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From Fred B. Agee

EARLY DAYS IN CHAFFEE COUNTY

Statement by 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 AT&SF 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 Mayal was the first settler 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 shoe 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 Mayram, *Merriam* which was the first silver producing mine in that district. Captain Mayram 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 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, not 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 accrued for the Springs. These Springs, however, were 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 registered 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, Mayal 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. Mayal loaned them money to improve their land, and they likewise engaged in raising potatoes and other farm ~~and~~ crops. The following summer there was a shortage of water which led to an altercation between them and Mayal, they claiming their crop failure was due to Mayal using more than his share of the 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 a verdict for damages in favor of Morris ~~and~~ 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 traveling 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 said he ~~had~~ and his mother 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 VanGleason and Pose from Del Norte bought the Little Charm for \$4,000. 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 & Haynes Stage 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, N.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 ~~xxx~~ 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&RG 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&RG 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&RG 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 travelers since they would purchase a ticket to Salida and find they had one to South Arkansas and often think they had been tricked.

SUPPLEMENTAL STATEMENT BY HUGH BOON

Hugh Boon stated he was County Superintendent of Schools in Lake County for the years 1869, 70, and 71, or until the election of 1872. Lake County then included the present Chaffee County and extended westward to the Utah State line, but there were no schools west of the Continental divide. At the time he took the office there were five schools in Lake County, one at Oro City, one at Granite, ~~one~~ at Browns Creek, one at Poncha Springs, and one which had been organized the previous year at Adobe Park. He ~~organized~~ organized School District No. 6 on Trout Creek during his term of office, and No. 7 at Riverside was organized either during his term of office or immediately afterwards. He did not clearly remember which.

He was a delegate to the first Republican State Convention at Pueblo following the admission of Colorado into the Union in 1876. He mentioned there were two other delegates from Lake County. These two were strongly in favor of Samuel H. Elbert (Territorial Governor from 1873 to 1874, and for whom Mt. Elbert is named) for Governor. Mr. Boon himself favored John L. Routt, Territorial Governor when Colorado became a state, but there was considerable opposition to him in this section because he had put it under Martial Law when the Lake County war was on. The other two delegates did not at first intend to attend the Convention and gave Boon their proxies; but upon reconsidering the matter, they showed up at the convention and voted for Elbert. Boon held out against them and supported Routt. When the votes were counted, Elbert lacked one of sufficient for nomination, and a deadlock followed. That evening they held a caucus and reached an agreement whereby Routt was to receive the nomination for Governor and Elbert that for Judge of the State Supreme Court. Both were successful at the following election.

Mr. Boon stated the Marshall Pass was originally called Poncho Pass, but following a trip to this country by Lieutenant Marshall, in charge of a detachment of U.S. Engineers on topographic work, the name was changed to Marshall Pass, and the name Poncho was then applied to the pass leading into the San Luis Valley. The confusion in names which followed ~~led~~ led to the inclusion of considerable territory in Saguache County which supposedly was intended for Chaffee County. He mentioned that the original description of Chaffee County read: "Commencing on the Arkansas River, three miles below the mouth of the South Arkansas, thence due west to the top of the Sange de Cristo range, thence along the divide to Poncho Pass, thence due west," etc. The shifting of the name "Poncho Pass" to the divide between the Arkansas and San Luis valleys resulted in the loss of the Silver Creek and Sargents country to Chaffee County through confusion in description.

With the rapid influx of settlers, prospectors and miners, and the rough element that came with the building in of the railroad in the late 70's and early 80's, things were considerably unsettled; and as in all newly organized territory, the machinery for law enforcement had considerable difficulty in functioning. More than 100 homicides occurred during this period without a single conviction, it being almost impossible to get witnesses to swear to the killings. On several occasions he was called to serve on the Grand Jury. Realizing the difficulty of securing convictions in cases of this kind, if they felt reasonably certain that the person was guilty, they would always return an indictment of "First Degree Murder," knowing that so long as the indictment hung over the party would get out of the country and stay out. In that way they got rid of a great many undesirables.

One of the most deadly shooting affairs, considering the number of people engaged in it, occurred at Garfield in 1881. Two brothers named Mums, from Louisiana, and a man by the name of McManus, who came here from Nevada, formed a partnership and went prospecting on the middle fork of the Little Arkansas. All three were gun men. They had a disagreement, broke up and came down to Garfield.

Hugh Boon and his brother Sim were on their way from Monarch to Maysville and stopped a few minutes in a saloon in Garfield. They met McManus who asked them to have a drink and told them something about the trouble. Hugh Boon knowing there would likely be shooting and not wishing to become involved in it said to Sim: "Let's be going; we were late in getting started." They got on their horses, but ~~thre~~ before they were around the turn below Garfield they heard the shooting. The Mums brothers were in a store opposite the saloon. McManus crossed over and met them. McManus killed the oldest Mums by the first shot. The other one shot him and he died within a minute after the shot, but succeeded in killing the other Mums before he died.

Mr. Boon mentioned that the big fire at Garfield occurred on election night in 1882. At that time most of the younger men belonged to the Knights of Pythias, and had gone to Salida to attend some big celebration. The fire got started, and there not being enough help to get it under control, it practically wiped out the whole town. He was clerk of the election at Monarch and recalls seeing dense smoke down the canon in the vicinity of Garfield when he got up next morning. Later he learned that the town had been wiped out by fire.

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