

William E. Crutcher

He was born on May 12, 1850, at Big Spring, Ky. He sprang from pioneer American stock; the Crutchers having been in the United States for several generations. When he was 6, the family moved to Davis County, Ky. where they located on a farm. In 1872 he came to Nebraska; then on to Colorado in the spring of '97. Hearing of the mining activities in Cat Gulch and vicinity, he went there, and was engaged in prospecting and mining during the next two years.

At the time of Mr. Crutcher's arrival, there wasn't a business enterprise or building in the Gulch; and the total population counted, perhaps, ten.

In '96, George L. Smith discovered and located the "Gold Bug" mine in Cat Gulch; and later shipped some ore averaging, probably, from 1 to 2 oz. gold--the vein soon pinched out, however. Other mines in the vicinity were the "Vivandier" and the "Independence," the later was located by Dave Austin; and Mr. Crutcher was one of the owners. The "Independence" proved to be the biggest producer of the vicinity, shipping over 100 car loads of ore. The ore was hauled to Hecla Junction by wagon, and shipped from there to Pueblo via the D&RG--freight rate was \$2.25 per ton.

In '97 a town site was platted, and the embryonic town called Turret. This name was derived from nearby Turret Mountain, and was suggested by Robert Denham. Charles Robert opened the first store, followed soon after by another owned by M. E. Zenor; then a butcher shop; and a saloon, operated by E. Becker. The citizens of this new community established a bi-weekly stage and mail route from Salida, 15 miles distant. Later, a Post Office was established, and A.H. Robinson appointed as the first Post Master. He also published the town paper--a sheet called "The Gold Belt".

In the summer of '98, Mr. Crutcher was appointed delegate to the Democratic Convention at Buena Vista. At the county election held that year, there were about

200 votes cast in Turret. To the best of his knowledge, Mr. Crutcher says, there were no City elections held, or had the city any officials, except, perhaps, a marshall. 1899 saw the culmination of Turret's greatness; its population reaching, probably, 500. In 1900 the decline of Turret began, most of the mines having "petered out"; many of them having never shipped any ore.

According to Mr Crutcher, a mild mining revival is in progress there at the present time; the "Jasper" mine employing 5 men, and the "Mandate" 3.

A celebration was staged on July 4th, 1900, the principle speaker of the day being U.S. Senator William Mason of Illinois. The Senator was a very pleasing speaker, his address being enjoyed greatly by the citizens of Turret.

In October '99 moved his family to Salida and established his home there. A year later, he founded the W.E. Crutcher Wholesale Fruit & Produce Co. Later, he took a partner into the business, E.S. Plimpton, changing the name of the firm to The Crutcher--Plimpton Merc. Co. Mr. Plimpton died in the fall of 1913, and the name of the firm changed again, this time to The Crutcher Merc. Co. He was engaged in this business until 1923, when he retired; selling the business to Messrs Todd, who later sold to The Quinn Produce Co.

At the time of this writing (Dec. 33) Mr. Crutcher, though retired from all business, is active and in good-health.

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