

## THE STORY OF A COLORADO PIONEER

(MRS CHARLES A FINDING)

Early in the year 1859 my Father, Marshall Silverthorne decided to come to Colorado for his health, arriving in Denver May 17th, 1859.

Improving rapidly in health he returned to Pennsylvania to bring back his family. With his wife and three children he started on his return trip to Denver early in March 1860. We came by train to St. Louis, then by boat to Omaha.

We were two weeks on the boat as we did not travel at night. After a short visit in Council Bluffs we outfitted for the trip. We were six weeks on the plains. We did not travel on Sundays. Mother devoted this day to washing, baking and cooking for the following week.

Twice during the trip the Indians were determined that my Father should trade my Mother for some of their ponies. The last time they were inclined to be rather ungly and Father had quite a time with them.

We arrived in Denver May 18th, 1860 just one year and a day after my Fathers first arrival. We rented a house of four rooms situated at what is now Fourteenth and Lawrence Streets. This house was built of rough boards, with no paint and with most of the windows covered with white muslin. It was called the Denver House after General Denver. The house was owned by Samuel Dolman who had gone back to Kansas with his family. We paid eighty-five dollars a month rent.

Soon some friends of Fathers wanted to board with us. These were George Clark of Clark & Grubers, Major Fillmore, Judge Hallett and others. With so many Mother had more than she could do and hired a daughter of old Left Hand an Indian Chief of the Arapahoes.

I remember one day a number of Indians were around the house and Mother wanted a small pair of moccasins for my little brother who had stepped on some prickly pears near the house hurting his feet very badly. We could not get all

the needles picked out. Mother went with the Indians into the dining room asking me to watch that the Indians outside did not enter and steal anything. I was afraid so as soon as Mother had gone I crawled under the bed and from there I watched the open door. Very soon a squaw peeped through a crack in the door and seeing something handy there stepped in and put it under her blanket. It was my new sunbonnet made with casing and pasteboard run in called slats.

After a trade of sugar and moccasins had taken place and the Indians had gone I crawled out of my hiding place and said "Mother, one of the squaws took my sun bonnet". Taking me by the hand she said, "come out and show me which one". I was frightened but had to go. Mother asked them if they had the bonnet but they denied having it. I pointed out the one who had taken it but she shook her head "No". so Mother took hold of her elbows raised them and the sunbonnet fell out of the folds of her blanket. Mother folded up the slats and boxed the squaws ears. They all began to cry out. In a few minutes many Whites and Indians were gathered there.

Our friends cried out "Oh don't Mrs. Silverthorne, we will all be killed". However the Indians soon quieted down and walked away. They were always stealing everything they could get their hands on, but their specialities were soap, sugar, and blueing.

In the fall of 1860 I went to school in Denver in a little log one room school building which stood on McGaa Street, on the banks on Cherry Creek. Miss Helen Ring was my teacher.

One day a man came down riding on a white horse and tied the horse to a large cootonwood tree just in front of the schoolhouse. Miss Ring said "Children I am afraid there is going to be trouble, so I will open the window and you crawl out and run home just as quickly as you can".

The man was George Steel, a notorious character. He had ridden to town to make William N Byers, the editor of the Rocky Mountain News, retract some statements



regarding this man Steel's career. This Mr. Byers refused to do. When I reached home Mother wrapped my sister, brother and myself in buffalo robes and put us in the attic so that no stary bullets could touch us since friends of Steel had gathered close to our home prepared to fight for him. Afterward Steele was shot and killed at Bradfords Corner, now known as Larimer and Sixteenth Streets.

About the same time a young man named Jim Gordon, who, when under the influence of liquor was very quarrelsome, had killed a young German man. After several trials he was acquitted under the flimsy excuse of "No Jurisdiction". This angered the Germans and they took it into their own hands and hung Gordon on a Saturday in July 1860. I saw this man hung. Nine years later I saw a man named Musgrove hung under the Larimer Street bridge. He was a stock thief and general outlaw.

In the latter part of May 1861, we started for Georgia Gulch, but stopped in Breckenridge. Here we rented a house that had been a store owned by O. A. Whittemore and C. P. Elder. There was one very large front room and a smaller room in the back which we used for a bedroom and kitchen. The floor of the kitchen was made of very old sluice boxes that had been worn until the knots stood out, caused by constant washing of water and gravel. As a rule these boxes were burned and the ashed panned for gold that would collect in the knots and crevices. The front room had a dirt floor with shelves and a counter running along one side. Father took a team and hauled sawdust from an old sawmill above town and covered this dirt floor to a depth of six inches. Mother sewed burlap sacks together and made a carpet. Then Father made pins such as are used for fastening tents down and nailed the burlap down with these. All dust sifted through so it as easy to keep clean. In this room we made three beds, end to end on the floor bu placing two logs one on top of the other. The enclosure was filled with hay then feather beds that had been brought from Pennsylvania were placed on this.

This room was a dining room during the day to accomodate those who came to Breckenridge and had no place to go. The Postoffice was in the fron part of this room, and a pidgeon-holed box about three by five feet held all the mail.

Saturday was the general Eastern mail day and the miners all came down to get their mail. There were two other arrivals of mail during the week but Saturday's mail was the principal one. The letters were distributed by calling out the names, the men answering "here" and the letters were tossed to them.

In a few months Mother was asked to bake bread, pies and cake to sell the day the men came down for the mail. This mean forty or fifty pies alone and a hundred pound sack of flour was very often used in the days baking. a quart of milk was included and this was paid for in gold dust which I weighed out. I would take in between thirty and forty dollars.

One summer I was sent down to the Placer Mine to take Father's lunch to him. I walked along slowly picking strawberries and wild flowers on my return and had been home only a few minutes when one of the men came running up and ask d Mother if I was home. A large buffalo had come along and in his excitement or anger had torn up all the sluice boxes and followed my trail up crossing the ~~river~~ river just before he reached town which was all that saved me.

In the Spring of 1862 we bought another house and moved into it. Here I helped Father build a fireplace and a cellar bringing up the dirt from the cellar in a bucket. We papered the walls of the house with newspapaers.

In the Fall of 1863 we went to Denver that my Sister and I might enter school. We bought a home on Arapahoe Street just where the tramway cars not come out of the Loop. This property we sold to the Tramway company in 1892.

We attended a private school in the Rectory of old St. John's Church on Fourteenth and Arapahoe Streets, taught by Miss Irene Sopris who later married Mr. J. S. Brown of the Brown Brothers Mercantile Company.



Each year early in June we would drive to Breckenridge, taking about four days for the trip. All provisions had to be hauled from Denver.

We would make the town of Hamilton in South Park the first day then start over Boreas Pass, leaving Hamilton about eleven or twelve o'clock at night when there was a crust on the snow so that we might walk over it.

In January 1873 I was married to Charles A. Finding and the next year was the last we were compelled to walk over the Range. We carried our little Baby in our arms a distance of fifteen miles.

Going back in our story to the year 1867, we made a trip East. We took with us an Indian Chief's jacket that had a fringe of two hundred and four human scalps. This was to show Easterners what the Indians were doing out here.

No wonder they thought this the "Wild and Wooley West"

At this time the Union Pacific Railroad came only as far as North Platte. Finding the stage coach reservations all engaged we decided to buy a team of horses. One of the party had a light wagon which we rode in and we had another for provisions and baggage.

The Indians were then getting very troublesome. The authorities at North Platte refused to let us start out unless we promised to drive fast enough to catch up with a company of Infantry. There were eight teams in our party.

We left the road after awhile and drove down near the river where a company of soldiers were camped. Two of the wagons decided to stay on the road near the Bluffs. While eating lunch we heard the cry out "Indians, Indians" and then we saw the Indians swoop down and circling around ride away with our horses. We went to the rescue of these people and then all together we hurried on, arriving at what was known as Beauvias's Crossing where we camped all night. After supper two soldiers came up and asked Mother if she and Miss McCune would go and see two soldiers who had deserted and who had been found badly wounded in the

The searching party had found them and brought them to camp. They were dying and kept calling for their Mothers. The boys died at daybreak happy in the thought that their Mothers were with them.

We were taken across the river at North Platte on a ferry and then we hurried to catch up with the soldiers who were camped that night near the river so that the Indians could not surround them. Just before reaching Wisconsin Ranch we saw a stage coach coming from Denver. On the stage was a young man who had come out to repair some telegraph wires that the Indians had cut. While talking to the driver and this young man we saw the coach coming on its way to Denver and since the roads were very narrow we had to hurry on. We soon heard shots and turning around saw the coach coming down the hill just as fast as the horses could travel. The other coach turned around and followed. The young telegraph operator had been killed. They said it seemed as though the Indians had come right out of the bluffs. Following this there was no more trouble with the Indians until after we left the soldiers at Fort Morgan. We camped that night at Stevens Ranch sixty five miles from Denver. We put our horses in the barn thinking they would be safe there. We slept in the house About twelve oclock we heard a shot and saw a light in the barn. There was much excitement in camp. Our Captain had given orders that anything moving should be shot. The man on guard crawled along and told the Captain something was moving. The Captian raised on his elbows and fired. Something jumped into the air. They found it to be an Indian. Upon Investigation we found our horses had been stolen. We could see the Indians all along the horizon. A few minutes after this Indian had been killed we heard the coach from Denver coming. We told them our horses had been stolen and that one of the Indians had been killed and that we expected an attack at daybreak. Father wrote a telegram asking for help and gave it to the driver to send from the first telegraph station along the way. When the word reach Fort M Morgan the next morning a few soldiers hurried out. Among them was a young brother



of General Phillip Sheridan who had just graduated from West Point. We traveled along reaching Living Spring before sundown. A sad company we were expecting never to see the rising sun again. We had been there hardly an hour when we saw in the distance people on horseback and in wagons. They proved to be friends coming from Denver to help us out.

Father broke down and cried "I did not know I had so many friends". We reached Denver safely and had a joyous welcome home. The telegram Father sent is now in the Museum in Denver and can be seen at anytime.

The Sand Creek Battle, the Massacre of the Hungate Family and the Denver Flood together with the Indian scare in Denver were outstanding events of 1864 to 1867 which all Pioneers well remember.

Old Chief Colorow at one time threatened to kill Mother and burn Breckenridge down because Mother refused to cook special meals for himself and his squaw.

One day a team of runaway horses ran over my Father wounding him very badly. The Indians heard he had been killed. An Indian Chief who was our friend called his tribe together and held their burial service for Father. This one old Indian Chief would often say to us " if Indians go to make war on you I tel you, I tell you. Most of the Indians were able to speak English fairly well.

There are countless more incidents I could tell but words are limited.

"We all shed a tear for those who are not here

But have gone to the unknown to explore.

But we trust they are blest,

And their sould have found rest

'Neath the shades on the evergreen shore."

Written by Mrs. Duane F. Miner of the Breckenridge Woman's Club. It is the story of her Mothers early experiences.