History of San Juan County
Chapter XLVI-L, 1894+
By Albert R. Lyman, 1918

CHAPTER XLVI

In the prolonged and bitter fight which was waged to redeem San Juan from the wil[d] elements, and from violent men, Monticello has ever taken an important part. Lik[e] a fort which is the key to all surrounding country, the hostile forces focussed their attacks on the struggling little town, spreading blight of drouth on its hard-earned crops, making its peaceful streets the stage of their tragic conflict and rendering the calm of its night with their shots and their curses. Nature alone, untamed and forbidding, would have been a problem sufficient to try strong hearts, but with the additional menace of reprobate humanity trying to victimize them in every way, life to the pioneers must have been wearisome indeed.

Besides the double tragedy, which resulted in the death of Mrs. Walton and Mr. McCord, two other killings were in store for Monticello. A man named Simpson and a man named Jackson were rivals for the hand of a certain girl, and the rivalry grew to gigantic proportions, resulting in a hostile meeting where Jackson was shot to death. The tragedy occurred at night, and no third person was present in the cabin at the time. The muffled shot rang out with a dull report from within its walls, impressing the few who heard it with a dread boding of its fateful nature. "That shot killed a man," said F. I. Jones, as the sound reached his bedchamber.

Aside from Simpson's testimony, and the appearance of a mute corpse, there was no sure evidence in the case, and this account makes no attempt to place the bla[me.] The Committee who went next morning to find Jackson lying where he fell, his mouth and eyes open, his moustache a clot of blood, shuddered with horror that the peaceful town should have such scenes enacted within its narrow limits.

The other killing resulted from a quarrel between Al Homan and Jim Rumrel. The two men rode out to the field into a street on the north side of town, disputing about some trouble they had sometime before. They were seen and heard by different persons near by, but the nature of the former trouble being not understood, the merits of the quarrel remained in doubt. After several shots had bee[n] fired, Rumrel fell dead from his saddle, and was left for the people of the town to bury. The wherefore of the killing might be learned from the court records, for Holman stood trial and was acquitted. It is claimed that Rumrel's real name was Simpson, and that he was a brother to the man who slew Jackson.

The gunmen in and around Monticello made living so difficult and so dangerous, adding so many special unpleasantries on the side, that it is claimed most of the big boys and young men carried concealed weapons for an extreme emergency.

The professional gunmen of that day called his revolver as essential article of raiment, and he wore it day and night. It was his vice, his pastime, and he developed in its use a cat-like agility and skill which could have done honor to more lofty business. Speed of operation and accuracy for aim exercised a good deal of seniority until someone attacked it from the rear.

Billy Sotell arrived one day with a kindred spirit at the Monticello Co-op, just after the clerk had locked up and gone home for dinner. Billy felt indisposed to await the return of that clerk, he wanted something from the store, and more still, he wanted to relieve the monotony of a dull day. Yanking his revolver from its scabbard, he shot the lock from the lumber door, and going in with his companion, helped himself as his fancy dictated.

It should be stated, however, for Sotell, that he apologized to F. I. Jones, and added, "you ought to shoot us like dogs. But don't ever come after us with sho[rt] guns, they're our game. Bring your long guns." And then to prove how thoroughl[y] he had mastered the fine art of using the short gun, he tossed up a half dollar and shot it before it reached the ground. It should be said further for Sotell that to prove he was indeed ashamed of himself, he promised then and there to leave San Juan, and departed according to that promise, he has not yet returned.

As if the minds of these quarrelsome gunmen were not sufficiently fruitful in raising hell without help, someone opened a joint known as the "Blue Goose" whe[re] fire-water was sold, where questionable practices and genuine coarse times prevailed. It is reported that Dora Crouse went into the Blue Goose to reform it[s] sinful inmates, and when he came out a few minutes later, he walked backward to his lodgings that people might not know the thankless inmates of said Blue Goose had cut away with a razor the most important part of his trousers.

One load of drink enroute to that Goose stayed overnight at Carlisle Ranch, wher[e] and old Irishman known as Pat, was given free access to the full barrels. No one knows how long, not how much he drank, but they found him frozen stiff next morning, and had to thaw him out before he could be made sufficiently straight for a coffin.

It is not surprising that those times should result in the forming of a vigilance committee, which, though it is not on record as having done much, perhaps exerted a wholesome influence by making its existence known. All the same, this committe[e] did hand Fred Sharp to a tree, and they came within a second of leaving him there too long. What a shame, when the country was lousy with men who should have been left dangling indefinitely, they should have nabbed Sharp, who seems to have been innocent. The committee thought he knew where a certain criminal hid, and they tried to strangle the desired knowledge out of him with a rope. His apparent death threw into them a panic of fear and they worked

frantically to bring him too, only to hear him affirm he knew nothing about it, and so far as anyone knows he told the truth.

The gold excitement over San Juan is general, and along its river in particular, naturally devoted some attention to the Blue Mountain, whose mysterious formation promised almost anything unusual, and of course this effort found mines galore, "Dream Mines," which are still dreams, vain dreams. It is related that some of these were revealed by disembodied spirits, whose strange signs and mutterings indicate hidden veins of fabulous richness. But they must be spiritual only, as they fail to materialize.

In one of those shafts, during one cold winter. Joe McGaluard and a man named Morto continued to work in their shaft far below the driving snow and the cold winds. In a long hole drilled in the rock they placed a huge load of giant powder, part of which seems to have been frozen. Only the thawed part of the load exploded, and the remaining hole being still too deep to abandon, the two men proceeded to make it deeper. They drove their steel drill into the remaining part of the charge, causing it to go off with a terrible bang. Morton's eyes were blown out, and his face and upper limbs fearfully lacerated. McGaluard came out with a broken leg. What should be done? The nearest human dwelling was miles away down the mountains over merciless banks of drifted snow. McGaluard made his friend as comfortable as possible and started afoot and alone with his dangling leg for Verdure. That he made it at all, is proof of his iron nerve, for most of the distance, he covered on his hands and one knee. A rescue party ascended the mountain on snow shoes, reaching the lonely camp only in time to see Martin breat[he] his last, and they brought the body down over the snow on a cowhide.

A man named Captain Jackson deserves mention in connection with these mines, for he erected a stamp mill on Johnson Creek, and laid off a town in a lovely valley at its east slope. But Jackson dropped dead in the road as he followed one of his shipments of machinery from Dolores, and all his mining operations dropped dead with him. If he had lived, it might have been altogether different, but th[e] deserted mill and the cabins are known as Jackson's Camp, and aside from Louie Sailor, who lives there in the summer time, the place is forsaken.

Another mining man to build up a mill on Blue Mountain, was Ben Haywood. But hi[s] mill too met with adversity, and failed to begin operation. Many who helped built were sadly disappointed, and Joe Nielson's numerous piles or cordwood, put in accordance with contract for that mill, netted him experience instead of cash. Those neat ricks of wood lay there more than twenty years, and are lately being hauled to Monticello for the grist mill.

The great drouth which struck San Juan County like a blight, spreading its scorching flame over the whole country, lasting for years, cooling the fighting

spirit of many a noisy gunman, and purifying the human elements of the entire district, must wait for another chapter.

CHAPTER XLVII

Frederic I. Jones acted as Presiding Elder over the Monticello Branch in 1894, when it was organized as a regular Ward and he became Bishop, with C. E. Walton, Sr., and Wilmer Brown as Counselors.

Up to that time and during the next year, good rainfall resulted in prosperous seasons and bounteous crops.

Having known nothing better, the farmers went every fall with their loads of grain to Mancos or Dolores in Colorado, returning from those mills with flour, or from the stores with merchandise. Farming in the Blue Mountain Country was on a much smaller scale than now. Scarcely anyone believed grain could be raised without irrigation and beyond the limited fields immediately around Monticello, Verdure and Carlisle ranch, the hills were public domain, used and valued for such forage as cattle and sheep could find upon them. Verdure in those days consisted of George A. Adams and Parley Butt and their families; and Bob Hott and the men employed on his ranch.

Willard Butt ran a sawmill and a dairy in the summer time at the head of Devil Canyon, in fact a number of families from Monticello had dairies at different places along the base of the mountain. That Butt sawmill built not far from the pit where Willard Butt and George Ipson sawed out with a whipsaw the first lumber in the country, seems to have had the lumber trade of San Juan completely monopolized, although no one became jealous of the dividends it brought in.

In 1896 the hideous spectre of drouth came stalking over the whole country. Everything became dry and more dry, but people indulged fond hopes that next season would be better. Next season was worse. Dry winds drove clouds of dust fiercely along from the southwest, drinking up moisture like a sponge, leaving weeds and grass dry and withered. Crops failed. Loose soil on newly plowed land was swept from the hill tops leaving naked marks of the plow running across the hard earth. The flow from old springs diminished in quantity, and many small springs disappeared altogether.

People lost heart, and some of them pulled up stakes and departed without ceremony for more promising quarters. But as a whole, the community at Monticello remembered they had settled there in response to a call from President Hammond, and to him they looked for permission to leave their post. He released them all, with the possible exception of the Bishop. But that blanket release made no difference with the dry spell, and strange to relate, it made little difference with the people themselves, for very few availed themselves of

permission to go. They hung to the place with the mighty instinctive love of home which makes civilized men better than wandering tribes.

In the years 1898 and 1899 became dryer still, and the purifying process among the human element of the country continued to splendid advantage. More than one rip-roaring gunman found the atmosphere entirely too dry for his comfort, and watching for opportunity to nail the best saddle horse in the country he vanished in the sandstorm to leave no tracks and return no more.

During those years, even when the drouth spectre glared most spitefully in the heat mirage on the heated hills, F. I. Jones remembered his little experiment wit[h] dry wheat, and raised somewhat of a crop every year. What he did for San Juan in thus meeting his own needs, preserving his own courage, and lending of course to the courage of others, may hardly be estimated. When lapse of time has added sti[ll] more to the enchantment of those days, and abler histories than this have chronicled the details of that stubborn fight, the name of Frederic I Jones will stand boldly out like a heroic figure on a black ground of despair.

That drouth dried up the flow of the San Juan River at Bluff so that it could be crossed dry shod. Small pools were writhing with dying fish, and hunting them ou[t] of the larger ponds became a winning sport. Navajos offered them for sale by the sackful, in fact they learned, contrary to their old traditions, that fish are good to eat.

An early chapter of this account reported the birth of the sheep industry in San Juan. There were other flocks than those belonging to the people of Bluff, but for a long time the sheep men were also men, and no friction arose between the two industries. Times changed, however and what had been friendship developed in to spite and hatred awaiting opportunity to do things which men are never proud to remember.

It cannot be consistently claimed the sheep interests were free of any blame in the trouble, for there is no law of heaven or earth which could justify them in blistering the back and the front dooryard of any camp or community. All the same, and in spite of their unfair invasion of many a green section from which they should have stayed scrupulously away, their doings were open and above board and honorable as compared to the cowardly hands who skulked around with their poison, their matches and their dynamite, to do things they were ever ashamed to acknowledge.

The dynamiters confined their efforts mostly to the dipping vats on the creek below Monticello, and when the first vat had been rebuilt and made ready again for use, they blew it up again. No one has the right, as at present vested in the Forest Service, to divide the country between the cattle and the sheep and no one succeeded in arranging an agreement between the two interests. Sheep corrals burned mysteriously, and shearing pens fared no better wherever they

were left unguarded. Now and then a Mexican herder knew by the whistle of a near-by bullet that the progress of his flock in a certain direction was changed.

Sometimes the irrate cowpuncher, too wrathy to give any warning, pounced on the unsuspecting shepherd and beat him unmercifully with a hard twist rope or with a branding iron. It should be said, however, for these manipulators of the rope and the iron, that they were discreet in ascertaining beforehand that the herder had left his gun in camp.

Let no one run away with the idea that this is an attempt to champion th[e] cause of the sheepman, for he was generally blessed with the gall of a government mule, and amply able to champion his own cause.

The prize for the most dastardly act in this sheep and cattle conflict, belongs to the fellow who poisoned the nose-bags of a six-horse wool team, belonging to the Nielson brothers. The relationship of that freight outfit, with its load of wool, to any offense which the sheep might have been guilty, could never be seen by any human not blinded with hate. The site of those fine creatures, writhing in death around their load, should have satisfied, at least for the moment, the infernal craving for spite in the fingers which placed the poison.

CHAPTER XLVIII

In the summer of 1897, Walter C. Lyman of the Utah Implement Company, came from Salt Lake City to look at White Mesa. As a boy he had crossed the lower end of that mesa in the year 1880 while hunting deer, and later he had read glowing reports of it as written by President Hammond. He was accompanied on this trip to San Juan by his brother, Joseph A. Lyman, and they traveled straight to Bluff, as the only road across the County led to and ended at that place.

As Bluff they equipped a buckboard with a small supply of provisions, and a team of doubtful integrity, and proceeded to explore what had developed in their fancy to be a rich stretch of farming land with a fine stream running to waste by its side. Leaving the County Road on Big Bench, they tied the balky horses tail to the vehicle to make sure he should not strike the collar with discouraging force, and thus fooled the simple old fellow into pulling more then he had pulled for years. They drove up the steep rocky hills at the south end of the mesa, where it is possible the L. C. outfit had hauled a few loads of grain, though the hauling had never been sufficiently extensive to leave so much as a faint track among the sagebrush on top of the mesa.

That sagebrush stretch exceeded all the anticipations of the two Lymans. Traversing the mesa northward twenty miles, The descended its northeastern rim to Johnso[n] Creek, where they discovered in each other all the symptoms of White-Mesa-Fever which had already brought President Hammond's judgement into serious question among his friends. For, stating matters plainly, the

President had been called a crank since his seemingly extravagant prophecies for White Mesa in 1885. "Supposing he got that ditch built, " objected one man, "there wouldn't be stream enough to water a hill of potatoes." Strange as that verdict may seem, in the light of what has since been done, the flow of Johnson Creek,and Recapture in those years was discouragingly small and short-lived.

But the Lymans had caught the fever, and in spite of all the broadsides of wisdom and advice fired at them by the old settlers, they resolved to make a canal along the hills and cliffs from Johnson Creek to the top of the mesa. Platte D. Lyman of Bluff, another brother, fell promptly in with their proposition, and D. John Rogers and his brother Willis came duly down with the fever after being exposed. L. H. Redd, Hanson Bayles and Kumen Jones also took it in a mild form but the rest of the country took antitoxin for the complaint as soon as they heard about it. White Mesa became a tall joke, and to confess belief in the proposed canal meant to face the laugh.

The ditch was to head three or four miles above that other ditch surveyed twelve years before by order of President Hammond, and it tapped Johnson Creek, missing Recapture by three miles.

Having no surveying outfit at hand, the little company of enthusiasts used a common spirit level on legs to locate their ditch, and that spirit level survey was the trusted basis on which the work was undertaken. From the rocky creek side, they drove their oak or cedar pegs at regular intervals among the tangle of brush and trees, marking with a pick along the cliff face where a tunnel would have to be cut through.

That survey seemed certainly to run up hill, and the whole vast project, costing as it would, thousands of dollars, appeared dreamy and impracticable. There was no delay on that account, however, for they filed on the water, ordered a shipment of tools, tents and camp supplies from Salt Lake City, and began opening a ditch along the string of pegs.

As that canal and its bank crawled slowly onward like a great snake towards the top of the mesa, they moved camp as occasion required, and winter found them near the proposed tunnel through the rock. All winter long without delays for blizzard[s] or storms, work on the ditch continued from that camp. Benjamin Perkins and a Cornishman named Hunt, worked at the long hole in the sandstone, and eight or ten men wielded shovel, pick and crowbar on the hillside.

Platte Lyman was cook. The hundreds of people now living on White Mesa should know and bear in mind, that the persistent crew who built that ditch, ate beans and then more beans. Sometimes the bill of fare called for beef and stewed dried peaches, but always for beans.

With the opening of spring, work went slow, but before July it reached a steady gait and continued until fall. During that fall and winter of 1898 and 1899 W. C. Lyman was called on a mission to the Eastern States. Platte D. Lyman was called to Europe, and Willis Rogerson and Albert Lyman were also called on missions. Work on the ditch seemed doomed to stop a while, and the missionaries, as they departed for an indefinite stay, looked back with solicitude for the enterprise at which they had worked so determinedly.

"I hope and pray the country continues so dry while we are gone that no one will think of jumping our claim," said Platte D. Lyman, and his hopes and prayers in that respect were more than realized. Waiting there on the parched hillside, tha[t] ditch provoked a laugh from all who traveled Johnson Creek. "Anybody can see tha[t] it runs up hill," they would say, "but even then it will carry all the water the[re] is to put in it." And most of the time there was no water running past the head of the seemingly deserted canal.

In the summer of 1901, Platte D. Lyman returned from Europe and though he was eager to see work begin again on the neglected enterprise, he was occupied with a physical disorder from which he died in November.

With his release from that mission in the Eastern States, W. C. Lyman received a call to preside over the Northern States Mission, thus again delaying indefinitel[y] the undertaking in San Juan. But in 1902, he was not only released from missionary work elsewhere, but was called to preside over the San Juan Stake.

Building up and colonizing San Juan was ever a special duty of the church authorities therein, and the new Stake President exercised his influence to accomplish for White Mesa what had been outlined by President Hammond.

From the old L. C. Ranch, purchased by Joseph A Lyman, work on White Mesa ditch was carried on during the winter of 1902 and 1903. D. John Rogers and others undertook to connect the two shafts running in from each end of the proposed tunnel, and succeeded after determined efforts in breaking through the last partition which divided them. The difficulties and discouragements of making that hol[e] through the sandstone, can hardly be appreciated by people arriving later to find a stream running easily and pleasantly through it. The ceiling of that tunnel was ever to low, and D. John Rogers is said to have scattered along upon its rough surface, sundry patches of cuticle from the top of his bald head. Besides all that, people simply knew the tunnel's pitch was in the wrong direction, and the water couldn't possibly run in the intended direction.

The spring of 1903 found the much talked of ditch open to the top of the mesa and water duly turned in. What excitement! Would it refuse to travel the hard fought patch before it or would it go straight onward proving liars and false prophets in every rod of its progress?

President Lyman followed the stream as it felt its way along, and so interested did he become that he forgot his hat where it hung on a limb, and walked bare-headed along the ditch bank to see the precious liquid plunge over the last doubtful place and ripple away down the ravine towards the heart of the mesa. And that hat hung there on its limb three weeks, for President Lyman went promptly away on other business as soon as the ditch had lodged its enemies safely in the Ananias Club.

CHAPTER XLIX

Long before the completion of the ditch, Peter Allan was employed to survey the townsite on White Mesa, plotting the lots and the streets. But those cedar pegs, hiding away among the dry sagebrush, served only to provoke a laugh from nearly all who saw them.

The county road, the only way from Monticello to Bluff, traversed Mustang Mesa, leaving the town-to-be a remote region into which wagons seldom ventured. Yet the most direct route for that road between the two old towns, led exactly across the site of the new one, and W. C. Lyman began a movement to have it changed to that route. His proposition met opposition and ridicule; some folks declared the new road would be at least twelve miles longer than the old one, and they swore they would travel the old road though they had to maintain it themselves.

In spite of all this rash talk, the new road was opened southwestward from Devil Canyon, crossing Recapture at the mouth of Bull Pup, and traversing fifteen or more miles of White Mesa. It passed directly over the place of the proposed town and shortened the distance by several miles between the two old settlements.

A road now open, the next essential was a nucleus of settlers from which to develop an actual settlement. Five or six families professed their intention of making homes in the new place, but no one felt disposed to face the tremendous task of being the very first settler. There was no water for house use, in spite of the expensive reservoir which had been built for that purpose; and there was no near neighbors, no fences, no ditches, nor houses, not even a respectable clear patch to be fenced. To make permanent camp on the townsite before any improvements were installed, was to go up there bare-handed against the stern elements of nature which had prevailed there during the ages. A man might camp on the ground without discomfort during certain seasons of the year, but for a woman to follow around after him at his work or stay in a camp alone, was quite a different thing.

Lack of fences brought grief to the few who raised crops on the mesa in those years. They would view their little field the last thing at night and find no trace or indication of animals near, but next morning, behold a few straggling cows from

afar had eaten up or trodden in the ground all that was worthwhile, and were peacefully chewing their cuds under the trees near by.

But in spite of all these rank elements of adversity within, and the popular howl of prejudice without; in spite of the ditch which broke through its banks at exactly the wrong time, in spite of the sheep herds which persisted in eating every spear of grass near to and necessary for the birth of the country, the resolutio[n] to begin a town became stronger each month. In spite of the fact that during the dry years the water from the mountain failed late in the spring to reach the head of the ditch, W. C. Lyman declared he had been shown a neat and populous settlement on White Mesa, and there were a few who believed his vision would become real.

It will be remembered that during the eighties and the early nineties the great L. C. cattle company occupied all of White Mesa and much of the country surrounding it, but in the latter nineties they began to close out and the remnant of their herd changed hands several times before it was all rounded up and driven away. Along with these changes, unscrupulous men saw opportunity to steal the neglected calves which were growing up to be mavericks, and the country between Blue Mountain and Big Bench became a den of thieves. From stealing mavericks, it was but a short step to the practice of taking every unbranded calf they could find. It is related that one man operating in that section had a cow with fifty calves.

Four white men and a Ute named Brooks, camping on Johnson Creek while they combed "the long-eared ones" from Brushy Basin, discovered the shod horse track of A. R. Lyman where he had gone in search of his lost horses, and where incidentally, he had followed their tracks a little distance to ascertain how many there were of them. According to Brooks, the sight of that track on theirs led them to imagine all sorts of things, and they didn't even dare to return to camp, but stampeded in four directions, agreeing to meet on the Dolores River in Colorado. So far as is known, they returned no more to San Juan, and the calves they had swiped, were left to be reswiped by someone with more enduring gall. Their camp outfit, pack covers, panniers, pack saddles, ropes, beds, provision, etc., lay there on the creek bank for several months before passers-by carried the last of it away.

Besides this thieving element which absorbed range cattle and saddle horses like a sponge, three wild stallions ranging back and forth over the country, made it all but impossible to corral a horse after he had been free ten days on the range[.] One of these creatures, a beautiful bay, met his waterloo in the shape of a man with a "thirty-thirty" on the brink of West Water; and a roan B. P. mare, who tried to keep up the reputation of the band came one morning in contact with F. B. Hammond Jr., and her bones are bleaching there yet.

"Blind corrals which never fooled a wild horse, were built and are still to be found among the trees, and here and there on rocky points, little linings of white bones tell where the fleet-footed creatures passed in their checks.

The fresh trail of the cattle thief and the dust of the wild horse were still in evidence on White Mesa when it was decided the time had arrived for beginning the town. The first actual settler arrived on the 2nd of April, 1905. He brought with him his wife, her little sister, and his baby girl who had just learned to walk. Hunting among the brush, they located the pegs marking the corners of the lot on which they were to live, and stopping the team they cleared a place large enough for a tent. His old brown cow, which he brought along, he staked on the ground where the new church building is being erected.

O, what a howling wilderness that first little family had to meet!

Nothing in the shape of human convenience, yet they had come to stay, they are staying yet and he is looking back over the lapse of thirteen years for the substance of this chapter.

The first settler had to arise before daylight and walk with two buckets to West Water a mile away for the water his family were to use during the day. Whenever he went to work, his wife and the little girls had to follow him or remain at home alone; that home whose surroundings were not yet different from the wilderness of brush and trees in every direction. But he built a lumber room, cleared and fenced his lot with barbed wire, making his home appear in striking contrast to the gray waste. The county road ran up a swell and over a hill half a mile away, though passers were few and far between.

Hanson Bayles with some men and Navajos camped at a tank a mile to the east, and later on W. C. Lyman and his son Fred, camped on one of the lots of the town. Joseph A. Lyman and his son-in-law, Hanse Bogh, lived on a farm three and four miles northward, where they had brought the Grayson Post Office from their former home at the old L. C. Ranch. As the spring progressed, other settlers-to-be arrived in the fields north and south of the town, and on Sundays they collected at the Grayson Post Office for meetings.

Before the end of May, Joseph A Lyman, W. C. Lyman, Alvin Lyman, Hanse Bogh and Fletcher B. Hammond, Jr., came with their families to build houses. Logs were hauled from the mountain, and on July 8th everybody turned out to see the sawing of the first board. That lusty steam whistle, rending the air three times a day, seemed in some strange way to be the infant town crowing over all the false prophets who had predicted it could never be born. Each one of the six families looked out in the evening to count five other lights, and assure themselves those lights would increase in number until the new town would be all it had appeared in the vision to be.

CHAPTER L

In the last two chapters we followed the account of White Mesa from the beginning of its first canal in 1897 to the settlement of its first town in 1905. That, ho[w]ever, does not cover the history of the County during those years, for the first fight to maintain the two older settlements was still being waged with all the invincible energy which had kept them in existence thus far.

The great drouth made little difference to Bluff locally, even though the river went dry in the late summer. It did have a telling effect on the cattle range, where they fought each other away from the disappearing tanks and springs, leavin[g] their dry carcasses on the nearby banks and hills in memory of the terrible famine for water.

But with that drouth came somewhat of a change to the regular monotony of the Blu[ff] ditch. Wearied to death of trying to find and maintain a ditch-head on the river bank, someone proposed a steam pump to settle the question once and for all. The unstable old stream had changed banks, shifted from its course, and been in consta[nt] and variable use everywhere but along the cribs, though there it had held steadil[y] to the bed where they found it eighteen years before. To the cribs they naturall[y[turned with their engine for a safe place, and after many misfires and much delay they touched a match to the old machine, got up steam and started the pump. It drew a fair quantity of muddy water through its pipe and into the ditch, and wood-teams began skinning the country of fuel up and down the river for many miles. Nor did it take very long to complete the skinning, leaving the people to scratc[h] their heads with a new problem; that of finding something to feed that hungry engine.

Meanwhile the old San Juan murmured to itself about this pumping scheme, and sta[rt]ed to enlarge a side channel through which it sent a current of increasing size, until the cribs, with the huge steam pump on the bank thereof, were left high an[d] dry. "Posty" the engineer, found himself without a job. Bluff faced the pleasa[nt] alternative of doing without water, or digging another long ditch in the sand, and trying to make for it a head in the banks of the disagreeable stream.

That quarrel between Bluff and its turbulent neighbor and long since become chro[nic] and was not be settled by any strategic withdrawal from the large battle front at the cribs. By that withdrawal the river surrendered a large island covered with you[ng] cottonwoods suitable for rip-rapping, and the new territory was promptly skinned for that purpose. The war went determinedly on; rip-rapping, ditching and damming with shovels, teams and scrappers, though sometimes the damming was done by word of mouth.

As a fierce counter-attack to all this effort, the river planned a strong drive for the town itself. Enlarging Walton's slue to accomodate its while force, it took new territory every day, licking up Lucerne patches, barbed-wire fences and

ponderous old trees with a fluency which would sicken a saint. With a loud roar of laughter it took in the venerable old Swing Tree, and attacked Bishop Nielson'[s] hay field with telling fury.

Bluff trembled at the sight and watched with knitted brow. Nothing could be done until the big drive had spent its strength, nothing but to arrange for a dam across the entrance of Waltons Slue, a dam which should be erected and fortified while the river was preparing for a second drive.

This meant a pile driver, pine logs from Blue Mountain, and quantities of brush and rock which would make all other rip-rapping campaigns dwindle to insignifican[ce.] The cost of that dam? Well, the Bluff people were no longer poverty-stricken, in fact, Bluff had the name of being the wealthiest town for its population to be found in a number of states. And in recognition of the generous tithing sent up from there every year, the Church guaranteed liberal assistance to the proposed dam.

In the inter months when the rip-rapping old river became thin and weak awaiting reinforcements from its wide basin around LaPlata Mountains, the huge dam became visible across the upper end of Walton's Slue, and before the said reinforcement arrived, the defenses stood ready for the attack.

Let no one suppose that because this account is glibly disposed of, that task was small. It was not small. Work on the dam, or "the dam work", as it came to be known, hung on with tiresome regularity, breaking into the equally wearisome task of preparing the ditch for spring.

From its rush on the dam the river turned absently away to its old channel, but the dam was strengthened and made higher the following winter, 1903-1904.

Bluff was particularly free during the latter nineties from death and disease. During four successive years, no funeral was held in the little town, but the nex[t] four years, and the next, were very different.

Fred Adams, husky and strong in the vigor of young manhood, came down with typhoi[d] fever while on a trip to the Gable Camp, and died before his people could bring him home. His father, William Adams, fairly well advanced in years, died within the next year.

Francis A. Hammond moved from Bluff to Moab, a Ward of the San Juan Stake over which he still presided. In November, 1900, while visiting a little colony near the mouth of Largo on the San Juan river in New Mexico, his team became frightene[d] and unmanagable from a dangling clothesline, and dashing across the yard, pitched him violently against a wall of one of the corral buildings. He never regained consciousness and died soon afterward. In his honor the place has since gone by the name of Hammond.

Platte D. Lyman, returning in July, 1901 from presiding over the European Mission was called to succeed Francis A. Hammond as President of San Juan Stake. But even then he was suffering from a cancer, and after undergoing a surgical operation, he died at Bluff in November. He was succeeded in the Stake by Walter C. Lyman.

In December, 1901, a plague of diptheria broke out in Bluff, resulting about Christmas time in the death of James B. Decker, his sons Horace, Lynn and Clare and his daughter Gertrude. The suddenness of these things gave such a paralyzing sting to the little community, the people present can still recall it after this lapse of years. In connection with this affair, honorable mention should be made of Joseph F. Barton, Joseph A. Lyman, Mariette Stevens and possibly others who served for days in the stricken home.

An April, 1902, John Larson's home was found in flames at two o'clock in the morning, and though the startled town turned out at the call of the bell, the fire wa[s] beyond control. While its red light revealed the cliffs on both sides of the riv[er] and illuminated the country all around, it was eagerly asked on every side, "Wher[e] is Mrs. Larson?" Someone has seen her in the house the previous evening and they started a fruitless search to find her. When the diminished heat permitted a bucket brigade to approach the smouldering ruin, they threw water freely over it, and in the early dawn it became possible to look into the foundations of Mrs. Larson's bed chamber. Her bedstead, warped and twisted in the heat could be plainly seen, the bedding had of course been consumed, but at the foot of the bed lay a strange smoking mass which somehow inspired hope and terror in all who saw it. When the heated surroundings had been sufficiently cooled that mass was examined and found to be the remains of the missing woman. She lay on her face, and the carpet and her nigh clothes immediately between her and the floor had not yet burned. Why she should remain to perish there in the fire instead of escaping by door or window, is still a mystery. There is a lingering suspicion that she was murdered. An erratic tramp who had been several days in town, did not go to the fire, even though he was awakened and told of it, and late next morning when he approached the place, he was seen to be pale and trembling. He left town soon afterwards, and the items of evidence which might have made a case against him, were never collected until he had gone beyond recall. Mrs. Larson was a girl bride, still retaining the charm of her young womanhood. Her maiden name was Hadden, and she came from Mancos, Colorado.

In the winter of 1903, "Joe" Nielson came suddenly down with pneumonia and died about Christmas time. It began to look as though the days of celebration had been singled out as times of mourning.

Sometime in1905 or 1906, May Jones was severly burned by the overturning of an oil lamp. Her children who had started the fire were in danger of being

burned, and rushing to their rescue, her clothes caught the flames, and after a long painful illness, she died leaving a family of small children.

While May Jones lingered between life and death, Bishop Jense Nielson sat in his chair day after day and night after night, waiting for the dropsical condition of his body to rise to the vital point which would bring the end. He could not bear to lie down, and during those weary hours he talked rationally and calmly about the expected change. Though confined so long to his rooms, he seemed to now all that went on in town, who was home and who was away. Not long before the end, he expressed fear that there were not enough men at home to attend his funeral. He reviewed his life; how he had joined the Church in Denmark, how he crossed the plains with the handcart company, how he had helped build towns and grown old as a pioneer, and with all those things he took genuine satisfaction even in his death. His remains along with a number of his co-laborers rest on the bald gravel hill overlooking the town which they founded, and to mai[n]tain which they wrested heroically with the adverse elements.