoes were a staple food. For several years, all the potatoes in the valley were raised in Pleasant Valley on the land owned by Bert Barrows. Later, we found potatoes could be raised nearer home.

That fall of 1889, my brother and I spent part of our time catching fish out of Bear River to supply food for our daily use. The rivers teemed with trout, suckers and grayling, now called whitefish. In all the deep holes, fish were so plentiful we got in each other’s ways. Suckers were in schools 100 yards long in the deeper holes. Fish could be speared or caught with grab hooks, when the water was too muddy to see them. Our fishing tackle consisted of a line, pole, a few flies, grasshoppers and bait hooks. Angleworms were unknown then. The first angleworms were planted here by Bill Harvey, known as Bear, and were sent to him by a friend in Missouri. There were no laws or game wardens. We salted the large supply of fish down in earthen jars or barrels to preserve them.
SURVIVING A ROUTT COUNTY WINTER

When winter was about to set in, we needed a horse-drawn sled. As necessity is the mother of invention, we went into the timber and cut a large Quaking Aspen tree, with a natural bend for the runners. We sawed it lengthwise, put a tongue in it, and a box on it. There was not a bit of iron on it except nails for the seat and box. The sled lasted for several years. It was admired by all who saw it.

We made skis called snowshoes out of pine or red Spruce 1 x 4. We used a canvas or leather strap to put the front part of the foot through to hold them on. The tips were soaked and boiled in a wash boiler on the stove, enough to bend them. There was one long pole to push one along or to use for a brake when hills were too steep. You could always tell just how many kids were in a family by the size and number of pairs of snowshoes hanging outside the cabin. Older and larger children required longer skis.

There was little other amusement, except to play cards, over the long winters. That first year, fire had scorched or burned most of the timber west of the valley. It kept us busy supplying timber for barn logs and corral poles, and providing fuel for three stoves in the house. We did very well to do what work we did. John, the oldest, was 16 years old, with five of us younger boys, in a row. We scouted around and found a fine lot of timber on the Chipman ranch, now the Carl Rehder ranch. It had been burnt in 1879 by the Indians, the same fire that burned much of the Rabbit Ears timber. There were a lot of tall dry trees and red spruce and pine north and west of where the Valley View Lodge is now. A big part of the timber was cut down, not even trimmed or cut in lengths. Ferd Jochems came on the scene and ordered us to vacate at once. He said he owned all the logs that were cut down. Jochems and his neighbors had cut the trees on the crust of the snow and gave it all to him. Brother Joe, next older than me, could not be bluffed. He showed a fighting spirit, and said as long as the trees were not trimmed we had a right to them. None of us, my father and his six sons, were easily bluffed. We went right ahead and started to cut skid trails. The older boys with the aid of two horses, that the small boys rode, kept a string of logs going, which soon added to an immense pile. Mr. Jochems was alone and could not make much headway. No doubt we got more than the lion’s share.

Later on, we got firewood west of the ranch from timber killed by the fire of 1889, mostly Quaker Aspen and balsam. Our first winter, we did not know how much fuel we would need so we ran short by spring. We took to the woods on the crust. We took our homemade sled, two on the tongue to pull, and as many more behind to push as there was room for. We did not burn coal at the time, so sawing wood kept us busy. By the next year, we knew how much wood we would have to cut and we did not run short again.

A few years later, my brother-in-law, Billy Eickhoff, and I went to the Chipman ranch to get some dry red spruce trees for a flume to cross Oak Creek for irrigation purposes.
Mrs. Chipman’s son was about grown. He ordered everyone to keep from cutting timber on their homestead, which he had a right to do. We greeted him; he was boiling mad. Before he had time to say anything, Billy pulled out a bottle of whiskey, and said, “Frank, have a drink,” which he did. After talking a while, Billy said, “Have another one,” which Frank did. The time was ripe to approach him for some logs. Frank said, “Sure thing. I will get my axe and help get just want you want.” Frank took another snort after we were loaded. When he got to the house, he threw his hands in the air and hollered, “Say, you can have all the logs you want for nothin’, and the whole damn ranch.”

Spring finally arrived and the snow went off early on the south slopes. The hills were blue with larkspur blossoms, which killed a lot of the cattle. Some ranchers were put out of business. The fire did some good after all; a lot of underbrush was burnt, making it easier to see game to hunt. A lot of raspberries showed up on north slopes which lasted for several years. We picked a lot of strawberries on the river bottoms.

We had wintered the cattle on 15 tons of hay, from the stack that had been left behind. Our neighbors, as well as our family, were about out of hay. Everything was burnt, west of us, the fall before. On April 1st, we would turn out our stock to graze in the hill to the east on Walton Creek. We brought them back home on May 1st. By that time, the grass near home had a good start in the meadows, and in the Oak Hills, which had burnt the fall before.

The Hamils ran cattle in the lower country. Young Hamil had charge of them. There were always ill feelings between cattle men and homesteaders, “nesters”, as they were called. That fall of 1889, Hamil was found dead on the range, a bullet hole through his body. When he had ridden the range, he told those with him, “If anything happens to me, I don’t want to be buried in this wild and wooly God-forsaken country,” and he would sing the song “Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie.” Mrs. Peck, the former Routt County Superintendent of Schools, also told me Hamil had trouble with the nesters. In late December of 1889, his body was taken to Georgetown for burial.

Cattle, mostly aged long horned steers, were shipped in by the thousands in the spring. Cattle were driven overland from Denver railroad stations. They were fattened on free grass and shipped to market. Cattlemen had a free hand. They did not want to see their range taken over by homesteaders, or nesters. Cattlemen would wait until dark, during harvest time, and drive steers onto the homesteaders’ fields, destroying their crops.

At that time, livestock on our ranch consisted of eight cows, six calves and three horses, including a saddle horse and a fine team. Mr. LeVene, the man who previously owned our land, had left a female Shepherd dog that was a great help to herd cattle and track down wounded deer.

Dad got a mare and some colts when we lived in Empire. The range for them in Routt County was on Hunt Creek near Crosho Lake. We had a small pony called Plugust. After
winter set in, it snowed about a foot one night. Plugust could not be found; no tracks of any kind – must have wandered off. His dead body was found on the Cow Creek divide. Sadly, he looked to have starved to death that spring. We found one of our cows, dead, that fell off of the snow trail onto her back. I skinned her, took one quarter, and placed it in a willow bush to set some traps. I caught three red foxes in one night.

LeVene was also a trapper. The story was told that he put out poison to kill foxes and coyotes. A storm came up one night, so he didn’t go out to check his traps. When he did, he found a black fox dead and the pelt spoiled. Black fox pelts were very valuable. He stayed there and cried for a half a day.

We had arrived to our new Sidney home too late to get our winter supply of meat, so we had to live mostly on jack rabbits that first winter. We usually shot them by moonlight with a single barrel muzzle loaded shotgun, which we used a great many years. We called our shotgun Leucetia. It helped fill our larder with ducks, geese, grouse, sage hens and rabbits on the early days of the ranch. One day when the boys were shooting at some grouse, the barrel dropped off a foot from the end, breaking it in two. That was the end of Leucetia, sad to say. We had a .44 black powder rifle we used to kill large game. The sight got broken off so Brother Joe whittled one out of a bone, since there was no gunsmith here at the time.

John Weiskoph was an old friend of the family and lived where Val Moore lives now. He told us to bring a fish seine (trap) over and he would catch some fish for us. However, going home that evening, we were caught in a Routt County blizzard and we were completely lost. It got pitch dark. We were wandering around in circles but finally saw a dim light flicker in the distance. We found our way home or else we would have perished. Once the river froze over we were minus fish.

There were no bridges of any kind at the time. When we wanted to cross a stream, we took our shoes off or got soaking wet. Ben Booco had a homestead where Ralph Hudspeth’s ranch is now. Us boys would spend evenings there with Ben, his brother, Bill, and Al and John Suttle. John Suttle’s ranch was the Hudspeth hay ranch. Not having any pictures or fancy calendars to hang on the wall, they had decorated with grouse, sage hen and duck wings of every shade and color. There were also rabbit ears tacked on the walls and ceiling. Ben was an accomplished musician. He played for dances which we had at various homes.
“WORKING OUT”

Paw and Maw said, “Boys have to go to work out between times, until you are 21 years old.” All the money we earned went to Dad. He hired us out, set the price and did the collecting. At the time, I earned about twenty-five cents a day. We were going to school at the time in a little cabin with a dirt roof that had been Milo Baxter’s saloon. That winter, I was the janitor; my pay was ten cents a day. When spring came Paw had the warrant made out to him. I also sold coyote hides, mink and muskrats. Got $10.00; Paw took that also.

My first experience as a farm hand in Routt County was in the early nineties. I went to work for Mr. Lyon, at the ranch now owned by Hutch Reager. I worked grubbing, piling and burning sagebrush to clear pasture land. I helped build ditches for him with a pick and shovel. One of the creeks is the second right out of Oak Creek. Mr. Lyon asked Dad to extend and enlarge the ditch out of Oak Creek that I had helped on years before. I helped build the irrigation ditch with a shovel. My brother and I grubbed sagebrush in the meadow. Mr. Lyon was plowing new land with three horses. I also helped with sheep out on the Merton Lyon ranch, now the Will Nay ranch. I drove a mule team, hauling hay bundles from the Ray Lyon ranch on the Mesa.* I had to ford the river on our ranch. Coming down the steep bank, the mules took too short a turn up the river, and the load, rack and all, upset in the water. When the mules got through drinking, they drug me through the water hanging onto the lines, wet all over. Cal Stackhouse was also hauling. He helped straighten up the wagon and rack while the bundles of hay floated down on down the river.

We were a large happy family, all doing our best, to keep family ties together. Brother John worked for the Scotts on what is now the A.R. Brown ranches on the Mesa. His wages were $35.00 a month and dinner. He slept at home, and worked for three months. His wages went into the family budget. He worked at livery stables at various times. During haying season, he always came home to do the mowing.

*The Mesa: the Yampa River Basin, from the current Shop and Hop to the base of Rabbit Ears Pass
HUNTING TALES

In the fall of 1890, when the deer came back after the fire, two of our neighbors, George Lang and Milo Baxter, said, “We will take the old man along as cook for our camp, while we go out and kill the deer.” They went out into the hills and said to have supper ready. Dad went out a short distance from camp and killed two deer. He dressed them and hung them in a tree. They had come in without any luck. He had their supper of fresh deer liver ready when they returned empty handed.

I went with my brother John on my first deer hunt. I carried a rifle, a 44-40 black powder. We shot a yearling and a two-year-old buck. The first shots on my next hunt, I killed five deer with a Sharps single-shot rifle. We had more meat then we could use, so we divided it among the neighbors.

One fall, my brother Joe and myself went on a deer hunt in our old stomping ground at Dry Creek. Brother Joe was a good hunter and a very good shot. We stayed with Mr. Brady. The deer were very plentiful. Joe ran into a bunch of bucks. He started to shoot. When the smoke cleared away, seven were killed, none under three points. We camped all night and killed two more.

Everett Stapleton and Joe were hunting in Twenty-Mile Park. While walking down a trail on the north side of a very steep mountain, a mother bear came running down the slope, with three cub bears following her. Joe took a shot at her on the run. The cubs climbed trees. They were unable to capture them, but followed after the mother, who left a bloody trail. She went into a cave big enough to enter. This cave opened into another small cave. They could hear her growling. They took a chance shot; she came tumbling out and dropped dead at their feet.

A short time later, while hunting on Cow Creek, the two dogs treed a mountain lion, up a cottonwood tree. Joe shot and hit it in the head. It dropped at the foot of the tree. He cut its throat, and tied it behind the saddle. When it was skinned, it showed that it was only stunned. The shot had not even cracked the skull. It would have been too bad if it had come to life. When he put it on the horse, he did not pay any attention to it.

Joe was hunting one time, when he saw a bear standing up eating chokecherries off a bush. He took a shot at it. It got down on all fours and started for him. He was getting on his horse, ready to make a hasty retreat. It fell dead; it had been shot near the heart.

One day Joe and I were hunting on Cow Creek. Looking east we saw a mountain lion sitting down like a big cat, too far to shoot at it. I sneaked up near a bunch of brush. Joe motioned for me to go. We played peekaboo around and around. I could not see it. The lion finally darted up the hill, out of sight.
Mr. Brady had 30 or 40 burros; they did not require much hay. They wintered in the hills nearby. A man said to Mr. Brady, “There is a market for your burros at Fort Collins. I will take them and sell them on a 50-50 basis.” Mr. Brady consented. The man sold them and kept the money. Mr. Brady sold the ranch to George Cook from Hayden. Brady moved to Meeker, Colorado.

The next year, my brother Henry and myself camped on the Brady place. I started down a narrow rock ridge. I heard several shots in succession. I met Henry all excited, very nervous. On the narrow ridge, several does had met him, face to face, and made for him. They turned the wrong way, and he dropped three of them just a few feet away. We were snowed in for several days, in an October snow storm. We were afraid our meat would spoil. We found a sled, loaded it, and headed for home. We got along fine for awhile, but then got on a narrow road where some fresh work had been done. The sled runners stuck in the mud and broke the tongue out. We went to the home of George Klectner for help. He pulled us out and we borrowed his wagon to get home. We then had to return the wagon and sled.

Hunters came from great distances to hunt in the fall. Large numbers of deer were killed. Four posts would be set into the ground, about 16-20 feet apart. A network of wires was strung. The harvested deer were skinned and the meat was cut into strips. Meat was placed on this wire platform, and left to dry in the sun. A fire was left to smolder underneath. The meat would cure in the smoke and was called jerked venison. It was hauled out by the wagon load. The hides were tacked on the ground with wooden pins until dry. Brady had a man come by every year hunting who made jerked venison by drying and smoking it.

About the 20th of September 1890, several of my Dad’s friends came from Denver for a hunting trip. They had a team and wagon, camping equipment. We headed for the Stephen Reese ranch in Twenty-Mile Park, on what is now the Bill Bruchez ranch. On the way, two antelope were killed where the Joe Long ranch is now. We camped on the Dr. Mager ranch that night. I had fishing tackle along and caught a nice mess of trout for supper and breakfast. Dr. Mager was a son-in-law of Dr. Eickhoff. Mager bought out Koll’s 320 acres and leased a school section adjoining. He had 75 mares and two stallions. They ranged in the Flat Tops. He later was killed on the streets of Denver, in a horse and buggy accident. Duquette later bought out Mager’s holdings, now owned by Pearly Green. He paid $2.00 per head, cows $11.00 to $12.00. One cow and calf brought $13.00 and a good bull brought $11.00 – that was during the panic.

Hunting deer was a regular occurrence. Every ten days or two weeks, some of the boys were in the hills nearby or in Twenty-Mile Park, our old hunting ground. This would lay in a meat supply for father, mother, all the children and what company we had. We were a stopping place for freighters and travelers going through who took a lot of our provisions.
About the middle of March, Bill Barker and I had one of the boys take us to the divide south of the Hot Springs to hunt elk. There was a good road for a team and sleds. We spent several days scouting through the mountains with very poor success, shooting some blue grouse to supply our needs at camp. We built a fire for heat and cooking near the entrance of our small tent. We decided to go further north, where the tracks started to go. The snow was from four to six feet deep. A little bare ground could be seen on the steep south slopes. About 11:00 a.m., we arrived on a high ledge of rocks where we could look down on Mad Creek north of us. On our backs we carried a loaf of bread, some bacon, and a can of tomatoes. We intended to camp out the next night. We strapped our rifles to our backs, put a ski in each hand, sliding down the steep mountain using our heels for a brake. When we got to the foot of the mountain, we looked around to find we had slid down between two avalanches. The slides had taken large trees and huge boulders down with it.

It was twelve o’clock and we decided to eat our lunch sitting on the bank of Mad Creek which was very clear. Barker went to open the can of tomatoes, cutting his hand severely. He left a stream of blood on the snow. The bleeding did not quit until evening, but with no serious results. It got very cloudy and threatening. As luck would have it, we found a cabin and the latch string was on the outside. There was a good bed and some bacon and provisions which looked good to us. We climbed the high mountain in the morning, then started west for the Elk River. We followed the road until we got to Hot Spring Creek. But going up Hot Spring Creek, the snow got too soft to use skis. We went up the canyon, climbing very steep and rocky places. We had to get ahold of branches of trees and brush and pull ourselves up. Finally, my partner said, “I just can’t go another step.” I went to Hot Springs, leaving my gun. I then went down to meet him, carrying his rifle and giving him a hand. We finally arrived at our camp, tired and exhausted. We high-tailed it for home the next day.

My brother and I once went on a hunting trip west of the Boettler ranch in Twenty-Mile Park. We stopped at the ranch and they told us we were out of luck. A party of thirty or forty hunters were slaughtering deer by the hundreds for the fun of it, just to see them fall. The way they were shooting, it sounded like a war. The stench was terrible. There were bucks, does, and fawns seen everywhere to be devoured by magpies, crows, ravens, and turkey buzzards.

We went from there to Grass Creek where we made camp. About sundown and break of day, looking to the north and south along the skyline, a continued string of deer could be seen on their migration to their winter range in the lower country. We saw this sight for several days while we hunted, morning and night. Antelope also were very numerous on the alkali flats. It did not take long to get what deer we wanted for all of us for our winter meat supply. It would be put in brine for future use.

A year later, my brother John, Dick McKinnis and Pat Martin and I were camping on the same location. It snowed about a foot or more that night. We took refuge in a coal
mine. The next night we set up a tent, using a wagon tongue for a tent ridge pole. We had a deer hanging in a tree, not fifteen feet from our bed under a canvas. In the morning we went to get something to eat for breakfast and all that was left of the deer was the hide and a few bones. During the night, a mountain lion had pulled the deer down and ate it all. We were sleeping only 15 feet away and no one had heard a sound! This was done without disturbing anyone or even the two dogs! For several years, this was our annual hunting ground.

My friend, Barker, and another hide hunter once got into an argument about who could bring in the most hides in a week from the lower country. A bet was made. Barker was an expert shot. He could kill grouse and sage hens on the wing with a rifle. On their return to camp, one had 146 and the other had 148 hides on their pack horses.

At that time it was not unusual to see from fifty to seventy-five deer in one evening in the foothills. One day, some hunters took a few shots at some antelope and frightened them. We were grubbing sagebrush in our meadow at the time. Thirty or forty antelope came running from the south. They were only thirty feet from us and they almost ran over us. We threw our grubbing hoes at them.

In the summer of 1893, the younger boys were old enough to work in the hay field. So I helped a man named Forgey rake and stack hay for John Suttle on what is now the Gay ranch near Sidney. The Booco brothers stacked the hay by hand for $1.50 per ton. In the fall of 1893, I worked for Jim Hangs on the Lloyd Brown ranch on the Mesa. We stacked 150 tons of hay by hand, hauled it on a wagon to the barn, all in two stacks. Up until haying time, I herded Mr. Hangs' cattle on Walton Creek and Storm Mountain for the summer. Part of the cattle were grazed on Slate Creek below town.

That fall, Mr. Forgey and myself started on our elk hunt. We made our headquarters on the Keller ranch. Jim Lee was feeding the cattle. We hunted east of the ranch; it took us several days to locate the elk. A few shots were heard every day. Just enough to stir them up. A storm came up. We had a large herd cornered in the canyon east of the Barber ranch. After the storm quieted down, we backtracked out of there, without ever seeing the elk. They finally crossed Big Creek on the south slope the next day. Jim Lee had come with us. We hid in the timber. Jim stirred them up, with a few shots. The elk headed east. We took a few running shots as they went by. I dropped a fine two year old cow elk with a shot to the neck. There must have been several hundred in the bunch. On the tail end were the bulls. As they ran, it seemed like they were carrying their massive antlers on their backs. They left a wide trail, breaking down Aspen trees as they ran. We followed the trail and found three yearling elk dead and a big cow elk, wounded. We headed to the ranch that night. We tied the two cow elk behind one horse and three young ones behind the other horse. We pulled them through the snow to the ranch. We saw a lot of tracks that crossed the road, between Big Creek and Mad Creek, heading for their winter range in the lower country. We finally arrived back home; it was Thanksgiving Day.
In the early days, elk wintered in the lower country the same as deer do now. In the fall and winter of 1893, large groups of hunters with high powered rifles arrived. The hunters were so numerous, following the elk to their winter range in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, that the killing was terrific. Loads of elk in wagon boxes with side boards and even hay racks were used and loaded to the top. At one camp, elk legs were piled high as a cabin. In Elk River canyon, there were a lot of trails heading for Elk Mountain, going west to the winter range. Large hunting parties went to the elk’s winter range in the lower country. The only elk left were the Franz elk in a pasture on Elk River and the town herd in Steamboat. They were released into the hills and all our elk here now originated from them.

In the fall of 1894, Mr. Forgey and I left home driving a team and jumper sled, leading a saddle horse. We drove to the Keller ranch on Elk River. We stayed with him and hunted elk on the hills east of the house. Very little snow covered the ground. We were in the hills every day without success and only ran into a few little bunches of elk when a big storm came up. The elk started to bunch up to go to their winter range. By that time the hills were full of hunters. Shooting was heard on all sides. We located the elk one evening. The next morning Mr. Lee went with us. We could see the elk headed down on the south side of Big Creek. Forgey and I went one way in front of the elk; Mr. Lee went west behind them. Mr. Lee got close enough to get a shot. That started the elk toward us, all strung out. I traded my 40-82 to Mr. Lee for his 44-40. I only had five cartridges. The trade was made thinking Mr. Lee could get more game than myself. I fired four shots without seeing anything drop. With my last shot, I shot a fine young cow elk in the neck just as she was stepping over a log. We took up the blood trail and got one more cow elk and three yearling calves. After dressing our elk, it was getting late. The next morning, we took two horses with single tree harnesses and drug the elk through the snow to the Keller ranch. The next morning, we started for home, leaving one elk with Mr. Lee.

I had bid my sister, Bertha, goodbye when I left to go hunting. She was sick in bed with typhoid fever. When I returned, I went to her bedside again. She told me later on she didn’t remember when I left or returned, and was delirious all that time. But glad to say, she came out okay.

In 1896, I worked for Bill Cook, an old bachelor, at what is now the Lyle Barber ranch. I grubbed sagebrush and built fence. It was almost June and the deer were just coming into the country. We got hungry for venison. One evening, I said I would like to go out in the morning and kill a deer. He said, “You can’t kill a deer.” I had killed several before that time. I got up at the break of day and went south of the house. I got down behind a big log on the side hill. Here they came – 40 or 50 in a string. I waited until they got about 100 to 200 yards away. I picked out a yearling, all shed off. I shot and it dropped dead. I returned to the ranch, blood on my hands from dressing it. Cook said, “Well, I guess you got one.” After breakfast, we saddled two horses to pack it in. When we got where it was, Cook shot a big buck laying down that did not even get up out of its bed.
We got the saddle mare to pack it in. The mare got scared and turned and kicked me in both legs, above the knees. It almost knocked me cold. Cook broke off a sapling and beat her until she squealed. We did not have any trouble loading deer the next time.

Cook started to Leadville with a span of horses to sell on the market. While I was at his place, on the south and west, there was an irrigation ditch used to irrigate his hay meadows. I kept seeing buzzards, crows and magpies flying around during the day. I got up bright and early one morning, before the birds got there, and found the ground covered with a fine lot of trout flopping in the grass. I gathered them up and took them to the house. I gathered trout for several mornings. What I could not eat, I salted down and had a nice jar full when Cook returned. Settlers were very few. While Cook was gone, I had only seen one man off in the distance on horseback in the Oak Creek basin.

Our next camp was at Juniper Mountain. We heard shooting all day long and come to find out Ute Indians from the Utah reservation were killing deer for their hides. They had come to hunt in what are now Moffat and Rio Blanco counties. They killed deer for meat and hides until 1897 when a law was passed limiting the number of deer that could be killed. Some game wardens, headed by Mr. Puritan, Charles Brotherton, and others, came to enforce the law. The Indians ran to their tepees and came out with their guns. Bedlam turned loose. Seven Indians were killed but no wardens were injured. The settlers were on their guard but the Indians did not come or kill any more deer. The Indians threatened to make war against the settlers. People up and down the valley were very much excited. But the trouble soon blew over. We never heard any more about Indians killing deer.

Later on, game laws were made and enforced. Slabs seven or eight feet long were furnished to fence hay stacks to protect the farmers’ hay from the elk and deer.
WILDLIFE AND SOME TAME

One morning when we went to the barn to do our chores, there was a young elk, dressed out and placed in our basket hay rack. It had been placed there in the night by one of our sisters’ boyfriends. Dad went to town and told the editor of the Steamboat Pilot of the incident, not saying that the elk was dead. It was copied by other papers, and his brothers wrote and wanted to know particulars. They lived in Iowa.

The local men often played jokes on each other by reporting items that were then written in the Pilot. Frank Cook was at our place one day and we told him we had a dog we wanted to get rid of. He led it into the hills and shot it. Someone saw him and said it was a mountain lion following him and that Frank was a very brave man. The writer signed himself “Old Blizzard.”

One time neighbor Ferdinand Jochems was churning cream in a jar. He churned for several days with no result. Dick Reinhardt and several others came to his cabin. Ferdinand said, “Fellows, churn this cream while I go and feed the cattle.” They took turns and finally they got butter and made it into a nice roll. They missed having the buttermilk in sourdough, so they added a few eggs and spices and baked a nice big cake for dinner. They told him they made it out of his cream he was trying to churn. They told him he had a sourdough cow. Jochems did not know the difference until he read the account in The Steamboat Pilot. No doubt John Weiskoph was the cook and author of the story.

The day we hoped to begin our hunt at the Keller place, previously mentioned, it stormed for a few days so we could not go out. Mr. Keller had no wife, but had three lovely daughters. I helped him with his chores and finding the cattle. Several years later I met one of the daughters at a dance. She said her Dad had said, “There is one of the nicest boys I ever met, so kind and thoughtful to help me. I want him for a son-in-law. He can have the pick of any one of my daughters.” I said, “This is a fine time to tell me after all these years.”
MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH

At home, we were milking 20 to 30 cows. I drove the milk cows south about a mile or more on the school section which was vacant at the time every morning and returned to bring them back in the evenings. Brenners and Barbers now own the school section.

One of our neighbors on the Mesa had a dairy herd. He had his hired boy drive their cows across the river after the river dropped, then spend the day with the Lyon family at Sidney. The boy would then take the cows home at night. We got into it. John chased the cows and the boy back. His boss came to our corral one evening while we were milking our cows. He said he was a boxer and was going to beat up John. John, Dad and myself invited him into the corral. We had our milk stools in hand. He backed out and took care of his cows after that, and we had no more trouble.

The neighbor’s cows from across the river had the habit of getting in our meadow, to a place where there was alkali, like a salt lick. Four or five of us boys would pick the deepest holes in the river we could find and force them to jump in. They would go clear under and then swim across the river. One pet two year old cow elk was with them. She swam with perfect ease, with two-thirds of her body above the water. There was a newcomer on the Lang and Phillips ranch watching. They had told him you could kill big game from your doorstep. One day these same milk cows and pet elk came into the field right up to the buildings. The man got his rifle and sneaked up and blasted away, killing it. They said, “You played with thunder killing a pet elk and you will go to the pen for this.” He got scared and took to the hills. They caught up with him and persuaded him to come back. They settled with W.H. Moore, the owner of the elk, by dividing the meat among the neighbors.

Mr. Jones, a man from Texas, had a ranch near ours. One day in January, a hunter chased a bull elk across the valley. The snow was about two feet deep. Mr. McKenzie, Jones’ father-in-law, saw the elk crossing. He had his horse and gun ready. He rode south toward Sidney, and shot it as it was breaking the snow drift west of the road. Mr. McKenzie also had a collection of live game – deer, elk, and snowshoe rabbits in pens and cages. Along in March us boys were hunting rabbits in the jack pines and balsams. The rabbits were very small, having grown up after the fire. We saw a lot of little tracks we thought may be bobcats but did not see any. The next morning, John and Logan Crawford and Bill Williams, John Williams’ father, came from town on the stage. They brought guns, skis and a large hunting dog; they went west of the Lang and Phillips’ ranches, hunting mountain lions. Their dog treed three baby mountain lions. Mr. McKenzie had followed them and, seeing the lions, McKenzie said, “I will give you $10.00 apiece for the lions if you help me catch them,” which they did. They shook the baby lions out of the tree, securely tied them with ropes, and he put them into pens for his menagerie. The next day, John, Logan, and Mr. Williams came back to the same place and treed the mother lion and shot it.

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That spring our neighbors, Ray Lyon and Cal Stackhouse, sold their ranches on the Mesa to Dick McKinnis (later the Scott Ranch) and headed to Texas overland with teams and wagons. These ranches are now known as the A.R. Brown ranches on the Mesa. They built crates for the animals for Mr. McKenzie, and loaded up for Texas. They were leading one large bull elk, in back of the wagon. The elk was very unruly and didn’t like such treatment. His horns had grown out, like stubs. He butted the wagon, and was a mass of blood. They camped one night on Trout Creek. Mr. McKenzie, while caring for the animals got too close. The bull elk kicked him and broke his leg. Mr. McKenzie said to cut the rope, which they did and turned him loose. Mr. McKenzie was patched up, his leg was set and they continued on the journey. The animals were bought from him by the state of Texas and he was hired as caretaker.
TRAILS AND PASSES

Until 1893, there was only a dim trail for horseback riders over Rabbit Ears Pass to North and Middle Park. The North Park people stated there was a good market for grain, potatoes, etc. in North Park if they only had a road. Work was started from both sides of the pass about the same time. No surveying was done. No one was paid; only volunteers. Openings were selected and trees were blazed with an ax to build the roads. Down-timber and brush were cleared where the road was to be made. Swamps were dodged or corduroyed.

One fall, in October, six wagons started out loaded with grain and potatoes heading for North Park. They had to double up [use a team of four instead of two horses] most of the way. They went over the top of the pass about where the ranger station is now located. They camped there for the night. A driving snowstorm came from the north and west. By morning, it was impossible to turn a wheel. The snow was four to six feet deep. They struck out single file on their horses dragging their neck yokes, double trees, and chains. It took them all day to get back home. The wagons had to be left there until spring. The grain and potatoes were all lost, left behind in the snow.

As soon as Berthoud Pass was open the following spring, my father and I started for "the outside," as we called it, with a team and covered wagon to look after some business. Frank and Will Cook met us at Empire; they had a team and loaded wagon as well. When we came to steep hills, we put our team in front of their wagon and doubled up. Then we would go back with our team to pull up their wagon. We went to Empire, Georgetown and Denver. On our return, going over Floyd Hill, one of our horses balked and refused to pull. Dad was not a very good driver. Our horse, Frank, was balky, and the team had to be pulled up steep places by another team of horses, owned by men who lived nearby in a tie camp. Dad had to walk a mile or two to get a farmer to pull us up the hill. We had trouble again above Idaho Springs, a place where there was a cord wood slide. My father went to a house to get help. A boy came to the door. They had a mule to skid logs. The lady there looked at my father, and said to her boy, in German, "Don’t you help. He looks like a horse thief. I do not trust him!” My Dad overheard and understood this. Dad spoke in German and offered to pay in advance, and put up his watch for security. She then said, “Mein Gott! Are you German?” He said, “Yaw.” She said, “I am so sorry.” She was very sorry for her mistake, and apologized more than once. Then she said to her boy, “You go and do all you can for him.” The boy fetched his small mule and helped us out of our trouble. We got along fine to Empire, where we met Will and Frank Cook, our neighbors. They had a wagon and a team of horses. They had a load on and were leading a young stallion. We did well then until we got to the Gore Range. It was the Fourth of July, and very hot. The flies were very bad. I rode the stallion; they had to put bacon grease all over him. I was in a mess, but the flies did not bother.
We arrived home safe and sound. While we were gone, all our cows had calves. The boys weaned the calves and fed them skim milk. Mother was making butter to sell at the Steamboat Springs stores. We did well enough in trade to have plenty of groceries and credit for more.

On one trip out, we stayed at Empire; Dad had sold his saloon for $250.00. We spent a day or two in Georgetown, then went to Denver. Dad had a high old time. He went to saloons and blew all his $250.00 and more. We had his old friend, Alois Koch, go to a wholesale grocery house and he bought $50.00 worth of groceries. Dad borrowed the money from Koch and gave his note at 12% investment.

Our neighbors on the Mesa were: Hull, Smithers, Lehman, Phil and Dick McKinnis and the Bonnier family. The Bonnier children were Emily and Godfrey; they lived on what are now the Brown and Jones ranches. Dick McKinnis owned what is now the Phillips ranch. Dick sold his ranch to Phillips for $5,000.00, then bought the Scott ranches for $5,000, which he later sold to Ed Allison for $10,000.00. Allison sold his land to Brown and Jones for $16,000.00, which Brown still owns.
BRIDGES, BOATS AND SCHOOLS

I also worked for a neighbor, Mr. Moore, putting up hay. Mr. Moore owned what is now the Bartholomew place. When I got through, he said, “You can have my boat for what I owe you.” The boat was about four feet wide and sixteen feet long. We kept it anchored near our ford [crossing] by the river. The boat was the same as public property and it was used by all the neighbors. My brothers went to the river one cold and frosty morning. Someone had rowed the boat across the river and left it on the opposite side, and the river was quite full. My brother Adolph was only about 12 years old. He undressed, swam across and rowed it back to the west bank.

The nearest schoolhouse in the valley was on the Mesa. It was built on the Sam Spires ranch, now the Lufkin ranch. Our term of school was three or sometimes four months; some of the older boys were busy in the hayfields and rarely attended school. The Summer, Moore, Lyon, Howlett children and Jessie Thayer, who boarded with the Lyon family, were the scholars. Our teacher was Cora Lyckens. The Lyckens family lived on the lower Linn Hall ranch. She walked to school and crossed a branch of the river on a foot log. There were no bridges across the river nearer than Steamboat, about eight miles north. The men got together and built a foot bridge with a one-inch steel cable and two cables running parallel. The boards were 12-14 inches wide wired on to allow us to walk. There was a smaller cable about four feet higher for us to hold onto. When too many of us kids got on the foot bridge, it would sag down and touch the water which was often swift and high. When the river dropped, we rode burros across the river.

The country schools near us only went through grade eight, so when it was time for high school, my three brothers and myself and sister, Josie, as our housekeeper, moved into town.

In December of 1890, we rented a cabin in town from Dr. Campbell, the village parson. It was small, one room, only 12 x 14 foot with a dirt roof, at the foot of a hill near Soda Creek in Steamboat Springs. We took our sister Josie along as cook. We told Dad, “We do not want any money for rent for the cabin. You have a lot of boys and would like to have a few acres of land cleared.” Dad and us boys “bached” there and did the job of clearing at the ranch, together, in short order.

Our sister, Josie, mingled with Steamboat society and was very popular among the young men. Chester Priest and a young man named Gregory Kelly were bitter rivals for her attention. They had a fisticuffs encounter on Lincoln Avenue one evening. Both men were big and powerful. Both were skinned up and came out with black eyes. No doubt Priest won the battle. George Brattons, a colored man, had a restaurant nearby. They went to his place to get cleaned up and to get beef steak to draw out the inflammation.
Our school teacher in town, Mr. Robinson, was also our nearest neighbor. He had a large pile of logs for firewood in the yard. Dad said, “You boys cut the firewood for that poor fellow.” We did, with a cross cut saw. John refused to saw wood. Adolph was too young. Joe and myself took over and got the job done.

_The Steamboat Pilot_ published our grades, which were always in the top: 96% to 100 %. Other boys said, “If we would saw wood for free, we would have higher grades, too.” Our school was a two-story frame building. The upstairs was not finished, roughed in only. There were two rooms downstairs, with two teachers. There were some real tough boys going to school. One big boy got very unruly. Mr. Robinson ordered him to the vestibule where our shoes, hats and boots were left. The boy refused to go, and held onto the seat with both hands. The teacher used his feet and kicked him out. He dragged him to the vestibule and worked him over. The boy said, “When I get old, I will get even with him.” The next day, the boy came to school with a revolver and told my brother, “I am going to be bad again. If he beats me up, I will kill him.” Brother Joe said, “Come with me,” and persuaded him to hide the revolver under the porch of the library. Later on the boy thanked Joe for what he had done.

A few years later, our teacher came to town, met this boy and myself and was very glad to see us. After the teacher left, I said, “That was a good chance to beat him up.”

He admitted, “I was a devil, and had it coming.”

The next winter, we moved into a small house near where the Catholic Church is now. It belonged to Mr. Bashor. I was appointed chief cook and bottle washer. Mr. Hunt was our school teacher. In the classroom that first day, the seats were all taken. We sat in a visitation seat without a desk. My job was to ring the bell when the teacher gave the nod. The Woolleys, our neighbors, had a ranch below town. The two younger boys, Orb and Eugene, liked to stop at our cabin, going back and forth from home to town. That spring, they got wet in a bad storm heading home to their ranch. Orb died from pneumonia. We were all very sad.

That winter, we hunted rabbits and grouse, and also did some trapping. One day we were down the river and saw some ducks swimming. My brother Joe had the shot gun; he sneaked up on them and one flew. He fired into them sitting and killed all six. We discovered they were tame ducks. We hid the ducks in the willows and told Willis Wollery. He said we should go get them after dark. Someone let the cat out of the bag and told Scottie Wither, the owner of the ducks. He had us call on him for a settlement. He wanted $30.00 and said he would give us time to earn the money to pay him back. Wills McClelland, an attorney, told us if we wanted him to defend us he would not charge us one cent, as the ducks were considered the same as wild ducks. We were not bothered by Mr. Wither. We all had fat ducks for Xmas dinner.
Brother John got to be a bronc twister. He and others that ran horses on the range, had a round up. They got as far as where Phippsburg is, by Riley Wilson’s ranch. His horse fell and he broke his leg. In a few months, he was okay again. That mare and her offspring furnished our horse power on the ranch.

The next winter we went to school in town, we lived in a log cabin with a dirt roof belonging to Tom Morgan. His livery stable was across the main road on Lincoln Avenue. The place is now occupied by the Spring Creek Cabins. The cabin had muslin on the walls, ready to be papered and not yet finished. Our cabin was headquarters for all the boys in town. We made bull’s eyes and practiced shooting with twenty-two rifles. We were all good shots. We bought our ammunition from Chas. Bear, who had a store selling guns and ammunition. While we were there, my mother’s brother, Gustave Specht, came for a visit from Patterson, New Jersey. He was a veteran of the Civil War.

We caught a lot of graylings off of the bridge with grab hooks. This was the bridge that annexed Brooklyn to Steamboat. That winter was very cold; the river froze solid and was slick as glass, from below the bridge near the bath house on down river for a mile or more. After-school hours and evenings, we had a lot of fun, and all the boys were on the ice, skating. One night, we had a large fire going, and the moon was full. The subject came up as to who was the best skater in town. We all lined up for a race, and started at the word “go.” I took the lead and won, the best two out of three races. My brother, Joe, and George Milbank, a very fancy skater, came in tied for second.

When spring arrived, also came the birds. Some of the boys at school would shoot robins, blackbirds and meadowlarks. Then they would pull the feathers off, dress them out, and toast them over a fire. Sometimes they would swallow their hearts raw to make them tough, which they were. One turned out to be a train robber and committed suicide when cornered. Another ran away from home one cold night, slept in a haystack near Yampa. He froze his feet, and had to have his toes amputated.

Our school term was six months. We boys had only three months of school. Nothing unusual happened during our stay in town. When we returned to the ranch that spring, there was still plenty of snow in the hills. We would go hunting for snowshoe rabbits and grouse. We got all we could carry home. Our small bunch of cattle and three head of horses were fed by hand over the fence. Dad and Brother Henry took care of all the work. Brother August was still very young.

Henry and our younger sister went to a summer school, west of Pleasant Valley. They rode one of our jacks to school. Henry Monson’s children and others attended. It was soon very warm, not a very large school. The teacher went to sleep now and then. When he woke up, the kids were out playing in the school yard.

For two or three years, the young Sidney scholars had attended school at Grouse Creek. The first school at Sidney was a log cabin built by Milo Baxter as a saloon. It had a dirt
roof and was southwest of where the Sidney school is now. We had school in the little cabin that winter. Our teacher was Mrs. Clapp. The Larimore family traded for the Hamilton Ranch so several more pupils were added to our school from that district. Our school desks were made by Bear Bros. Carpenters in Steamboat. We had double desks for two, which answered the purpose very well.

The District was organized about 1893. M.L. Hunt was our first teacher. His salary was $50.00 per month. My Uncle Louis was janitor at five cents per day. The scholars were the Summer, Howlett, Moore and Lyon children.

The next year, by cooperation, the neighbors all got together and built a log school house, about 22 x 24, with a dirt roof. The district paid for the lumber, nails, one door and windows. The cracks between the logs were chinked, and myself and Pete Writzel hauled stacked mud from Steamboat, near the Soda Spring to daub the cracks, which was used in pioneer cabins. The new school was the pride of the community. Young folks as well as old came from all around, and we celebrated with an oyster supper and dance. Our next teacher was A.J. Bonnier, an attorney from Steamboat.

I was later appointed janitor. I cut my own firewood, built fires, dusted and swept the floor. I got ten cents a day. One member of the school board said, “Ten cents a day is too much. A nickel would have been plenty.”

One day we were all frightened to death at school. One of the boys got on the roof and jumped up and down. The ridge logs sagged and the teacher ran out and ordered the boy off the roof. Our next episode was when George Moore encountered a skunk on his way to school. It was either one thing or the other – either George stay out or dismiss school. George got a vacation until the scent was disposed of. About 1910, the District was bonded and the present school was built.
HARVESTING, HAYING AND HERDING

We cleared all the land west of the river on our ranch and sowed timothy hay and harrowed it. We irrigated it out of the Baxter ditch, which had been surveyed by Preston King the previous fall. The hay helped feed our cattle herd, which was now increasing. We went to Steamboat and crossed the bridge, at the time, the only bridge in the valley. Then we came back on the other side, made camp and cleared our land across the river.

Albert Lyon was looking after the ranch when we were camping. When we came to our camp, one of the men brought out a jug of whiskey, filled a pint cup full. He kept talking, taking a swig or two until the cup was empty, enough in the cup to be passed around for all. He got rather groggy, and left for the cabin where he was “baching.” I asked for some milk and eggs; he said, “Help yourself, you can have the whole damn ranch if you want it.” I went back the next morning to find that he had kicked the window out of the cabin in the night, saddled his horse and left for home.

The main river crossing was further north. We moved camp to the Brady ranch. Mr. Brady had 30 or 40 head of fine Shorthorn cattle. Bob Williams, a cattle man, bought them for $16.00 a head. Williams had registered cattle.

That fall, we took the dirt off of the front part of the house roof and added a second story, adding a shingle roof. A carpenter helped us. During that time, we had several storms. Paw and Maw slept in the front room. It leaked and was very cold and wet. Sister Leila was born on December 13, 1892, during the time Maw was taken down with rheumatism, making a dozen children. It was a wonder both Maw and the baby did not die. Mother dearly loved all her children, wished to have twin boys to end with.

There was no church nearer than Steamboat. Ministers of different denominations held services at our school house. Mother said, “We are Catholics, but there is no church or priest in the county. Now you children go to any religious gathering or revival meeting. There is only one God to worship, after all, for a very good cause.” We always lived up to her advice.

Father Metz, our Spiritual Adviser at Georgetown, sent a Catholic priest over here, to look after our needs. A man with a team of horses and buggy brought him over. Mass was held and confessions were made. On his return over Rabbit Ears Pass, one of the boys gave him a lift with two saddle horses; the priest rode one to the top of the very steep road. Mother had given the priest $10.00. She received an insulting letter later from the priest stating that he at least expected $250.00 for his service. He said we had a son “working out” and that we could well afford that much and more. It did net set well with mother.

Uncle Sam was very liberal with public domain. One person could take a homestead and preemption and after six months could buy the preemption for $125.00. You could also
take a timber claim of 160 acres by planting ten acres of trees. F.A. Metcalf had a timber claim west of our ranch. Archie Wither plowed ten acres of sagebrush land on it. Dad took the contract of clearing it at $1.25 an acre. With six or seven of us, it did not take long to clear it. When finished, we planted black walnuts and different varieties of trees. It was not fenced. Stock trampled on it and it did not amount to anything. We offered it for sale for $500.00. Traded it off and it was sold for $3,000.00 and later on, sold again for 8,000.00. This year it produced fall wheat, 25 bushels per acre on 145 acres. This place is now owned by the A.R. Brown estate.

Jerry McWilliams was a very good friend. He always called Dad “Uncle John.” We told him to put up his team in our barn, and he did. While Dad was in the loft feeding his horses, he fell into the manger, hurting his leg. When Jerry saw him limping, he asked, “What is the matter, Uncle John?” Dad replied, “Your saddle horse kicked me.” Jerry was very sorry and could not understand why his horse would kick my Dad. It was several years afterward when the “cat was let out of the bag,” and the truth became known.

That first fall, the Summers let a contract to have the wild hay put up on the meadows of our ranch. My Dad had me work for Cooks, shocking hay and loading it on the wagon. I also helped stack the hay. When we got through, Cook said, “What do I owe you?” Dad said, “Nothing. You helped pull us up the hills on our trip to Denver.”

On September 1st, it was time to harvest grain. I started to work for Lyon, shocking oats. The grain was as tall as I was; it was some job. He showed me how to bind bundles, where the binders missed. When the grain was all cut and shocked, we started to haul and stack. The grain fields were on his son’s place on the Mesa, now the A.R. Brown ranch. The grain bundles were stacked at Sidney. I usually had supper at home, and lunch in the grain field. We had a hard rain one night. Mr. Lyon said the sun would dry the hay in a little while. I was wet, but shocked until sun down. I was soaked through and through. Lyon said, “By jolly, it would not do to let your folks know this.” I had supper there, went to bed early, drying my clothes by a wood stove.

The next day, the men pitched bundles to me on the rack, which I loaded. They had a span of hard-mouthed mules; the son drove them. He said, “Let’s trade jobs.” After the wagon was loaded, we headed to cross the river. There was no bridge, only a shallower place to ford. There was a steep bank; I was unable to drive straight. The mules turned upstream, turned the wagon load, and the load went upside down into the river. I was in the water up to my neck, hanging on to the lines. When the mules drank their fill, they started to cross the river; the rack caught on the bank. They could go no farther. I stood in front of them until a man came along on his way for another load. We straightened up the wagon, and the man said, “A man can hardly drive those hard mouthed mules, leave alone a little boy.” I did not know what my wages were. My Dad hired me out and collected the wages. He always said he’d collect until I was 21 years old, the law of the land.
In the spring of 1894, I hired out to work for Mr. Hangs for the summer months. He offered me $20.00 a month and board. Pa said that I would not work for that. I started to work May 1 at $25.00 per month and board, and worked until October 1. Mr. Hangs had about two hundred head of range cattle that were wintered on the ranch, then turned out for the summer at the foot of Storm Mountain. My job was cow puncher, riding a mule, to cut out the ranch cows as they had calves. We also started a dairy herd. The cows were wild as deer and had to be roped to be milked in the corral. They had no large cow barn. I worked very hard. At times, we milked thirty of these wild cows. Those that proved to be milk cows were reserved. Others were dried up and sold for beef. There was a school section south, about a mile from our ranch, where I also drove the cattle for nearby pasture, taking along some of the neighbors’ milk cows as well. The rest of the cattle were taken to Slate Creek near Steamboat and to Deer Mountain for pasture. Mr. Hangs bought a saddle horse for me to ride, later on.

When I was not riding, looking after the cattle, taking milk cows to the school section in the morning and evening, there was still plenty to do. There was a garden to plant, hoeing, irrigating, and pulling weeds. There were potatoes to be dug and put in the cellar. We were branding calves one day. A calf crawled under the fence and got away. Mr. Hangs cussed me and blamed me for it. The next morning, I got my belongings and bid Mrs. Hangs goodbye. I took across the field for home. Mr. Hangs took after me and persuaded me to come back. He said he was very sorry and promised to treat me better, which he did. He also said, “I want to tell you something. I have a lot to worry about. I have a lot of property in Denver, that I had tenants for, brought me a nice income. Also had these cattle. The Depression of the early 1890s came, tenants moved out, no income. I am selling the cattle to get money to pay taxes and other expenses to save my property.”

Mr. Duquette, the cattle buyer, bought the Hangs’ cattle, ready to go to market. He paid $22.50 for two year old steers, $13.00 for cow and calf pairs, $11.00 for a good sized bull, $10.00 to $15.00 for dry fat cows, and $2.50 per ton for hay. Sometime later on, Mr. Hangs told me, “I should have let the property go and kept the cattle. Now I have lost all.”

By the last of October, I got through with my job. I received $25.00 in cash and the other half of my pay in trade, including rye that was taken to the mill to be made into flour. Dad also collected some oats and barley for my work. The Hangs later rented the Milner ranch, where John Sinden lives and then homesteaded where Shorty Truax lives. The Hangs had three sons born, went into the cattle business, and were very prosperous. The old folks died, the young boys sold out. Two of the boys now live in Silt, Colorado.

Billy Eickhoff married my sister that summer of 1894. The last of October my brother John, me and Billy Eickhoff took a vacation and started for the lower country to hunt deer. We drove four horses and a wagon on this trip. We had pretty good luck. We had
a four horse team; one of the horses got sick. When we got to Lay, Colorado we made camp. It got cloudy and started to rain. We had a large pile of cedar wood and made our bed covered with a canvas. Along in the night it started to snow and Brother John said, “Look at our boots getting all wet.” He got up to put his boots under cover and I said, “Please put mine under cover, too.” He said, “If you’re too lazy to put yours under cover, they can stay there.” I said, “All right.” The next morning when we woke up there was a foot of snow on the ground. John started to laugh and said, “Look at your boots, full of snow!” He went to put on his boots only to find out he had put my boots under cover, nice and dry. I said, “Thank you!” I ended up coming home before the rest, leading the sick horse home.

Mr. Lyon and family spent that winter in Golden, Colorado. Billy and my sister Josie moved in and took care of the Lyons’ stock that winter.

In the early ‘90s, there were only one or two grain binders in the valley, and they did not have any bundle carriers. I was shocking grain on the Gill ranch. The man I worked for, Mr. Hangs, told me to be sure and bind every bundle by hand that was missed. Having shocked grain before, I was very efficient in making ties out of grain stock. The man who drove the binder said, “He is a very poor shocker that can’t keep up with the binder.” So I worked that much harder. Sometime before noon, the bundles came out untied and I got behind shocking. While we were eating dinner, the man told me I did not keep up. I told him he missed too many bundles. He said he ran out of twine. I went to the binder and found a full ball of twine in the binder.

About the only threshing machine in the valley was a machine from Yampa, owned by William Bird and sons. It was a five or six team horse power, hand fed. The straw fell on the ground and it took three to five men to push the straw out of the way to stack it over. Later on, threshing machines were pulled or driven by steam engines, elf feeders, and blower straw stackers. That was a great improvement and the binder had bundle carriers.

The next year I was at home helping with ranch work. Our first hay stacker was four long poles, two bolted on top. On each end of the stack, a steel cable – all well braced, was on a track attached to slings to take the hay off the wagon. The hay was hauled to a corral near the barn. Our next hay stacker was a homemade crane stacker built by W.H. Moore. We used a fork or slings, and sweep rakes, which was a big labor saver. We used an inch rope on two pulleys pulled by a horse or team. One day, two men stopped at the house and asked to have a bet settled. One man said it was a contraption used to put up hay and the other said it was made to hang horse thieves. One of the boys said it was really a hay stacker used to put up hay, but could be used for either purpose!

Dad did the stacking one day, sending up an extra big load. I handled the fork and did the tripping. Dad said when to trip; I pulled the rope. No sign of Dad. One of my brothers said Dad was buried under that pile of hay! Adolph, nimble as a cat, climbed up
the long pole. There was Dad, hiding. Dad was laughing and said, “You boys would have a fight to see who would get my gold watch!”

The year after that, I worked for my brother-in-law, Billy Eickhoff, who bought the Booco ranch adjoining the one he had purchased (the Bowen ranch). For pay, I got a grey saddle mare and a new silver-horned saddle, rope quirt, and Navajo blanket, the pride of the valley! I also got a bridle. My brother, John, borrowed the saddle to get a span of colts in Twenty-Mile Park. He tied one of them to the saddle horn. The horse pulled back and broke the cinch. The colt ran through the sagebrush and almost ruined the bridle. My cousin lost the blanket and my sister lost the quirt. My outfit came to a very sad end.

In the spring of 1895, and the next year, 1896, I worked for Bill Cook, an old bachelor, at what is now the Lyle Barber ranch. I grubbed sagebrush, helped build an irrigation ditch and built fence on lower Oak Creek. For pay, he gave my father sawed logs and shingles which were used to build a house in our yard for Billy and Josie, which later was their home and the Sidney post office. Billy and Mrs. Mager bought the Booco ranch and built a house. They sold the place later to my brother-in-law, Algie Bowen. Mrs. Mager and her daughters moved to Denver.

Cook’s brother and I were grubbing brush one day. It got very cloudy and rained a little. Bill called to us and we started to the house. Bill said, “I only want Frank.” I went back to work again. I had no watch and could not see the sun. I finally went to the house and found the Cook brothers had finished supper; dishes were already put away. I said, “Why didn’t you call me for supper?” He said, “We was just going to see how long you would stay in the field. Now you can get your own supper.” This proves to show how mean some people are when a fellow is willing to work. I hope what extra work I done for him done him lots of good. Cook always said that a Dutchmen, that is what he called me, could not see after 4:00 p.m. One evening we were scraping a ditch on a steep side hill with one horse. I was holding the scraper. It got away from me and almost cut the gamble string on his horse. Cook got rough with me. I said, “It is after 4:00 o’clock and I am as blind as a bat.” Cook drew in his horns. I quit him about that time.

The next year, 1897, I worked for John Hart. He was a bachelor and had a family staying with him. The man’s wife cooked for us. All we had to eat was biscuits and gravy three times a day. He was plowing new ground with three horses on a walking plow and had three more horses which he changed off with about half the time. The horses were good but real thin. They did not get enough to eat. I was grubbing sagebrush. I got very weak on my diet, so I sneaked eggs out of the coop and manger. I sucked the eggs and drank new milk when he was not looking so I got along well enough. One day I told him about not getting enough to eat. He said he was in the same boat. He said just do what you can. So I slowed down some. My compensation for this work was an order of groceries at a Steamboat store.
FILING ON MY OWN HOMESTEAD

I was 22 years old in 1898 and filed on a homestead of my own that summer, northwest of Sidney. I did the irrigation on our place. On the northwest section of 16 that P.J. Reinhardt had a lease on, he had no water right. But he helped himself to our water from the Walton Creek Ditch. To avoid trouble, I bought his lease for $325.00. Pa signed the note with me to raise the money. The land had no improvements except 15 or 20 acres in meadow and the balance in sagebrush. I had to build a cabin within six months. That next spring I helped brother John put in a crop on his place and we cleared more land. We then had about thirty acres of cultivated land; we split the grain that we grew on that acreage.

Our cattle increased and we needed more land. Brother John had a homestead west and north of the home ranch. Dad leased a 160 acre piece of school land south of John’s place. I filed on a homestead west of John’s place where there were some good springs and early range for pasture.

John’s ranch was to the east of mine, that he filed on in 1888. It was a very poor ranch, only a few acres could be cleared. But it had a good spring that furnished water for John’s ranch and Paw’s 160 acres of school land that Pa bought from the state. Eickhoff bought the Booco ranch south of our ranch for $1,500.00 and built a home there where they lived. The ranch was later sold to Algie Bowen who married my sister, Emma.

About June, Jeff Williams and I started to work for the Foster and Hill Saw Mill, putting in logs. We working boys were very short on funds. We got low on provisions and we had potatoes, gravy and biscuits for a week. The next week we had venison, gravy and biscuits. We got very lank at times. Jeff said, “Well, Louis, you grab a cant hook and I will grab an axe and we will kill skunks, porcupines or ground hogs.” We had no luck but stuck it out anyway.

That fall, my brother-in-law, Billy Eickhoff, bought a new binder for $150.00 from Neugens and Co. Bill Hartley stopped at our place looking for a homestead. I locked him on a place he liked very well. He stayed with us that summer and helped with the farm work. One day we missed a milk cow. Bill and I found her near the south side with a herd of range cattle, on Cow Creek. She had a young calf and had become very wild. I roped her and after getting straightened and on the way home, I said, “Say, Bill, I lost my pocket with a five, a five dollar gold piece and also my gold watch.” Bill started back to look for it. I said, “Never mind. I never pay attention to a little thing like that.” Bill finally got wise and realized it was a joke.

One day we were repairing some machinery near the river. It was very hot, and I said, “Let’s go swimming.” Bill laughed and said, “In that little stream? I am an awful good swimmer.” We went in a very deep hole and Bill splashed around and was about to drown. John Laramore was fishing nearby with a long willow pole. Bill was going down
for the last time, but got ahold of the pole and pulled himself in. He seemed more dead than alive, but he soon came out of it.

There was no county road at the time, just a trail through the fields in front of Bird McKinnis’ house. One winter, the snow was three or four feet deep. Our neighbor, Bill Cook, was driving along in front of Bird’s cabin. Bird stepped to the door and said, “You can’t travel this road.” Cook was forced to turn back and break a road about a half mile to meet the road again, getting home about midnight.

Bird McKinnis tried to be a bad actor, always carried a six shooter. He invited Brother John to stay with him on his ranch one night. John woke up that night, hearing two shots fired through the door. John said, “What is the matter with you?” Bird said, “I heard someone prowling around. I wanted to show you how quick I am on the trigger.”

Bill Young and McKinnis were feeding cattle for Reinhardt. Bill had a dog that came into the house. It was thirty degrees below zero that night. Bill said leave him in. Bird stuck his six shooter in Bill’s face. Bill’s left hand had been amputated. Bill used the stub for a guard, and gave Bird an undercut in the jaw. He knocked him down, kicked him with his feet out in the yard, and took his gun. At a dance later on, Bird came in and sat next to me, and showed me his six gun in a holster. He said, “I am going to get him before daylight.” I said, “No, you are not. You will have a rope around your neck before the smoke is out of the barrel of your gun. Cowboy’s horses out there have saddle guns and ropes tied to the saddles, and will string you at once.” Later on, Bill came to me and said, “What did Bird say?” I told him. Bill said, “I am ready for him,” and showed me his six gun. “If he don’t bat his eye to suit me, down goes his meat house.” McKinnis left for home, no match for Bill.

Bird carried the mail from Sidney Post Office to the Eddy Post Office on Trout Creek. He traveled by toboggan pulled by one horse, up Hilton Gulch through the hills. Bird worked for Bud Hoskinson in a coal mine. Bud owed Bird a small sum of money. They met where the road forked at Jr. Andrew’s. Bird said, “When are you going to pay me what you owe me?” Bud said, “I have a family to support. I will pay as soon as I can.” Bud was standing in his sled. Bird said, “I want it now and will take it out of your hide.” Bird jumped up, and caught his feet in the lines that were tied together, falling on his face. Bud took the snow shovel and worked him over, breaking his collarbone and thumb.

At one point, we bought a straw stack from a neighbor about 300 or 400 yards east of Bird McKinnis’ ranch. This ranch was owned by L.P. Miller at that time. McKinnis came home with a load of coal. He put his team in the barn and went to his cabin. He slipped in front of the house, rifle in hand. He pulled down on us with a .30-03 rifle and started to shoot. Several shots were fired. The bullets whizzed very close to me, hitting the straw stack or hay rack. When I was loaded, I crawled on the rack and came home. I
went back the next day, taking my rifle along. No one showed up. I never mentioned the shooting to my friends or family until years after.

To help one of my neighbors, who was also homesteading, we asked Dick McKinnis if we could go to the timber through their ranch. (This property is now known as the George Phillip’s ranch east and south on Walton Creek.) There was a nice lot of dry house logs there. He said, “Sure thing. All on government land.” Phil McKinnis, his brother Bird, Fremont Winnie and others had built a snow road from the Phil McKinnis ranch, south of Dick’s ranch. Part of it was owned by Lew Kern. These men were cutting house logs and logs for a double walled cellar that a man named Dunfield was building to store potatoes.

My brothers, Billy Eickhoff, our neighbor and myself cut a skid trail and hauled a few logs that day. The next morning, bright and early, my neighbor and myself were ahead of the other boys. Just as we got to our logs, Bird McKinnis came from behind a bunch of brush, pulled down on us with a rifle, and said, “Throw up your hands. What are you doing cutting my timber?” I said, “Where you are cutting is higher up on the mountain, and this does not concern you at all. You have got the drop on me now but there is another time coming.” He said, “Who are those sons of _____ down below?” I said, “Never you mind. You know who they are.” He made a pass at me with the rifle, and said, “Get to hell out of here or else I will clean up the whole works.” I could see he had a 30-30 Winchester rifle pointed at me with cocked hammer. He kept the gun on us. The only thing to do was to obey orders. We all went home. I saddled a horse and went to town to see Jake Harding, an attorney. I told him my story and he said, “Take my advice. You and your brothers go back, take your rifles and plenty of ammunition. One stand guard. If he shows up, shoot it out with him.” The next morning, my younger brothers, Henry and Adolph, and I went back well-armed. No one showed up. I got my logs unmolested.

The previous summer, the County Surveyor, Preston King, and the commissioners had met to survey a road west of the McKinnis ranch. Bird McKinnis met them with a rifle and drove them off. The surveyor told me the County was going to have a grand jury. He said, “You had trouble with McKinnis,” and asked me to have McKinnis arrested and put under a peace bond. The Commissioners intended to do the same. King said to me, “He run us off with a gun when we wanted to open a road through his place. This thing must be stopped. The Grand Jury is in session. We want you to put in your complaint and put a stop to it. We will have two indictments against him.”

I appeared before the Grand Jury and put in my complaint. J.W. Crawford was foreman of the jury. A complaint was filed against McKinnis. However, I was double-crossed as the County never done a thing. McKinnis was put under a peace bond to appear for trial in District Court in Hahns Peak that fall. The trial was called on schedule. The jury was selected from Williams Fork. Epp Donnelson from Hayden was the foreman of the jury for the District Court. The district attorney was Mr. Schumati with Judge Rucker on the
bench. McKinnis’ lawyers were A.J. Bonnier and Judge Wiley. The verdict, after all the evidence was in, was “not guilty.” The jury said, “That was a little gun play that happens every day on the Forks.” The jury men all shook hands with McKinnis and congratulated him for being proven innocent. After the trial, court was adjourned. All hands, jury and all, flocked into the saloon which always went full tilt during court sessions. Some got very hilarious after a few rounds of beer. They patted McKinnis on the back and called him “Birdie, old boy.” Charley Neiman, the Sheriff, said the verdict was outrageous. “When McKinnis was tried,” Charley said, “you would have been justified in killing him when he pulled the gun on you. The County Commissioners double-crossed me, filing no charges against McKinnis.”

Here comes the sad part of my story. A few years later, Epp Donnelson, one of the most prominent men in the Hayden valley, had trouble with his neighbor, Simp Tipton, over irrigation. Tipton said, “If you don’t stop stealing my water, I will take a shot at you.” Tipton was armed with a rifle. Epp said, “Blaze away,” which Tipton did, killing him instantly. Tipton was sentenced to the pen for life, but was released before his death.

Forty years later, at a Pioneer meeting, I had the pleasure of meeting two of the men who were on the jury at that time and told them I remembered them real well. I said, “How about gun play? If you fellows had not been so lenient with the man I had trouble with, your friend Epp Donnelson might be living today.”
ROUTT COUNTY TRAGEDY

In August of 1900, I was helping a man by the name of William Polmear, a very good Christian man, haul and stack hay. We put on a very big load and I started to climb on the back of the hay rack. I had my hands on the edge of the rack; Mr. Polmear came to help. He took his pitchfork and pushed it into the hay to help me. He hit the top of my hand and the fork went right through my hand. I still carry the scar. It was not done intentionally. We were building a crane stack at the time. While working there, Mr. Polmear said my neighbor, Bill Baxter, had been making bad remarks about my family and he was going to tell him off about it. I said, “He is a very undesirable citizen and if you say anything to him he will kill you.” Polmear said, “I am not afraid of him.” Polmear lived across the road on Oliver Bartholomew’s place. The next morning Baxter came east down the road. Polmear and his brother-in-law went across the road to meet Baxter. There was an argument. Baxter shot Polmear in the stomach, killing him instantly. Baxter surrendered, had a trial, and got five years in the pen. Mrs. Paulmear gave birth to a baby boy that night at nine o’clock.

Baxter was taken to the County Seat, Hahns Peak. He was placed in jail until District Court would meet in the fall. A few days after the murder, a vigilante committee met at the Sidney school house. Two men took charge of the meeting. It was agreed to meet at the Moon Hill Bridge and hang Baxter to the nearest tree. Very few showed up at the designated place. It was finally decided to disband and allow the law to take its course. Baxter was sentenced to five to seven years at the penitentiary at Cañon City, which no doubt was for the best. If the deed would have been, it would have cast a dark shadow over the valley for years to come.

A few years later, I was at Hahns Peak for some water adjudication business. The storekeeper told me that when Bill Baxter murdered William Polmear, word was circulated by a night rider that a large party of vigilantes were on the way to the jail to hang Baxter. As there were only three men there, the storekeeper, jailer, and sheriff would be outnumbered. They sat on the jail steps until 3:00 a.m. that night but no one appeared!
HARD TIMES, SAD EVENTS

In the spring of 1900, my four brothers -- John, Joe, Henry and Adolph went to Breckenridge to work, getting green timber which was peeled to be shipped to the paper mills in Denver. Joe had the contract and did real well. August, my younger brother, and I stayed at home to do farm work. We put up about 200 tons of hay or more. We worked very hard cutting poles and logs, and built corrals and sheds. One day, the Summer boys at Breckenridge were cutting timber and they saw smoke rolling up in the air near their camp. When they got there, everything in the camp had been destroyed.

When they came home that fall, Joe and John bought two lots in town for $350.00. That summer when I was home, I also helped my folks put up hay and then put up my own hay. Frank Campbell and myself hauled a load of oats to Middle Park. We then went back over Sheephorn [Canyon Road or Sheephorn Divide], to Wolcott, and hauled freight back to Steamboat. We paid about $1.00 per cwt. for the oats and sold them at Kremmeling for about $2.50 per cwt. That was in the fall. Henry, Joe Helm and myself hauled grain to Middle Park and brought back freight from Wolcott.

My brothers returned from Breckenridge that fall. I helped Joe build a cabin in Deer Park on his homestead that he had taken up in June. We finished that and Joe was preparing to go to Leadville to work for the winter. Joe and some of the boys went to town to the Modern Woodman meeting. It was a very cold night and Joe came home chilled to the bone. We built a hot fire and gave him a hot bath. He started to spit blood and we got the doctor at once. He passed away five days later from pneumonia. We had a very sad Christmas. Brother August was taken ill shortly after and passed away January 8, 1901. He was barely twenty years old.

Joe left $1,000.00 in life insurance to our mother. That spring, John went to Wolcott for a monument for the boys, and also brought back a load of barb wire to fence our ranches. Dad and I fenced all three ranches, including Joe’s Deer Park ranch and 40 acres of desert that he took up. In the spring of 1900, John had said, “If you help me put in my crop, I will give you half.” I grubbed brush on new ground, seeded the crop and cleared several acres. That was the first money that I could call my own.

We bought a binder and cut our own grain. We cut enough to pay for the binder. I traded calves for a team of horses. When our family had taken our homestead, Mother bought six cows and calves with the money she saved. John, Joe and myself each got a cow and calf. Josie got a cow; mother got two cows. Henry, Adolph and August each got a calf. We were to give Pa the steers until we were 21 years of age. As luck would have it, all were heifer calves, or mostly. I got the tail end of the cows, a crumple horned, poor looking cow. She was a good breeder and had mostly heifer calves. When I sold inferior or beef cows, I replaced them with other cows. I gave Edith, Polly and Bertha
each a heifer calf. After Polly got married, Grandpa McDermott said it was nice that Polly’s Dad gave her two cows. That’s the thanks I got.

That fall and into the winter of 1900-1901, I did some freighting, including hauling a few loads of lumber from the Hot Springs near Steamboat to the Tregonning and McAlpine Sawmill on Morrison Creek. Mr. Forgey and myself asked for a job logging. McAlpine said, “Yes, if you can prove yourselves qualified to join our staff. Go down below the road and bring in a couple of logs.” They were large logs, about 16 feet long and 3 feet in diameter, scaled about 300 to 400 pounds. We went down with our teams. The logs had been cut on bare frozen ground. We got our chains around them with a roll hitch, jarred them loose, and drug them in by noon that day. The boss said, “Okay, you can join us.” After a few days, Joe Helm joined us. We were paid $1.75 for 1,000 feet. The Withers brothers had a store which was where the Courthouse Annex is now. The brothers bought the entire output of lumber from the mill, paying $6.00 for 1,000 feet, $9.00 for 1,000 feet delivered to town. Eric Walker and Bud Hoskins were cutting logs and we were loading them.

In the spring of 1902, Pa let John have all our horses. I furnished Adolph to help him put in his first crop. Mother boarded the threshing crew, free of charge. John got all the grain. John did put in ten acres for Pa.

I had some grain on the Mesa on my leased school land. I cut Pa’s grain, then went back to work at a saw mill and worked until the 4th of July. The grain looked fine. Crickets came that summer and destroyed my crop and I did not get my seed back. They came in swarms, so thick the trees and house were covered. Paw was very nice to me. I went to town with them in the two seated spring wagon, to the 4th of July celebration, the only time I ever rode in it. He said, “I want you to come home and help put up the hay. I will help you put up yours.” I came home the last of July. The crickets had eaten all the grain down into the ground. They also ate two acres of potatoes that we planted. I traded around until I had four good work horses. I furnished all the oats for the horses. We used Pa’s team with the binder. I got the four horses all ready. Pa hired two men. John did the mowing. When we got through, John went hunting. Pa let the two men go and refused to hire anyone to help me back. I had to hire help and do the best I could to get my hay in the stack. It would have only taken a day or two extra to cut my grain. Pa said, “You cannot use my horses.” I got a team from Henry to cut my grain. I said nothing. Went home to my homestead. I had good credit in town, so I bought a bill of groceries on time. I hauled lumber and freight that fall after taking care of my grain. I worked at the saw mill all winter on Morrison Creek, skidding logs and hauling to the mill. Henry stayed on the ranch that winter and did the feeding, and fed my cattle on the school section. I stayed at the mill, then did odd jobs, teaming for $25.00 per day with my board and team fed. I rented John’s ranch and went back to my homestead and got Emma, my sister, and her husband, Algie, to help me put in 40 acres of grain.
A year or two later, rumor was going the rounds that Jack Edwards would be bringing large flocks of sheep through the Sidney valley, heading for the Denver and Rio Grande (D & RG) Railroad at Wolcott. He was said to have the biggest sheep ranch in the lower country. Edwards threatened to invade what is now Moffat and Routt County. It was reported he had 90,000 head of ewes. Edwards grazed his sheep to Wolcott near the railroad, and shipped his lambs to the eastern slope, some to packers and others to feeders. He was returning, driving the ewes back to Wyoming, their winter range. That’s when the cattle men organized several hundred men, all well-armed and plenty of ammunition, to meet the invaders in the lower country. They rode their saddle horses hard, early and late. The local cattlemen welcomed them, butchering a critter for a barbecue to feed them. They found a man and wife with 1,500 ewes lambing. The couple said, “For God’s sake, do not disturb us. We will go back as soon as we lamb.” Glad to say no blood was shed. Peace and quiet reigned and the forest service came into existence a few years later, helping to keep that peace.

Reinhardt, a prominent cattle man was offered 2,000 ewes free of charge to get sheep here. Reinhardt promised to take them and run them in the Sidney valley. Bird McKinnis was to be the herder. Come May, it was time for the school election at Sidney school and the subject of sheep was brought up. McKinnis was mingling in the crowd. He said, “Yes, and I am going to be the herder.” The men all got very quarrelsome. One man said, “We are all cattlemen and do not want anything to do with sheep.” McKinnis pulled a large-bladed knife, blade open. He stuck it in this man’s face so close it looked like he was about to stab him. McKinnis said, “The sheep are coming and it will be just too bad for you and your cattle or anyone else that bothers my sheep.” About that time, the Woolley brothers at Craig started in the sheep business with 200 ewes. One night a boy was alone at the ranch. Unknown parties entered the sheep corral and all the sheep were clubbed to death. No one was prosecuted.

Those were the days of the wild and wooly west. Lant and Tracy, the Butch Cassidy gang, and other outlaws were operating in Brown’s Park and the Hole in the Wall. Most every one of the men were not fully dressed unless he had a six shooter strapped on in a holster on his hip, or left side, ready to pull.

I made several trips over Rabbit Ears Pass to Kremmling, driving a team and buggy. On my first trip, I noticed a four wire fence with posts sixteen feet apart enclosing 15,000 acres of land which had been put up by the Swift Packing company. This was to graze steers on the range until July 1st. They were then shipped as prime beef. The cattle men objected. A secret meeting was held and the four wires were all cut between each post for 15 miles. A plain clothes detective scouted around among the boys, taking on a few friendly glasses of beer. The entire fence-cutting plot was exposed, but no arrest was made. Later I noticed all the wires had been spliced. I never heard the outcome.

The winter of 1904-1905, I again worked in the timber for Lem McAlpine and Joe Tregonning. Lem claimed he bought forty acres of timber from the government. No
doubt he took in more territory! Joe Helm and I skidded and hauled logs to the saw mill where Green Ridge slopes off to Morrison Creek. Ernest Campbell, an old saw mill man, was building what is now library hall in Steamboat. Helm and I were skidding and hauling and Tregonning was scaling the logs. We were watching him. Helm said, “We will not take your scale figures.” Tregonning said, “All right then, take them or go on down the line.” Helm said, “Let’s quit.” We packed our grub and rolled our bedding, ready to move. I went to the house where McAlpine and Tregonning were and said, “Have you got anything against me?” They said, “Not at all,” and I said, “Alright, I will stay.” I went to the bunk house, unpacked my grub box and unrolled my bed. Joe said, “Are you going down the line?” and I said, “No, I have had no trouble. I am going to stay.” He said, “It is always customary when one has a fallout for both to quit.” I said, “Not in this case.” I kept on skidding logs and Joe went down the line.

One of my horses sprained his hock joint and was unable to work. Lem said to “skid with one horse, and I’ll pay you $1.00 per 1,000 feet for all you put on the skid way.” I had a very good skid horse. Turn him loose and he would go down to the pile, stopping within a foot of the right place. One day Lem said, “I will take Shorty, a big bay horse, sharp shod and show you how to skid logs.” The snow was very deep. Lem tied to a big log. Shorty floundered in the deep snow and stepped on Lem’s foot, cutting a large gash. Lem hollered for help, and I got Shorty off his foot. Lem started for the mill, leaving a stream of blood. He was laid up for several days. A man named Edwards and I became very close friends. He usually helped me get the very large logs out. One day he was cutting a large green tree and I was coming up the road with team and sled. I asked which way the tree would fall; he said, “Come ahead as the tree will fall west.” I waited a few minutes and the tree fell to the east. If I had gone twenty feet further the team and I would have been crushed to death. Edwards went to Hog Park the following summer to cut railroad ties. He did not come in for dinner one night. Some men went to hunt for him. They found a hand sticking through the boughs of a tree which he had felled, crushing him to death.

Not long after, another saw mill man, Anthony, was working at Oak Creek at the mines. He was coupling two coal cars together, got between them, and was crushed to death. Two souls went to heaven in less than a few years.

Another time, I was hauling logs to the mill. The hill was very steep and I had to put four rough locks on the runners to keep from going too fast. Lem came up with his team and put on a very large load. He started down the hill when one rough came off where there was a sharp turn in the road. He could not make the turn. The team went over the bank into the deep snow up to their backs. It stifled one of his horses.

There were thirty or forty men working at the mill all winter. Water was hauled in on a sled for a large tank for the boilers. Two men were digging a well nearby down 25 feet, and not finding water. The next morning, the well was full to overflowing with their
tools still at the bottom of the well. Several hundred thousand feet of logs were hauled to town that winter. I worked until April, the only one left except the bosses.

The Withers had a small store where the courthouse now stands. That next summer, they built a larger store, the A.G. Wither’s Steamboat Mercantile Store. When I could not make any money logging, I worked at the store for $2.50 a day, my meals and room, and horses fed.

In April 1904, Ed Furlong, William Eickhoff and myself started for Wolcott with three teams. Ed was the owner of a hardware store in Steamboat Springs, which is now Home Furniture. We stayed at Yampa all night, put our horses in the barn, and slept in the hay loft. We heard two pistol shots at about daylight. I said, “There is somebody that has shot himself.” They laughed at my remark. Sure enough, we saw the doctor and some men going into the hotel with a stretcher for the body. When we got to Wolcott, the train pulled in and I ran like a stampede. It took three men to hold me. It was the first time I had seen a train for thirteen years. We unloaded a car load of wagons and buggies. We pulled the buggies, and knocked down the wagons. It took us several days when we returned to Steamboat to reassemble the wagons.

In the fall of 1905, I took a contract cleaning out the ditch for Judge Grey between Oak Creek and his ranch, now the Oliver Bartholomew ranch. My next job was feeding cattle for Ed Allison on what are now the Brown ranches on the Mesa. Allison paid me $25.00 a month. I furnished my team and fed my own grain.

My cattle increased until I got about 40 head. I got off every day to feed my own stock on my school section ranch. A few years before that, my cousin, Henry Summer, and Harry Radford, who married Henry’s sister Louise, came over on a hunting trip from South Park. Harry’s father and Joe Clugston bought the McPherson ranch, where Oscar Milsap now lives. I met May Radford, Harry’s sister, about that time. We started to go together in January of 1906. I helped Allison with his 200 head of cattle. This job kept me very busy, besides going to dances, sleigh riding, etc. [Louis married May Radford on Valentine’s Day, 1907.]

The Withers brothers bought the entire output of lumber, which was between 300,000 and 400,000 feet at $9.00 per thousand feet. A check was made on the stumpage. McAlpine sold his mill to Hull and Foster that spring. The trails soon got too hot for Lem. He left for Oregon, where he passed away sometime later. Jeff Clark had a planing mill near where Si Lockhart now lives. Jeff’s mill turned out a first grade supply of flooring, siding, etc., for most of the early buildings.

The Dawsons from Hayden bought a lot of hay in the Sidney Valley. They ran short of hay and bought hay from Allison for $8.00 per ton. The hay they had bought in the fall had cost them $3.00 per ton. I worked feeding Allison’s hay to the herd. First I had about 200 head to feed. Other cattle were wintered on nearby ranches. Allison kept giving me

_Louis Summer: A Routt County Pioneer_
more cattle to feed until I was feeding over 700 head. I hauled hay all day, staying on the Barnum ranch, now the Bartholomew ranch. I soon had all the cattle in one bunch, all 1,200 head. Mr. Curtis, the boss, hired my brother Adolph to help. We got through in April. We opened the gate one morning and started them out for the summer range in Twenty-Mile Park. As we came over the Cow Creek divide to where they ran the summer before, they were all becoming two year olds, and acting like it!

In the spring of 1906, I made a trade with Ira Hodson for his school lease of 120 acres. I traded about 40 head of cattle for the lease with its improvements. There was a four room log house with a shingle roof on the property. A log barn with room for 12 horses, a hay loft, and shed attached were of great benefit. There was also a good well, a small granary, and shed. Twenty-eight acres had been cleared and were ready for spring crops, east of the house. The balance of the land was in pasture to the south of the house, and was fenced with a three wire fence.

That fall a neighbor from Cow Creek hired me to plow some new land. We each had three horses and a sulky plow. The land consisted of over 80 acres of dense sagebrush. After plowing a fire guard, we started a fire. The wind was first from the west and then from the north. When we finished, only a few burnt stubs were left which made a good field.
The government had some very efficient men who had foresight enough to know that something had to be done to protect our timber and natural resources. Timber had been set on fire purposely to get rid of dead and rotten logs and underbrush so that they could salvage what was left with least expense. For several years, when we hunted in the fall, the smoke in the air was so dense, it obstructed the view for miles and made it difficult to hunt. Cattle and sheep men were at dagger points. Open warfare was declared. Sheepherders were murdered. Camps were destroyed by fire. Sheep in Moffat County were killed by driving them over cliffs. Now Craig in Moffat County is the largest sheep shipping point in the United States, if not in the world.

The Forest Service was started in 1906. Very fine work has been done by the men of my acquaintance including Gifford Pinchot, Harry Ratliff, Harry Creswell, Everett Stapleton, Jack Ellis, Will Nay, Albert Whitney, Ray and Ed Peck, and many others. Game Wardens were Mr. Puritan, Logan Crawford, Sam Coleman, Sam Stevens, and Jim Campbell. Present game wardens are Bud Hurd, Harry Dobbs, and Alfred Colley.

Late in November in the fall of 1906, I started from the ranch with a light driving team and buggy, heading to Kremmling. At that time, there was no train closer than Kremmling so I had to stay overnight. The train changed schedules two to three times a week. I had a passenger with me. The snow was only a few inches deep. I was to meet another party on my return trip. We started out early arriving at the Riggles’ ranch where there was a stopping place. By the time we got to the site of the present Columbine Lodge on Rabbit Ears Pass, we were in a severe snowstorm. There was no road visible. The snow was up to my dash board. We bucked snow all day keeping our directions by following telephone lines. We finally arrived at the Wall Saw Mill at 9:00 p.m. After a lunch and feed for my team, we arrived in the valley below at 11:00 p.m. We had a foot warmer heated with a brick of carbon that kept us from suffering from the cold. The Forest Service didn’t build the first road over Rabbit Ears Pass until 1914.

In the fall and winter of 1907 and 1908, John Stalker, a neighbor, and I took a contract to haul 100,000 feet of lumber, 12x12x12 and 14x14x16, from Stukey Brothers’ sawmill on Service Creek to the Gillruth ranch, the present Peiper ranch. The timber was used for the tunnels on the Moffat railroad. The road was so steep, we were compelled to use rough locks on our sleds.

The Sarvis Lumber Company started operating about 1915. They built a flume, seven miles long to shoot the lumber at the mouth of the Service Creek into a pond. The lumber was then floated down the river to a retaining pond in Steamboat. This business operated until about 1921 or 1922, and was a big concern. They had over 100 men working in the woods and the mill, using 100 head of horses. Most of their men were lumberjacks from Wisconsin. They went broke and quit business. They had used government timber, and when they went out of business, 100,000 feet of logs on skid
ways were left to rot. The Sarvis Lumber Company might have been a success, with the right men to manage it. Their president was a music teacher and knew very little about the lumber business. They had organized and sold stock to well-to-do farmers in Nebraska and other places. I bought lumber from them, for cattle sheds and other buildings, paid $30.00 per M [1,000 feet].

A lumber company at Milliken got lumber delivery, freight paid for $20.00 per M, delivered. When Gifford Pinchot and Teddy Roosevelt took over the public domain, it was a different story. There was an awful howl from cattle and sawmill men. Up to that time, the way it worked was when forest fires started, no one thought anything about it. They were uncontrolled and left to burn themselves out, or until rain or snow put out the fire.
FREIGHTING

This story would not be complete unless I told some experiences while freighting. F.E. Milner, a banker and merchant in Steamboat Springs, had one of the earliest freight outfits. He hauled freight from Georgetown and Denver to as far as Rawlins, Wyoming. He also hauled from Wolcott to Steamboat, with two yoke of oxen and a trail wagon. A pinto pony was led behind a trail wagon, and was used to round up the oxen every morning for the day’s journey. They traveled rather slowly on the home stretch but were not far behind the man with the team of oxen. The driver of the trail wagon, known as the bull whacker, was usually Dave Dickey.

About the time the Moffat Road* was being built toward Steamboat Springs, Milner and Watson had four wagons with four mules on each wagon to deliver oats for the horses working on the road graders. The freighters would then return loaded with goods for the Yampa Valley. We made another trip over the Gore Range with five teams heavily loaded with grain for the Kremmling stores, livery stables and the railroad graders. We came to a ravine we had to cross. It was covered with muddy soil for about one hundred feet or more where the creek had overflowed. In order to get across, we blocked our wagon wheels and cut a trench a foot wide and a foot deep to hold our wagons from slipping over the bank into the canyon below. We took our loads across one at a time with three or four men riding the upper side to keep from turning over. We got to the Penner ranch at the foot of the Gore at 2:00 a.m. – a stopping place where we stayed until daylight. We returned via Sheep horn and Wolcott where we loaded freight for the Steamboat stores.

In the early days, all travel and freight was hauled over Berthoud and Gore Passes. There was still only a trail over Rabbit Ears Pass until the early 1890s. In 1889, the State Bridge was built across the Grand River on the road to Wolcott. The town of Wolcott was first called Russell. The stage could now make the trip from Wolcott over State Bridge in 80 minutes. The stage could then complete the trip from Wolcott to Steamboat Springs in one day, by changing horses only once. Papoose and Chief were some of the more well-known stage horses. It was said they always got through.

On another trip, we were driving through Yampa, loaded, with grain. It was now about December 18, and a man said, “You fellows are crazy to tackle the Gore Pass at this time of year. You will get snowed in and never get out.” We continued our journey to Kremmling, and arrived back at Steamboat on December 24, on dry ground.

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The Moffat Road is a railroad that crosses the Continental Divide in north-central Colorado. It was named after railroad pioneer David Moffat. Moffat began construction of the Denver, Northwestern and Pacific Railroad, the highest standard-gauge railroad ever built in the United States, in 1904. He intended that the rail line would reach Salt Lake City. However, when Moffat died in 1911, the funding was exhausted, and the railroad stopped at Craig, Colorado. (Source: moffatroadrailroadmuseum.org, moffatroad.org, Wikipedia.com)
On one of our trips, we went to Hot Sulphur, and sold our oats to Lamont and Ed Becker, grain buyers. We bummed around town in our spare time. A building was being constructed for a jail. I talked to one of the men working. Another man said to me, “Do you know that fellow?” I said, “Yes, I knew him in Steamboat. He gets on a drunk sometimes. When the jail is finished, he will be the first one in there.” On our next trip, I was told I spoke the truth; he was the first boarder.

Joe Helm, my brother Henry, and I were hauling oats to Middle Park in the fall of 1905. We came back over Sheephorn Divide by way of the Blue River to Wolcott with freight for Steamboat Springs. While coming down the other side of Gore Pass, the lead team encountered ice almost like an iceberg. After investigating farther, we found a bridge was clogged with ice, which caused the water to overflow for one hundred yards or more. Our horses were all sharp shod. We got busy with our axes, chopping a trench one foot wide and about that deep. More freighters appeared on the scene. With the aid of a long pole and two or three men riding the upper side we got by in good shape. This kept the wagon from upsetting. We arrived at the Penner ranch at 3 a.m.

By December of 1907, the Moffat (rail)road was finished as far as Yarmony in the Gore Canyon. The Wither Brothers, who had a store in Steamboat Springs, hired George Lee and myself to take a load of oats to Yarmony, at the end of the railroad. I loaded those three tons of oats using our sleds. I had a four horse team, with about three tons of oats. I caught up with George Lee heading the same way. We arrived safely at Yarmony, unloaded the oats, and loaded up with the same amount of flour to take to market in Steamboat Springs. As we traveled back, we got along fine; there was plenty of snow. However, the sun came out and the snow got shallow so we would have to transfer to wagons or else go on the ice of the Grand River at State Bridge. We chose the ice. A man nearby was cutting cedar posts. He hailed us and said, “Are you crazy getting on the river with those heavy loads? The water is forty feet deep right where you are now.” He had helped a driver who was warned and had tried to cross anyway. The ice broke; the water was twenty feet deep. He said, “I helped the man out of the river when the ice broke, all of his horses swimming. We had to cut the harnesses and get out.” We went on the ice anyway, but were more fortunate than the other driver in the tale we heard. There was snow the rest of the way, and we made it to McCoy without further trouble. From there, the roads to Steamboat were good.

During the winter when the first oil wells were drilling near Tow Creek, Mormon Jones, an old freighter, started to Wolcott with a large boiler used on the oil wells. His load weighed about 12,000 pounds. The winter snow was several feet deep. His sled kept cutting off the road. He tipped over on the hill road and smashed his sled to pieces. He stayed at a stopping place until more freighters came along to give him and his load a lift. After being on the road for six weeks, he landed in Wolcott with his precious load. No doubt every freighter on the road had given him a lift. He surely was in the red when he balanced his books. He was named Boiler Jones thereafter.
I did not do any more freighting, as I was busy on my ranch. By December 1907, the Moffatt Road was complete as far as Yarmony in Gore Canyon. By 1909, the railroad was completed to Steamboat Springs. Because of this, business began to improve. Merrills started the First National Bank. The Empire Lumber Company established sawmills on Green Ridge in which the Merrills had an interest. P.A. Van Dorn had a ranch on Dry Creek. The Gooding family had a ranch on Dry Creek and a home in Steamboat Springs. Judge Gooding was a prominent lawyer in town. A.M. Gooding, Jr. is now the District Attorney.

Up to the time the railroad was built, there was a poor market for farm produce. Hay sold to cattle men as low as $2.50 per ton in the stack. I hauled hay to Oak Creek and got $10.00 a ton, delivered. It required four horses to haul one ton of baled hay.
COWBOYS WELCOME

About 1909, I was living on School Section 16, establishing a home on land now owned by Ben Hibbert. The North Park cowboys made our ranch their headquarters on their fall round-ups. They were from the Big Horn, Mallon, and other ranches. Their cowboys were Billy McGowan, Bun Quigley, Irvin Brands, Ed and Elmer Fogg, Joe Coyte, Monte Blevins Jr., Willett Collins and many others. One fall, Blevins and Collins were rounding up cattle in our valley. They started for North Park with 30 or 40 head of cattle when the snow began to fall and accumulated to two or three feet deep. About midnight, they returned, nearly frozen. The next morning, the cattle came stringing back and had to be wintered in the valley. The cowboys started back again without any cattle. They wrote me they had a hard trip over Rabbit Ears and reached the Dunlap ranch at 9:00 p.m.

At one point, a drift fence was built that spanned fifteen miles on Rabbit Ears Pass to keep the North Park cattle and Yampa Valley cattle separated. The deep winter snows made it too much work to keep fences in repair, so the project was abandoned.

The cowboys on one drive came from north of Walden, Colorado. It was estimated that we had 2,600 cattle in the drive. There were about the same number of cattle coming from the South. We had about 400 head in the jack-pot, which had to be checked very closely. Some had to be sheared to distinguish the different brands. As luck would have it, it didn’t storm while on the round-up. We had a good trail on our return home. On the way home, Franz and Larson picked up several aged bulls at Rand as well as strays from the Yampa Valley.

In the fall of 1924, Sam Adair hired Milbank Franz and H.P. Larson to deliver about twenty-five coming two-year-old bulls to Rand in North Park. They asked me to inform them of road conditions over Rabbit Ears Pass. I had just spent a week up there and the roads were passable. I went along and we started early, taking about forty head of cattle that belonged in North Park. The snow was already three or four feet deep on the top of the pass. Mr. Larson went ahead, leading an extra horse to break a trail. We arrived at the Dunlap ranch about nine o’clock at night. We reached Hebron the next day. I rode to the round-up headquarters, the Big Horn Ranch. Wherever we were, we knew we were welcome because the latch-string was on the outside. We were always royally entertained.
ROAD MAINTENANCE

Our roads in winter time, with very little travel, were very hard to keep open. Snow was often four or five feet deep. It took a good horse to follow the narrow track. Some would never learn. They would straddle the trail and get down, unable to travel.

The Forest Service built the first auto road on Rabbit Ears about 1917, at a cost of $65,000.00. It was all done with horses.

The only road across the Yampa River in 1924 was south of the present bridge. Our road overseer was a man named Brotherton. His ranch was the Woodcock Ranch, now owned by Raymond Gray. Brotherton oversaw roads in all of Routt County, which included Moffat County as the counties hadn’t yet been divided. Road equipment included a road plow, and a monitor or “go-devil.” This contraption was made out of plank, with one side longer than the other. Every man over twenty years of age had to give two days single-handed or one day with a team, which was the method used for collecting poll tax. Four or six horses pulled the heavy road plow, while two men rode the beam. We would plow a furrow and then get the go-devil and push it out with two or three men riding on it. The monitor was handled the same way. Road graders were unknown. Some of the early road bosses were Joe Helm, Bill Young, E.J. Forgey, Al Booco, Harley Barber, Harry Brenton, Frank Williams, W.J. Laramore, Bill Cross, Slim Yount, Wallace Ralston, Ward Wren, Jim McKinnis, and myself. Most of these were on before the power equipment took over in the winter time, with snow four to six feet deep.

At times, the mail carriers came on skis or snowshoes. When going or coming from town out on the road, we would look for turnouts or places where the road turned in to ranches where teams could pass each other. If these places were unavailable, we would meet, and it meant we would have to stop and shovel out turnouts so we could get by. This would take considerable time. Occasionally a team would get off of the road and they could go no further. A place then had to be shoveled next to the road, about 10’ by 10’, clear down to the ground. Hay and water were carried to the horses until the road was settled or frozen in order to get them home.

One winter, Ben Booco had a load of freight on, also a barrel of whiskey. When on the turn north of the W.J. Laramore ranch, his load tipped over. He could not get the barrel of whiskey back on by himself, so he went for help. When they returned the barrel had a small gimlet hole where someone had tapped it and all of the whisky had leaked out. That place was named Whiskey Point.
BUSINESS IS BOOMING

In 1917, the Sarvis Lumber Company was organized by some promoters from Nebraska. Stock was sold to prominent ranchers. More than 100 lumber jacks from the northern states and about that many horses were required. Camps were set up where Service Creek empties into the Yampa River. A great many local men were also employed. There was also a saw mill in the higher country. Ponds were built to store logs in, during the winter. A flume was built in the rugged canyon, seven miles long, to carry the logs to a retaining pond at the foot of the hill. Logs were floated down the Yampa River to another retaining pond in Steamboat Springs. A modern saw mill was built with the capacity of 100,000 feet of lumber a day. Huge piles of lumber and lath covered several acres of land. It was really a going concern until the crash came in 1920 and the mill went into the hands of the receivers. The mill was dismantled and disposed. No doubt the head men were inexperienced in the timber business and paid too many outrageous salaries.

In the early 1880s, John Whetstone and family had settled on Lower Trout Creek, a homestead of 320 acres. Mr. Whetstone had a partner who owned an interest in the shorthorn cattle of the homestead. The partner left and nothing was heard of him for some time. One day, Mr. Whetstone received a letter from his partner saying, “You know how many cattle are on the ranch. You can send me the money for my share.” Mr. Whetstone bought out his partner, and in 1904, leased the adjoining section of school land.

Mr. Whetstone made a fine ranch out of his holdings. He had built a ditch for irrigation and for water power. He used the water power for a saw mill, and built a house, barns, shed and granary. The saw logs were hauled from Upper Trout Creek. Several horses and 300 head of cattle were also on the ranch.

A man named Thames was a big operator in Denver. He had come from Germany without any money and had been a cowboy in Wyoming. He bought a few horses with the money he had saved and led or drove them to Denver to sell. Thames eventually bought the old Elephant Corral, an early day trading post on 1444 Wazee Street in Denver. The Elephant Corral sold horses by the carload, and also sold farm machinery. Some parties from Routt County called on Mr. Thames and asked him if he would be interested in purchasing a ranch in Routt County, located in Twenty-Mile Park. It was said to be underlaid with coal. Mr. Thames formed a company of about forty men, who each put up $1,000.00 and together, they bought the Whetstone ranch for $40,000.00. The new company was called the North American Land Company, and used the 7N brand. They bought 1,000 young steers from Denver. They bought the Jones ranch on the north of Trout Creek, the Bones ranch, and the Ralston ranch on Fish Creek. All this land cut several hundred tons of hay, and they bought extra hay for $2.00 a ton in the Sidney valley.
One year, winter set in early, in October. Hay advanced in price. The hay promoters were old timers from the lower country where there was open range all winter. Ranchers started to the lower country with spring wagons and horses but found that many cattlemen were looking for hay. Mr. Thames came back and started to buy hay at terribly high prices. Mr. Thames paid out $16,000.00 for hay. A long winter followed and hay went to $36.00 a ton, unloaded at Sidney. Dead cattle were strung from Sidney to the home ranch; 200 steers were lost and also some of the cattle on the home ranch.

In the fall of 1909, I went to Denver to bid on the school land advertised for sale. I bought it for the appraised price, averaging $14.00 per acre for 280 acres. I had about 300 tons of hay for sale, and had been unable to find a market. I called upon John Thames, whom I had never met. He said he was ready to quit a country where the cattle froze to death on the feed yards. I told him I had lived in Routt County since 1889, fed cattle almost every winter with very little loss and none freezing to death. I told him the trouble was mismanagement. I told him John Summer was my father; he said my father was an old friend of his. He was glad to meet me, and asked if I’d be his foreman. I refused as I told him I’d just purchased a ranch of my own and was not interested. But, I told him, I had a brother, Adolph, who would be just the man. Adolph went to Denver and was given a lease on all the land. Ed Watson was the former foreman, whose job my brother took.

By 1915, the Thames cattle had increased from less than 300 to 1,500. The hay raised on his ranch was about 1,500 ton, besides a large acreage of grain, mostly grown on land recently cleared. Mr. Thames told me he was working on a deal to sell Mr. Frank Church the remaining 800 steers if I could find 1,000 tons of hay to feed. I located and helped measure the hay. Mr. Church intended to feed the hay and then finish out the cattle on beet pulp, corn and grain to fatten them. Instead, Mr. Church filled his yards with cattle from the Denver yards. He bought enough hay here to finish feeding them until spring. The steers were on the range until late fall. Then they were shipped to market. Thames just about broke even; the price paid for the hay was $5.00 a ton. Mr. Thames told the stockholders at different meetings, “Any time any of you are not satisfied with your investment, I will refund your $1,000.00.” They kept turning in until John Thames was then the sole owner.

Adding to his troubles, John Thames had a section of fine timber on Upper Service Creek. The Sarvis Lumber Company had a million feet of fine logs on skids, piled up that was never paid for, nor were the men who were employed to cut and skid the logs.

My ranch became more productive. Two different years, I baled and shipped fifteen cars of hay to the Denver market. In the fall of 1911, J. L. Norvell asked me to take the job of feeding 800 three-year-old steers. He bought all the hay on the Tharp and Jochem ranches. Mr. Thorne, from Bladen, Nebraska, had bought these ranches in the fall of 1908. There were three crops of hay on these ranches which amounted to 800 tons. I furnished the horses and an extra man, Billy Tucker, who worked for me all that summer.
and fall. Mr. Norvell paid Frank Squire to help me. We started to feed December 1, 1911. The men boarded at my ranch. None of the haystacks were fenced and had been stacked in groups of six in a row. I had a feed yard for half the steers on the river bottom with plenty of shelter in the willows on a shallow branch of the river. On the other ranches, we fed in a pasture nearby. Then we built fences out of pine poles to keep the steers out of the haystacks.

The first feed yard was on my own ranch where we lived. We would feed two loads of hay to the first bunch of steers on the upper ranches, then two loads to the others, then unhitch for dinner. We fed eight loads of hay a day. I kept ahead of the boys shoveling snow out of the way and breaking new feed yards as they were needed. My biggest team of horses weighed about 1,500 or 1,600 pounds each, which really helped as the snow was between four and five feet deep. As we pulled the hay out of a stack, there were holes in these stacks large enough to bury a mule where the ice was frozen solid. Our only tools were picks and crow bars. In later years, iron hooks with long handles were used to pull the tops off the stacks. There were 72 stacks all together, averaging about eight tons or a little more to the stack.

We fed all this hay by early April and ran out. We could not contact Mr. Norvell, who was away. That night he called me by phone notifying me that he had located hay a few miles away. We moved the cattle that night to Pleasant Valley where Art Hudspeth now lives. We got to bed about midnight after moving the cattle. Mr. Norvell was well pleased and said that was the best job of feeding cattle he had seen since the early days when he was first in the business. The hay fed out better even though some was badly damaged. Henry Martin now owns the Tharp and Jochem ranches.
AT ODDS WITH PA

In the fall of 1918, I was taken down with sciatica and was unable to do any work. I rented my ranch to John Laramore and moved to Pa’s ranch. Pa wanted me to buy his ranch for $12,000.00. In 1919, land went up. I was offered $150.00 an acre from Brown and Jones. They would take it April 1st, 1920. They would not take an option on it or pay anything down. Said their word was as good as money in the bank. If I sold it to anyone else, I would have to pay a commission. They backed out and would not take it at any price. I paid Pa $500.00 down, paid the taxes for a couple of years, paid out $300.00 for cedar posts and built all new fence for a couple of miles. I paid out $50.00 for cleaning ditches, and $75.00 to Algie for a small house in the yard that he would move away. Paid charges of up to $1,300 a year while I had it. The Depression came on; I could not pay it. You could not sell hay for $3.00 a ton. When we bought the ranch, Pa disinherited John and me and divided our share to others a lot less deserving.

Pa did not want me to have any money. He sold gravel at Oak Creek when it was booming, and I hired a lot of teams. I wanted to haul some gravel. He said, “Let the poor homesteaders have the job. You have enough money without that.” We rented his upper place. A man dug a well; it was not walled up and caved in. That spring Pa hired a man and got me to help clean it out. We put an eight or ten inch iron pipe in it and made a large basin to hold the water. He had us haul a lot of rocks and gravel around the pipe to keep it from caving in again. We did a very good job. When we got through, Pa paid the man and said to me, “I owe you nothing.” When we threshed the grain, he said, “You got more than your share” - (another dirty jip).

Pa and I got out logs for a cow barn that we built. We were milking about 30 cows; one third or one half were mine. The folks got the money for the butter. I never seen a cent of it. Pa did not want to stable the cows so the barn was empty, nor could the calves bed down in it. We milked in all kinds of weather. One morning, it was 40 degrees below zero. I did not go to the barn; the boys did the milking. I said that I will not milk any more cows out in the cold. We all got busy and put stanchions and a floor in the barn. We did not milk outside in the winter again.

Pa had a chance to buy the 160 acres west of our house for $500.00. I did my best to try to get him to buy it. Booco bought it for $3,000.00 and sold it for $8,000.00. Now it cannot be bought for any price. A few years later, Pa paid $1,600.00 for the 160 acres of school land that we own now. Then a few years later he sold Joe’s Deer Park ranch of 40 acres of desert land for $2,000.00. Just what we needed as homesteaders were taking over our free range.

Booco offered us his ranch where Algie lives for $1,500.00. I begged Pa to buy it. It cut about 100 tons of hay, the same as it cuts now. Hay was selling for about $5.00 a ton, always higher in the spring. I said, “If you buy it, I will work out for the year and help pay for it.” I earned $35.00 or $40.00 a month, not for myself but for the Summer estate. I
never did regret what I did, when I did work out [away from the home ranch], and what I did at home when I thought of the many little mouths to be fed, younger than myself.

Pa pulled off some funny stunts. We had two bob sleds, one with the hay rack on and one with a wagon box to haul coal or wood. There were all of us boys at home. He sold one of the sleds so when we wanted to go for wood or coal we had to take the rack off and on again. We also had a two-seated light passenger sled. Pa sold the buck bob and had a small box put on it, hardly room for two people. When he went to town to get his little jug filled, which always came before the groceries, no one to bother, not even mother. He usually had the jug replenished during the week.

That fall, Dawson bought a lot of hay in the valley for $3.25 a ton and brought up 1,200 head of cattle to feed. Pa sold hay at that price, ran out of hay and the price went up to $10.00 a ton. I had a stack of hay leftover; Pa wanted it, and said “I will pay you for it.” There was about 15 tons in it. The next fall, he said, “I will give you a stack for it.” I wanted to bale it, found heat in the stack; it was spoiled for baling. We fed it to his cattle and I was out $150.00.

Later on, I got to raising a lot of hay on my ranch on the Mesa, did some new seeding, and renovated and sowed clover on the old meadows. Paw’s land on the Mesa was planted to straight timothy, was run down and not producing much hay. He said, “I will furnish clover seed and want you to work the ground over so that I will get more hay.” I did a good job renovating. I would get up at 4:00 a.m., sow the seed and harrow the field. Pa told the neighbors, “My son stole my seed and planted it on his own meadow.” The next year, he had a good crop of hay. I did the job for almost nothing.

I would do the mowing on Pa’s land every summer. Our old mower played out. Pa would not buy one. John bought a new one, paid out of his own pocket. I traded my homestead for some lots in town that the folks owned. I sold them for $600.00. Henry had a better homestead; he sold his for $1,600.00. Pa and Maw sold my homestead to John for $2,300.00. John could not pay for it; he had a farm loan on both places. John worked out one summer for Scotts on the Mesa and got $35.00 a month and dinner. Paw got all his wages.

When I was away one fall, the cattle were all in the meadow. I had about $200.00 worth of young steers. When I came home, Pa said, “I needed some money so I sold your steers.” I had my own brand on them. Someone forged my name on the bill of sale, either Pa or the cattle buyer.

Adolph bought a relinquishment on a homestead and filed on it. The price was $350.00. It had some land cleared and fences and included a team of horses, wagon, harness, several head of cattle, and tools. Pa paid for everything. Adolph sold cattle, horses, wagon, harness and all and spent the money.
One time at the store, Pa showed Adolph a check for $400.00 that he got for grain. Adolph said, “I could use that very nicely.” Pa endorsed it and gave it to him. After all I did, one time I asked him for 75 cents to go to a play in town. He went upstairs, came down, would not speak and threw the money on the table. Then he slammed the door and went upstairs. A few days later, Adolph got ready to go to a dance. Without asking, Pa gave him $5.00.

I got very disgusted with the way things were going at home. I got all ready to leave home. Mamma started to cry and begged me to stay and said, “I do not know how we will get along without you.”

I was always called hotheaded even to this day. I only missed one hay season on Pa’s place. That was in 1894 and that summer I worked for Jim Hangs. As soon as my son and daughter, Evelyn and Vernon, were old enough to drive cars, Pa always got them to take him to town. He would give them 50 cents or $1.00.

When Pa died in 1936, after the funeral, we met at Elvin Bowen’s home in town. Elvin read the will. John said, “I am not satisfied that we were about left out of the will on account of what we owed him. Our accounts or notes were outlawed a long time ago. Let’s you and I contest the will and get our share.” I said, “No, it would create a lot of gossip, besides getting the ill will of sisters and Henry, which I do not want.”
LATER LIFE

My family and I were delighted and thrilled by having a surprise visit from Geneve Purless from California. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lafe _____, the sister of Adella Ferriss. She had read the book *The Tread of the Pioneers* that I sent them to read. Mrs. Purless enjoyed the stories so much that she came to Steamboat Springs at once by bus, traveling at day time, to admire the garden spot of the west, and her birthplace. Born in Steamboat in 1890, her father had a livery stable, then owned by Tom Morgan, across the road from the Spring Creek Cabins. McAdams had a bunch of registered horses that were sold at Public Auction in July 1891. P.J. Reinhardt and Perry Burgess had charge of the sale. McAdams moved to Meeker and witnessed the killing of the outlaws that attempted to rob the Meeker Bank. Mrs. Purless had pictures of the dead bandits. She also had pictures of her mother and sister; they were both good riders and broke the toughest mustangs. Mrs. Purless started to ride horses when she was three years old. When she was seven years old, she would go out on the darkest nights and take a ride, bareback and with only a halter on the horse. She also had a picture of her mother, sister and George Bratton on horse Nigger. Geo, as he was called, was a very prominent miner, prospector and restaurant owner. Mrs. Purless complimented Marshall Shell for his kindness, in directing her to a place to stay while here. She left by bus to visit relatives at Silt and Glenwood Springs before returning home.

7/9/52
Dear Sister Edith,

Emma is so busy with her housework and company, she asked me to write and give full detail about all that is going on around here, makes it very sad for you as this is your birthday.

Alexander passed away at 3 p.m. Saturday. He became unconscious at midnight. Polly and girls went to the hotel. Andrew was the only one with him when the end came. They all composed themselves, and quieted down. Arrived home at midnight. Polly had a good night sleep. Sunday they had the Catholic Priest with them. Henry and Mattie were also there. Polly did not want to see any of us. John came from McCoy and is staying with Bowens for a few days.

The funeral was held today at the Catholic Church. May, Vernon, Evelyn and Reno went together. I did not go. I suffer so much pain and am on crutches. Sorry to say, I was unable to go. Emma and Algie went with John in his pickup.

The church was filled to capacity with large quantities of beautiful flowers. After the congregation went outside, Polly, her girls and her family went all to pieces.
LOOKING BACK

Dad and Mother tried to do what was right with us kids. On Sundays, Mother would put up a lunch for thirteen or fourteen of us in a large clothes basket. We would have sideboards on the wagon box, filled with hay, and covered with canvas. We would hook up our team, one sorrel horse called Frank, the other a flea-bitten gray, called Bally. Dad and Mother rode up on the spring seat; she held the baby in her arms. All the rest of us would pile in the back and we would drive south through Deer Park, and up Oak Creek. No town of Oak Creek was there, only a homestead cabin with a dirt roof. No other ranches nearby, only those on creeks near the river bottoms farther south. At noon, we would stop where there was shade and a spring. There we would relax and rest and eat our lunch. When it was time to go, the roll was called as some of the younger ones wandered off and might be lost. We would continue our journey on home, counting the deer we saw as we went. Often we could count twenty or thirty deer. The next time we went, we would take a different route. Our trip would be twenty or thirty miles.

It is now September 10, 1954, my birthday. I am 78 years old and live on the old homestead. About a month ago, myself, wife May and our daughter took the same drive only a little further. Our daughter, Evelyn, drove our two door Ford V8. We took about the same route driving south through grain fields on 131, surfaced road, then on graveled roads over Yellow Jacket through Pleasant Valley to Highway 40, down the Mesa and home. What a change, fine modern homes, the most fertile valley in the world where they have telephones and REA, Registered Shorthorn and Hereford cattle, modern dairies and Holstein cattle. Some were stacking hay. All power equipment, fields dotted with baled hay, some round bales, others square bales. Progress marches on. Land prices from $100.00 to $150.00 an acre.
SCIATICA

For ten long years I have suffered
From my back, hip joint, knee and
Ankle right down to my toes
Know one seems care for me
With all my grief and woes

Night is so much longer
When you can not sleep a wink
All I can do is roll and tumble
With lots of time to think

I have called on Chiropractics
They cracked my neck and bent my back
And than give me some good hard slaps
They think they are on the right track

It’s all of know avail
Just like a ship without a sail
They take two bucks of your hard
Earned dough and listen to your tale of woe

Their the biggest fakers in all the land
They sure have got a lot of crust
Should be put in jail until they rust
My motto is in God we trust
Just follow them and we will all go bust.
ODE TO THE OLD WEST

When I gaze at the gulches and hillsides where herds of cattle now graze,
It makes me so sad and lonely as I think of the by-gone days.
Every 160 acres supported a happy family where the sturdy homesteader
Hacked down a nearby tree.

They built a cabin with a dirt roof, filling the cracks with mud
To keep out the howling blizzards in the best way that they could.
You could hear the echo of axes on every hill and vale
Where you were greeted by their dog and the friendly wag of his tail.

Times have changed the Old West since the days of long ago.
Ranchers, who bought up these homesteads, now live in the valley below.
The homesteaders are gone, along with the Indian and buffalo.
Many sleep beneath the headstones or to greener fields we saw them go.

They left behind cabins with roofs all fallen apart.
When I see them so desolate, loneliness fills my heart.
The wagon wheels have broken spokes, with tires fallen in two.
The household equipment is in the junk pile, all of which were once so new.

With the horse and buggy to take you to town many miles away
We had more time to visit than with all the modern equipment of today.
We had no separator but put our milk in pans to cool.
The children walked many miles to a little old log school.

We had kerosene lamps and lanterns with wicks,
The trusty old mother hen raised the baby chicks.
Some had brown leghorn hens, others had Plymouth Rocks.
As we had no oyster shells, we fed them gravel and broken up crocks.
When we went fishing, we always came home late,
Spent most of the time catching grasshoppers as we had no worms for bait.

We had no highway fatalities, crop surpluses and controls were unknown.
Sometimes I wish this modern living had left us entirely alone.
POSTSCRIPT

The Summer Ranch Legacy
By Jane McLeod and Allan White

Approximately eight miles south of Steamboat Springs, in the lush irrigated meadowlands where the Yampa River spreads widest and the community of Sidney was once located, is the 153‐acre Summer ranch. In September of 1889, John Summer (originally from Austria), his wife and children, traveled by team and wagon from Empire, Colorado, to the Yampa Valley as part of the growing surge of homesteaders pushing west to ranch and raise cattle. John Summer bought a homestead relinquishment from a French settler by the name of LeVene and settled his family into a crude log cabin shortly before winter set in. In addition to the cabin there was a makeshift barn, a shed, a small corral and the various farm animals and essentials they had brought with them. Eventually the cabin was re‐created into a two‐story structure that stood until 1962 when the current house was built.

The first cabin at Sidney had been built in 1880. Over time, Sidney developed such amenities as a post office, a store, a church, a blacksmith and a school all strung along the Stagecoach road, known today as River Road. In 1889, for the Summer family, self‐reliance was the key ingredient to survival. Managing a hay crop, horses, milk cows, cattle, chickens and a garden (the first being in the sod roof of the log cabin), with additional supplements of wild game, fish and wild berries, kept all hands busy but fed. As the family of twelve children grew, some stayed in the area and some moved on.

Louis stayed. He bought land and got into the cattle business. He initially had 160 acres where Emerald Meadows is now, until crickets ruined his grain crop one year. He sold that land for some nearby irrigated hay meadows. Louis married May Radford, the daughter of a local rancher, on Valentine’s Day 1907. They had two children: Evelyn, born in 1911, and Vernon, born in 1917. In the Great Depression of the ‘20s life changed for the worse as Louis, along with countless others, lost his savings and went broke when the cattle market collapsed. In 1927 he moved back to the original ranch with his family and rented from his father. Vernon and his sister attended the Sidney school (originally built in 1895 and later rebuilt by a neighborhood carpenter in 1910) for grammar school and transferred to town for high school. In the nice weather, rides to town to attend school could be obtained from any number of friends. When winter set in, Vernon and his sister either boarded or lived in an apartment in town during the years his mother worked there. For fifty cents, Vernon could ride out to the ranch on the train to help his dad on weekends.

At the completion of high school in 1934, Vernon’s dream was to be a rancher. Working alongside his father, he was determined to stay on the land and be his own boss. When John Summer Sr. died in 1936, his will divided his estate among his surviving children. Although the ranch was not left to Louis, the debts he carried with his father were
forgiven. Freed from that obligation, and with an understanding that Vernon would stay on and work the land, they were able to arrange financing to purchase the ranch from the estate.

In 1938 the original quarter section appraised for $4,500 and the upper pasture for $2,500. Together, Vernon and his father continued to raise hay, grain and cattle (from a low end in lean years of perhaps 20 breeding cows, to a high of 87). Some springs, the entire cow/calf operation easily could swell to 250 head – this number would include steers and heifers born in previous years still growing to market size. Shipping to market in Denver, originally from the Sidney stockyard and later trucking over the pass, feeding through the winters with a team, mending and building fences and putting up a hay crop – the life of a cattle rancher was busy but rewarding. Louis Summer was active up until the year (1955) he died. He drove the team while Vernon threw off the hay, and Louis even managed to dig fence posts while supported by his crutches. Being on the land and doing what was required was what he loved. Vernon successfully continued the cattle operation and the haying operation until 1979. In 1962, Vernon married Edythe Chritton and together they built the home where Vernon resided until his death in 2012 at age 95.

The old homestead house has been torn down and vanished from the Sidney landscape along with other familiar buildings, such as the old store and the post office that met their demise in 1945. Vernon was a good steward of the land over the years. He seeded all of the hay meadows, improving the quality of the hay and the production yield. Over the years, Vernon received numerous awards for his care of the land. Some of these awards included the Conservation Award in 1981, The Goodyear Award in 1981, the Colorado Centennial Farm Program award in 1989 at the State Fair in Pueblo, the 1994 Leckenby Award and in 1995 the County Centennial award. All of these awards only begin to acknowledge the rancher who was such a careful custodian of the land and did so much to preserve the heritage of the Yampa Valley.