

ESTABLISHED 1875
Bent County Bank
OF LAS ANIMAS

P. G. SCOTT, PRESIDENT.
A. S. BOOTH, VICE PRES.
W. J. A. SCOTT, CASHIER.

Las Animas, Colo.

July 16, 1921

Miss Beach,
Rocky Ford,
Colorado

Dear Miss Beach:

Your father asks me to give you a synopsis of my history while in this state, saying that you wanted it for a certain purpose.

I can say all there is to tell in a few brief sentences.

I came to Colorado from Kansas, landing at Kit Carson August 1st, 1870.

I had come from Canada to Kansas expecting to be benefited in health, but finding Atchison County full of malaria, I thought best to go to a higher altitude. My objective was anywhere along the eastern foot of the mountains.

In Kit Carson at that time, was situated the Commission houses of Otero, Sellar & Co., Chick, Brown & Co., and Webster & Curdiffe, as that was the point on the Kansas, Pacific Railroad where shipments of goods from the east to merchants in Southern Colorado and New Mexico were transported by wagon trains to their destination.

The West was totally new to me. I had never seen a Mexican or heard a word of his language spoken, and the greater number of the freighters at that time, and wagon drivers, were Mexicans, who were as ignorant of my language as I was of theirs.

By the kind assistance of an interpreter, I took passage in an ox wagon train for Trinidad, and was advised by the wagon boss,

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who knew a little English, to take my bed to their camp and thus avoid having to pay hotel bill.

Kit Carson was a lively place at that time. Looking back it seems to me that a large proportion of the buildings were saloons, dance halls, and other places of amusement, and one of the strange sights to a tender-foot was that almost every grown man had two six-shooters hanging to his belt. However, a large legitimate business was being done.

In two or three days the wagons in our train were loaded and we started south.

The morning of the second day, our wagon boss quarreled with one of his drivers ⁱⁿ and ~~in~~ order to enforce what appeared to be his commands, though I could not understand a word of what was passing, the wagon boss used the butt of his black-snake, and knocked the driver down. As soon as he regained his feet, he went to his wagon, took out his bed and carried it over to a train that was close by. This left us with five yoke of oxen and no driver. The wagon boss then came to me and asked if I thought I could manage the team, and as several years of my boyhood had been spent in the backwoods of Canada, where the most of my work was driving oxen, I told him I could. I was then and there promoted to the ⁱⁿresponsibility of a driver, and given a whip with a very long lash and a very short handle.

I could see how the other drivers handled their whips,

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making them pop like the explosion of a pistol. My best efforts in that direction usually resulted in the winding the lash around my neck. Anyway the oxen were quite safe.

I enjoyed the work and though the fare was common, it was ample and I gained strength from day to day, until when we reached Trinidad, after an uneventful trip, I felt almost capable of doing a man's work.

The wagon boss urged me to go with him to Santa Fe, N.M. He was loaded with Government supplies for that place, said he had a ranch nearby and if I would go with him he would later help me to go into business. However, I left the train at Trinidad and while looking for work I met a ranchman who lived at that time, where the city of Raton now stands. He had there a home station for a stage ^{line} coach, a herd of cattle and quite a large hay ranch nearby.

My salary at first was my board and lodging. I made my board as expensive for my employer as possible as I had a splendid appetite. My lodging did not cost him anything because I spread my bed at the side of an old hay stack.

When haying started I was promoted to a man's work with about half a man's pay. That did not worry me however, because I was steadily gaining in health and ability to work, and by the time the hay was in stacks I was ready for another job. My boss then put me in charge of his small herd of cattle. I was to occupy the cabin that we used while putting up the hay, and I was to live there

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alone and do my own cooking. Riding after cattle was to my taste and everything was agreeable except I was somewhat lonesome and then I had never done any cooking before. That however, did not matter so much because I did not feel like kicking at my own cooking and I got along somehow.

By and by however, I began to think I could do something a little better and decided to return to Trinidad and look for a position more in accordance with work that I was used to and that I thought would pay me better. In looking around the city of Trinidad, I learned that Mr. John S. Hough, manager of the store of Provers & Hough, needed help as he had sent his clerk to meet his brother, Si Hough, who was on his way from Texas with a herd of cattle. With him I secured the position of bookkeeper, a job that I knew how to handle, but otherwise I was of little use as I was ignorant of the Spanish language, and about four-fifths of his customers knew no English.

I stayed in the store at Trinidad until the spring of 1871, when the herd of cattle belonging to Silas and John Hough, was moved from Crow Creek, New Mexico to Temps station, then in Bent County, Colorado. I had helped to move the cattle and when they were located at Temps, Mr. Hough put a small stock of goods in a room there and left me in charge of that and the cattle.

To make up for my ignorance about the cattle business I had two expert Texas cow punchers that had been raised at the business and knew every move to make. I stayed there all summer but towards fall I had sent word to Mr. Hough that I did not want

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to stay there all winter as I wanted something better to do. He called me back to Trinidad and told me that he had arranged for me to go to Boggsville, where his partner, Mr. John W. Prowers, was located, that I was to teach school and help Mr. Prowers with his books or anything else that he wanted me to do. I reached Boggsville, September 1st, 1871, where I found the first school house in Bent County, in course of erection. I had taught school in Canada and in Kansas and knew rather more about the necessary furniture than the school directors did. I therefore was put in charge of the finishing and furnishing of the room, which was in due time, ready for occupancy. I found Mr. Prowers to be a broad-minded, intelligent gentleman, and I had a very pleasant time with my duties under him.

When the pupils were assembled, I found my roll consisting of two white, four half breed Mexicans, five quarter breed Indians, three half breed Indians, and one colored. Among these pupils were four of the family of Kit Carson, the celebrated frontier man. On the whole, they were good average pupils. We had no trouble in getting along with the pupils, or they among themselves.

Before assuming my duties as teaching, I had to undergo an examination, by the County School Superintendent. I went to his home for that purpose and found him busy branding a lot of calves and in order to expedite the work, as he was short of help, I took hold and helped. At the noon hour the Superintendent produced a book that evidently had been got together by some one fifty or

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157

Bent County Bank

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seventy-five years before. In it there were questions for prospective school teachers. The examination began by asking me questions from this book. I explained to my examiner that that was not the modern way of teaching that particular subject. We went from subject to subject in much the same way. I had shown him the Certificates I had received before teaching in Canada and Kansas, then as there was a good deal of work to do yet in the corral, he decided that I was alright and could get a first grade Certificate, so we ended it by adjourning to the corral to finish the work, and which we did before dark, to our mutual satisfaction. The examination had some of the elements of a farce for I believe I asked the Superintendent more questions than he asked me.

When spring came the school was dismissed and the teacher got a job as a cow-puncher for Mr. Prowers.

There were no fences in those days, in fact, there was not a mile of fence between the Kansas state line and Mexico, and we rode the river from the one point to the other.

In the fall of 1873, the Arkansas Valley Branch of the Kansas, Pacific R. R. was built from Kit Carson to the site of the present town of Las Animas, and that fall Las Animas was laid ^{up}. The town site was owned by D. H. Moffat, Jr., and R. M. Moore was his agent.

Being farther south than Kit Carson, the Forwarding and

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Commission business left that place and came to Las Animas.

Kilberg, Bartels & Co. and Prowers & Hough were the two houses that handled the Forwarding and Commission business. I took a position with Prowers & Hough as Forwarding clerk. That is, the southern merchants would order their goods from the east, and had them consigned to Las Animas, in care of Prowers & Hough. We received the goods from the Railroad, paid the freight, hired teams, mostly ox teams, and shipped the goods in that way to their destination. Las Animas was a very, very busy place in those days as there was a large territory south not yet penetrated by any railroad. This was the shipping point for Government freight to all their posts south and southwest, while the merchants in southern Colorado, New Mexico and part of Arizona, got their goods through one or the other of the houses in Las Animas.

Some three years later, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe R. R. was extended from the Kansas state line to Pueblo, and a branch from La Junta to Elmore was built. That took the Forwarding business away from Las Animas. Also took away my job.

In 1875 the Bent County Bank was organized by W. D. Thatcher, John A. Thatcher, John W. Prowers and John S. Hough, and I was offered the position of bookkeeper and entered on my duties as such, June 1st, 1876. On May 1st, 1878 I was appointed Cashier in place of G. S. Siddons, who went from here to open a Bank for the Thatcher Bros. at Ouray, Colorado.

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From that date my fate seemed to be sealed for I
never managed to get away from that day to this, July 1st, 1921.