

From Fred B. Agee

EARLY DAYS IN CHAFFEE COUNTY.

Statement of Hugh Boon.

Mr. Boon stated he came to this part of the country in 1866. At that time the nearest railroad point was Ft. Riley, Kansas on the Union Pacific Ry. At that time the A T & S.F.Ry. had one mile of railroad grade west of the Missouri river, and the Union Pacific Ry. had extended its line about 100 miles west of Omaha.

He states that Mayol was the first settled in what is now Chaffee County, having located on Cottonwood Creek near Buena Vista in 1862 and took out a ditch the same year. In 1863 he raised a small patch of potatoes which he sold the following winter to miners at a price of 3 pounds for a dollar. He sold the large potatoes and saved the small ones for seed and raised a considerable crop of them the following year.

He stated that a Dr. Stewart was the first to locate on Haywood and Hortense Springs. Later a man by the name of Haywood, a ^{show} merchant from Denver, came in, jumped the claim and succeeded in getting title to them. Dr. Stewart, after losing claim to the springs, passed numerous various vicissitudes of fortune and finally when he died about thirty years ago was herding sheep in San Luis Valley.

Hortense springs received their name from the Hortense Mine located on Mt. Princeton in 1870 or 1871 by Captain Merriam which was the first silver producing mine in that district. Captain Merriam was a great admirer of Napoleon Bonaparte and named the mine Hortense after the step-daughter of Napoleon.

A year or two later the famous Murphy group of mines, Mary Murphy, Pat Murphy, Iron Chest, etc. were located in the same district by Ab. Wright, a nephew of Silas Wright, at one time Governor of New York State. Mr. Boon recalled a rather thrilling ~~an~~ account of an encounter between Wright and a grizzly bear weighing 2300 pounds, which was recounted to him in the early days and which occurred in California prior to Wright's coming to this part of the country. Wright succeeded in killing the bear but the bear in its last struggles struck Wright on the top of the head, but only tearing off the hide but removing a section of the cranium bone and also one ear. Notwithstanding this Wright recovered and lived to an old age.

A man by the name of Baldwin was the first to locate on Poncha Springs. He served in the same company as Hugh Boon in the Union army during the civil war and came out here from Ohio in 1867. He located on Poncha Springs, built a cabin and put in a small dam so as to make a swimming pool. A year or two later he went to Denver and later returned to the east, informing Hugh Boon he could have any rights which he had acquired to the springs. These springs were, however, later filed upon under the pre-emption act by George Nathrop (nephew of Charles Nathrop) who was financed in improving the springs by A. B. Daniels and Daniel Witter. The latter was one of the originators of the Colorado National Bank in Denver and was also register of the first land office in Colorado at Denver.

Mr. Boon stated the first civil case tried before a jury in what is now Chaffee County was at Granite about 1870. As stated, Mayol located on Cottonwood Creek in 1862 and engaged in farming. About 1870 two men by the name of Morris and Thompson desired to take up land near him. Mayol loaned

them money to improve their land, and they likewise engaged in raising potatoes and other farm crops. The following summer there was a shortage of water which led to an altercation between them and Mayol, they claiming their crop failure was due to Mayol using more than his share of water. They brought suit for damages to the estimated value of the crop. The case was tried before Justice of the Peace Hooten at Granite. It was during the late summer and most everybody was away at the mines. It was possible to find only five jurymen so Boon who was running a store and Post Office at Granite at that time volunteered to close his store and act as the sixth. After hearing the evidence in the case, the other five were favorable to verdict for damages in favor of Morris and Thompson. Boon held out for no damages and hung the jury. An agreement was finally reached whereby Morris and Thompson were allowed \$1.00. Both sides were represented by attorneys. Mr. Boon stated it was the first case brought before Hooten in which there were attorneys for the opposing sides. Hooten's mind, none too strong, was temporarily unbalanced by the continuous wrangling between the two attorneys over the admission of evidence, and after the trial was over, it was necessary to bring him down to the hot springs at Chalk Creek (Hortense springs) and hold him for two or three weeks until he recovered his sanity.

Game was exceedingly plentiful in this part of the country in those days, particularly deer. Mr. Boon mentioned that the road was completed down the Arkansas to Canon City in 1873. He said the following fall it was impossible for one to lose his way in travelling it because you could not get out of smelling distance of cooking venison.

Upon inquiry as to timber conditions in the country at that time, Mr. Boon stated that prior to the early forest fires the present aspen covered slopes on the South Arkansas below Monarch and in Weldon Gulch were covered with a good stand of yellow pine and red spruce (Douglas Fir) timber, a great many of the trees being 2 and 3 feet in diameter.

Mr. Boon recounted his early transaction with Nick Creede after whom Creede, Colorado is named. He stated Mr. Creede located the first mine near Monarch. He stated he and his brother met Creede driving a horse and buggy near the mouth of Gas Creek on the Arkansas. Creede inquired of them as to where would be a good place to prospect. He informed him that they were planning on prospecting the South Arkansas when they returned from their trip. Creede decided also to prospect that country and located a good showing of ore, which resulted in the staking out of Monarch Mine. Upon the return of the Boon boys to their ranch on the South Arkansas (the present Velotta place) they met Creede coming down, who gave them a half interest in their mine, and they purchased a half interest in the Charmer also located by Boon. The Monarch mine was later sold to the Monarch Pool, and Van Gleason and Posey from Del Norte bought the Little Charm for \$4000.00. Following these transactions Creede located some mining property on Ford Creek in the San Luis Valley country which he afterwards sold for several thousand dollars. He later came back and located the Kismet mine on Silver Creek, which was sold to Major Boyd of the Boyd and Haynes State Company. He stated that a man named Tom Kinney was the original locator of the Bonanza mine near the town of Bonanza, and held an interest in it for a number of years. He was also one of the original owners of the Rawley mine. He stated that Kinney was an old regular army sergeant who had been stationed at Raleigh North C. for some time following the civil war and that he often spoke of the good times he had while there, and the Rawley was named.

by him for this town.

Hugh Boon was one of the early Post Masters in the country, having served as such for about three years at Granite in the late 60's and early 70's. He was later post master at Cleora. He recalled with some amusement the difficulties in which the various post masters along the Arkansas would invariably become involved. While they were not dishonest, they would not take the trouble to keep the Post Office accounts separate from their own. The Post Office department, however, was scrupulously careful in charging to them the stamps sent out. As a result they would later have considerable difficulty in straightening out their accounts and taking advantage of his early experience in this capacity at sometime or another practically every post master called upon him to fix up the accounts and submit a report.

He recalled an incident which gave him considerable trouble when he was post master in Cleora in 1879. Champ requested him to register a letter to the American Publishing Company at St. Louis, containing \$7.50. The Post Office instructions governing registrations were much involved and he put in two days trying to get clear on them before he finally forwarded the registered letter. Some weeks later he received word that the envelope had reached the Post Office at St. Louis but was minus the contents. The Post Office inspector there in calling the matter to his attention, was very critical as to details, stating that registration papers were not properly made out etc., Boon replied that he had put in two days in mastering the instructions and was quite sure they must be all right. A tracer was started, which led to the discovery of the fact that the mail agent on the Kansas and Pacific Ry. had managed to use a lead pencil in such a way in the corner of the envelope to give it the appearance of having worn through, in that way making an opening large enough to abstract the money. The investigation of this case enabled the postal officials to account for several other losses in registered mail, since it developed that this particular agent had been abstracting small sums in this manner for a long time.

Mr. Boon stated that when the present town of Salida was started in 1880 it was originally shown on the D&R.G.RY, as South Arkansas. The name was not entirely satisfactory, since some confusion resulted from the fact that Poncha Springs was originally known as South Arkansas some years previous. Later the same year, Mrs. Hunt, the wife of Governor Hunt, vice-president of the D & R G Ry, was making a trip through this part of the country by train. She was gazing out of the car window as the train emerged from the canyon below town and observing the beautiful valley opening up before her, she gave utterance to the Spanish word "Salida" meaning "OUTLET" or Gateway. It was seized upon as a fitting name for the town and the name was so changed. He mentioned however, at the time the D.&R.G RY had a large number of tickets printed up with the name as South Arkansas, which they continued to use until the supply was exhausted a year or two later. This was somewhat confusing to travellers since they would purchase a ticket to Salida and find they had one to South Arkansas and often think they had been tricked.