

PIONEER TELLS OF DISPERSING INDIANS WITH FIRECRACKERS

Denverite Once Reported Scalped by Braves Fought Five Days Before Aid Reached Besieged Party—He Doesn't Know Sickness.

(By EDWIN HOOVER.)

A red-headed boy of 19 left his home in Plattsmouth, Neb., early in 1866, to join a caravan of ox-drawn covered wagons freighting from Fort Kearney to Helena, Mont., via the newly-blazed Bozeman-Bridger cutoff.

When the weeks and months passed by, and a year brought no news save meager and garbled reports that the caravan had been massacred by Sioux Indians, the parents of the Plattsmouth youth mourned their son as dead.

"Indians love red scalps," they recalled. "Ben would be a brilliant mark for them."

Saturday, Ben Ward, the red-haired youngster—now an octogenarian whose tawny tinge has been faded by the bleaching reagents of eighty winters—sat in his home at 2216 Newton street, "harking back" to the colorful epoch and recalling the dramatic passage of that 100-wagon caravan thru the frontier northwest, its fight with Sitting Bull's warriors and the four-day siege that ended when the white defenders were on their "last legs"—too weary and sorely-smitten to bury their dead.

"I was a 'bullwhacker' on that expedition," said the elderly scout. "Wild Bill" Hickok was a government scout with us. Steve Carson, a cousin of the famous Kit, was one of the drivers. Each wagon was hitched to six yokes of oxen—slow-traveling but sure.

"When we reached Fort Laramie, Wyo., a treaty with Indians was in progress and we waited till it was signed; but the terms were unsatisfactory to a lot of braves and we were attacked by redskins in the Big Horn mountains.

FORTY-TWO WERE IN THE PARTY.

"There were only forty-two of us—the caravan had split up since leaving Nebraska. Also, we had been 'guerillaed' by Indians, all along, the route, who had killed six wagon-masters and members of scouting parties. I saw Bill Hickok coming toward camp at a high run and knew exactly what was up—even before the Sioux appeared behind him.

"When Bill came close to the place where I was watering my oxen—half a mile from the corrals—he wheeled his horse and emptied six Sioux saddles with his rifle so fast it made my head swim.

"The Indians had us cut off from the wagon train. We shot across the backs of oxen and kept the Sioux circling.

"The strategy by which we reached camp has given me many a laugh since then," Ward chuckled. "The caravan was carrying dynamite and firecrackers to Helena. Knowing the superstitious nature of Indians, I had kept a bunch of firecrackers with me, planning for just such an emergency.

"Bill and I tied the firecrackers to the tail of my St. Bernard dog, which was 'at heel' constantly and, with the first explosion, he was gone, yelping and plunging straight toward the corrals—and incidentally, toward the redskins who thought the Great Spirit was 'hounding' them! They scattered—whoooping in terror. The dog was unhurt.

FOUGHT FIVE DAYS BEFORE AID CAME.

"Bill and I got to camp—and there we fought shoulder to shoulder, generally under a wagon bed, until noon of the fifth day when an emigrant train with 200 soldiers hove in sight.

"Twenty of us were dead. Most of the rest were wounded. We found our dead comrades by scouting for the feathered ends of arrows sticking up above the sage brush. Each body had nine arrows thru the intestines. Most of them had the hearts cut out. This testified to their bravery because it is the Indian custom to fry a fighting man's heart and distribute it among warriors who believe the eating of it increases their courage."

Ben Ward carries a scar on his leg where an arrow cut a tendon in the Big Horn encounter. "It smarted some," he acknowledged, "and I had trouble walking for a while. Wild Bill, who afterward became marshal of Abilene, came thru unscathed. But Steve Carson was killed. A letter addressed to him at Helena, Mont.—when we finally won thru—announced that death had prevented Kit Carson from joining us, as he had planned.

"Five years ago a son of Steve, from Missouri, located me here in Denver and for the first time knew definitely the circumstances of his father's death."

"Two years after the Wyoming battle, Ward was trailing with Sioux for buffalo hides in North Dakota. He made headquarters with Sitting Bull who presumably directed the Big Horn massacre. But the chieftain denied to the trader that he had taken part in the fight, claiming that he was in his teepee "making medicine."

"Mo 'wastado'—good Indian," he insisted, eyeing Ward's crimson scalp covetously.

WAS GUEST OF SITTING BULL.

Sitting Bull presented Ward to Tawachwee, his squaw, and made the white man his guest thruout the winter of 1868. Ward came out of the Dakotas with "a roomful of buffalo hides."

Ward relates that his first trip to Denver was in the spring of 1863, when he was only 16 years old.

"We unyoked our oxen about the place where the Denver General hospital now stands," he said Saturday. "Denver then—as I remember it—had just about one street, lined with honkytonks, saloons and gambling halls. The men in our caravan spent their pay between sunset and sunrise, but I was too young—and didn't have the inclination—to dissipate my money.

"That fall and winter I was attached to the Second Nebraska regiment and was scout for Will Cody—himself only 18, just two years older than I—who was driving stage for the Historic Halliday stage line.

"Cody's route extended from Fort Kearney to Cottonwood—now McPherson, Neb. My escort duty was from Kearney to the fort at Plum Creek—thirty miles.

"Bill drove at a gallop all the way, of course. Going thru Plum Creek valley, several miles from the fort,

one day, he chose to leave the valley by way of a little-used cutoff that went straight up the bank to the plateau above. He told me afterward that he didn't know why he took that route. Anyhow, it saved our lives, because a band of seventy-five Indians were lying in ambush. They rose up with their war cry when we turned off, but we had a 200-yard start and managed to keep them at a distance until we reached the Plum Creek fort where fifteen soldiers had seen us waging our running battle but didn't dare come out for fear the attack was a ruse to get them in the open.

CODY ADMITS IT WAS CLOSE SHAVE.

"Eleven passengers, tenderfeet, were darn near scared to death on that wild ride and Cody himself acknowledged 'it was a close shave.'"

Cody became a celebrity long after his Nebraska stage-driving career and always kept up his friendship with Ben Ward. Repeatedly he offered the pal of his youth enticing salaries to join the Buffalo Bill Wild West shows, but Ward, busy with his hunting, trapping, trading, and, later, mining activities, never was lured to the sawdust ring. "A man has to be a showman to make a success of that sort of thing," Ward explains. "Buffalo Bill was a natural showman—I'm not and never have been."

In addition to his experiences with the celebrities of frontier days in Indian battles, Ward took active part, as contractor, in the building of the Burlington railroad into Colorado. Once it devolved on him to take a \$150,000 payroll from Culberson, Neb., to Akron, Colo. The route was thru the "Jesse James territory" where the famous bandit had been operating.

OVER LOOKS BIG FORTUNE IN GOLD.

The outlaw ignored the lazy span of mules and rickety wagon Ward drove, thereby overlooking a big fortune in gold and silver carelessly sacked in the wagonbed amid provisions, tools and bedding.

Last year, after spending the winter in California with a daughter, Mr. Ward returned to Denver to find that he had long been eligible to pension as a veteran of the Indian wars—which extended from 1862 until the battle of Wounded Knee, when the remnant of Custer's regiment wiped out hostile Sioux. Some \$2,000 in pension had "bucked up on him." With this snug nest egg and a regular government income for the rest of his life, he regards the winter and coal strikes complacently.

Still actively interested in mining, Ward made two trips to the new gold "higgings" near Parker recently and has been infected by the prospecting "bug."

"Eighty years old—yes," he says, "but the only time I was ever sick was when I got double pneumonia while buffalo hunting thirty years ago. That bothered me some, but I guess I'm lucky to have gone thru the years of Indian warfare and all the grief of pioneering without having more trouble than one arrow wound and one attack of sickness."

GOVERNMENT GETS BIG REVENUE FROM COLORADO LANDS

State Properties Yield U. S. \$2,500,000 Income Since 1873.

Uncle Sam has received an enormous amount of revenue thru his public land activities in this state. Sale and leasing of lands has turned millions into the treasury, while large amounts are paid the government yearly under various acts.

From sale of coal lands, rentals and royalty from permits and leases, the government has received approximately 2 and one-half million dollars, since 1873. More than a million dollars has been realized by the government from sale of timber and stone lands, since 1873.

During the last twenty-six years more than 9 million dollars has been paid into the treasury to the credit of the reclamation fund from the sales of public lands in Colorado and from fees and commissions.

Receipts of Uncle Sam under the mineral leasing act, in Colorado, from the time of passage of the act in 1920 to July 1, 1927, amounted to \$331,000. Approximately \$370,000 has been paid the government in fees and commissions in connection with stock-raising entries in Colorado since passage of the act.

During the fiscal year ended June 30, 1927, sales of Indian lands in Colorado amounted to almost \$100,000. The government has realized \$1,604,000 under the desert land entry act, which was passed in 1877.

Money received by the government from these various sources is deposited in the treasury by the land office. It is then distributed among the reclamation fund, the public land states, to the various Indian tribes and the general fund of the United States.

DENVER NEAR QUOTA FOR JEWISH HOME

Denver's quota, \$10,000, of the \$100,000 national fund being raised for the purpose of enlarging and improving the Denver National Home for Jewish Children is almost "over the top," according to announcement by George Greenspun, executive secretary of the institution, who will go to New York this week to collect the remainder of the money subscribed elsewhere.

ha
DE
O
Pos
O
few
own
owne
Pr
many
left
Miss
close
"So,
telling
\$5.31
as if
Wh
than
went
graph
way
Finch
friend
Mr
Smith
virtue
and a
Mark
force
game
obtain
If I
blazin
tions
his pl
ness"
hostel
Tho
was s
near
fore h
of Den
the li
On t
testim
nave
His n
every
COL
SI
Don
county
pleted
statem
the g
total
shown
Of this
ing an
for co
ledger
peared
CL
King
Legi
"Fo
pres
end