

Statement of Henry Weber

Sept. 12th. 1931.

Dx
Richard
Carroll

I was born in Omaha in 1857. My father's name was Henry Weber and my mother's maiden name was Catherine. My father made a trip to Canon City, Colorado in the fall of 1859 with an Ox team. He made the trip with a train of immigrants. In the spring of 1860 my mother and I and a brother Frank Weber made the trip to Denver, Colorado by stage. Our father came to Denver from Canon City after us and we all then went to Canon City. My father had two log buildings in Canon City, in one he kept a lunch counter and grocery store. We lived two blocks from the store in a log residence.

I remember on one occasion some Union Soldiers came through Canon City. My father saw them coming and locked the door of the store and came home. The soldiers came along and broke the ~~xxx~~ door down and helped themselves to what provisions they wanted. We stayed in Canon City for two years then moved to Fairplay, then to Montgomery and then to Buckskin, then back to Canon City in 1866 or 1867. My father then took up a place down near Florence on the River. He put in a small crop, the river came up and washed it out, then we moved back into Canon City. In the spring of 1868 we came through South Park and down Trout Creek and down the Arkansas river and rented John Tennessee's place on the Little Arkansas River where the brick yard now is and put in a crop. The next spring my father took up a place about 1 and one-quarter miles north of Poncha. Nat Rich and John Vaught took up places on the first bench above Poncha and my father took his up just above near the Pinion ridge. These three took the first irrigation ditch out of the north side of the Little Arkansas River. John Tennessee had previously taken his ditch out of the south side of the river. His ditch is known as the Tennessee ditch.

My father was a stone mason. He came up to the South Park in 1864 and built the chimney for the Salt works now on Tom McQuaid's ranch. The chimney is still standing.

My father, Nat Rich and John Vaught dug the first hole at Poncha Springs, to make a place to bathe. The hole was 5 or 6 feet deep and about 6 by 8 feet in dimensions. I think this was in 1868.

In the 60's and 70's the Ute Indians used to come up the San Luis Valley and across Poncha Pass, cross the Upper Arkansas Valley and up either Ute Trail or Trout Creek through south Park and out into the plains to hunt buffalo. They would spend most of the summer on the plains and then come back over the same route and down through the San Luis Valley. Ordinarily 100 to 150 Indians including the squaws and ~~xx~~ tapooses would come through on these trips. ~~xxx~~ Some summers there would be two or three parties of from one hundred to one hundred fifty. They always travelled by horseback. The bucks never did any work. The only thing they would do was to hunt. The squaws would do all the work drag the tent poles behind their horses, prepare camp, cook and do all the rest of the work. Ouray and Colorow were two of the main chiefs. When Colorow came through with his party of indians he would go by Browns Creek and up Trout creek.

We were on the ranch near Poncha just one year. My father worked in the mines and the crops that we planted were all eaten up by the grasshoppers. As a matter of fact all the crops on adobe Park and the rest of the southern end of the valley were totally destroyed by the grasshoppers that year.

In 1869 or 1870 we moved to Cache Creek. This was a small town about a mile and a half from the mouth of the creek by the same name, that is west of the Arkansas River. Charley Mater had a grocery store and a hotel building in Cache Creek and my father became interested with him and my father and mother ran the hotel. We were at Cache Creek about a year and a half, then moved to Low Pass. That was a mining camp above Granite on Low Pass Creek which enters the Arkansas River from the east side.

Cache Creek was quite a little booming town when we were there. There were two saloons, two grocery stores and a hotel. John Mundlein had a blacksmith shop in Cache Creek at the time we were there. Joe Hutchinson had charge of the placer mining that was going on there and was Superintended on in partnership with the owners of the property.

When we first located on the place North of what is now Poncha there was no town there. Nat Rich was living on the land now occupied by the town. Nat Rich was a great friend of the Ute Indians. They thought a great deal of him. On account of the fact that they could not say Nat Rich they called him "Na-va-et". I was well acquainted with Shavano, Colorow and Ouray, and also with Colorow's son. I remember that Nat Rich used to dress Colorow's son, who was quite a chunk of a boy, up in white men's clothes and the Indians would have great sport with the boy.

At the time we were at Cache Creek the mining operations were run by Bailey and Gaff I remember now and Joe Hutchinson was in charge of the placer diggings for them.

Low Pass was about two miles from the Arkansas River. It consisted of two hotels, a store and an old arastra mill. Most of the mining however was placer mining.

with the father

The next year we moved to a little mining camp by the name of Hawkinsville which was about one mile south of Low Pass. Chub Newitt a brother of Joseph Newitt owned the building in which my father and mother ran the hotel at Low Pass. Hawkinsville was a quartz mining camp. My father and mother also ran the hotel there. The main mine there was called the Yankee Blade. A stamp mill was constructed at Granite and the Ore was taken by wagons from the Yankee Blade to the mill at Granite.

About 1872 we moved to Granite. We stayed there about a year and then we moved to Browns' creek and took up the ranch now owned by Mrs. Evans and now farmed by her son Dick Evans.

While we lived at Granite my father worked at the quartz mines at Hawkinsville.

I went to school in a one-room log school on the north side of Brown's creek. A man by the name of Sprague owned the ranch on Brown's creek above us and Gilliland owned the ranch below us. He was a minister and used to hold Sunday school in the log school house. This log school house stood on the ~~left~~ west side of the present state highway near the bottom of the hill on the north side of Brown's creek. The settlers built the school house. This was the first school house that was constructed in what is now Chaffee County.

While we lived in Cache creek my folks sent me to Canon City for one winter to attend school there as that was the nearest school from Cache creek.

Dyer

At the log school house on Brown's creek Judge Sprague taught a term or two and Mr. Dier who later became Judge Dier also taught. I

I went to school to both of them. A man by the name of Anderson was teaching at the log school house on Brown's creek at the time of the Lake County War.

During the Lake County war Tom Ehrhart and I and about ten or a dozen others were going to school at the Log School house. Anderson was the teacher. I remeber 12 or 15 of the vigilantes committee came to the school house in the morning. We had had a snow and the members of the committee all had their eyes blacked so as to avoid being snow blinded. They came to the school and Kraft the leader came to the door and knocked. Anderson went out then came back and told Tom Ehrhart and ^{me} to sort of ~~me~~ look after the school until ~~kn~~ noon as he thought he would be back then. The vigilantes took Anderson with them and we understand took him to Nathrop. As Anderson did not return at noon we dismissed the school. On our way home we met a number of the vigilantes and they made us hold up our hands and swear that we would not divulge anything concerning their visit to the school. Anderson returned that night and opened school the next day. The vigilantes had their headquarters for the southern end of the valley at Bales ranch and at Nathrop for the central part of the county and another head quarters at Grante. At these headquarters they held their meetings and took people that they wanted to these headquarters and questioned them, held their courts etc. At this time we lived on a place just this side of Brown's creek, now occupied ~~and~~ by Jerry O'Conner. The vigilantes committee molested many of the people and drove and scared a great many people out of the county. The number of vigilantes gradually increased during the winter and until the following spring, then they gradually became less obnoxious, and decreased in numbers and finally disbanded. Most of the work done by the Vigilantes was after Judge Dier was killed. DYER The vigilantes made a practice of stopping any one that they cared to. They would question them, hold court if they wanted to, detain people for days without semblance of right etc. Charles Nathrop, John Coon, Bales, Weston, Kraft and many others, a few of whom are still living were members of the vigilantes.

Elijah Gibbs Lived on Gas Creek. He was a middle-age man very averse to work. He made his living by hunting, horse raising and other similar things. I was well acquainted with him. George Harrington had a small grocery store just a few feet from his house. Just back between the two buildings they had a well. After Mr. and Mrs. Harrington had gone to bed they saw a light from a fire and got up, and found that the store was on fire. Mrs. Harrington started to draw water from the well. Harrington was taking the buckets and throwing the water on the fire when he was shot in the back. Harrington died immediately. Harrington's widow later married ~~Jxxxxxx~~ Frank Land. I think Mrs. Land is still living in Cripple Creek. She was in Salida and I had a visit with her here a couple of years ago. George Harrington was buried at Centerville cemetery.

The day before Harrington was shot Gibbs went up to Harrington's place to try and get some more water out of the creek. Harrington was out in the field. Gibbs had his gun with him. Harrington and Gibbs had some argument about the water and Gibbs claimed that Harrington started after him with a shovel. Gibb's gun was fired but Gibbs claims that was an accident and I think that must have been true as Gibbs was a crack shot and if he had shot at Harrington he would no doubt have hit him. Harrington had Gibbs arrested. Gibbs was taken before Justice of the Peace Cowen who was a brother-in-law of Gibbs.

Nov 1934
says Gibbs came thru
few days ago and
found out about
I
No. 61805
HAD DIED
BEFORE THIS
J.W.

I understand that Cowen was to hold Gibbs for trial but Mrs. Gibbs was sick and Cowen allowed ~~HARRINGTON~~ Gibbs to go home. That evening the house was fired and Harrington was killed. Gibbs, in a day or so was arrested and taken to Granite, and was to have a trial there but secured a change of Venue to Denver. He was tried there and acquitted. He returned to his home and was preparing to leave the country. During this time the number of vigilants was increasing all the time and, after the killing of the Boones, were guarding all the outlets in an endeavor to prevent Gibbs from leaving the country. However after the shooting at the Gibbs place, Gibbs and his brother and father-in-law started out. They crossed the Arkansas at about the mouth of Gas Creek and above there encountered some of the vigilantes, including the sheriff, but Gibbs and his party got away and got to Colorado Springs and got on the train there and went to Denver. The Sheriff John Weldon followed Gibbs on into Denver and demanded him from the officers there who gave him protection. The Denver officers refused to surrender him to Weldon. Gibbs has never been seen since then.

The facts concerning the killing at the Gibbs place, just before Gibbs, his brother and father-in-law got out of the country are somewhat as follows. It all happened on a bright moonlight night when there was a little snow on the ground. About 35 of the vigilantes, supposed to include Sheriff Weldon, went to Gibbs Place. The vigilantes demanded that Gibbs come out. He refused and they made another demand which he refused and then Gibbs stated that he put out the fire and light in the house so they could not see him and his wife and so he could see out. He saw two of the vigilantes go to a hay stack and get ~~a~~ a bundle of hay and bring it to the door and were proceeding to set it afire when Gibbs went to shooting. Sam and ~~David~~ Boone were both mortally wounded, and another man, whose name I do not now remember died soon afterwards. The vigilantes then ~~scattered~~ and Gibbs stated that as soon as they got away from the house he ran out of the house and went down to his brothers place which was below his. Apparently when the vigilantes saw Gibbs leave they mustered courage and went back and gathered up the wounded. Both of the Boone brothers were taken down to the log cabin on the west side of the Arkansas River near Browns canon, which was known as the Kraft place. This is a two story log cabin and both the Boone boys died there. The cabin is still standing. It is a two story building, now not occupied. It is situated below the state highway and just east of the country road that leads from the state highway to adobe park.

When the Leadville excitement got started good and from 1877, 1878 and 1879 and along there were seven four-horse coaches used in the stage line service between Canon City and Leadville, that is seven made the trip to Leadville and seven to Canon City each day. The road from Canon City went up Grape Creek and did not again get back to the Arkansas River until it got to Coaldale. From Coaldale it came right up the Arkansas River, through where Salida now stands and on up the valley. It past the ranch on which my father and mother and I were living at about five o'clock in the evening. Horses were changed on this coaches every ten miles. It took about 14 or 15 hours to make the trip each way. When the railroad was built into Cleora the stage coaches the run from Cleora to Leadville.

rail

Otto Mears built the road from Poncha to Gunnison, under contract from the railroad Company.

During the sixties, seventies and eighties there were a great

Many prospecting parties, in fact the country was full of prospectors. Nearly every gulch was prospected to its head time and again. No big mine however was found until Smith and Gray found the Murphy on Chalk Creek and later the same men found the Madonna.

The Aspen excitement started in 1884. A stage was put on from Granite to Aspen over Independence pass. The road was terrible but freight wagons by the hundreds were continually on the road. In this freighting did not stop for winter. In winter freight wagons were used to the upper end of the upper twin Lakes, then sleds were used to within about 12 miles of Aspen.

Monarch started in the late 70's and the railroad was put into Monarch to take care of the Madonna output just as soon as it reached Poncha. There was practically nothing at Poncha until about 1878. The Jackson Hotel was built then. For three or four years business in Poncha was excellent. There were a number of business houses, a good bank. I ran a butcher shop there for a time. The Hotel had a big business and it was filled to capacity almost all of the time. About 1882 there was a big fire in Poncha that practically wiped the town out leaving only the Jackson Hotel, the Bank building in the business section. The town was not rebuilt and from that time on Salida had the edge on Poncha.

Maysville and Arborville both grew at practically the same time as Poncha. Arborville was named after a man by the name of Arbor. He had a dance hall at that place. At one time there were about 200 people at Arborville. Maysville had a number of business houses, two or three hotels, At its best it had between 2000 and 3000 population.

Early in the 80's Salida had its boom and Arborville, Maysville and Poncha went down rapidly.

There was a little town at Otto, quite a settlement at Mears and also at Shirley. Otto and Mears were both named after Otto Mears.

In 1872 or 1873 Charles Nathrop hired Hugh Boon and myself to drive a bunch of beef cattle consisting of 87 head from Villa Grove to Denver. We drove the cattle over Poncha Pass, down through about where Salida now stands and up Ute Trail, through the South Park and on to Denver. This required 17 days.

About a half mile below Shirley there is still a stump which was part of the toll gate on the Marshall Pass wagon road. This stump is on the left hand side of the road and between the road and the creek.

When I was a boy about 7 or 8 years old the Ute Chief Colorow and his band of Utes always stopped and camped at a cottonwood grove near my father's place on Brown's creek when they made their annual trip to the plains. They generally stopped there and camped two or three days. I would always go out as soon as they stopped to camp and visit with them. We were always good friends. At one time Colorow wanted to take me with them to Mexico and I wanted to go but my parents would not let me go. At all times the Utes were very friendly to the whites in this section and at no time did they harm anyone altho they had many opportunities to do so.

CHARCOAL INDUSTRY.

The charcoal industry came with the Leadville mining boom, starting in the late 70's. It became a very large industry in this section of the State. There were three sets of kilns near Malta, one set at Riverside, another about two miles above Buena Vista, one four miles below Buena Vista, two sets at Browns Canon one set at Coaldale, one at Texas Creek and one set at Poncha. Seven Kilns constituted a set. It required about 30 men all told, to keep one set going, that is the wood choppers, haulers and all. Practically all the wood that was used was pinon. A trifling amount of pine was sometimes used. It took seven days to burn a set. The charcoal was shipped to the smelters at Leadville. These charcoal kilns were about all owned and operated by a man by the name of McAllister. He used to keep several hundred cords of pinion piled at the two sets of kilns at Browns canon. At once time all of the wood there was burned and all the kilns destroyed. The fire was due to one of the kilns exploding.

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From 1874 to 1886 I was engaged, more or less in the cattle business, At that time there was a great many cattle rustlers in this part of the country. My cattle generally run on the west side of the Arkansas river, between Salida and Buena Vista. Over on the Cameron Mountain country cattle rustlers would steal whole herds at a time, drive them in and rebrand and then sell. Ed Watkins who was supposed to be one of the biggest cattle rustlers was arrested along about 1900, brought to Salida. He and the sheriff came into my office. Watkins asked to borrow my gun. The sheriff stated it was allright, that he, the sheriff would take the gun and give it to Watkins when he should be released. I gave him my gun. They took the train at Salida for Caon City. The train stopped opposite the penitentiary to let Watkins off for safety sake. The mob however took Watins away from the sheriff, shot him full of holes, then took him over to the river bridge and hung him. His partner Ernest Christensen was sent to the Colorado State penitentiary for a two-year term. This was about ~~at~~ the end of the serious and wholesale cattle thievery in this section. CHRISTISON

run in
year
1883

In the early 80's I was running a butcher shopp on F Street in Salida, Colorado, close to second street/. Baxter Stingley was Marshall. One day I was standing in front of the shop. A party had just pawned a watch to me. Stingley saw that I had two watches and said you better let me have one of them. So I handed him a big heavy-cased watch. He put it in his vest pocket. Two or three days later a party of men employed at the Brown's canon coal kilns came down to Salida on their way to Bear Creek where they were going hunting. They stopped, got pretty well liquored up and went into a restaurant on the south side of ~~xxxxx~~ first St. between ~~E~~ and F. streets and ordered dinner. They got noisy and were ~~xxx~~ throwing the dishes around. The propietor went for help. He got Stingley and a deputy. As soon as Stingley and his deputy entered the room the shooting started. Stingley's deputy was killed, another man across the street on horse back was killed, a stranger was crippled and Stingley was shot twice, once in the groin, and the other bullet lodged in the watch that I had loaned him. The bullet went through the ~~fixxxx~~ case and works and lodged against the back case which it dented. All the men in the drunken party were known but nothing was done towards prosecuting them.

1883
this was 1884
see Balmain

A short time after the above indident a warrant was sent to Stingley from the sheriff of Saguache County for the arrest of Frank Read. Stingley went to Arbor's dance hall which was on first street just opposite the Monarch barn, now owned by the City of Salida. Stingley saw his man there, passed him, then turned and pulled out his gun. Read as quick as a flash knocked the gun out of Stingley's hand and picked it up and shot Stingley.

1886

REED

Stingley was down on his knees and begged REED Stingley not to shoot him again, but Read smiled and deliberately shot him through the heart, killing him instantly. Read went out, got on his horse which was tied to a hitching post just outside the dance hall, and left and was never apprehended.

Chapman and Riggin put up about the first ore mill in this part of the country. It was at Alpine. It apparently did not make a success as it only ran a short time.

Alpine was a booming little town for a short time but did not last long. St. Elmo. started after Alpine.