History of San Juan County
Chapter VI-X, 1880 - 1881
By Albert R. Lyman, 1918

1880 CHAPTER VI

In Lyman's original manuscript, there was a chapter numbering error. The chapter numbers went from V to VII, skipping VI, yet there was no missing text/continuity of the story. To prevent readers from thinking that a chapter is missing, I (Lamont Crabtree) took the liberty to divide chapter V into two chapters and labelled this (the second half of the original chapter V) as chapter VI.

No place for a road had yet been marked across the maze of box canyons reaching thirty miles from the San Juan river to the upper end of that ridge, and to find and mark out a road across it, Platte Lyman, George Sevy and Samuel Bryson left Clay Hill with a pack outfit. The difficulty of their undertaking is suggested by the tree-like contour of Grand Gulch, reaching straight across the course they wished to take to the east. Its might limbs reach out from the center to the east and west of the ridge, forming point after point from which a man cannot descend a-foot. Those gulches open abruptly into the bowels of the earth, and their cavernous echoing bottoms defy every vehicle but the airplane. The three explorers were compelled to turn north again through the forest, till they alighted upon an Indian trail which headed most of the limbs of Grand Gulch, and crossed the others near their shallow source.

A trip was undertaken to the south also, but these explorers found that the San Juan River was no place for a road and returned hungry and cold to the hill.

Just how much heart this parched corn-fed company had for the baked clay and black boulders of Clay Hill, may be guessed from their prompt beginning on a dugway down its steep, wrinkled face. They picked and shovelled out a rude mark along the mountain side, cutting it so deep that the scar is still visible. But whatever their heart, they must have had a secret longing for something to seaso[n] the relish with which they ate their parched corn, and one of them relates that he "killed a very poor beef" and lent most of it to the people of the camp.

Like many a rough and ready cowboy, who takes just time to cook his food just "done enough to eat raw", so these folks opened their chutes and dugways wide enough for a wagon before someone headed into it, and the camp followed. One woman tells of driving a span of bronco mules down that hill, and how she ever reached the bottom by way of the dugway, instead of rolling straight down from its lower side, is still a mystery to her.

The first wagons tacked the new dugway about the twelfth of March, and the last followed two days later. In the desert at the bottom, a fierce blizzard burst upon them. Wind and snow blustered into camp, overturning tents, whistling through their unsheltered quarters and making whips of wagon covers, and dealing long hours of discomfort to be remembered many years. "It was the coldest night I

ever experienced," says one of them, "it was impossible to be comfortable in bed or anywhere else."

Such places as Slick Rock and Clay Hill had served to keep the company together, by detaining the leaders till the last straggler caught up, but from Clay Hill they strung out towards Elk Mountain, and George Hobbs says he found tem scattered for thirty miles.

George Sevy drove the lead wagon, and ahead of him a crew of choppers were busy opening a way though the dense cedars. Towards the mountain they found no gras[s] there were fewer openings in the forest, and the mud is reported to have been from six inches to two feet deep. The snow had not all gone from the ridge, and it lay deep on the mountain above them. In many cases the lead teams came back a day's journey to help the strugglers up, and in some cases wagons were left till summer should come.

Out of the forest one day, rode an old Ute--he dropped his jaw and raised his hands in surprise at the sight of the company. Where had they come from? They told him they were Mormons from the settlements. He had already guessed that, but where in the name of reason had they crossed the Colorado? They explained to him where the crossing was made. "No!" he grunted, in disgusted unbelief, they couldn't cross there, they might have crossed farther up, but there was no place to cross at the Hole-in-the-Rock. "And the old man was perfectly right", affirms one of the company, "there never was and never will be a place for crossing at the Hole-in-the-Rock."

The lead wagons halted for five days, and most of the company caught up before a road was opened across upper Grand Gulch. From there they scattered off again, and the leaders reached the mouth of Comb Wash, on the San Juan River, about the end of March.

If that place had offered any promising opening at all, it is not improbable the worn-out company would have stopped, and made a settlement instead of going on. But it is a rock-bound precipitous corner, from which they sought a way out, and being unable to follow up the river, they sought their improvised forces to a focus on what is now known as San Juan Hill.

1880 **CHAPTER VII**

When the company stopped in that cliff-bound corer to make a road up San Juan Hill, their raw-boned animals, in a few hours slicked off every spear of grass in sight. The gain, which might have relieved the situation, had long since gone through the coffee mill, and had been converted into biscuits. So they drove the whole starving herd into San Juan, and out among the sand hills on the south side. Willard Butt was one of these herders to cross the river every morning, and

he relates that they rode over in water to their waists, depending on the warmth of the sun to dry their drenched clothing while they guarded the herd.

It took five or six days to make the road a bare and slippery possibility, on which the horses and oxen trembled and fell, and skinned their bony knees reaching the top with the expression of having just come out of a terrible convulsion. But San Juan Hill, with the slippery humps of its solid road-bed smeared and splattered with hair and blood, was serving the only purpose it ever served. Not long afterward a better way was found, and the rugged rock, with the rude scar of the dugway across its face, stands as witness for future ages, to the dogged persistency of that company who found a way through or made it, and forced their way through by main strength and awkwardness where, according to Ute patriarch, there was positively no place for entrance or exit.

Some of the wagons ascended the hill on the third, and on the fifth they reached a bottom two miles long, just above the moth of Cottonwood Wash on the river. "MY horses were so poor and weak," says L.H. Redd, Jr., "that when I reached Cottonwood, they could hardly drag along. I was five days coming from San Juan Hill."

This bottom by Cottonwood, was the first possible place they had found to stop, and also the first place from which they had no strength to go on. It was therefore, according to Mormon philosophy, the will of Providence that they should go no farther. Their animals were fagged completely out. It was fifteen miles to Montezuma settlement founded by President Smith and his explorers the previous year, but being compelled to stop, they decided to stay permanently.

The main body of the company came into camp on the sixth, and a meeting was held in which a committee was appointed to arrange for division of the land, and another to survey and begin a ditch.

In point of numbers, the new town was larger that day than it has been since, when eighty-five wagons pulled into camp, and the men numbered seventy. A few, who had the horses to match the inclination, drove on to Montezuma, and indefinitely on still in search of something better. A few prospectors, who had followed the camp thus far, left for distant mining regions in Colorado.

The ditch committee drove their stakes and started their men to work next morning, but the land committee found the land much smaller than they expected, and recommended that it be divided into forty claims, to be held by forty men who should draw numbers from a hat containing tickets and blanks. The others were to go farther up the river and make another settlement. The committee's recommendation was accepted by vote, but the twenty men drawing blanks were unable to move on. Dissatisfaction and bad feelings spread through the camp. Ditch work was discontinue several stormy meetings brought no relief

to the strained situation, and for a week the affairs of the company hung unpleasantly in the balance.

James Pace, who had drawn a number, proposed that the drawing be thrown out, and that all share alike. His proposition, at first was voted down, was afterward accepted, and on the 13th, fifty-nine men each drew an acre lot, and a field from eight to twenty acres, according to the location and quality of the land. This arrangement brought good will and contentment to the camp, and ditch work was resumed that afternoon. Each family moved to its own claim, "put up a wickiup", and some of them dug wells, finding water at an easy depth.

But these Mormons were not exactly the first white folks to live on the bottom of Cottonwood Wash. They found three families named Harris living there in log house and claiming small tracts of land, having been there all winter. Of one George Harris, Platte Lyman writes, "I bought a log house, ten acres of land, a cook stove, three gallons of coal oil, some work on the ditch and a town lot, for one horse and two cows and calves."

On the night of the twelfth, the first baby of the new settlement was born, a little boy to Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Decker.

At a meeting held on the twenty-fifth, it was unanimously decided to name the new town Bluff City. William Hutchins has the distinction of suggesting the name, which was afterward cut down by the Post Office Department to Bluff, to prevent confusion in the mails, explaining that Council Bluffs is nicknamed Bluff City. Whether for this precaution or some other unknown cause, the two towns have never yet been rivals for mail matter nor anything else.

Word came from Silas Smith that the Territorial Legislature had made an appropriation of $5,000.00 for the road built into San Juan and the impoverished settlers were eager to present their bills for work they had done under difficulty and without pay. They had spent $4,800.00 on the road, valuing a man's labor at a dollar and a half a day. Later reports said the appropriation would cover only forty percent of the road expense, and just what it did cover, or whether it ever covered anything at all, is not clear.

Word came also, that the legislature had organized San Juan County, appointing S. S. Smith as Judge, with Platte D. Lyman, Jens Nielson and Zachariah B. Decker as Selectmen, and Charles E. Walton, Clerk. The Selectmen were directed to hold court, which they did, April 26, and appointed L.H. Redd, Jr., as the first Assessor and Collector of the new county.

The ditch crew included every man, and they drove their picks and shovels through stratus of clay and quicksand with an assurance of reward which the San Juan and its valleys have never yet bestowed. As if this combination of nature were not exacting enough in her demands upon them, some cruel blunder in the

survey had left them working on a ditch sloping up from the river, instead of down from it. In spite of all that has been said about Mormons making water run up hill, the muddy stream reached reluctantly into the head of their hard shoveled channel, and refused to move.

A dam was made. The side branch of the stream was shut off with a barrier of sand. The muddy substance travelled unwillingly up along the unnatural channel opened for it, plotting silently all the time with its old ally, the sand, for a way of escape. And the sand, true to its comrade of ages, slid down from its artificial heap like so much sugar and the San Juan broke with a glad yell for liberty. It flew back in haste from the most distant point in their ditch, while the crew scratched their heads and muttered, wondering what manner of country they had found.

Little did they dream that the old San Juan, murmuring and roaring like a thing at war with itself, was plotting even then with its ally against the unsuspecting settlers along its bank; and that in its own time it would reach angrily out across their farms and into their houses, taking back and reoccupying every foot of its dominion, just as it had taken back with a sarcastic laugh, the water claimed by Bluff's first ditch.

1880 CHAPTER VIII

Someone discovered, carved into the smooth-hewn trunk of a cottonwood tree near Bluff, a surveyor's record which gave the elevation as 4,600 feet, the place, 328 miles south and 126 miles east of Salt Lake City. It was signed Ferdinand Decker and seems to remain unquestioned.

This will assist us to locate Bluff in our mental map of Utah, but no stranger to the realities of that situation is expected to imagine the difficulties of travel isolating Bluff from the rest of creation. "It was more than a hundred miles from nowhere", with regular mail service still years away and good roads reserved to bless the remote future.

President Silas S. Smith reached Bluff about May fifteenth, but he drove on to the settlement made the previous year at Montezuma, where he stayed until September. On June 6th, he organized the Bluff Branch, with Jens Nielson as presiding priest; he also organized a Sunday School, with James B. Decker as Superintendent.

As a place of public worship, the people made a big bowery---a shade of leafy cottonwood limbs across a shed-like arrangement of poles. This was pleasant enough when the wind was still, but spring weather on the San Juan is punctuated by blinding storms of sand, which rise darkly up from the desert stretches of the Navajo Reservation, to pepper everything with sharp grit, and overturn or carry away all light objects not well anchored.

The ditch dwindled in numbers, both because of its better acquaintance with the unforbearing San Juan, and also to meet necessities resulting from the long winter trip. Their base of supplies was Escalante, a hundred and eighty miles distant, over that unmerciful route by way of Clay Hill and Hole-in-the-Rock. Some of them, as soon as their horses were rested, started back for flour and provisions which were already awaiting them at this distant point.

Others turned back as soon as they possibly could, resolved to get out of San Jua[n] without further delay, and return to San Juan never again. Twenty-one wagons drove off at one time for Colorado, most of them intending to freight there during the summer and return in the fall. Some of them did return, and others closed their big circle by another road back to the settlements in Utah.

But somehow, in this wonderful colony which had come through from Escalante whether it could or not, there remained a splendid element of invincibility. When the dissatisfied and disheartened ones moved on to the east, and back to the west, that invincible spirit clenched its jaw tighter, and attacked the Bluff ditch with angry force. It brought out a stream of water, it broke the virgin stakes and riders of the crooked cottonwood limbs into a hocus-pocus barrier which is responsible for the generations of breach cows which have pestered Bluff ever since.

More still, it undertook from that same rams-horn breed of trees, to select logs and build houses, whose walls bowed in and out with wonderful irregularity, and chinks ranging from nothing to a foot wide. It roofed them with thick coats of sand, which feathered out into a crop of runty sunflowers and stick-weeds, if the weed-seed had time to sprout before the wind carried the sand away. But whether it raised weeds or blew away, it never turned the rain, which dripped dismally from it long after the sky was clear. These houses had doorways without glass, and floors which required sprinkling at intervals to lay the native dust and tempt the soil to harden.

Jens Nielson is said to have had a yellow mule with a ring bone and a white mule with spavins on three legs. All this added materially to his good fortune, for the thieving Navajos preferred the better teams of their brethren whenever they made a raid, and they raided as often as they saw opportunity. Navajo Frank made it his business to watch for the settlers' horses, and take them if he found them unguarded. Cattle too, were driven away by the Navajos or butchered by the Piute.

Curious visitors from both tribes came to take stock of the white settlers as soon as their presence became generally known. Navajos of that day generally waded the river and came dripping into town, wearing nothing but an open-mouthed stare and a breech-cloth. Both tribes adhered to a policy of friendliness in the

town that they might beg biscuits the more effectively; but they would steal things little and big as industriously as if it were their life's calling.

Bluff was not the first, nor so far the only settlement on the San Juan in Utah. Montezuma had been occupied since June of the pervious year, and Mitchell had been on the river there even longer. The Davis and Harriman families were joined by S. S. Smith, Z. B. Decker, and a man named Haight. About this time, Thales Haskel, whose name is closely interwoven with this history, was called from Moancopy to the San Juan mission, and he settled at Montezuma. To this place also came William Hyde with his family from Salt Lake City, and opened a store to trade with the Indians.

Montezuma had a ditch--in fact it experienced with several ditches which taught, as no man could teach, the inconsistency and variableness of the San Juan, and the sandy valleys along its banks.

Added to the thrills of their ditches and their isolation, came to both settlements, anxiety for the outcome of troubles Mitchell had with the Navajos, trouble which, to his mind, justified his appeal for military protection. And a company of soldiers came to his neighbourhood, much to the annoyance and ill will of the Indians. But the Utah settlers were in the county to cultivate friendly relation with these red men, and already their policy of friendship was beginning to bear good fruit.

We must not become engrossed in these other matters as to forget that San Juan County had been duly organized, that the machinery had been put in order to establish and preserve law in this erstwhile lawless region. It is comforting to know that the men called to establish a precedent of the dignity and honor of the new county were equal to the importance of the task. When L.H. Redd, Jr., received his commission as Assessor and Collector, he began promptly to hunt down all property which had enjoyed in the wild region a safe retreat from taxation. Let no one suppose for a minute that the owner of these herds submitted willingly, often they protested and in some cases they flatly refused to be assessed, and threatened the young assessor if he insisted. "I came here to assess this property," affirmed L.H. Redd, according to one eye witness, "and I shall assess every bit of it, and when the time comes, I shall collect every cent that is due." Another item worthy of mention is that the taxes were collected according to promise.

An election day had been appointed for August in the new county, and when the time arrived, everything was duly arranged. No press was near enough to print the tickets, and they were written out with pen and ink by L.H. Redd, Jr., and James Lewis. It is said that Judge S. S. Smith was re-elected, though the names of the Selectmen are not given. L.H. Redd, Jr., was elected Assessor and Collector; James B. Decker, Sheriff; Platte D. Lyman, Prosecuting Attorney and C. E. Walton, Clerk.

1880 CHAPTER IX

The first one in the new settlement to die was an old gentlemen named Roswell Stevens. There was no lumber for his coffin, so they took his wagon box to pieces and made of it a box for that purpose.

This famine for lumber induced certain men to slice up cottonwood logs with a whipsaw, but these boards were so determined to warp and twist like a thing in convulsions, they wouldn't lie still after being nailed down. Willard Butt and George Ipson made a sawpit between the heads of Bull Dog and Devil Canyon, and sawed out with a whipsaw the first pine lumber made in the county.

Escalante continued to be the base of supplies for the new settlements on the San Juan until the pile accumulated there from various points in Utah, had all started off in small instalments and at a snails pace towards Hole-in-the-Rock. From then on, the new towns looked to the east, and sent their slow-plodding teams up the river, out by Navajo Springs, and on by Mancos and Durango to Alamosa, the terminus of the railroad, move than two hundred miles distant.

A few ranchers and cattlemen had been on Mancos river, since seventy four, and to their post office came all mail from Bluff. From there to its destination, it was taken at irregular and uncertain intervals by freighters, or whoever happened to remember of have authority to receive it.

The days of anxiety, of hardship and discouragement in that first summer, may hardly be appreciated from these thirty-seven years distance. When they began irrigating their wilting crops, the ditch broke and after mending the break and returning to their land, behold it had broken again. The main thing that happened that spring and summer happened to the ditch, until even the women and children grew weary of the report: "The ditch is broken". A hundred necessary improvements were neglected to repair the troublesome bank. And the time came, when there were not enough men to do it, the crops were left to burn for weeks at a time.

To consider Bluff today, hidden away in green bowers of a dozen varieties of trees one would hardly imagine what little shade there was that first year, to modify the blinding surface of the hot sand. "It seemed to me that glistening sand would burn my eyes out", says one woman, "I was half blind from always seeing it, and those gray cliffs reflected the heat into our camp, until I thought we would be cooked alive."

And sometimes the ditch, the freighting, and the cattle on the range, called away so many men, the women were left to suffer and pray in mortal fear of the strange savages by whom they were surrounded. This part of the story may seem of little import, but to the mind whose memories of childhood hold still the echoes of fervent prayers morning and evening, that the Indians would be

peacably disposed towards the defenceless town, it is a feature which must not be omitted.

The history of Bluff was, so far, very much the history of Montezuma, whose people looked hopefully forward to a prosperous settlement. Under the direction of Silas S. Smith, Jr., their presiding priest, they laboured to out general the river, and make peace with the Indians. They had a Sunday School Superintendent, John A. Smith, and in the store of William Hyde they enjoyed an advantage which Bluff still needed badly. When the Smiths moved away in September, to San Louis Valley, Zachariah B. Decker became presiding priest, and consequently the leader in their struggle for supremacy over the elements.

The County Equalization had made Montezuma one of the three precincts of the Count[y] and the people of this upper settlement had a right to suppose their town, being already the oldest, would be as permanent and important as any town in the whole region.

But in both places the people, at least some of them, were beginning to wonder whether they were not really up against the impossible; a river defying all their efforts to control it, and a horde of thieving savages on every side. For be it remembered, the Utes claimed and occupied the country north of the river, and the Navajo Reservation reached up to its banks on the south. "We were about to be crucified between two thieves," says one who was present.

What they stole from these peaceful Mormons was the easiest gain the Indians had ever known, and some of them became fearful lest the remainder of their nation would discover the snap before they got their share. Even the squaws and papooses visiting town were not there for their health or their curiosity only.

One Navajo squaw, bent on making her trip pay, took a pair of baby shoes from the home of Hyrum Perkins. He had been watching her movements, and missed the shoes soon after her departure, but she had made straight for the river and gone across. Getting an interpreter, he followed her to her hogan, and asked her for the shoes. The accusation was a terrible shock to her dignity and honor as an honest woman. When he convinced her he knew she had taken the shoes, she admitted she had picked them up, but declared she put them on the end of a log standing out from the corner of the cabin, describing the exact place with great detail and wonderful hypocrisy.

In spite of her protests and threats, they proceeded to search the hogan, moving sacks, sheepskins, saddles and blankets, but no shoes were uncovered. Then they moved the Navajo lady herself from the seat she had occupied continuously since their arrival, and there were the shoes. She broke into a loud laugh, and seemed to regard it as a huge joke on them.

About September 1st, Erastus Snow, Brigham Young, Jr., Francis M. Lyman and other[s] arrived at Bluff to take account of the San Juan Mission. The situation was considered in all its adverse details and the people collected in the old bowery to hear the further orders of the authority that called them to San Juan.

"We want you to maintain your start in this country," said Erastus Snow, explaining that the church had a definite object and purpose in settling a colony in this wild region. He advised the people to build their houses in a fort, to defend themselves more easily from the Indians. "And if you are true men", he declared with emphasis, "and do your part to uphold this mission, the Indians who are unfriendly, will waste away."

Mr. Snow and his companions organized the San Juan and San Louis Stake, with Silas Smith, President and Platte D. Lyman First Counselor. They organized Bluff as Ward, with Jens Nielson, Bishop, George Sevy, First Counselor, and Kumen Jones, Second Counselor.

This is not an ecclesiastical history, but when leading forces and factors are of an ecclesiastical nature, it is no reason they should be omitted and leave the narrative imperfect on that account. The county was settled in response to a call from the church, church officials had it set apart and organized as a County, and they were first to uphold its dignity, and assert its beings and rights.

Jens Nielson had civil positions, but his business from that September 1880, until he died, was to do his best as the Bishop of Bluff. For Bluff, and the wide territory surrounding it, he hung to his post with an invincible determinatio[n] which cannot be denied as a prominent place among the potent factors which have made for development of the county.

The visit of Erastus Snow and his companions, gave the mission new life and meaning. The fort grew into an open square surrounded by a solid wall of cottonwood log houses, whose people, living thus nearer together, realized more keenly their mutual dependence. They were much like a big family of boys and girls, all loving and respecting the broken English orders of their Danish Bishop.

They united to build a place of worship, known and loved as the old meeting house. Here, as autumn brought home the freighters from Colorado, they met in glad festivals of rest from their weary labours. Christmas and the coming of the New Year were celebrated with joy and feasting, good cheer prevailed there in the fort and the log hall.

The company that danced and sang on the bare rock by the Colorado a year before, had dwindled sadly in size, and its members were scattered in distant states, never to be gathered again. But the remaining few retained that chivalrous spirit to dance again, to sing and hope and rejoice. Around them lay splendid hills and fertile prairies of the great San Juan, ready by their very silence

and isolation to bless the pioneers abundantly if they would remain, ready and eager to make this obscure Bluff City, in a few years, the richest town of its size in the whole State of Utah.

1881 CHAPTER X

The quiet log fort and the hamlet at Montezuma, saw little of the outside world that first winter. From the fore part of January, to the latter part of March, they received no mail, and the topics of interest to entertain or amuse them, wer[e] of the social life in the fort, or the thieving Indians outside.

A lively Y.M.M.I.A. was conducted by C. E. Walton, and then the Relief Society contributed several splendid entertainments to relieve the solemn monotony of the[ir] isolation. "Sunday School and meeting are generally well attended, and always interesting," wrote one of the fort-dwellers that winter.

In February, five families from Utah joined the little community where a number of new babies and one pair of twins, may already have suggested that the great wilderness of San Juan would really be settled from this small beginning.

They celebrated April 6, 1881, the first anniversary of their arrival, taking care, besides holding a meeting and a great ball for adults in the log meeting house, to have also a dance for the children who were given to understand it was in memory of a great event. Some of the young folks who participated in that dance, are as devotedly attached to San Juan, as if their ancestors had lived there twenty generations.

In January Colonel Critchlow, representing the D & R. G. R. R., arrived at Bluff looking for an opening to build a road through to St. George. He returned in Marc[h] fully convinced that no road could be built westward from Bluff.

On the Colonel's return from Escalante, he was directed to a place twenty or thirty miles north of Hole-in-the-Rock, where the Hall brothers had moved the apparatus of their ferry, and made what has since been known as Hall's Ferry. Hole-in-the-Rock ceased at once to be a crossing, its roads soon became impassable, few men and wagons have gone that way since. Some of the marks and scars, such as "Uncle Ben's dugway", are still in evidence on the bare rock, but the whirr and hum of th[e] world's progress, seldom break the deep silence of that remote region.

Bluff determined to make early and careful preparation for their fight with the river that season. On January 13th, William Robb, Joseph F. Barton and Platte D. Lyman were appointed as a committee on a building ditch, and making or finishing the community fence around their fields. Ditch work began February 4th, and was pushe[d] by a crew of eighteen men until April 2nd, when they turned in the water. It brok[e] promptly out, however, in a dozen places, and

when they turned it in again about the 13th, with the banks well strengthened, the river went down, leaving the ditch high and dry.

Bluff and Montezuma were not the only places having ditches, for Moody, Barney, Woolsey and others, were running little farms, and enterprises, though one of them was in operation when the river raised on the 21st. That same raise struck the Bluff ditch again, in fact it struck so hard that one man complained on the 23rd, "Our ditch breaks so often that quite a force of men are kept busy most of the time repairing it."

In spite of the scarcity and high price of lumber, they made a headgate to hold the river from overflowing the ditch. But the river whittled the headgate out of the sand, and started it on a voyage to the Gulf of California. Hanson Bayles and others saw it going, and ran anxiously along the bank, tyring to lasso it and draw it in. Their ropes fell uselessly in the muddy stream, and the headgate never returned.

Montezuma tried a little strategem on the wily San Juan; early in January, William Hyde began a great water wheel, sixteen feet in diameter and twelve feet wide. He had it in the river and started it going on the 29th of March, and all who saw were delighted. In an hour its buckets lifted 23,000 gallons of water into the flume, from which it was conducted out to their fields.

Montezuma began the new year with seven families, and they entertained great hopes while the water wheel continued. On March 28th, one of Mr. Harriman's little daughters died and, according to all information at hand, her's was the first deat[h] in the new settlement. They selected a place for a grave at the foot of the gravel mesa east of town, and that solitary little fence has marked the place these thirty-six years. For though the turbulent old San Juan, in its own time, wraught angry destruction among all the fields which had been made in its old dominion, it could not reach the little fence by the hill, and the little maiden's resting place has not been molested.

This first winter on the San Juan, though its particulars cannot be included in this account, is almost a continuous story of theft, pursuit and loss. The company had started for the new region with good herds of cattle, but the winter delay had reduced their numbers fearfully. Hanson Bayles started twenty-one head away in October '79, and six of them reached Bluff. Other herds fared likewise, and the precious remnant, along with the horses, were the loud-smelling carcass around which the Navajo and Ute eagerly hovered.

What would have happened but for Thales Haskel, is hard to guess. Haskel camped on the trails and the clues of these thefts day and night, and pled with the Indians for square deal. If ever he knew fear in all the perilous straights to which these trails led him, no mortal being ever knew or suspected it. He could employ their language to better advantage than the Utes and Navajos

themselves, and his superior knowledge combined with his fearless personal bearing, to make him a person of awe and majesty among them. To the many calls which Bishop Nielson made upon him again and again for this kind of work, he always responded cheerfully and willingly, "That's what I'm here for". Haskel never balked. In the hearts of those who knew him, he lives today, the pleasant recollection of unwavering fidelity.

Early in January, six men returned with five stolen horses, for which they were compelled to pay the Navajos $2.00 a head, and it was decided to herd the horses thereafter, every day. But there was ditching and fencing, the cattle required care, every storm left the road needing repairs, and some storms left it impassable. The urgent call of all these things took the herder from the horses about February 19th.

In four days word came to the fort that the Utes had started off with some of the horses. Five men hurried up to Cottonwood Wash, and over the bench to the Butler, succeeding by riding into the night in passing a gang of Utes who had camped. The white men guarded the trail until daylight, and rode into the camp. The Utes were not in the least surprised to see them, and they had no horses but thei[r] own. The affair was sufficiently convincing, however, and the men of the fort started their herd again as soon as they could round up their horses.

The urgent call of other matters broke up the herd again, and again they followed the trail of thieves with varying degrees of success. A bunch of cattle were traced beyond the head of the Butler, and the Bluff men, going the for the first time into the valleys east of Elk Mountain, were pleased with the country, and one of them wrote, "we have found a good stock range."

Late in March, Joseph Barton found Navajo Frank stealing three horses, but Frank left the horses and ran like a coyote as soon as he was seen. Kumen Jones, on another occasion, waded the river with his clothes on his head, in time to intercept Frank across from the Jump, which place he was passing with Mr. Jones' team. The old Navajo's method was to make a friendly visit to the fort, ascertain who was present, and then hurry off to his stealing before anyone had time to change positions.

With all his proposed friendship, he made bold to insult the women when no men were near. Being large and robust, he saw no reason why he should not be his own lawgiver whenever it was possible.

But Haskel's dark eyes caught Frank's one day, and holding the big Navajo to listen whether he would or not, proceeded with sage-like dignity to repeat the words of Erastus Snow. "If you don't quit stealing our horses, you will surely die!" affirmed Haskel, leaving the brevity of his speech to filter the more rapidly into the old thief's system.

Time passed, many months beyond the dates with which this chapter deals, and one day to the fort came a Navajo, stooping and slow. With labored step he sought out Haskel's cabin, and called eagerly for Haskel. It was Frank, his lungs seemed to have rotted completely away. "You write a letter to God", he began, when the gray bearded interpreter appeared, "tell Him I want to live, tell Him I will steal no more horses."

When Frank was seen three or four years ago, he was still alive to some extent, but the cavity where his powerful lungs used to be, looked as vacant as when he asked Haskel to write that letter.