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Hole-in-the-Wall a Garden of Eden

"The Picket" Gets Ex-Sheriff John Dunn to Tell About That Famous Wyoming Country and Those Who Inhabit It.

There is no man in Montana better qualified to give an accurate description of the famous Hole-in-the-Wall country or tell a better story of the history of the organized gang of outlaws who infest that section and have so long defied the officers of the law in their secure retreat than former Sheriff John Dunn of Carbon county. He is not a large man physically, neither is he boastful, but he is as courageous as a lion. The voters of this county took him from his ranch and made him sheriff for two successive terms. Official profanity didn't spoil him, like it does some people, and he is the same modest, unassuming, rough-and-ready man, as ever. It was during his incumbency of the office of sheriff that he formed the acquaintance of the Hole-in-the-Wall gang and caused these modern day devils and cut-throats to both fear and respect him. During his first term as sheriff Mr. Dunn led the posse which performed the dangerous feat of running to earth this same gang of reckless desperadoes, which are now being hunted for the recent daring daylight holdup on the Great Northern. In that historical chase of 1897 Sheriff Dunn and posse captured the escaping members of the Hole-in-the-Wall outlaws following the daylight robbery of the bank of Belle Fourche and turned them over to the officers of South Dakota. Later, when the Roberts boys escaped from the Deadwood jail and held up the Union Pacific train at Rock Springs, Wyo., and after they had killed Sheriff Hazen of Natrona county, Sheriff Dunn started on the trail and fearlessly went right into their own country, among their sympathizers, and would doubtless have effected their capture again if his services had been called into requisition early enough in the chase. As it was he made them hunt their holes and they remained comparatively quiet until the recent Malta spectacular extravaganza. When seen the other day in Red Lodge by The Picket as Sheriff Dunn was loath to talk about his exploits, but upon being urged, finally consented to tell the story desired by the reporter. Mr. Dunn began by ascertaining that the popular conception of the Hole-in-the-Wall is somewhat erroneous.

"This famous rendezvous of the original Currie gang, now nearly extinct," said Mr. Dunn, "is much more extensive in area than is generally supposed. It is situated in the geographical center of Wyoming, in the fastness of the mountains, and is accessible only by two passes or breaks in the range of mountains by which it is formed. It lies about 100 miles due south of Buffalo, Wyo., about the same distance due north of Rawlins, on the Union Pacific, and some 80 miles southeast of Thermopoli. It is in the northern part of Natrona county and comprises an area of about 130 square miles, having a length east and west of 16 miles and a width through the center of some eight miles.

"Taken as a whole, it forms one of the finest fortresses in the world, completely encircled by frowning perpendicular walls of solid rock, which rise to an average height of several hundred feet, with only two breaks, one at the eastern extremity and the other near the western end. These openings lead through narrow canyons, several miles in length, and a handful of men, properly stationed and supplied with plenty of am-

munition, could exterminate an army of soldiers.

"This admirable natural retreat is a veritable Garden of Eden. Within this walled fortress lies one of the most charmingly picturesque and fertile valleys of the west. Through the center runs a silvery stream with numerous branches, along which are situated some very fine ranches. The valley of the Hole-in-the-Wall contains a population of probably some 50 souls. The men residing there, some of whom are married and have families, took refuge there at the time of the rustler war, and while they have never done anything worse than to steal cattle they are in active sympathy with the Currie gang, and would fight for them at the drop of the hat and drop the hat themselves. Some of them are well lived and have large herds of cattle.

"It is less than fifteen years since the Hole-in-the-Wall first attracted public attention and it was not until the famous rustler war of Wyoming that it became the rendezvous of cattle thieves and brigands and the abiding habit of some of their sympathizers. This war started in 1890, being the hottest around Buffalo, Wyo., and was precipitated by the big cattlemen themselves. It is related that the big outlaws, in their annual roundups, were in the habit of gathering in every thing they came across and that the small outfits found it impossible to get a fair shake. Then began a systematic system of robbing and finally the toughest of those who had gotten their start with a good bull and a hot branding iron organized and broke into the roundup, took their brands therefrom and drove off the mavericks. Then the rustler war began in earnest. The large outfits blacklisted the small owners and made it impossible for them to dispose of their cattle on the beef market. The blacklisted men, some of whom had been working as cowpunchers for the big outfits, couldn't get employment any more and big thieving took the place of petty larceny. Thus were men made outlaws through force of circumstances.

"The leaders of this war on the part of the cowpunchers and small owners were George Currie and a companion named Bell. These were ably assisted by Currie's two brothers and the Roberts boys. Frank and Tom said to be brothers and also cousins of the Currie boys. They subsequently adopted the surnames of Jones and are now more generally known as Kid Currie and Lonebaugh, and these five, together with Tom O'Day and Walter Putney, formed the original Hole-in-the-Wall gang, they being subsequently reinforced by other but less dangerous cowpunchers.

"This gang upon the breaking out of the rustler war, captured a Hotchkiss gun in 1891 from a company of soldiers near Buffalo, Wyo., and retreated with the cannon into the Hole-in-the-Wall where they planted it in the mountains overlooking the eastern entrance to the natural rendezvous, and it is the general impression that this huge piece of artillery is still kept in constant readiness in case of emergency.

"The gang soon found cattle and horse stealing a rather tame pastime and they gradually graduated into thoroughbred bandits, fearless for themselves and careless alike of other human life. Their first exploit in the way of bank robbery found its consummation in the little

town of Belle Fourche, S. Dak. This affair took place in 1897 and was participated in by Tom O'Day, Walter Putney and the two Roberts boys. It was a daylight robbery and resulted in the loss to the bank of several thousand dollars and the immediate capture of Tom O'Day. The other three robbers got away. They took to the mountains of the Big Horn range and laid low for some time, concealing a similar raid on the Carbon County bank at Red Lodge, Mont. In the meantime they were joined by George Currie and three other grim desperadoes, Putney and the Roberts boys, in company with another man, rode into Red Lodge in broad daylight, leaving Currie and two men at Mad Springs, 25 miles southeast of the city, in the Bad Lands, with a relay of thirty head of horses. Upon arriving in the city the gang were seen and recognized by City Marshal Byron St. Clair, who used to know them in Wyoming. The outlaws told St. Clair their mission in Red Lodge and said: 'We're going to hold up the bank at 7 o'clock tonight and you had better go fishing.' Instead of doing this, however, St. Clair proceeded to the bank and informed Cashier B. E. Vail what he had learned. St. Clair then returned to the gang and told them that their presence in town was known and that they had better make tracks. The outlaws subsequently learned from a certain man who now lives in this town that St. Clair had betrayed them. They held a short council of war and discussed the advisability of killing St. Clair full of cold lead. They took a vote on the proposition and the result was not in favor of committing the murder. They concluded that it would look better and less cowardly to shoot St. Clair in the chase that they anticipated would follow their departure from the city.

"Having abandoned the idea of robbing the bank they mounted their horses and started for the Yellowstone. A posse was organized, consisting of Stock Detective W. D. Smith of Miles City, Dick Hicks of Billings, H. C. Calhoun of Columbus, Con. Meendenhall of Livingston, Attorney Stone of Red Lodge, and myself. We trailed the outlaws across the Yellowstone at Columbus and came upon them at about 5 o'clock at night in the hills some 20 miles from Lavinia, in Fergus county. We saw Putney ride up to the top of a hill to take a view of the country and we approached the camp within rifle range as Kid Currie was saddling his horse. We threw down on him and commanded him to throw up, but instead of obeying the summons, he got on the other side of his horse, pulled his sixshooter and threw it down over the back of the animal. The next instant a rifle ball from my gun struck Currie in the wrist and turned him around several times. He then sprang on the horse and started for the hills. As he came to a wire fence his horse was shot in jumping the fence and landed dead on the other side. Currie started off on foot. In the meantime part of the posse had captured the other two members of the gang and went in search of Currie. I saw him about a mile distant in the hills and rode around and crawled up within a short distance of where he lay partly concealed behind a sand hill. Hold him he had better come out of there and in reply he held up his bloody hand and said he was shot in the breast

and was dying. He didn't look to me like a dying man and I told him that if he didn't come over to where I was I'd tear down that sand hill. This had the desired effect, and he came running. He was entirely disarmed and I went back to the sand hill and found his two sixshooters and a belt full of cartridges buried in the sand.

"We took the three outlaws to Billings and turned them over to the officers of South Dakota and they were lodged in the Deadwood jail, along with Tom O'Day, to await trial. Pending the sitting of the court they broke jail, and O'Day and Putney were captured three days afterward, but the Roberts boys succeeded in making good their escape. Putney and O'Day afterwards established an alibi and were discharged from custody.

"I don't know exactly when or how this man Harry Longbaugh got into the game, but he was first heard from in connection with the Union Pacific train robbery at Rock Springs two years ago. In the chase that followed Sheriff Hazen of Natrona county, as I have already said, was shot and killed by the bandits, upon being surrounded by a posse, consisting of the sheriff, Harry Spurluck, a Union Pacific detective, Joe La Force, deputy United States Marshal of Wyoming, and a number of others, including a man with bloodhounds from Lincoln, Neb. A company of militia was stationed at the eastern entrance to the Hole-in-the-Wall, with the expectation that the outlaws would enter their retreat by that pass, but the bandits were posted and harbored all along the route by their sympathizers, and instead of entering the Hole-in-the-Wall, they swung around Nowode, crossed and recrossed the Big Horn river several times and struck out for Utah. During this chase a Montana posse was made up, consisting of Under Sheriff Frank Beller of Livingston, Deputy Sheriff Dick Hicks of Bridger and myself. We started out on our own hook and at one time in the Big Horn mountains were within a few miles' ride of the outlaws. We were greatly hampered by the settlers of that country, who made it a point to throw us off the track at every possible opportunity. After a chase of two weeks we gave up the hunt and returned home empty handed.

"The Currie gang, as originally constituted, is now pretty well defunct, the only members thereof now actually engaged in the bandit business being the Roberts boys and Harry Longbaugh. George Currie's two brothers died with their boots on, one of whom, I believe, was killed at Lardistey, Mont. George Currie himself was shot to death in Utah, near Sand Desert, about a year or so ago, while resisting arrest for his latest escapade of stealing a herd of cattle and working over the brands. Bell was sent to the Wyoming state penitentiary in 1893 and was liberated a year or so ago, getting off for good behavior. During the Deadwood trial Walter Putney's father came out from the east and after his son was cleared, the old man started him up in the horse business in Big Horn county, Wyo., where he now resides. Tom O'Day was blacklisted by the gang and fled from the controls of the outlaws because of a lack of nerve. He is at present, I believe, making his headquarters at Lost Cabin, some 20 miles east of the entrance to the Hole in the Wall."

NO TRUTH IN MURDER REPORT.

A Wealthy Meeteetse Woolgrower Goes Insane and Death Ensues.

A report was current on the streets this week to the effect that William Carmicle, an extensive woolgrower of Meeteetse, had been murdered and that his body was found last Tuesday morning at his sheep camp. In order to ascertain the facts The Picket made inquiries of Meeteetse over the long distance telephone and was informed that the murder rumor had no foundation in fact, although Mr. Carmicle died very suddenly at his sheep camp last Tuesday morning. It was learned that his death was due to mental derangement and that he passed away in an insane condition. His mental malady dated back to last summer, when he had an insane spell lasting several weeks. After that he was apparently all right until a week or so ago, when he suffered another attack, resulting in his death, as stated. The funeral was held in Meeteetse Wednesday afternoon, being conducted by the Odd Fellows. The deceased leaves a mother residing at Salt Lake, Utah.

ANTLERS FOR THREE.

A Trio of Meeteetse Fawns Properly Branded in Red Lodge.

Three festive fawns from Meeteetse, Wyo., chaperoned by W. Dean Hays of

HAD THEM ON THE HIP.

A Red Lodge Barber Gives a Second Public Exhibition of Hypnotic Power.

A large audience witnessed the hypnotic entertainment given at the opera house last Monday night by Prof. F. E. Looper, the Red Lodge barber who made his debut as a hypnotist in this city several weeks ago. It was his second appearance in public and the exhibition demonstrated the fact that he has been giving the science considerable study. During the forenoon he put a subject to sleep in a coffin in the I X L show window and the fellow slumbered soundly until awakened by the professor at the opera house in the evening. During the exhibition a number of volunteers went to the stage from the audience, but they wouldn't put themselves in the proper frame of mind to receive the occult influence and the professor had to rely for the exploitation of his power on three subjects whom he had previously successfully worked on. They performed all sorts of ludicrous antics and were compelled by the force of the hypnotic spell to do whatever the professor willed. Having demonstrated his power to his own satisfaction the barber has quit wielding the razor and on Tuesday departed for Laurel and other places to give exhibitions.

A bright, newsy paper—The Picket.

JOHN P. ARNOTT,

ATTORNEY AT LAW.

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