

Remember the Old Yampa Valley

By

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**REMEMBER THE OLD YAMPA VALLEY
AND THE BOY THAT LOVED IT SO TRUE
LOGAN BOURN CRAWFORD**



*by
Lulita Crawford Pritchett*

Cover Picture — Yampa Valley from Rabbit Ears Road, looking
toward Flat Top mountains
—*Courtesy Bud Werner Library
and Vernon Summer*

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FOREWORD

These are tales of the first children other than Indians to live in Yampa Valley of northwestern Colorado. To the end of their days, Lulie, Logan, and John Crawford believed this was the greatest place on earth. They never really did grow up. Whenever there was opportunity as the years passed, they relived their adventures with undimmed enthusiasm, telling on each other, laughing at each other and at themselves.

By then their own children were sitting at their feet, listening spellbound. I was one of those listeners — Lulie's daughter. So that other youngsters, several lifetimes removed, may also thrill to the Old West as those first comers saw it, I have written down what I remember.

Uncle Logan furnished most of the stories in this particular collection. He could never work or play for any length of time without bursting into song. In later years, when he came home to help take care of his aged parents, I learned all the old songs. I spent many summers of my childhood at Grandfather's. Every morning, while Uncle Logan cooked sourdough cakes for breakfast, we at the table were treated to AFTER THE BALL IS OVER, TWO LITTLE GIRLS IN BLUE, and dozens of others. One of his favorites was THE HUNTERS OF KENTUCKY. He had learned it away back yonder when he was a brash kid with curly auburn hair. It went like this:

*“Ye gentlemen and ladies fair
Who grace this famous city,
Come listen if you've time to spare
While I rehearse a ditty;
And for an opportunity,
Conceive yourselves quite lucky,
For 'tis not often here you see
A hunter from Kentucky.*

*Chorus: “O Kentucky, the hunters of Kentucky,
O Kentucky, the hunters of Kentucky.*

*“We are a hardy freeborn race,
Each man to fear a stranger;
Whate'er the game, we join in chase
Despising toil and danger. . . .”*

Logan was no Kentuckian. He had been born in Missouri in 1869 and brought in a wagon train to Colorado at age four. But the old song,

relic of the War of 1812 and the Battle of New Orleans, just suited him, and he sang it till anyone in earshot must have been heartily sick of it.

No doubt, he liked to think of himself as a swashbuckling hero. What he said he could do, he did. He never backed down. Actually, he was just a venturesome boy who quickly learned how to survive on the frontier and have a barrel of fun besides. Before he was half grown, he was doing a man's work — and a lot of other things! Occasionally Pa would feel it necessary to say to him, “You don't *have* to splinter your snowshoes on the very steepest hills!” or “Anyone with a lick of sense wouldn't try to ride a bear!”

Nonetheless, in emergencies, Pa and the growing community soon found they could depend on Logan. As the years rolled on — twenty-five or fifty or more — old settlers were proud to boast, “Logan Crawford? You bet, I knew him! Why, I can remember when he”

Logan himself, his reddish thatch replaced by a gray one, once remarked, “I wouldn't trade my life for anything I know of!”

So now, come listen if you've time to spare!



Logan — Young Man



Logan – Gray Headed
Dinner's about ready – maybe fried
Young sagechicken!



Chapter I

MOUNTAINEER IN THE MAKING

In June 1874 Logan's father, James H. Crawford, staked a claim at a group of mineral springs in Yampa Valley near the big bend of the river. Envisioning a health resort where visitors could drink invigorating waters and bathe in healing hot pools in the midst of magnificent mountain scenery, he founded a town, which he named Steamboat Springs from a small geyser that chugged like a steamboat. He predicted that within five to ten years a railroad would be built to bring the world to his town.

The railroad was quarter of a century coming.

Meanwhile, what a paradise for children to grow up in, though some people might not have thought so! Routt County alone comprised some five and a quarter million acres barely scratched by civilization. In those days it stretched from the Continental Divide to Utah. A few prospectors and trappers had crossed it, leaving little sign. The only settlement was at the foot of Hahn's Peak, twenty-five miles north of Steamboat Springs where, depending on the fortunes of the miners, a dozen to several hundred men placered for gold during the short summer months. Nobody really knew what lay in the big mountains or in the vast sagebrush of the lower country. As soon as the Crawford boys were big enough, they went to find out.

Always, they were glad to get home to Yampa Valley. Judging by trails worn deep into the grass roots, wild animals and Indians, since the beginning of time, had also sought a home here — deer, elk, and antelope drawn by mineral licks; Indians, by “medicine springs”; and all by the abundance of good living in lush river bottom and sheltering hills.

Pa had built his comfortable cabin on a small bench above Soda Creek not far from the Iron Spring, where he could stand in his doorway, look across marsh and pond, and watch the sun go down in glory behind Elk Mountain.

At first, the Crawfords had no neighbors but the Ute Indians. Logan played with Charlie Yarmonite, the chief's son. Yarmonite made each boy a bow. Using sharpened sticks for arrows, the two went hunting chipmunks. Charlie liked to shoot his arrow as high as he could into the air and run to pick it up where it fell. One day he caught a bumblebee, pulled it open, and showed Logan a drop of honey inside it. The Indian boy had a sharpened case knife with which he cut willows to make a sweat house. He stuck the willows in the ground, bent them toward the middle and fastened them together; then he covered the frame with skins and a blanket. There were many such sweat houses. The Indians poured water on hot rocks and sat in the steam.

After the Utes were moved to a reservation in Utah following the Meeker Massacre in 1879, Logan had only his sister Lulie, two years

older, and brother John, four years younger, to play with till other settlers came. But the three made a good crew, never lacking something to do. Whatever they found on their rambles they took home to show “the folks.”

Early one spring, while exploring bare spots on Woodchuck hill, they found a tangle of half dormant garter snakes under a rock. The children were not the least bit afraid of snakes since there were no poisonous ones in Steamboat, though Pa said he had seen rattlesnakes near Elk Mountain and in Twenty-Mile Park. Delighted with their find, the explorers draped the limp reptiles by their tails one by one over a pole, and with some difficulty carried them to the cabin.

Ma's reaction was instant and vehement. She did not seem at all pleased as the snakes started to come to life and fall off the pole in her kitchen. “Take them back on the hill!” she ordered. “A long way back!”

It may have been the same spring that the Crawfords ran out of almost everything to eat. Pa, who was making his first trip of the season to Georgetown for provisions, was a long time returning on account of mud and high water. After the family grew tired of fish caught in Soda Creek, Ma and Logan went up on the ridge with the ten-bore Parker shotgun and each bagged several blue grouse.

Then Ma decided to try to shoot an elk from the herd a short distance up the valley. Again, she took Logan with her, and this time she carried Pa's big gun, a single-shot Remington 40-82, Hepburn pattern. It weighed thirteen pounds. She had to pull the hammer back, then the breechblock, put in the great big long cartridge, let the breechblock down and let the hammer down — carefully.

Ma was trying to load the gun while Logan walked ahead of her twenty or thirty feet. As she let the hammer down, POWIE, the gun went off. The bullet hit right between Logan's feet, throwing dirt all over him. The hunters did not go on.

A month or so later, after Pa returned, Logan shot his first deer with that same gun. This time Pa was with him. The gun was so heavy Logan had to rest it in the crotch of a tree and let the deer walk into the sights. He drew his long breath, the way Pa told him to, and fired.

In summer the children had the job of bringing in the cows or “catching up” the horses. One morning Pa sent Logan and John to fetch Nibs, his black saddle horse. It was a long hot walk to the wild meadows near Elk River where the horse herd generally grazed.

Nibs would not be caught. He would come almost within reach, then dodge away. Finally, Logan made a noose of the rope and laid it in the grass. John put his hat on the ground near it, fixed it like a little nest, and fooled around as if he had something in it. Nibs, curious, came up to examine the nest, stepped in the noose, and Logan jerked the rope.

Now that they had caught Nibs, the boys had time to notice the fish that had run up the small stream nearby. They could grab the fish with their hands under the bank in the grass roots and were having great fun till Logan got hold of what he thought was a trout, threw it out — and wrapped a snake around John's neck! They quit fishing right then and rode Nibs home.

On Logan's eleventh birthday Pa baked him a cake. The reason Ma did not bake it was that Pa and Logan had gone in a wagon to Gore Range to examine a quartz vein for gold. While Pa wielded the pick, Logan fished in a beaver pond, using the buggy whip for a pole. (He always carried a fishhook or two fastened in his hat.) Though he was having all kinds of luck, his pile of trout did not grow because a mink was stealing the fish as fast as they were caught. Logan had to move his catch back on the hill out of the mink's territory.

Pa fried the trout crisp and brown for supper while he cooked the birthday cake in the Dutch oven. When the cake was about half done, he decided to add more flour. Ma would have turned up her nose at that cake, but Logan liked it fine even though he and Pa had to eat it with a spoon.

That same year Pa gave Logan his first chaps. They were twenty-four inches long and bore the stamp HERMAN H. HEISER, BEST CALFSKIN CHAPS. No doubt Pa had already noted that his older son had a special knack with horses.

Three years later, when Logan was fourteen, Pa could trust him to help haul winter provisions from Georgetown, 125 miles away on the eastern side of the range. Pa drove General and Bell to one wagon, and Logan drove Bess and Peggy to the other. Bell's colt ranged along.

The scariest part of the whole trip was the descent toward Georgetown, a thriving mining community in a deep pocket of the mountains. Travelers from the Western Slope reached Georgetown by turning off at Empire and crossing a ridge. Beyond the ridge was a narrow track blasted from rock and dropping at a precipitous angle. Freighters starting down or up took a careful look first. There was no passing on that stretch. From the top, the narrow gauge railroad in the thin valley below appeared like a toy.

Logan, who was ahead of Pa, was almost to the bottom when he had to stop because a teamster in front of him was having trouble. A rock had slid off the hill and broken the back of the man's near wheeler. Logan and Pa helped the poor fellow put the horse out of its misery and roll it over the bank. The teamster had to put one of his leaders in the wheeler's place.

Silver ore was brought into Georgetown on strings of burros along networks of trails. When Pa and Logan drove into town, main street was full of burros, some coming in loaded; some unloaded, ready to go out. Two strings were stopped while their owners argued. Pa and Logan pulled up to see what was going on.

It was common knowledge that burros were notionate and if they were a pound overloaded they would lie down. One fellow stated that his burros would carry 250 pounds of ore each. The other fellow bet he could take any burro from the first man's string, put only 50 pounds on it, and it would lie down. The bet was eagerly accepted.

The first man unloaded one of his burros. The fellow who had made the bet got a great big feather tick from somewhere, weighed it on some scales on the street, tied it on the burro, and said, "Now, lead him up the street."

The owner barely got started when the burro “sat down.” Everybody roared with laughter except the disgruntled loser of the bet.

A couple of days later Pa and Logan headed back to Steamboat Springs with their provisions, Logan in the lead. He had on 3400 pounds. Climbing that steep, narrow stretch just beyond town, the straining teams had to raise the wheels straight up, step after step, and had to stop often to wheeze.

Part way to the top Bell's colt came alongside Logan's team, saw that Bess was not his mother, turned to go back, and fell over the bank. He lit on his neck sixty feet down. Logan could hear the life go out of him.

There was nothing to do but drive on. As a special treat Pa had bought a watermelon imported from some warmer clime. When he and Logan stopped for lunch near the Blue Hill above Empire, neither could eat a bite of that watermelon.



PONIES TO NORTH PARK

The day was a weather breeder — too hot for October. What should have been a bright blue sky was dingy around the edges. Ma and Lulie had hurried to finish the washing, and now near noon were hanging out the last clothes, hoping they would dry before storm gathered. John, as usual, was down at the mouth of Soda Creek, fishing. Logan was chopping wood with less than enthusiasm. He wished he was up on the mountain where Pa and two other homesteaders were “viewing out” a road that would go over Buffalo Pass and connect with a settlement in North Park. If anybody had a right to be up there, it was Logan. He had found the pass and named it. And here he was stuck at home, missing all the fun.

A welcome diversion was a swirl of dust on the trail leading up the river from the west. A bunch of ponies materialized from the dust — maybe thirty or forty — and fell to cropping grass around the mineral springs as if they were starved. Down in the Crawford corral Nibs was also observing the intruders in high headed curiosity. (Pa had taken a team and plow this morning so he could plow a furrow where the new road would go.) Logan stuck his axe in the chopping block and walked toward the ponies. A flea-bitten dun flattened its ears and turned its heels to him.

There was only one person driving the herd, a whiskery stranger. He yelled at Logan, “Hey, you kid! Keep away from them horses. Wanta git hurt?”

Logan immediately stepped closer. Many of the mustangs were calicoes and buckskins, colors highly favored by the Indians. He guessed this fellow with alkali dust in the creases of his hat and boots was a trader and had maybe got the horses from the Utes on their reservation. Logan knew better than to ask questions.

It was the stranger, reining near, who asked, “Bub, kin I git me some dinner here?”

“Sure,” said Logan.

Almost everybody traveling the river trail stopped at the hospitable Crawford cabin. Ma fed them all. The stranger threw off his saddle and let his horse and a pack horse graze with the rest. He followed Logan to the cabin.

John was already there. Ma was dishing up dinner. She put on an extra plate heaped with food, and the fellow ate as if was as starved as the ponies. Between mouthfuls he said he had, indeed, come all the way from Utah and was going to try to sell the horses to ranchers across the range. The Utes on the reservation who had traded him the horses were the same ones that used to roam the Yampa Valley. The drover said they still had many ponies and often slipped away from their confines, riding

great distances to old campsites to hunt deer.

When the trader had cleaned his plate, he wiped his fingers on his buckskin vest and got up. "Ma'am," he asked, "is there a man around kin guide me to North Park?"

Ma said, "Logan can."

"Him?" The stranger's eyes traveled from Logan's shock of reddish hair to his ankles that showed bony beneath outgrown jeans. "Well —" he jerked an impatient thumb — "saddle that broomtail in the corral and let's git off."

"Nibs is no broomtail!" cried Logan. Under his breath he added, "I'll show him!"

He didn't much like this fellow, but he did like the idea of escaping the woodpile. Also, he would get to see what the road viewers were doing. So he saddled Nibs, grabbed his jacket and Pa's pistol, and on second thought buckled on Pa's spurs. The jingle, as he strutted down the trail, was music in his ears. He set his hat cockily on his head, jumped on Nibs, and pricked him with the spurs.

Nibs was a good horse but particular about some things. He sprang in the air and came down crookedly with a jolt that sent Logan sprawling.

For the first time, the stranger laughed. "That's a better horse than I thought!" he remarked.

Logan picked himself up, whacked the dust off his hat, and bruised of body and spirit, crawled back on Nibs.

The drover had saddled a fresh horse. Now he popped his quirt at the ponies, pausing only long enough to take a cigar out of his pocket and light it. Yampa Valley people hardly knew what a cigar was. Pa sometimes puffed at an old pipe. The man was still chuckling.

His chuckling changed to cussing as he and Logan tried to drive the ponies up the south bank of Soda Creek toward the head waters of Butcherknife Creek. The mustangs had no notion of climbing mountains. They dodged, doubled back, and went any place but where they were supposed to. Logan shot his pistol occasionally to scare them out of the brush, and the drover popped his quirt and called them many names. He shouted at Logan, "Where in blue blazes you takin' me?"

Logan knew where he was going. He had never had any trouble finding the low spot in the range in the first place. Game trails all led to it, and as they converged to cross the top, carved a wide rut two feet deep in the tundra. Though the last buffalo had disappeared from these parts, old wallows were everywhere to prove that the ponderous animals had crossed at this place for perhaps hundreds of years, along with deer, elk, bear, and Indians.

Logan's only trouble was with the onery ponies. He feared they would break their necks plunging over rocks and logs. In pursuit of them, he and the trader were in danger of breaking their own necks. A few ragged clouds dimmed the sun but not the heat. Riders and horses were streaming sweat by the time they came upon the road viewers working on a bushy hill — a place later called the S'S.

Even the ponies seemed glad to rest a little, and the drover acted almost jovial. No doubt he was relieved to know he was on the right trail.

He gave a cigar and light to each of the viewers.

Pa waved him on. "Better get over the top before the storm. I don't like the looks of those clouds. We're knocking off and heading home."

Logan hoped the mustangs had run themselves out and now might follow the trail of their own accord. No such luck. The chase continued. Through gullies. Through mountain ash and laurel. Over rocks. . . .

In spite of everything, Logan might have jockeyed those stubborn critters over the pass if he had had a little more time. Sudden dusk blotted out the smolder of sunset. An ominous roar bore down upon men and horses. Wind! It nearly wrenched the riders from their saddles. A cannon clap of thunder jarred the earth. Nibs nearly left his skin.

The ponies, twisting like cats, leaped down the ravine.

"Hold 'em against the bank!" yelled the trader, "don't let 'em git away!"

Logan had all he could do just to stick on Nibs. The herd, including the pack horse, whistled past — no doubt headed for Utah. In the flashes of lightning Logan could see the trader hunkered in his saddle while the rain pelted him.

After what seemed hours, the fury subsided, the rain turned to a drizzle, and finally quit. Logan tied Nibs to a limber branch so he could not break away. There was nothing to do but make a fire, wait until morning, backtrack, and hope the ponies might be somewhere down in the valley.

Under the roots of a big spruce he found dry needles and punk, which he built into a careful pile near a jutting rock. His numb fingers searched his pockets for a match. A good mountain man always carried matches for emergencies. He went through his pockets again. He had been in such a hurry putting on Pa's spurs — He had to ask the trader for a match.

Moments of silence; then a grunt. "Reckon I used my last match when I passed out them cigars."

Well, there was more than one way to get a fire. Crouched beside the rock, Logan took the ball out of a cartridge and most of the powder, and put the cartridge in his six shooter. He held the spare powder in his hand ready to sprinkle on a spark when he got one. Then he moved back a few inches to pull the trigger, but the hammer would not cock. All afternoon he had been shooting the pistol to scare the horses out of the brush and now it would not work!

He set about taking the gun apart. The first thing he did was break the blade of his knife.

Once he heard the trader say bitterly, "If I'd had a man to guide me —,"

With wooden fingers Logan explored the gun. He dropped a screw and hunted for it in the wet grass, hunted, hunted. . . . Deciding the notch in the hammer was worn and the spring had slipped over it, he worked stubbornly maybe an hour — two hours — He could have asked the trader for his gun, but he didn't.

Finally, he had the spring back in place and the pistol together again.

He tore a little of the lining from his jacket and put it in the shell. The cotton threads would ignite easily. Sliding the cartridge in, he cocked the hammer. *Cocked the hammer!*

At the first squeeze of the trigger he got a spark. It caught the powder he had sprinkled and then the pine needles. He whipped off his hat to shield the flame. One at a time, he added dry twigs and bits of bark. Dragging up a pitchy log, he made a big fire.

The trader, who had tied his horse near Nibs, spread his hands to the warmth. "If we had some grub—" he muttered, "but that pack horse is ten miles away by now along with the rest."

All at once Nibs flung up his head. A stick cracked in the forest. Bear! thought Logan, and grabbed Nibs' rope. The trader's hand went to his gun. A pair of eyes glowed through the darkness. They came toward the fire. But bear were afraid of fire. Now there was a ring of eyes around the fire. The trader's horse whinnied and was answered.

"The ponies!" cried Logan. "They didn't go to Utah!"

"Well, I'll be—!" The trader slapped his thigh. "I'd oughta remembered — Injun ponies stay with a camp! The fire gathered 'em for us."

The pack horse was there, too, pack half under its belly but still on. Logan soon had some grub cooking. After he and the trader had eaten, they kicked away the coals, lay in the ashes, and slept till dawn. When sun tipped the ridges, Logan could see where he was. He walked twenty yards and found a blaze mark. The pass was only a short distance beyond. He helped drive the ponies down onto Grizzly Creek where the trader could find his way alone into North Park.

The man fished a quarter from his wallet and handed it to Logan. "You're all right, kid!"

Logan pocketed the first money he had ever earned as a mountain guide. He pricked Nibs with the spurs. In a great bucking leap, Nibs took off for Bear River, and this time Logan rode him. You bet!



Chapter III

WILD CIRCUS

Logan was enjoying a circus all by himself this day in late summer as he sat on a log near Rabbit Ears Pass eating his lunch. In the first ring, almost at his feet, the performer was a small clown, a chipmunk, pulling down fireweed stalks and stuffing its cheeks with silk till they were puffed out like a bad case of mumps.

In the second ring was a doe deer nibbling tidbits from a patch of fringed gentians. When she gave a blat, here came two fauns and got their dinner. As the fauns frolicked about, the mother bunted them in play. Suddenly, the doe stared at Logan, saw he was not a tree stump, snorted, and bounced into the woods, the little ones bouncing after her.

Since Logan was now experienced enough to guide sportsmen who occasionally came to Routt County, he had to find good camp spots. As he explored, he watched the wild creatures going about their own business or play.

This time of year the buck deer were lying out in the open, sunning their new horns. Twenty or thirty fine, fat fellows might be bunched together, not afraid of a boy who walked quietly by them. They were shedding reddish hair and growing blue-gray coats. In another month the horns would be hard, and the bucks would be whetting them on every tree.

One day Logan watched a mother black bear with three cubs, two brown and one black. While the mother took her ease, the cubs raced around a serviceberry bush. The leader would reach a certain spot and turn a somersault. His brothers (or sisters) would do the same. After a few rounds, they ran up to their mother to be fed. About that time she caught Logan's scent, knocked them sprawling, and lumbered off, her cubs after her.

One bright warm afternoon south of Hot Sulphur Springs on Little Muddy Creek, Logan saw a lioness with two very small kittens. All around them were elk feeding, to which the lioness paid little attention. Nor did the elk pay attention to the cats. For half an hour Logan watched the kittens romp about their mother, pulling her tail and biting her ears. Now and then she cuffed them fondly.

Logan was picking wild raspberries a few miles west of Steamboat Springs the day he met the coyote pups. Great patches of timber had been burned by the Utes at the time of the Meeker trouble. One black scar on the hill south of the Milton Woolery ranch was growing back to greenery in a bramble of wild raspberry bushes, just now loaded with ripe fruit. Logan had brought buckets in a wagon, driven as close as he could, and gone to picking.

A slight rustling in the brush a few yards above him let him know he had an audience. Half a dozen coyote pups were observing him like little

owls. He guessed the mother coyote had gone shopping for dinner and left the children at the den to entertain themselves.

Pretending not to notice them, Logan went on filling his bucket. As the sun grew hotter, the pups grew bolder. They sneaked closer, hiding behind rocks and stumps and occasionally scuffling and growling. When he made a sudden movement, they fell back, tumbling over each other.

It took Logan the better part of a day to fill four ten-pound pails. While he worked, the pups had an uproarious time. By then, no doubt, the mother coyote was looking on from a distance, having long since caught a gopher or grouse. She must have spent a very nervous afternoon.

Young animals of all species could be expected to frolic, but Logan was surprised to come upon grown elk cavorting in the high country beyond the head of Big Creek.

He had climbed to Lake of the Craggs to see if there were any fish in it. When he got there, it was no use to try fishing because several elk were playing in the water. He guessed they had eaten themselves giddy on the little black bunch grass that furnished powerful feed at this altitude and were primed for amusement. The game seemed to be Follow the Leader. The leader was a big cow, and her playmates were three other cows that mimicked whatever she did. They would gambol around the rocky island in the middle of the lake, then lie down in the shallows and roll and splash. They did not know Logan was laughing at them fifty yards away.

Better than any freak in a man-made circus, was a miniature magician that regularly performed only a few feet from the Crawford cabin. Logan could lie on the river bank and peer through the grass at a gray bubble moving upstream under water. Pretty soon the bubble would bob to the surface and turn into a perfectly dry, slate gray water ouzel with a bullhead in his bill. His mate would join him from her nest behind a small waterfall, and the two would do a bobbing dance on the rocks. The ouzels stayed all winter around the warm springs. Their song on a cold January day sounded sweeter than that of any summer songbirds.

The willows bordering Soda Creek were full of surprises. Once Logan found a good trout pool where a dead spruce had tipped over the stream. Working his way around a tangle of roots so he could throw his hook in the pool, he came face to face with a black bear who was crossing the log from the other direction. Logan fell back over the roots, and the bear fell into the pool, splashing water every direction. Neither boy nor bear sought further acquaintance.

In winter, bear hibernated and deer migrated to lower country. Though some elk also migrated, a good many stayed around Steamboat since their long legs equipped them to travel in snow. A few wintered near Elk Mountain. Others lived at the Hot Springs north of town, using the small creek that drained to Elk River basin as a trail. They could live on the tips of scrub oak and whatever other bushes rose above the snow.

One January day Logan was snowshoeing along a north slope when he spotted a bunch of bull elk in the creek below him. For fun he took a fast scoop down at them, and they jumped into the deep snow, breaking through a soft place undermined by a hot spring. There they were,

wedged in tight where they could not get out. If Logan had had a sixty-foot rope, he could have put it around their horns and tied it. They WOWED at him and gritted their teeth, but all their struggles only sank them deeper in the hole. Logan took off his snowshoes and used them to cut the snowbank till he thought the elk could free themselves. They did.

From January through May elk and deer would be dropping their horns. Logan saw one bull elk give a stiff legged jump, douse his head, and get rid of both horns at once. Another monster with a heavy rack was not so lucky. He could shake only one horn loose. It must have been embarrassing for him, Lord of the Woods, to have to walk lopsided for a day or two till he could knock off the other horn.

While the bull elk were lounging around growing new horns, wise old cows took charge of the herds. When Logan and John camped too close, the cows barked at them — a disagreeable, coughing sort of bark. The boys were glad to move camp next morning.

One August day Logan was traveling on foot through a jumble of trees and rocks near Rankin Creek northeast of town when he noticed a small herd of elk crossing a hollow below him and heading his way. He had just time to spread out like a woodchuck on a big flat rock that rose six or seven feet above the trail. Here came the elk single file directly under him. It was wonderful to see how they could step so nearly in each other's tracks. A dozen elk would leave hardly any more sign than a single animal.

They must have smelled him for every few steps they would stop to look. Halting beneath the rock, the lead cow turned her face right into Logan's. Blare eyed, she stood a moment, not one foot away. Then she tore out of there!

Strangely, the others did not run. They could see nothing to run from. A bit nervously they stalked along the trail, and Logan stroked the back of everyone. He ran his hand down the rough hair of NINETEEN WILD ELK! Maybe they thought he was just a big fly, or the wind. Wouldn't he have something to tell when he got home!

As the years passed, ranchers moved in, and thousands of cattle were driven from Texas to fatten on the rich grass of Colorado and Wyoming. Elk, deer, and antelope no longer owned the range. There was still plenty of room for vast wild herds to roam the mountains, but more and more domesticated stock grazed the meadows.

One cow elk, however, had no notion of giving up any territory. Logan happened along just in time to see her proclaim her rights. She was quietly feeding alone at a haystack near the mouth of Elk River when a longhorn buckskin steer spotted her and lumbered with rumbling bellow to drive her off. No doubt he had whipped everything else and must have thought this scrawny elk would also run from his great vicious horns.

The elk did not budge till he was almost upon her. Then she let fly with her hind feet — straight out behind like a mule. Whirling, she struck with her front feet. The steer's bellow rattled into a bleat. Dazed, he turned tail and limped away. Having educated the big bully, the elk resumed her meal.

Logan laughed all the way home. He had seen a lot of star performers in his wild circus, but that old cow elk took the cake!



Yampa Valley from Rock Quarry
looking toward Storm Mountain (Mt. Werner)
—*Courtesy Jerry Rowen*



Chapter IV

ROUTT COUNTY'S "OLD MOSE"

The people of Routt County, Logan Crawford in particular, never let anybody or anything get ahead of them if they could help it. And so, when stories came out of South Park about a monster grizzly named Old Mose that was killing stock and terrorizing ranchers in Park, Chaffee, and Fremont counties, the folks in Routt County discovered a grizzly, which they also called Old Mose, and which they claimed was bigger and more ferocious than the South Park bear.

No hunter had yet been good enough nor trapper clever enough to bag either bear. Grizzlies had a reputation of being wanton killers, endowed with almost human cunning and a capacity to withstand rifle fire. As large as they were, they had the quickness of a cat. They could make match sticks out of a pole fence and knock over a grown bull with the slap of a paw.

One Routt County hunter spent a night in a tree with Mose at the bottom. Another, Len Pollard, trailing Mose early in the spring, camped and rolled himself in a "green" elk hide to sleep. The hide froze together. Mose ambled into camp, picked up the hide with Len inside it, and carried it half a mile before he abandoned it.

Logan said, "I sure would like to take a shot at that grizzly!"

He got his wish late that fall. He had gone with Pa in the wagon to haul in an elk Pa had killed the day before at the foot of Storm Mountain. Pa had butchered the elk and propped it open to cool, but when he and Logan found it, it was partly eaten and covered with a mound of sticks and dirt.

"Bear!" Pa snapped. "He'll be back, and we'll be ready for him."

At crack of dawn Pa and Logan tied their horses at a distance, slipped through the frosted ferns, and sat down behind some bushes to wait. Pretty soon they heard sticks breaking above them on the mountain. Walking leisurely out of the trees came not one bear, but two! Humped shoulders and dished-in faces proclaimed them grizzlies. The first, smaller, with dark rippling coat, must have been a young one. The second, with silvered fur, was monstrous. He rolled from side to side as he walked and had a head as big as a nail keg. Old Mose — sure!

Pa whispered, "I'll get the first one. You take the hind one."

Logan gripped his gun. He heard Pa shoot and saw the first grizzly go down. He squeezed the trigger. The gun kicked back at him with a deafening explosion, and his bullet plowed a green furrow in an aspen tree. He had missed completely a target as big as a house. He stood trembling and ashamed while Mose crashed away up the hill.

"Never mind, son," consoled Pa. "You're not the only man to miss Old Mose."

Pa dressed out his bear, and he and Logan packed home sacks of fat

and all the bear and elk meat they could. Ma was glad to get the bear grease for it was softer than deer tallow.

Logan would have gone back and tried to trail the grizzly if Pa had not needed him to drive a team to Georgetown for supplies. Three weeks later when Pa and Logan returned home, winter was closing in. Snow topped the beaver houses in the pond, and ducks and geese and sandhill cranes had left.

John Suttle and Billy St. John invited Logan to go elk hunting with them to the Hot Springs, six or seven miles north of town. These springs lay in the roughest kind of country. At the bottom of a deep crease between steep hills, ran the creek and from either side dozens of rivulets drained steaming water into it. The water was almost boiling.

In summer Pa liked to show off the Hot Springs to visiting friends and relatives, and Ma always took eggs along to cook in the hot water. With a dipper she would nest them in the sand at the bottom of a bubbling pool, and in half an hour she would lift them out nicely coddled. No matter how long they stayed in the water they never got hard boiled. Then she would make tea with the spring water, which had very little mineral taste.

John Suttle's father ran a lumber mill in Steamboat and Billy worked at the mill. Logan went with them ostensibly to help get an elk but really to see if he could find Old Mose. The snow, almost too deep for a horse and not deep enough for snowshoes, made hard, slow traveling. Ponto, the dog, roamed widely at first, but soon was glad enough to plod after the horses. Though Logan saw coyote, fox, bobcat, porcupine, weasel, and elk sign, he saw no bear tracks.

By the time the hunters reached the springs it was mid-afternoon. Coming here was like finding a patch of tropics in the Rocky Mountain winter. For quarter of an acre there was no snow. Here the creek never froze. In cracks in the rocks grass grew as green as in May, and yellow monkey flowers bloomed.

Ordinarily, Logan would have found a dry spot and sprawled comfortably in the warmth, enjoying the novelty of spring in November and admiring the curious ice patterns the steam had made on the pines and spruces. Today he had other business. He needed to finish a job he had previously bungled. The crooked shadow of Elk Peak was already lengthening. He paused only long enough to let Nibs blow, then he said, "I'll strike up yonder."

John Suttle nodded. "Billy and me'll try down this direction."

As the sun dropped, so did the temperature. Tying his bandana over his ears and jamming his hat on top, Logan prodded a reluctant Nibs through a jumble of boulders and logs. If Old Mose was looking for a den, he could not pick a better place. Nibs wheezed to a ridge top and minced down the other side, an unhappy Ponto following.

Once Logan thought he had found Mose. Peering under a cliff in a cave, he saw something big and furry. His heart gave a leap and he was about to shout the grizzly awake when a second look showed him that the furry bulk was not Mose but a mother black bear with her head on her paws, asleep, and two cubs snuggled against her. There she was, all

comfortable for winter, sheltered from wind and storm. She and her cubs would sleep till some warm April day set the snow to dripping and made them rouse and stretch.

Logan headed toward Elk Park. Suddenly, Nibs stiffened. Yonder was a monstrous dark shape. Nibs would have bolted if his legs had not been sucked down in snow. No mistake this time — the huge head, the great shoulders — Old Mose!

Logan left the saddle and lit running. He heard the great bear “Boo-boo!” and saw him rear back from the carcass of an elk he had been eating. For a minute Logan thought Mose was coming for him. Instead, the grizzly turned and lumbered toward Mad Creek.

Pell-mell Logan followed down the ridge, through a canyon. Dropping over rocks and brush, he could hear the bear not twenty feet ahead of him in the timber. When he might have flung a shot, he had to stop to knock the snow out of his gun. Ponto tangled in his legs or rode on his shoulders. . . .

A mile and a half they tore. Instead of climbing an open hillside, the smart old grizzly turned up the creek. In spite of his bulk, he could travel fast. Logan risked a shot. The distance was too great. When he came up to the spot where the bear had been, a trace of blood on the snow told him his bullet had barely grazed the grizzly's right hind foot. He could hear Mose breaking brush away off on the next hill.

Even in the gathering dusk Logan might have followed if he had not remembered Nibs. If Nibs stood in the snow any longer, he would chill to death. Slowly, boy and dog backtracked, found Nibs, and headed for the Hot Springs.

“Hey, where you been?” greeted Billy. “We got an elk right away. We thought you'd hear us shooting.”

Logan pulled the saddle off, dropped to the warm rocks, and slept as if on a featherbed. . . .

Some time later he awoke and stood up to take the kink out of his bones, but the bitter cold hit him and he scrooged down quickly and helped himself to a chunk of elk ribs from the spit by the fire.

“I bet it's twenty below zero,” he said.

“But we're warm enough here,” said John Suttle.

“Too hot,” complained Billy, who had gone to sleep with his feet almost in the fire. He jumped up, ran to a snow bank, and stuck his boots in it. Then he really did yell and dance, for instead of cooling his feet, the snow drove the heat and steam in. When Logan and John Suttle finally tugged his boots off, all the skin came with them.

Billy was in bad shape. At daylight Logan and John Suttle boosted him on his horse, packed the elk meat on Nibs and on John Suttle's horse, and started for home. Logan had no more chance to hunt. Anyhow, he had scared Old Mose. Maybe he and Mose were even now.

Just then the sun burst over the hill and seemed to set the frosted pines and spruces afire. After the other two had started on, Logan stood admiring the spectacle while the breath froze on his eyelashes. Steam from the spring had draped long festoons of crystals like glorified popcorn strings upon Christmas trees.

Let South Park have its Old Mose! Plenty of places had grizzly bear. But only this little spot in Routt County had diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires hanging from trees. And yellow monkey flowers blooming among the rocks *in the winter!*

So far as Logan was concerned, Routt County had South Park and the whole world beat!



Chapter V

TAWNY RAIDER

The tracks in the snow came clear to the point of the hill above the Crawford barn. Mountain lion tracks! No mistaking their size and the broad base of them. No wonder the dogs had gone crazy in the night. They usually slept in the barn or in the courtway of the cabin home.

Probably this was the same lion that, the week before, had killed a three-year-old gelding several miles up the river. In plain daylight it had bounded into the feedlot and slashed the gelding's neck. The rancher had flung a shot after it, but it had melted away in the brush toward Agate Creek. He had set a trap, but caught only a snag of fur.

Out on the plains it was spring, but Routt County was still locked in one of the severest winters it had ever known. Snow was so deep that even long-legged elk found browsing difficult. Carnivores depending on rabbits for food were lean and hungry. Though rabbits could be found behind every bush in ordinary years, for some reason they were scarce this year. Made bold by starvation, predators moved in on domestic stock. Coyotes snatched chickens right under the noses of ranch wives. A bobcat caught Jones' house cat on the back step of their cabin in Twenty-Mile Park.

Mountain lions, largest of the cat family in America, weighing about 175 pounds and measuring seven or eight feet in length, generally let the settlers alone. They liked to hunt at night and keep to cover in the daytime. Their favorite victims were deer. With eighteen razor-sharp claws — five on each front foot and four on each hind foot — and rapier fangs, they could quickly dispatch the biggest buck. Fortunately, mountain lions did not hunt in packs. After mating, the adults went their separate ways, roaming widely. This lion in Yampa Valley appeared to a lone hunter. Since the deer had all migrated to lower country, it had to stalk whatever it could find — a horse, or a dog. In times of famine, a desperate lion had been known to tackle even a man.

Logan and John Crawford and Bill Williams, who had recently come to live in Steamboat, held a council of war. Bill said, "I reckon it's an old she-lion with kittens to feed. She won't stop with one killing. Not a place in the valley will be safe from her."

Next morning the three boys started out to hunt the marauder. They carried sixshooters since all were good shots, and it was hard to manage a rifle while traveling through brush on snowshoes. Bill had two dogs, and the Crawfords had two — one a yellow dog named Monty, too old and fat to run a lion. But as soon as Logan took his gun off the rack, Monty's tail began to wave, and Logan did not have the heart to make him stay at home.

On their narrow slats of snowshoes the hunters began the search near Agate Creek. They had blackened around their eyes with charcoal and

wore their hats pulled low to keep from getting snow blind. This was good lion country with scattered timber, ledges of rock, and brushy hollows. They figured the big cat probably had her den somewhere here. John and Bill went one way, and Logan another to try to pick up fresh sign. All the dogs went with John and Bill except Monty.

"Never mind," Logan told the old dog. "You and me'll stick together."

As the day wore on, the sun blazing out of a bright blue sky was hot. Sweat dripped off Monty's tongue. Logan was about to cross over to a new ridge when he came upon a scraggly pine with a fresh white slit in the trunk.



Monty

"Oh, oh!" he exclaimed. "Look what we found!"

Bobcats made claw marks on trees, but not the size of these. They had surely been scratched by the old she-lion herself. A few quills and a little blood on the snow told the story. The big cat had climbed up, knocked a porcupine out of the tree, and then slid down so fast to retrieve her prize that she had ripped the trunk from top to bottom. Any creature had to be starved to tackle a porcupine. Logan could not help feeling a

twinge of sympathy till he thought of the gelding with its neck slashed open.

"Sic 'em Monty!" he said.

Monty did not have to be told. He took off like a young dog. In a couple of hundred yards he sniffed around the porcupine that had been dropped. The distance between the lion tracks increased.

"Right here is where she got wind of us," said Logan.

The way to tree a lion was to push her hard and not let her rest. Monty could not run fast enough to make the cat tree. Several times Logan threw a shot after her. His bullets only clipped some twigs. Monty sat down and licked snow apologetically.

"Never mind. We'll get her!"

After an hour or more, Logan was not so sure. He had hoped John and Bill would hear him shooting and come with the other dogs to help. Something caused him to look over his shoulder. There, not a hundred yards away, was the lion — trailing *him*! She had learned that Monty could not run very well and was playing a game of her own. Logan whipped up his gun, but she was gone.

He took after her, daring her, bucking his snowshoes through the tangles the old cat chose. He might have got her, too, if his snowshoe pole had not jammed between two trees and snapped. He had to stop to cut a new one from a green jack pine and lost her.

Waiting for her to make the next move, he and Monty both had a chance to rest a little and cool off in the shade of a ledge. When they had waited a considerable while, Logan decided the big cat had given up and had circled back to wherever she had her kittens. Squatting on his snowshoes, he rubbed the dog's matted ears. "We'd have got her if she'd been a common lion," he muttered. "Maybe we'd just better be glad she didn't get us!"

He and Monty started the weary journey back to Agate Creek where Bill and John had agreed to meet them. By now the sun was low enough to pencil shadows on the opposite hill. One of the shadows moved! That and Monty's yelp were all the warning Logan had. He never did see the lion crouched above him on the ledge, but as he swerved sharply he felt the wind from her body.

Old Monty sprang roaring at her. She sailed out over the scrub oak, ran a hundred yards to the gulch and went up a cottonwood.

Treed, at last! She sat in the crotch of a limb, spitting and snarling and lashing her tail. From a distance of seventy-five yards Logan fired and must have hit her for with a yowl she sprang from the tree.

Monty did his best to hold her with his dull teeth. She sank her fangs in his throat and shook him like a mouse. Logan's gun snapped on empty. He let out a yell, and crashing into the gulch, whammed the lion with his snowshoe pole. Monty was just squeaking. Logan had to hit that lion three times before she let the dog loose. Then both lion and dog were lying there gasping, till Logan got a cartridge in the sixshooter and put an end to the lion. . . .

Monty began to wheeze again. By and by he was able to prop himself up and sniff the big cat. There was no mistaking his proud growl.

Logan let him claim his victory. He was no longer a fat, old, no-account dog. Stretched at his feet was the Tawny Raider.

John and Bill had finally heard the shots, and they came and helped to skin the lion. The next day the boys were able to find the old cat's four spotted kittens.

What happened to those kittens is another story!



Chapter VI

BEARBACK

What to do with the four lion kittens! They were pretty big — one female and three males. All were fighters. At present they were housed in a covered pen of stout planks not far from the Crawford cabin at the west end of town. Whenever the breeze picked up their scent, every horse, cow, and dog in Steamboat was completely demoralized.

Logan wrote to an eastern man he had guided on a hunting trip to see if he might know of a zoo that would take the kittens. Meanwhile, John, Logan, and Bill had to scour the country for something to feed their ravenous boarders. What started as a routine hunt this morning in late March turned into something much more exciting.

The boys climbed the mountain south of town, walking on the crust and carrying their snowshoes. In an hour or so the crust would be melted and they would have to wear those snowshoes. By afternoon they might have to buck fresh snow from a squall that was gathering over the range. They took turns dragging a trail sled, which they left at the edge of some timber where they could load it and pick it up on the way back.

Today, instead of a six shooter, Logan had brought the 38/55 Winchester. He and Bill and old Monty hunted through the lodgepole pines while John struck off toward the head of Cow Creek. Three dogs went with him. After hunting several hours, Bill and Logan returned to the sled with a few rabbits and porcupines. They were tired and hungry and ready to quit. No sign of John. They shot their guns a few times as a signal. No answering shot. Logan climbed to the top of the ridge. By listening intently he thought he could hear dogs barking.

He and Bill left the sled once more and went to see if John had something treed. They found John and his dogs camped at the foot of a big “quaker.” In the branches above sat a bear, evidently just out of hibernation.

Upon the arrival of reinforcements, John's dogs began a fresh concert, joined by Monty. The bear wrinkled his nose and peered down at his tormentors, daring them to start something.

“He's such a nice round fluffy fellow,” said John. “Do you think we can catch him alive?”

“Oh, easy,” said Bill. “He's nothing but a cub.”

Logan squinted at the brown bunch above him. “Looks too big for a cub. I think he's an old hog bear.”

In mountain language a hog bear was a runt — a grown bear but small of body with disproportionately long nose that resembled a hog's snout.

The ropes were all at the sled except a short length Bill had in his pocket. The boys figured that would be enough to tie up Mr. Bear if they also used the leather throngs from their overshoes.

Bill climbed the tree to prod the bear out with a snowshoe pole. Instead of jumping, bruin showed his teeth and started down after Bill, who slid back a notch.

“Stay with him, Bill!” Logan yelled. “He’s nothing but a cub!”

Bill made a more vigorous try. This time the bear climbed higher, Bill right on his tail. The thin, brittle top of the aspen began to crack. Still the bear would not jump.

Logan moved a short distance up the slope. “You just sit tight,” he ordered Bill, and aimed his gun.

Bang! A chunk of splinters flew out above Bill’s head. The black powder sounded like a cannon. In three shots Logan had cut the trunk nearly in two. Bill poked at the bear, and the tree broke.

John shouted, “Here he comes!”

Bill fell out of the tree in a shower of twigs. The bear still had his arms around the stub of trunk when he lit. Dropping the gun, Logan jumped on him and grabbed his ears while John and Bill tried to hogtie him. The dogs were going crazy. As soon as the bear got his arms unwound, he clawed the skin off Logan’s hands, then rose up with Logan and the dogs hanging to him and began to walk off.

“Stay with him! He’s only a cub!” yelled Bill.

By then all of them knew he was no cub. His teeth were yellow, his tusks worn. And he was mad! It took four dogs and three boys to stretch him out. He kept things lively by ripping off one of John’s shoes and punching Bill in the stomach.

Finally, the boys managed to tie all four of his feet together. They took the collar off the biggest dog, buckled it around the bear’s neck, gave him a stick to bite on, and tied each end of the stick to the collar. Though Mr. Bear did a lot of grumbling, he could not bite the stick in two, nor could he bite his captors. They had him cinched up good — they thought.

They found a stout pine pole and threaded it through the rope. Bill took the front end and Logan the hind end, and with the heavy bear suspended upside down between them, they started over the hill to the trail sled. John carried the guns.

The storm that had been lurking along the range all day was moving down. Wet, thick snow blotted out town, which was only a mile below, just across the river. The fresh layer of white stuff on top of old mush made snowshoes stick. The hunters were going down a slope at a pretty good clip when Hog Bear worked one arm loose and hooked it around a tree.

The procession piled up, bear on top. John was no help untangling the mess. He just stood laughing. Maybe the noises Hog Bear made were chuckles, too.

At last the boys reached the trail sled and tied their squirming prize on top of the gunnysack of lion food. Logan took first turn at dragging the sled, which was now so top heavy it was almost impossible to manage. It whanged into trees and hung up on brush snags. In steep places John and Bill had to hitch ropes to it and heave back as hard as they could to keep it from running over Logan. Boys and dogs were soon



Yampa Valley in Winter
View from Emerald Mountain,
looking north

played out. Hog Bear was the only one going strong. He had nothing else to do except quarrel.

Logan lost patience. Abandoning snowshoes, he flung himself “bellybuster” on top of the bear, grabbed hold of what sled he could reach, and kicked off.

“Get out of the way!” he ordered.

For maybe a hundred yards he made a clean run before skidding into a gulch. John and Bill helped right the sled and pull it out of the gulch, and Logan climbed aboard again. Hog Bear was complaining mightily.

The only way Logan could guide the runners was to drag a foot on one side or the other. A scrub oak claimed his hat, almost taking his ears, too. In spite of the soft snow, the sled gathered speed. . . . Through a white blur Logan saw the cottonwoods along the river heaving toward him.

The river. The last place he wanted to land was on the rocks in the river. The Yampa was still at winter low, partly crusted with ice and full of big boulders. He dragged both feet as hard as he could. . . . The next he knew he was skating on his nose with the sled and bear turning cartwheels over him.

When he had dug the snow out of his face, and his head had quit spinning, he was able to look around. Sled yonder, bottom side up in a willow patch. Hog Bear still on it still complaining. Logan could not blame him.

John and Bill came whipping down the hill in a bluster of snow, bringing Logan's snowshoes and hat. A long way behind them floundered the dogs.

"Well, you made it!" There was relief in John's voice.

"Man, oh man!" was all Bill could say.

Three or four months later the boys sold that bear for twenty-five dollars to a Texan by the name of Kimsey, who was traveling through the country with what he called a Wild West show. Mr. Kimsey had a few animals in cages — a moth-eaten mountain lion, a bobcat, and a couple of snowshoe rabbits. An old man played the fiddle. Admission was a quarter.

Steamboat's population was so small it could not provide much of a crowd though the boys all went. They thought Hog Bear was the best thing in the show unless it was the fiddler.

The old man sure could play as long as he was sober, but after he had had a few drinks out of his bottle, he wanted to fight everybody. To keep him from getting into trouble, Mr. Kimsey shut him in a big extra cage.

As the show started on up the valley, the boys saw the old fiddler peering out of his cage, and Hog Bear looking out of his, and it was hard to tell which one was cussing the loudest!



Chapter VII

A LOAD OF LIONS

A letter finally came from Logan's friend in the East. Enclosed was a purchase order from the superintendent of the zoo in Rochester, New York for four lion kittens at \$50 apiece — total two hundred dollars, a glittering sum even when split three ways.

The lions were to be delivered to the nearest railroad, which at that time was the Denver & Rio Grande on Eagle River. The station was Wolcott, seventy-five miles from Steamboat. Much of the road leading to Wolcott was narrow, steep, and rocky in summer, and narrow, steep, and icy in winter. Wind and snow could drift it solid in half an hour, or a surprise thaw could make it bottomless. Spring in the mountains was the most difficult season. Routt County, still buried under many feet of snow, alternately froze and thawed. The stage, scheduled to run three times a week, was always late — sometimes a couple of weeks late. It was probably just as well that Billy Eickoff, the stage driver, did not know what lay ahead of him when he accepted the kittens as freight.

Those kittens had never become the least bit tame. Now their baby spots were fading. The worst scrapper of the lot was the littlest one — the female. Her face could look wide eyed and innocent one moment and screw into an ugly snarl the next. When anyone threw a chunk of meat into the pen, she was first to pounce on it. She could whip all three of her brothers.

The boys built a long cage with slats across one end that would just fit inside the back of the mail sled. When Billy Eickoff drove up to the cabin early one morning, sleigh bells jingling, the kittens were in the cage ready to go. He swung the team of grays up wind, keeping a tight rein on them. Frost rimed the harness and clung to the horses' whiskers.

"Better git them lions loaded quick," he ordered.

As the boys grabbed the box to heave it on, Lion Puss let out a yowl.

"Whoa! Whoa-oa-oa. . . ! Buck! Star!" shouted Billy.

He took the grays around the wood pile twice before his brawny arms fought them to a stop. This time the boys managed to load and rope down the cage. Logan, who was going along to help, vaulted to the seat. Ma ran out with a comforter to keep off the wind.

"Take care!" Pa warned.

But by then the stage was a quarter of a mile away. The wildly jingling sleigh bells called the inhabitants of Steamboat to their doors. No one had ever seen lazy Buck and Star start so willingly on a cold morning. Like bullets they shot through town, the sled runners squealing on the hard-packed snow.

"Hang on!" Billy yelled to Logan, throwing all his weight on the near rein.

The sled jerked toward the river, hitting the bridge on one runner.

The road out of town led over the bluffs above the Yampa, where teams were accustomed to travel at a steady, plodding pace. Not Buck and Star. Not today. They stretched out in earnest. Logan never would have believed they had it in them. It was all he could do to keep his seat and hang on to the flying comforter.

Beyond the bluffs the road dropped back into the valley, crossing what in summer was meadow land and sagebrush — in winter, a white expanse marked here and there with willow stakes so freighters would know where the road was. Horses in this country learned to feel the packed trail beneath their hoofs. It was said they could walk a clothesline.

For short intervals when the wind changed, Buck and Star walked and wheezed like the old team they were, but most of the time they plunged like crazy colts, trying to outrun the lion smell.

A dog ran barking from a cabin. A rancher with a feed pail on his arm stared after the flying sled.

“Boy, we’re traveling!” whooped Logan as the air splintered past.

“If you think this is travelin’,” hollered Billy, “wait till you see what the next team can do!”

Teams were regularly changed twelve miles from Steamboat just the other side of Yellow Jacket Pass. This was scrub oak country with a scattering of sarviceberry, chokecherry, and aspen. The sun was not very high when Billy pulled the grays into the station. He was careful to stop up-wind.

The station hand was not expecting the stage that early. He came running out, coat flapping. “Hey—!”

“Got a load to put on the train,” said Billy.

The fellow peered into the sled. Lion Puss sprang against the slats. He stumbled back. “Jumpin’ Jupiter!”

“Yeah,” said Billy. “Better git the fresh team hitched on quick before the wind changes.”

“I won’t be able to git Floss and Snorter in a mile of this sled.”

“Fetch ‘em out!”

Logan had already unhooked the heaving grays. He led them, still feebly plunging, into the barn and helped the station keeper “wrestle” Floss and Snorter from their stalls.

“Look out!” cautioned the man. “These fool broncs ain’t more’n half broke.”

Even though the wind held, the man and Logan and Billy had their hands full to get the waltzing mustangs backed in place and the tugs fastened. Just in time, too. A caterwaul from the rear of the sled froze the new team momentarily. The tips of their ears quivered.

The station keeper leaped away. “Look out!”

Billy on the seat wrapped the reins around his wrists. The broncs gathered their muscles and aimed for the moon.

“Grab aholt, Log!” shouted Billy.

For a second it was doubtful whether Logan would accompany the expedition. He made a flying jump and barely managed to pull himself in as the sled left the earth and hung a moment in midair.

Only by purest chance did Floss and Snorter land in the road. They did not stay in it. They nicked it here and there and in some places shot squarely across it and hit it at the next curve. Ordinarily, a team off the beaten track in winter would get stuck hopelessly. Today Puss's yowls and the pungent lion scent plunged the bays over everything. Snowdrifts or trees made no difference. Billy could not stop them. All he could do was swerve them approximately in the right direction. Like a kite at the end of a string the sled whipped along.

The shriek of sleigh bells woke the quiet countryside, used to crawling teams and muffled drivers half asleep, drugged by the cold. Mingled with the sleigh bells was an eerie yowling. The few homesteaders along the route were not sure they were hearing or seeing aright. Sound of the stage bells, distinctive from any others, brought folks running out with letters to mail, and Logan glimpsed astonishment on their faces when the stage did not stop. He guessed Billy usually got a cup of coffee here and there while he let his team rest. Today Billy could no more stop the team than he could a couple of thunder bolts. At first, he drove, jaw jutted forward, muscles bulging under his windbreaker. Gradually, his great frame settled back on the seat.

"Run, you buggers!" he roared. "Bust a ham string if you want. Nobody cares!"

The sled hit a frozen chunk, careened sharply across the road, and bounced back on the heels of the frantic team.

Billy addressed them: "Go on! Run! I got nuthin' else to do but set up here!"

The harness creaked and groaned. The sled box threatened to part from the runners. A mile ahead of Yampa station Billy gave Logan one rein, and they both braced and pulled for all they were worth.

"We shore got to git us some dinner," said Billy.

The log station loomed ahead. With Herculean efforts they swerved the team toward it. For a second Logan thought Floss and Snorter would jump right over the barn. Desperately, he and Billy hauled on the reins, and the team plunged into a snow bank — and stopped. By a miracle the sled was upright and in one piece.

An hour later, with a good hot dinner under their belts and with a new team, Billy and Logan continued their journey. Sometimes a stage driver had to ply his whip to persuade teams to start. This team required no urging. It left Yampa at top speed. Billy's raw face cracked into a grin.

Egeria Park, with the Flat Tops squatted in the distance, was usually a monotonous windy stretch. Today it was windy, but it was not monotonous. The lions inspired the horses to amazing achievement.

"Run, you buggers!" shouted Billy.

Two hours ahead of schedule, they reached Toponas Station at the upper end of the park and by strenuous efforts got the horses headed into the wind and halted. The old team, tongues hanging out, were led away, and the fresh team, by name Sorghum and Satan, backed into their places, sulky as usual, heads stubborn, ears flat. But when the tugs were fastened and the sled slewed around down wind, they were suddenly mighty willing. Like grasshoppers out of a can they left Toponas.

"Here we go again!" chuckled Logan.

The hills splayed out in the shape of fingers, and the road, hard packed and slick as grease, went over every one. Up and down, up and down. When Billy's arms tired, Logan took one rein and he the other, and they sawed and sawed. As they topped Red Dirt Divide, they saw, toiling up the hill, four horses hitched to a heavy load.

"Look out!" cried Logan.

Though the freighter saw them coming, he was helpless to do anything. He made ready to jump as the runaways bore down on him. Logan set his muscles for the crash, but by a hair's breadth the sled skinned past. Logan and Billy had not even time to glance back. The fellow's swearing trailed into the wind.

Usually, it was a long, hard pull across these cedared hills. In summer, sweating teams would have to rest often. In winter they inched up the icy slopes and eased gingerly down them. Sorghum and Satan took those hills on a high run, and every time Lion Puss grumbled, they let out another link. The sled teetered on one runner, then the other.

It was a wonder that the stage ever reached McCoy Station on Rock Creek. Billy and Logan were glad to see the sprawling cabins in the cedars and the pile of deer horns showing through the snow that had banked around them. The barnyard was already cluttered with the tarpaulined sleds of a large freight outfit stopped for the night on their way from Wolcott to Steamboat Springs. McCoy's was noted for its hospitality and good table.

The team, though still wild eyed, had no wind left. They were led away to their stalls, and Billy and Logan put the lion box in a harness room on one side of the barn. Logan tried to beat some feeling back into his numb arms. For a while he could hardly stand up, and the wind still roared in his ears.

Around the supper table that night gathered the frost-bitten brotherhood of the road. Their eyes, swollen and red with the cold, were lighted with the prospect of cheer and a comfortable night's sleep. They expected to tell a few good yarns and listen to others before they slept. Billy knew all the freighters, and Logan some of them.

After supper Billy lighted his pipe. "You boys think you know sledging," he said. "Well, I guess you never hauled a load of lions." He regaled them with details of the day's trip. Rumbling laughter filled the room.

When he and Logan had told all they could think of, Logan went over to McCoy's cabinet organ. Straddling the stool, he located two chords that sounded pretty good, and vigorously playing them, sang THE PIRATE'S SERENADE:

*"My boat's by the tower,
My barque's on the bay,
And both must be gone
E'er the dawning of day. . .
Oh wake, lady, wake,
I am waiting for thee,*

*This night or never
My bride thou shalt be . . .
"Forgive my rough mood,
Unaccustomed to sue,
I woo not perhaps
As your land lovers woo.
My voice has been trained
To the notes of the gun
That startles the deep
When the combat's begun,
And heavy and hard
Is the grasp of my hand
Whose glove has been ever
The guard of our band. . .

"Oh, islands there are
On the face of the deep
Where the winds never blow
And the skies never weep. . . ."*

That must have sounded good to those men who had fought snowy roads all day. It is doubtful if any of them had ever seen an ocean or knew what a barque was. But a dazzle of boats and a far-off "deep" and a snatch of song would go with them tomorrow on the long, tedious pull across the mountains. They made Logan sing on. He finished THE PIRATE'S SERENADE and obliged with half a dozen other songs.

Then he and Billy tramped to the barn to fork hay to Sorghum and Satan. Logan tossed some frozen rabbits to the lions and set a pan of water in their box. He felt sorry for the kittens cramped in that box, but at least they were sheltered from the cold. In the lantern light the cats' eyes glowed like coals.

The freighters turned their horses out to water. Ordinarily, the weary critters plodded back to their stalls of their own accord, and their drivers sought warm beds and a good night's rest.

Suddenly, that comfortable pattern was changed. As the horses passed the harness shed, they caught scent of the lions. Away they went! Since they could not jump the corral fence, they tore around and around the barn, doubling speed every time they neared the shed. The freighters swore and shouted. Not till near midnight did the angry men, with Logan and Billy helping, beat and drag the big club footed brutes back into the barn.

It seemed to Logan he had hardly got in bed till Billy was shaking him in the bitter cold dawn.

"I reckon," said Billy, "we'd better hit the road while them freighters is still asleep."

He and Logan gulped breakfast, hitched up (if their desperate actions could be called that), and loaded the kittens. Pandemonium was threatening to break loose again any moment.

"Git goin'," begged the stable man.

Sorghum and Satan, wearing their harness at a cockeyed angle, took off at a dead run. It was fourteen miles to Wolcott. Logan had no more than got the comforter anchored when State Bridge loomed ahead. Day was just breaking. The horses hit the bridge at a speed to make the iron frame work clank and shiver. They clawed their way up the steep hill on the other side, the sled runners squealing on the edge of nowhere, then banging into the bank.

“Yowrrr!” wailed the lions.

Over a crooked road famous for its treachery, catapulted the team.

“Run, you buggers!” bellowed Billy.

How sled, harness, and horses ever hung together and reached the divide between Grand and Eagle rivers was a mystery. By then, even Sorghum and Satan were willing to rest. Billy stopped them near a barn while he carried buckets of water from a spring. Logan held the reins.

Out of the barn marched an immense yellow house cat. As important as a king, he stalked toward the sled. Since the packed road was below the level of the snow, he could look directly into the cage. As he did so, Lion Puss jumped against the slats and spit at him. The monster's tail grew bigger than his body. Every hair stood on end. The next minute tail and all disappeared around the corner of the barn. Logan and Billy laughed.

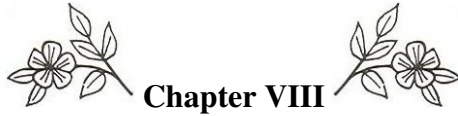
In a final reckless dash, the stage made it to Wolcott, and when the train from the west pulled in, the kittens were loaded on it. Billy was glad to tell them goodbye, but Logan boarded the train and went as far as he could with them.

Word about the lions had been telegraphed ahead, and at every station people crowded to see them. Logan got off at Salida to look at them for the last time. The expressman threw open the doors of the baggage car so that about two hundred town folks could view the kittens.

Among them was a strapping young fellow wearing a derby hat (dubbed “soupy hat” in Routt County). In a voice slurred with whiskey he loudly proclaimed how much he knew about mountain lions. Hopping up into the car, he put his red face against the cage. Lion Puss made a swipe with her paw. Though she could not reach through the slats far enough to do much damage, the drunk fell onto the station platform and rolled like a big pumpkin. The crowd roared with laughter.

Logan privately cheered Lion Puss. He got into his sleeper and rode to Denver to visit his cousins before returning to Steamboat Springs. Lion Puss and her brothers traveled on east.

The kittens were destined for a far state called New York, but their fame lingered in northwestern Colorado. They had helped to write history. The Steamboat-Wolcott stage had never before been one to two hours *early* at every station!



BALLOTS TO BROWN'S HOLE

Rocky Mountain summers were short. Autumns were shorter still. Settlers in the upper Yampa Valley never had enough time to get ready for winter. This year, in addition to regular chores, they had election to worry about. All across America people were prepared to cast ballots for national and local leaders. But Routt County was in deep trouble. It had no ballots — yet.

On this gloomy November afternoon just two days before election, a group of concerned citizens hugged the stove in the print shop, among them Pa Crawford. James Hoyle, who, in 1885, had opened the print shop and started a newspaper in Steamboat Springs, had contracted to print the ballots. It was not his fault that the freighter hauling paper had not got here. It was undoubtedly the fault of nasty weather on the high range. Mail nor nothing had made it to Steamboat for a week. The storm was now threatening Yampa Valley.

Routt County did not give up easily. Saddled horses stood at the hitchrack, and three of the best riders waited. Logan Crawford was one of them. Stationed by the print shop window, he rubbed the steam off with his sleeve and watched the road. If the freighter should come within the next hour or so, maybe the ballots could still be printed and delivered.

The fire in the stove had almost died, along with the hope of the group, when, through the murk, Logan discerned the crawling freight wagon.

Feverishly, James Hoyle went to work. The citizens took heart. Given half a chance, the three riders would deliver the ballots to perhaps a dozen precincts scattered over 8250 square miles. That there were only a handful of voters out there in the sagebrush made no difference. Routt County was part of America!

The ballots could surely be carried to the nearer precincts — Egeria, Rock Creek, Hahn's Peak, Upper Snake River, Hayden, and Fortification. But Brown's Hole (the precinct was called Lodore) was another matter. Approximately a hundred and sixty-five miles away in the extreme northwest corner of Colorado, it lay in a vast country of sand washes, cedars, and canyons that few people on upper Bear River had ever seen. Pa Crawford was one who had. He had drilled his son well on the landmarks. Nobody in the print shop thought the ballots could be taken to Brown's Hole by day after tomorrow. Nobody except Logan.

A dozen times he went out to examine the cinches on Croppy, his gray riding horse, and the pack saddle on little bay Mattie. Neither horse was much to look at. The tips of Croppy's ears had been frozen off the day he had been foaled in a spring blizzard. He had a paunchy "bread basket" and big round hoofs so tough they hardly ever had to be shod. He

lacked trim lines, but how he could travel! Right from the start, he had belonged to Logan. Most horses walked, trotted, or galloped. Croppy did all these things with variations. He would change from right foot forward to left foot forward, or he would double pace or single pace, or invent something new — all restful for a rider. He seemed to take an interest in whatever Logan was doing.

As for Mattie, she could not be coaxed or beaten into doing anything she did not want to do. She would act mulish and lie down, even in the middle of a creek. One talent redeemed her: she would follow another horse without a lead rope. Logan was betting on Croppy and Mattie.

The thump of the press stopped. James Hoyle croaked, “Well, they’re done—”

A shout drowned his hopelessness. Before the ink was dry the ballots were packed, and the riders took off — one up the valley; one to Hahn’s Peak; and Logan, down the valley.

Catching the excitement, Croppy left Steamboat in a burst of speed, but soon slowed to a pace he could hold for hours. At the foot of the first bluffs he crossed Bear River, Mattie following like a charge of artillery. Before reaching Hayden, the horses would have forded Bear River twelve times and Elk River once. When the water was shallow, it was easier to cross and go down a bar than to climb hills or skirt bluffs.

As he rode, Logan had plenty of time to consider his destination. In frontier language, a “hole” was a sheltered valley surrounded by mountains. Long known as a haven for wild game and a wintering ground for Indians, Brown’s Hole had lately become a hideout for bad men and rustlers. Herds of cattle driven from Texas to graze on the open ranges of Colorado and Wyoming offered unlimited opportunities. It was said the few honest ranchers in the area found it advisable to mind their own business. Logan was to deliver the ballots to a rancher named Herbert Bassett.

Sunset was quickly gone. Since there was no moon, Logan could see the trail only dimly, but Croppy never slowed, and Mattie scrambled behind. At eight o’clock they reached Jim Whetstone’s ranch near Hayden, left the first ballots, and Logan ate supper. He thought he would rest the horses just a few minutes. . . .

Jim Whetstone shook him awake. “I sure would like to let you rest, kid, but you’ve got a long way to go.”

Logan was ashamed to have gone so sound asleep. Two hours lost! Brown’s Hole still a hundred and forty miles away, and election day after tomorrow!

The rancher had the saddle on Croppy and the pack on Mattie. He said, “Good luck, kid.”

As Croppy struck out down the river, Logan turned up his collar against the sharp cold. Behind him lay black storm, but ahead were stars in a broadening sky. Coyotes made the echoes ring. Now and then their jibberish silenced, to resume when Croppy and Mattie had passed. Things were moving in the brush. Deer, Logan reckoned, pushing for lower country ahead of the storm.

At daylight he reached Fortification Creek and left another bunch of

ballots. He was only forty-five miles from home. He fed the horses at Mr. Rose's, ate breakfast, and tumbled into a bed for an hour while Croppy and Mattie dozed on their feet. Then he propped his eyes open and dragged into the saddle.

Mr. Rose said, "Better take a couple of fresh horses and leave yours here."

Logan shook his head. He could not trust this job to any other horses.

He had never been farther west than Fortification Creek. Used to the rugged mountains around Steamboat, he found this country monotonous. Though he was traveling as fast as Croppy could take him, he seemed to get nowhere in the sea of sagebrush. And election was tomorrow!

Straining his eyes to locate landmarks Pa had described to him, Logan was relieved in fifteen or twenty miles to reach Wallihan's cabin on Lay Creek. From there, heading north through rolling country, he passed Sugar Loaf, a brushy cone several hundred feet high. The air was considerably warmer down here. Sagebrush. . . and more sagebrush. . . and rabbit brush. . . and gullies. . . and cedar pocked hills. . . . And the sun dipping lower.

Croppy, his blunt ears cupped to the strange trail, stumbled sometimes but kept going. Any other horse would have quit long ago. Mattie would have lain down, ballots and all, but she would not be left in this lonesome place.

Cross Mountain was a landmark no one could miss because it was set squarely across the river, which had made a canyon through it. The trail went around the southwest end of the mountain a couple of miles to Lily Park. Here was John W. Lowell's cow outfit. At four o'clock of the brief November day Logan was mighty glad to ride up to a corral, slide stiffly from the saddle, and deliver his third sack of ballots. Mattie was weaving on her feet, and Croppy was so tired his muscles jerked. Logan wanted nothing so much as to lie down anywhere and sleep.

Instead, he ate what the cook set out for him, drank some scalding black coffee, and threw his saddle on a long legged bay of John Lowell's. He had no choice. His own horses had gone the limit of their strength. Tying the last sack of ballots back of the saddle, Logan started on the final lap of his trip. Forty-five miles to Bassett's.

An hour before sunset he crossed Bear River, then followed Little Snake River north along the west side of Cross Mountain. He missed Mattie's faithful clatter, missed Croppy's easy gait. Most of all, he missed the company of the two horses he knew so well. John Lowell's horse had only one gait — a heavy trot.

Soon after leaving Lily Park Logan was startled by a shot. At first, he thought someone was shooting at him; then a big doe deer leaped out of the cedars and fell dead about thirty feet from him. He guessed he had come upon a bunch of Indians off their reservation, killing the deer which had newly arrived from upper country. Three or four more deer jumped out of the cedars, but the Indians held their fire till he got by. His horse cut up some.

As he forded Little Snake River to angle north, the sun dropped from sight. In the moment of twilight he took a good look around. Not a

familiar landmark anywhere. He hoped the horse knew the country.

There were stars but no moon. The bay, not so sure footed as Croppy, floundered along the trail, sometimes on it, sometimes not. Logan picked out a star and tried to keep that star in front of him. About midnight he saw a smoldering camp fire and two or three tepees. Dogs ran yapping at him. When a big Indian appeared, Logan asked him if that was the trail to Brown's Hole. The Indian said it was.

On and on stumbled the horse. Then, in spite of the bone jarring motion, Logan went sound asleep in the saddle. . . .

He awoke with a start. Dawn was cracking, and the horse had brought him to a cluster of cabins which must be the Bassett place. Two nights and a day it had taken him to get here. Dogs were bow-wow-ing his arrival. In the gray light he could see men sneaking out of the bunkhouse and hightailing for the rocks at the back. He reckoned they thought he was the sheriff after some of them. A man that Logan took to be Herbert Bassett came out of the main cabin, pulling his trousers on.

When the man learned who Logan was, he shouted to the bunkhouse gang, and they came drifting back. Mr. Bassett, wearing a long graying beard, seemed mightily pleased to get those ballots. He pumped Logan's hand and assured him that he himself would deliver them seven miles farther to the school house on Beaver Creek where voting would take place. Somebody took care of John Lowell's horse, and Logan fell into a bed and slept.

He awoke near supper time and had his first good look around. Brown's Hole! Here he was! Ballots delivered and election almost finished. He felt like shouting loud enough for the doubters at Steamboat to hear him — those who had said he could not make it. His responsibility was over. Now it was up to each precinct to return the marked ballots to Hahn's Peak, the county seat, within ten days.

The rambling log ranch house was backed against a hill of cedars and shelving rocks. It fronted on an expanse of bottom land — yonder a field and a straggle of cottonwoods — and in the distance, great red cliffs slashed in two by the river. This semi-arid country was as warm as summer even now in November. Insects kept up a constant buzz in the prickly brush.

One of the Bassett boys named Ebb (short for Elbert) took him to see the garden, dried up or gone to seed except for one monstrous yellow globe.

"What's that?" Logan asked.

"A punkin."

"Man, oh man! It's big as a barrel!"

"Bet you don't grow 'em in Steamboat like that."

"Bet we could if the season wasn't so short. What you aim to do with it?"

"Its too old and ripe to be any account."

"You watch." With his knife Logan cut away the soft rot of both ends and cleaned out the inside the best he could. Then he took off his hat and crawled through that pumpkin. By that time several men had drifted over from the corral where they had been fooling around with a bronc.

They laughed when he stood up with pumpkin seeds in his hair, and he laughed with them.

After supper Logan wandered over to the bunkhouse, drawn by the sounds of a squeaky fiddle. The place was thick with tobacco smoke, and a bottle was going the rounds. Somebody sociably passed it to Logan, who shook his head. The men were amusing themselves. One did a clumsy clog. The negro, who, Logan afterwards learned, was named Isom Dart, "patted juber" from the top of his head to the soles of his feet, up and down and round about like nothing Logan had ever seen before.

Then all eyes turned on the visitor. "What can you do, Red?"

"I could sing," Logan ventured, "if I could get to a piano."

One of the men went to ask if they could use the Bassetts' piano. Permission granted, the gang tramped over to the ranch house, some staggering a little, and squatted on their heels to watch Logan straddle the piano stool and feel around for C or G chord. The first sound he let out would not go with either chord. The men guffawed, but one of the Bassett girls named Annie shut them up.

"Go ahead, Red," she said. Maybe she took a shine to him because she had a spark of red in her own hair.

Logan tried again. This time he got a better start and sang THE PIRATE'S SERENADE. By the end of the third verse he was going lustily, and the men were quiet. Then he sang:

*"Fair as a lily, joyous and free
Light of that little prairie home was she.
Everyone who knew her felt the gentle power
Of Rosalie, the prairie flower."*

No matter who they were — cattle rustlers or other outlaws — they liked his singing. Even the drunks were listening, and the black man kept making him sing some more. When he had run out of everything he knew and was getting hoarse, the men shuffled back to their bunks. Logan visited with the Bassetts and soon turned in. They let him "bed down" in the ranch house.

Early next morning he took off for home. He sure was happy to leave John Lowell's hard trotter at Lily Park and climb onto good old Croppy once more. On the advice of John Lowell, he chose the Snake River route back to Steamboat. Part of the way, there was a semblance of road that the cow outfits traveled. When he left Lily Park, he had to ford Bear River, which was easy this time of year. The first night he stayed at Dow Dody's and the next night at Three Forks.

At Hahn's Peak he ran into snow that soon piled up knee deep to the horses. This was the first real blizzard of the winter, and it grew worse and worse. Logan remembered thinking it was a good thing Croppy had long legs so he could break trail for short-legged Mattie. He remembered crossing Elk River and noting that it was starting to ice up. Then he did not remember any more until Croppy stumbled.

The horse was coming down the hill about a mile from Steamboat. Logan, trying to shift his weight, could not feel his legs at all. They were

like two logs. Somehow he got out of the saddle, sat in the snow, pried off his boots and socks, and rubbed his legs till a little feeling came back. He walked the rest of the way, stumping along on his poor legs.

At last he was home in the warm spicy kitchen with his feet in a tub of cold water and the family waiting on him. He was a hero returned. Through the window he could peer at winter outside. How his feet and legs did hurt for a while! But the pain was nothing to the satisfaction he felt. He and Croppy and Mattie had delivered the ballots to Brown's Hole, traveling more than three hundred miles round trip. Now they were home, the nicest place on earth.

Let 'er snow!



BUCKSKIN POLICE

On this day in late October, just one year after the ballot trip, Logan was again traveling through the Lower Country, a blanket and a poke of grub tied behind his saddle. He had business with a bunch of Indians who were said to be camped at Douglas Springs. It was business he was trying to put off as long as possible.

Pa had not been able to find anybody else to take this job. He had received a letter from the Game and Fish Commissioner saying that the Utes were off their reservation killing deer by the hundreds for their hides. The letter requested that somebody go down and stop the slaughter. Though Steamboat was two or three days' ride from Douglas Springs, it was the nearest town in which men might be recruited. But it was still a very small town, and the men were either hauling provisions or, like Pa, gathering stock to drive to winter range. Those who could have gone had no mind to confront a bunch of Utes just because they were killing a few deer when there were enough deer in Routt County to last forever.

Pa had a different opinion. He said killing meat for winter was necessary, but no one must be allowed to waste deer just for their hides. That was what had happened to the buffalo, and now there was not a buffalo left in northwestern Colorado. He looked at Logan.

"Jimmy," Ma said sharply, "you're not thinking of letting that boy—" "Somebody's got to do it. The State will pay five dollars a day. How would you like to go, son?"

"Sure, Pa, I'll go!"

And go Logan did, in spite of Ma's protests. Now, away down almost to Lay Creek, he was having second thoughts. How was he going to make twenty or thirty Indians quit killing deer? The Utes had been hunting deer for a thousand years. On the cliffs east of Hayden some ancient artist had pecked and painted small figures with bows and arrows facing antlered deer. Present-day Indians had rifles. All Logan had was a pistol.

Buckskin was the best this time of year, and hunting the easiest. Deer were migrating from the high mountains in droves to spread out in their wintering grounds in the lower cedar country. As he had ridden from Steamboat, Logan had marveled at all the heart-shaped tracks gathering in from every draw till they churned a wide runway. Though he had seen few deer, he reckoned there were dozens of them lying in the brush resting, or browsing a bit, waiting till after sundown to take up their journey.

Pa said Indian buckskin was better than white man's buckskin because, instead of using knives, the Indians used their hands and stone scrapers to get off the meat, and bones to scrape off the hair. Then they pulled and stretched the hide and smoked it with bark till it was a rich color.

The Utes at Douglas Springs were making a big haul from deer that must have traveled other trails. This runway bent south toward the river. Logan should have kept straight on to Wallihans' place, but, yielding to the excitement of all those tracks, he too turned south.

The freshest tracks had been made last night by deer that were already far away in the cedars. More deer would be rolling out of the mountains and traveling tonight under the full October moon. Since it was near sundown, Logan decided to "layout" in the sagebrush and see the show.

He went clear into the canyon at Juniper Crossing, watered Croppy, and drank himself. Then he climbed back up to the rim, unsaddled, picketed the horse a good distance from the runway, and camped as close to the trail as he dared. Making a little fire of sagebrush, he fried some bacon and sopped a biscuit in the grease. In the orange sunset glow he took a biscuit to Croppy before he rolled in his blanket, his head on his saddle, where he could look against the skyline and see anything coming. Coyotes on one hill were answered on another. . . .

The jar and tremble of earth jerked him upright. The fire was out. The full moon hung in a sky frosty with stars. Along the ground thrummed a sound like a herd of stampeding cattle. Yonder, Croppy was standing stiff as a board.

At the hill's edge against the stars, Logan could distinguish black shapes moving — heads, horns, and big ears. The deer were coming! At first, he thought there must be ten or fifteen. They came right toward him, traveling pretty fast. Some almost stepped on him. When they caught his scent, they crowded to a stop, snorted, then bounded past.

More came. Fifty. . . a hundred and fifty. . . . They kept coming. Logan lost count.

They did not travel in a closely packed herd. In squads and bunches they sifted across the hill, and sometimes one came alone. The moonlight showed them as plain as day — young forked horns, big old bucks with branching antlers, does with fauns whimpering along.

Logan began to count again: four hundred, five hundred, eight hundred. . . . He was shivering not only with autumn chill but with the wonder of what he was seeing.

Not till dawn did the procession end. Logan believed twenty-five or thirty hundred deer had crossed the river that night. As weary as if he had been chopping wood for eight hours he bathed his face in the stream and heaved the saddle on a nervous Croppy.

At Wallihans' he ate breakfast, fed Croppy some oats, and continued on his way to Douglas Springs. Pretty soon, on the trail ahead he saw a couple of horsemen. Indians, maybe. A tingle went through him, but he kept Croppy going at an even pace. As the riders drew nearer, he saw that they were not Indians but white men. At close range they looked like ordinary ranchers. He did not recognize either.

They pulled up and one said, "Howdy, kid, you're riding a lonesome piece."

At the friendly tone Logan limbered into a grin. "I'm looking for Indians," he said.



Mule Deer

Picture by A. G. Wallihan, early-day
photographer of wild game

"Injuns — what the devil you want with them?"

"I'm Buckskin Police."

"You're *what*?"

"Buckskin Police. I've rode all the way from Steamboat to make the Indians quit killing deer."

"Steamboat! Look, kid, the Utes ain't bothering you folks none and we're cleaning up a nice pile trading with them. We know a fellow who will pay fifty cents a hide. You go on home and forget the Injuns."

"But the Game and Fish Commission—"

"What do we care about the Game and Fish Commission! You go back to Steamboat and tell whoever sent you to mind their own damn business!"

The man's partner laughed. "Kid, you couldn't scare them Injuns off. They're a tough bunch. You'd better be smart and go home. 'Tain't so long ago since some of these very Utes were scalping folks like you."

Logan knew the men were just trying to throw a scare into him. Doggedly, he continued on his way. Towards night the trail led off a cedar mesa to Little Snake River near the northwest end of Cross Mountain where there were some cabins and a corral belonging to a cattleman named Elijah B. (Longhorn) Thompson. Longhorn had one of his cowboys look after Croppy while he took Logan in to supper.

When Logan explained that he was Buckskin Police on his way to scare off the Indians, Longhorn said only, "You'd better turn in early and get a good rest."

After Logan had crawled between the blankets, he heard a horse leaving the ranch but was too tired to wonder why.

Next morning Longhorn had Croppy fed, watered, and saddled. He said, "So long, kid. Don't reckon you'll have any trouble finding them Indians."

The trail was patterned with deer tracks. On top of the deer tracks was a single horse track. Now Logan remembered hearing that horse leave Longhorn's last night. Why would a rider be going to Douglas Springs at night? Logan could think of only one reason: Longhorn was trading with the Utes, too, and he had sent a cowboy to warn them Logan was coming so they could be ready for him. Ready maybe to pick him off with an easy shot.

By noon Logan had not encountered a single Indian, nor had he caught up with the mysterious horseman. His eyes smarted from searching every rock and hillock for sign of ambush. After crossing a big open country in which Lone Mountain stood a stark sentinel, Croppy finally brought him to Douglas Springs.

Not a soul there! Grass mashed down, and broken tepee poles showed where a big camp had been. Logan thrust his hand in the ashes of a campfire. Still warm. He examined his pistol and rode on, following horse and moccasin tracks.

Where the trail dipped to Green River, he caught sight of the Utes — thirty of forty of them. They saw him at the same time, and without waiting to talk to him, larruped their ponies into the river. They were running from him! Running! Logan was as surprised as he was relieved. For a moment he just sat watching them. Squaws and children beat horses to make them go. Bucks yanked on ropes of pack animals. Water splashed a mile high. Logan counted thirty ponies loaded with square bundles of buckskin. With a yell he raced Croppy to the river bank, and the Utes skittered faster.

Out of nowhere a gruff voice said, "You shore got 'em goin', kid!" Logan jerked around to behold six white men, well armed, sitting their horses a few yards behind him.

Their spokesman, a chunky built, light complexioned fellow, explained, "We saw the Injuns running and came down off the mountain to find out what the commotion was about. Figured maybe somebody was looking for *us*."

"I-I'm Buckskin Police," stammered Logan. "They were running from me."

"You bet! We had hard work to make them stop long enough to talk to us. They saw us quirting to head them off and thought we were Buckskin Police. They told us Longhorn had sent word the police were after them. Seems Longhorn's messenger neglected to say that the police was one red-headed kid!" The man slapped his thigh and laughed.

Logan laughed, too, a bit shakily. Longhorn had been looking out for him, after all. The messenger had probably taken a short cut back to the ranch. Logan said, "Well, anyhow, I reckon the Indians are on their way to the reservation."

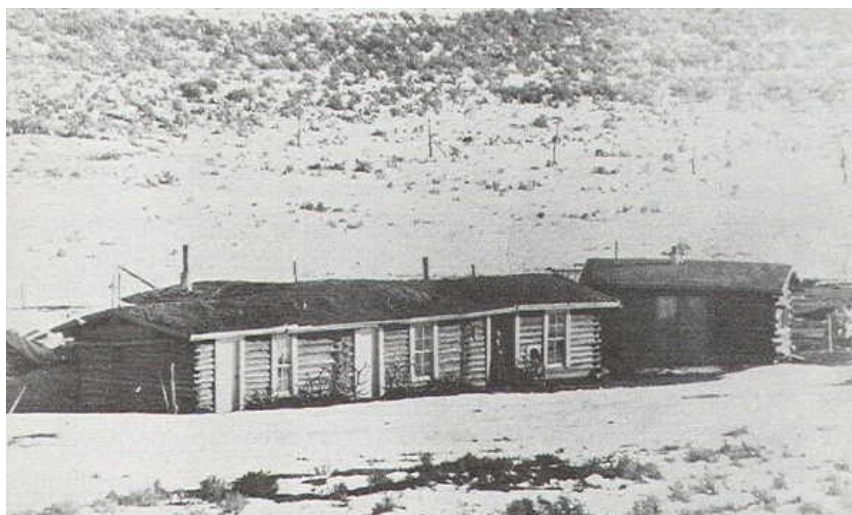
"You can spread it on big when you get home," continued the man. "You can tell how you scared the Utes half to death. You don't need to mention Longhorn Thompson, nor Matt Rash. . . ."

Matt Rash!

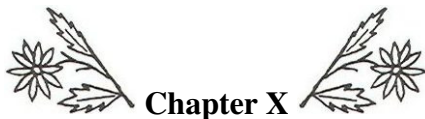
Madison M. (Matt) Rash first appeared in northwest Colorado in 1882 with a trail herd of cattle from Texas. He gained dubious fame as a cattle rustler around Brown's Hole with a stronghold on Zenobia Peak, and was no doubt well started on this profitable business when Logan "met up" with him. He was suspected of previous dark doings in Texas and Oklahoma. In 1900 he was shot and killed by Tom Horn, who had supposedly been hired by legitimate cattlemen to rid the range of rustlers.

But the Matt Rash Logan remembered was a friendly fellow on a horse down near Green River, who enjoyed a joke with a red-headed kid one October day.

And far outweighing the adventure with Matt, was a memory Logan would treasure to the end of his days — a wondrous procession of deer against the stars near Juniper Crossing one October night.



Wallihan Cabin, Lay, Colorado



Chapter X

BLACK PEBBLES

What Routt County needed was a train!

The Union Pacific, that had built into Wyoming in 1868, was too far north; and the Denver and Rio Grande, that later laid tracks along the Eagle River, was too far south. Scattered settlers knew that Routt County had untold riches to offer the world — if the world could just get to this remote mountain region.

Late in the fall of 1882 Pony Whitmore, a prospector and trapper, made a discovery that seemed certain to bring a railroad down Yampa Valley. In a small park known as The Potholes, between Dry Fork and Main Fork of Elkhead Creek, Pony found shiny black pebbles, which interested him not at all since he was looking for gold. He wintered with the Crawfords, and along towards spring happened to mention the black pebbles.

“Looked like pieces of coal except they were so hard I couldn't chip 'em with a knife.”

Black outcroppings were not uncommon in Routt County. The coal was easily broken, and a few settlers dug enough to burn in their stoves. But Pony's comment made Pa prick up his ears. As soon as the snow was off, Pony took Pa and Logan to see for themselves. Pa wet a pebble with his tongue, revealing black luster.

“Could be anthracite! Could be better than gold, Pony!”

“Takes tons of that stuff,” grunted the prospector, and rode on, leaving Pa and Logan to trace the source of the coal to a narrow seam in a gulch.

Finding nothing more in the Potholes, the two moved over to the main fork of Elkhead to camp for the night. Pa shot a sagehen for supper. When Logan took the sagehen to the creek to dress and wash it, he noted black particles in the water. His shout brought Pa running. Before dark the two had prospected upstream far enough to find a three-foot vein. Next day they located other veins — one, eleven feet wide. They wrote claim notices, marked their claims with stakes and piles of rocks, and returned, jubilant, to Steamboat Springs.

Samples sent “Outside” confirmed that the coal was, indeed, anthracite. The dreams of Routt County people took wings. Coal was needed all across the United States to furnish fuel for domestic use and to power steam engines for industry, trains, and ships. Anthracite, valued because it contained little volatile material and burned with a hot flame, was now derived mainly from Pennsylvania. If the coal in the Elkhead region proved as high grade as Pa believed it to be, it would no doubt be sought by large corporations, and a railroad would be built to transport it to market. That railroad could also bring in the home seeker, health seeker, merchant, investor, and tourist. In addition to coal, the railroad

could carry out cattle, lumber, building stone, oil, and ranch produce.

The Morgan brothers, the Sheltons, the Duceys, and others staked claims. Before anyone could secure title to the land, the country had to be surveyed. Ezekiel Shelton of Hayden began this job, and Preston King of Egeria Park did later work. The survey proved to be a tremendous undertaking. A corner first had to be located, and from it a line run into California Park, then to individual locations.

Most of the young men of Yampa Valley joined the crews. Logan and John helped Mr. King, as did Bill Williams, Jim Monson, Russell Jones, Tom Ducey, and several more. Two or three dogs ranged along, including Cap, a Crawford dog. Mr. King, short, blue eyed, deliberate, was as unhurried as the boys were impatient. When he squinted through the telescope on his transit and said, "That's the line," the axemen had to clear brush and cut trees, even if those trees were a couple of feet in diameter. The flagman had to go and set up the rod wherever Mr. King motioned.

Once when John was flagman, he was motioned straight into a rattlesnake den. He was glad when Mr. King gave him the "all right" sign and he could make a mark in the dirt with his toe and go to killing snakes with the rod. He had a pile of them by the time Mr. King came jogging over on his black horse.

Logan soon became camp cook. He preferred to cook rather than eat the messes some of the others stirred up. Preparing food over a campfire for a hungry bunch of men — sometimes as many as eighteen — was not easy. While Mr. King was doing his figuring, the boys could catch fish or shoot sagechickens, or bring in a deer or antelope. Every once in a while Logan had to make a trip to town for provisions. When a bear prowled through camp, knocked the cans around, and ate all the grease, he had to ride to the nearest ranch for more grease. The boys liked his grub. His finest achievement was light bread. The Dutch oven was far too small, so he contrived an oven of some old sheet iron. How the fellows did go for that bread!

Fall in Routt County was the best time of the year. Sun lingered in the yellow aspens, and flies and mosquitoes were gone. The survey crew made good headway during September and the first part of October, and could begin to see an end to their job. Then the rain began. There had been occasional showers all summer that nobody minded, but this rain kept on till camp was a mud hole and the bedding soggy.

"Grayling storm," said John.

Every year about mid October the settlers looked for the Grayling Storm, so named because the fish known as grayling (actually white fish) chose this approximate time to leave the river and run up the little streams to spawn. All wild life heeded that first big storm. Deer began to sift down from the high hills. Blue grouse moved up into the spruce forests. Woodchucks had already gone to bed. Winter was not far off.

The crew, hurrying to finish work, slogged through dripping brush. Logan, in charge of camp, had trouble trying to cook with wet wood, keep his sour dough starter going, and "wrestle" the bedding. A makeshift tent and a few "tarps" were little help.

This morning the sun broke through. After the boys and Mr. King had gone and the air had warmed somewhat, Logan moved camp into an open meadow, unrolled the moldy blankets, and draped them to dry over half an acre of bare buckbrush.

He should have paid more attention to the well traveled game trail that led down from the hill and crossed the creek through a deep trough in the willows. He did note that elk had been using the meadow, but elk were everywhere. This time of year the bulls were collecting harems and fighting rivals.

Right now a bull was bugling on the hill, warning all young upstarts that he was the kingpin. Drawn by the clear musical sound, Logan climbed cautiously up the trail, the damp leaves making little noise under his feet. He had no gun and needed no meat. He just wanted to admire the biggest and most magnificent creature in these woods. Through the aspens he began to glimpse the yellowish brown coats and cream colored rump patches of thirty or forty cows and calves feeding in a grove. He could not see the bull, but he could hear him.

A big cow ambled toward Logan, who stood behind a tree trunk, motionless. Closer and closer she grazed till she was not a yard away from his tree. When she reached around to pull a tuft of grass between his shoes, Logan hardly breathed. The cow must have caught his scent. She wheeled and went leaping down the trail. The other cows and calves took fright and followed, flinging turf with their hoofs.

Old Kingpin himself chose that moment to answer a mocking, silvery insult from the opposite ridge. He charged from his mountain to do battle. Logan barely managed to scramble out of the way.

Once started along the steep trail, neither the stampeding cows nor Kingpin could stop. Nor did they want to. Elk herds had traveled this runaway forever. At the foot of the bank was the creek, and just beyond the creek the patch of buck brush on which the camp bedding was spread to dry.

It was no use for Logan to run and wave his arms and shout. By the time he reached the meadow, the whole herd had swum through the acre of blankets and, taking a few tatters with them, were disappearing into the timber. Kingpin wearing a shred on his antlers, brought up the rear.

Loss of some of the bedding and ruination of the rest could have been a catastrophe if the crew had not finished the survey that very day. Since it was late afternoon when they wound up the job, they would ordinarily have remained in camp for the night, but with blankets a mess and rain starting again, they struck out for a deserted cabin a few miles down country where they could "hole in" till morning and then head home.

Slipping and sliding along a trail that was little more than a deer track, the good mountain ponies finally brought their riders to what had once been a small clearing. Horse, crew, and dogs took heart at sight of the cabin squatted there in a patch of wild parsnip stalks.

Tails waving, the dogs rushed ahead and bulged through the open door. They had no sooner got in than they were battling to get out. All tried to squeeze through the door at once. Cap made it first. With a yelp

he shot out, holding his head sideways, and began rolling furiously in the weeds. The other dogs joined him, batting at their heads with their paws, and whimpering.

"Skunk!" croaked John.

The crew knew without being told. The acrid odor surrounded them. They could almost see it steaming from the cabin. They hunched in their saddles while the rain and cold soaked into their bones.

Logan got off his horse, took a long breath, and dived into the shack. He found the skunk dead. Some dogs never learned. They had killed the varmint, but not until it had taken ample revenge. He eased it outside with a stick, shoved it what he thought was a sufficient distance, and kicked leaves and mud over it.

Stalking back to his horse, he unsaddled and picketed it in the lee of some bushes where it could get shelter. Then he went into the cabin and grimly set to work. He cleaned ashes from a rusted stove and started a fire with wood left by a previous occupant.

When the boys had taken care of their horses the best they could and appeared in the doorway, he had bacon sizzling in a pan and was making biscuits. Night had settled down.

"Come in, fellows," he invited. "It's nice and sweet and cozy!"

Big Irishman Tom Ducey turned pale and bolted. Before long he came back, driven by the rain.

Logan kept the fire going and cooked by candle light. The crew tried their best to eat for they had worked like mules and were as lank as could be. Half an hour ago they had been ravenous. Now their stomachs knotted. Logan had to throw away most of the good grub. Even the dogs would not eat it. They were screwed into balls of misery in the farthest corner. Nobody had the heart to send them into the storm. They could not be blamed for trying to do their duty and clean out the place.

Mr. King walked to the door, peered into the wet blackness, and changed his mind. Pulling desperately on his pipe, he settled back against the wall.

Logan turned the skillet and bread pan upside down, shoved more wood in the stove, and sprawled on the floor with the rest of the crew to try to sleep. Firelight flickered through the stove cracks. Though the floor was hard and the roof leaked, the boys would have asked nothing better if they had not been suffocated with skunk smell.

A mouse gnawed on the bits of biscuit dough stuck to the pan. *Click, bumpity, clank!*

John raised up. "Darned if that mouse isn't eatin' pan and all!" he commented. "Cap, go git him!"

Cap only curled tighter.

Clinkety clatter! went the mouse.

"Shore wisht I had his stomach," said Tom Ducey.

John giggled. They all began to laugh. They fell asleep, still laughing, and woke to the first snow of the season. But nobody cared if winter set in now. Down in the earth under the winter, anthracite coal was waiting to fetch the world to Routt County.

Logan could almost hear a train whistling.



IMPRESSING THE UNION PACIFIC

Several years went by, and it seemed that Routt County's dream of a train never would come true. Then, one spring, when creeks and rivers were still booming, the directors of the Union Pacific Railroad, which ran through Wyoming, decided to investigate the anthracite field. They sent Pa a letter requesting that someone meet a party of men on a certain day at Hayden, twenty-five miles west of Steamboat Springs. The men would be coming from Rawlins via Fortification Creek.

Pa himself would most certainly have met such important visitors if he had not had a more pressing obligation. He had somehow got hold of a diamond drill. At the very time the railroad representatives would be in the coal field a mechanic from Hendrie & Bolthoff, a machinery firm in Denver, would also be there to show Pa how to operate the diamond drill. Responsibility for guiding the U.P. men fell to Logan, who was now almost as tall as Pa, knew as much about the country as anyone, and was "rarin'" to tell all he knew.

Early on the appointed day Logan started from Steamboat with a string of horses from the Crawford herd. He himself rode Pete, a half-broken gray colt. Ordinarily, he could have headed straight down the river, but with the stream at flood tide, it was necessary to travel around through the hills. Logan chose to go through Twenty-Mile Park. High water was what settlers most dreaded. Almost every spring some person or some domestic animals got drowned. This year, however, there were two bridges in Routt County: the first had been erected across Bear River near Hayden in 1883, and the second had recently been built in upper Steamboat. Logan had nothing to worry about — so he thought.

All the way through Twenty-Mile Park Pete cut shins, exploding at every cottontail that popped out of the brush. Logan should have been warned then not to trust that colt, but he was too busy planning how he was going to impress the Union Pacific.

He reached the Marshall ranch near the Hayden bridge before the Wyoming folks did. When Mr. Marshall learned that Logan had to take a party of visitors across that bridge, he looked troubled. He said the bridge itself was as sturdy as ever, but the swift current had gouged out the far bank and left a hole where bridge and road should have connected. Logan went to look at the hole and did not like what he saw. Mr. Marshall said a team and wagon had gone through the hole this morning, and the way to do it was to whip up the horses and not let them mire down.

When the U.P. outfit pulled in and Logan saw the four big strong mules hitched to the wagon, he was sure they could make it. The wagon was loaded with duffel, including a large camera. There were two geologists, a camp roustabout, and a burly teamster. One geologist, Mr.

Holt, with ruddy face, bright blue eyes, and a bristle of mustache, was head of the group; the other, Mr. Tanner, spare and a trifle round shouldered, was camera man. Awkwardly, Logan shook hands. He explained the situation. Since the water would rise with snow-melt as the day warmed, he advised not stopping for lunch, but crossing the river at once. The men agreed.

Logan instructed the teamster, "When you come to the end of the bridge and go into that hole, you want to whip up your mules."

"You telling me how to drive?" growled the teamster.

Logan and Pete and the string of saddle horses plunged through the washout and waited on the other side. Cautiously, the teamster drove over the bridge and into the hole.

"Now!" shouted Logan.

The fellow should have laid the whip on those mules. One good jump would have taken the leaders to solid footing. But he was too slow, his hand too heavy on the reins. The current grabbed the mules. In no time at all the leaders were swallowed by swirling mud — the wheelers floundering and frightened — the wagon tipped at a crazy angle—

With a yell for someone to jump in and cut the harness, Logan was off Pete and into the water to try to hold up the leaders' heads. If even one of the men had helped him, he might have saved those mules. When the teamster came to his senses and used the whip, it was too late. Logan did his best to slash the struggling animals free. As he hacked desperately with his knife, he thought the river was going to get him, too. Under furious lashing, the panicked wheelers finally broke loose. They managed to scramble over their dead team mates and jerk the wagon up the bank.

The whip caught Logan once or twice, but the sting of it was nothing to the sting inside him. Two fine mules worth several hundred dollars — drowned. The trip that was to have been so fine — spoiled right at the start!

It took Logan a while to get his breath back. He spit the sand out of his mouth and with smoldering eyes watched the two remaining mules tremble and wheeze, and the men crawl from the dripping wagon. Mr. Tanner looked to see if the camera was hurt. The teamster directed a stream of profanity at Logan. Mr. Holt, has face more purple than red, shut the teamster up with a curt word. He sat down on the bank to study the predicament.

"Can we make it from here with one team?" he asked Logan.

James Crawford's son would have quit the whole mess right then except that he was James Crawford's son. He said, "I reckon you can."

About sundown the crippled U.P. outfit reached the camp that had been set up for them on the grassy bench near Elkhead Creek, where Pa was waiting. How Logan did hate to tell his father what had happened!

In the days that followed, Logan did his best to overcome the bad start. Leaving teamster and cook in camp, he and the geologists rode horseback all over that country, Logan and Pete carrying the camera, which was about two feet long and weighed twenty-five pounds. The men carefully collected samples, made notes, and took pictures. From

time to time Pa joined them briefly.

This was the most exciting season of the year with wild game returning in droves from winter range to mountain pastures. Though the scientists were principally interested in what was underneath the ground, they had to stop and admire a hundred or more antelope, their white rumps as they ran making a streak across a field of yellow arnica flowers. One morning they crawled up to a salt lick with their guide where they could count a buck deer, three does, a bull elk, and an antelope all at once.

Logan was beginning to enjoy himself. He did not have to cook or wash kettles. All he had to do was look after the horses, keep a smudge going to ward off mosquitoes, and fix his own bed. He could lie around the campfire after supper and listen to tales that beat any stories Routt County folks could tell. The scientists said that millions of years ago, after the ocean had receded, there had been swamps here, and living in the swamps, animals as big as houses called dinosaurs. Forests of strange plants had grown and fallen and been pressed and cooked and made into coal. Then the mountains had heaved and cracked, and the huge basalt mass of Pilot Knob had been formed along with Wolf Mountain. Fire and smoke had issued from the earth, and molten rock had spread over the coal, hardening it to anthracite.

Sometimes Logan cupped his harmonica in his hands and blew upon it, and the strains of NELLIE GRAY or STAR OF THE EVENING floated above the mutter of Elkhead Creek, while beyond the firelight, the coyote chatter stopped.

One evening the men had gone to bed in the tent and Logan was preparing to roll up by the fire when he heard the horses, that had been picketed in a small park just above camp, trampling restlessly. No doubt



Coal Camp Headquarters
Eighteen miles northwest of Steamboat Springs
In the Pilot Knob area
James H. Crawford in light shirt,
standing left center

they sensed movement all about them. Most big game browsed and rested in daytime and traveled at night. If the horses got spooked and pulled their picket pins, they would probably head down the trail between the hill and some high bushes. Logan put his sleeping bag right in that trail so he would know if those horses tried to leave. The trail continued across the creek where a log jam had spread the water, making it shallow enough to ford.

It seemed he had just got to sleep when he was slapped awake by cold water in his face. He jerked to his elbows. At that moment a long shadow arched over him, dripping more water. It was coming from the wrong direction to be a horse. In the dim moonlight he saw big ears and a set of antlers. Deer! Several must have jumped over him, and he might never have known it had it not been for the water shattering from them. He remained still, and one at a time, three others, with easy grace, cleared him. The tinkle of their hoofs faded in the night. With a chuckle, he lay back.

On the last day of their stay the geologists wanted to take a few more pictures in the Potholes. As usual, Logan was carrying the camera, the strap around his arm. The three were riding along the edge of a hill when a sage hen blustered out of the brush under Pete's nose.

Pete went up in the air like a rocket. He lit bucking. All the way down the hill he bucked — a hundred and eighty yards — and at every jump it seemed he would fall backwards. The camera strap locked Logan's arm, making him helpless. He stuck on as long as he could before pitching off, right on top of that fine camera. He heard it crunch under him. Pete, still bucking, disappeared down the draw.

Shamed and dizzy, Logan waited for the axe to fall when the men saw the squashed box.

But all Mr. Holt said was, "You hurt, boy? Don't see how you stuck on that bronco as long as you did!"

And Mr. Tanner added, "Amen! I've got all the pictures I need anyway."

Those geologists had turned out to be mighty decent fellows.

Routt County could hardly wait to hear how soon the Union Pacific was going to start building that railroad. When a letter finally came, Pa sat on his cabin step at Steamboat, read it carefully, and handed it to Logan, who could not believe what he read. The U.P. had decided not to extend its line into Colorado! Though the anthracite was of high quality, the quantity was uncertain, and the region too remote. . . .

Logan blurted, "Maybe if the mules hadn't drowned, and I hadn't busted the camera—"

"It's not your fault, son."

There was another letter, written by Mr. Tanner to Logan, that eased the hurt a little. Mr. Tanner asked if Logan would take him hunting some day.

Stuffing the first letter into his pocket, Pa stood up. "Well," he said, "the Union Pacific is welcome to Wyoming." A long moment he stood looking — at mineral marsh — at the beginnings of a town — at mountains rooted in granite. "I can hear it!" he declared, and the lilt was



Antelope
Picture by A. G. Wallihan

back in his voice. "I can hear it plainer than ever — that train a-whistling down Yampa Valley!"

Though Routt County did not benefit from the visit of the Union Pacific men, Pete did. Two weeks after he had thrown Logan, he wandered into Ellis Clark's ranch still wearing the saddle. When Ellis removed saddle and blanket, all the hide and hair on the colt's back came off with them. Poor Pete must have been glad to get home at last to the Crawford barn and corral.

From then on, he was a changed horse. A good, steady horse. Not cottontails, nor sagechickens, nor anything else could make him blink an eye!



LITTLE BLACK BULL

If anyone could find fun riding herd on a bunch of cantankerous cattle, Logan could. As soon as he had been big enough to climb on a horse, he had helped look after the stock, which were an important part of the Crawfords' livelihood.

Pa had brought the first cows and calves into Middle Park along with his family in 1874 and had wintered about thirty head on Muddy Creek. The next winter he drove his herd to Burns' Hole, a sheltered valley at the eastern end of the Flattops. When he settled in Steamboat Springs, he continued to winter his stock in Burns' Hole where the season was much milder than in Yampa Valley and animals could generally forage the year around. In summer the rapidly growing herd roamed the lush Elk River valley, and the Crawfords sold beef and butter to the placer miners at Hahn's Peak. One June Pa and Elmer Brooks drove a herd of cattle up Blue River to Dillon, up Ten-Mile Creek, and over a pass to Leadville, and sold them for sixty dollars a head. Leadville was booming because of rich stakes of silver.

Some time in the late eighties Pa decided to sell all his cattle except a milk cow or two since he was now into the business of developing a town at Steamboat Springs. By then, the herd numbered about three hundred. Instead of bringing the cattle home from winter range, he drove them only as far as what was called the Willow Camp, just above the present town of Yampa, and left Logan and the dogs to hold them while he went in search of Tom Watson, the cattle buyer.

Tom Watson was well known in northwestern Colorado. For more than twenty years until his death in 1903 he gathered cattle from small, remote ranches, drove them to market or the nearest railroad, sold them, and returned with the cash in a long, leather pouch. He also did freighting and owned a mercantile establishment in Meeker. Tom was a hard rider — here one day and fifty miles somewhere else the next. He was purported to be presently in Wet Mountain Valley.

While Pa was looking for the buyer, Logan had his hands full keeping the Crawford cattle from going on down to Steamboat. They knew the trail as well as he did. Not only did he have to watch the cattle, but he had to take care of old General, Pa's fine Morgan stallion, and thirty head of mares and colts. Pa had no intention of giving up his horse herd. Logan and General shared a crude log shed out of the wet spring weather. All through the meadowlands old buffalo wallows were still full of water from melted snow.

Riding around the cattle could have been monotonous if Logan had not discovered several things to interest him. One day the dogs jumped a jackrabbit near the Devil's Grave, which was a long steep hill with a rock at one end that resembled a headstone. The rabbit was the biggest one

Logan had ever seen. He flicked a hind leg, looked back over his shoulder at the yipping dogs, and after teasing them awhile, took off over the Devil's Grave and left them far behind. The race was repeated day after day. Both rabbit and dogs seemed to enjoy it. The dogs never could catch that rabbit, but never gave up.

While they were occupied, Logan could ride back through camp to Finger Rock, a landmark for all travelers. Near this tall monolith lived a family of foxes, among them a beautiful silver fox with a white tipped tail as long as its body. The usual fox was orange-red, but a red fox mother could have a cross or silver fox offspring, just as a black bear mother often had a brown or cinnamon cub. If the wind was right, and if Logan got off his horse and kept very still behind some brush, he could sometimes see the silver fox or watch the young foxes playing.

Antelope furnished another diversion. One morning as Logan topped the divide between Yampa River and Choate Creek, he spotted half a dozen antelope resting near a deep gulch. On foot he circled back, dropped into the gulch, crawled directly under the antelope and twisted a stick in the hair of the buck that was taking his midday nap a foot or two from the bank.

Looking to see what was biting him, the buck discovered Logan. His eyes almost popped from his head. One minute he was there. The next, he had knocked over a couple of does that were in his way, and his white rump was disappearing across the ridge. In about ten days when Pa came back, Logan told him with a chuckle, "I'll bet that old buck didn't lie down again for a week!"

Tom Watson and some of his men were with Pa. They took the cattle, and Pa and Logan drove the horse herd on to Steamboat.

Several years later Logan found himself again traveling through Egeria Park with another herd of cattle. And again it was the middle of June. Tom Watson had died, and newcomers were buying and selling cattle, among them Jerry McWilliams. Jerry had picked up a sizeable bunch on Little Snake River and had bought more on Elk River and Deep Creek. At Steamboat, having other business to attend to, he turned the herd over to Billy Whipple, who, with Bob Cary, Doc Monson, and Logan Crawford, now had the responsibility of getting it to the Denver stockyards.

All the way up Yampa Valley Billy gathered more cattle till he had about four hundred. He was headed for Rollins Pass. By driving to Wolcott he could have shipped out on the D&RG railroad, which had reached that point in 1888, but Jerry had instructed his men to get those cattle to market on their own power. Rollins Pass, over which the original road to Middle Park had been built, was seldom used nowadays. Stage and freight travel was over the gentler grades of Berthoud Pass.

Billy's problem was not the distance or the rough country. It was the onery herd — a mixture of all sizes, colors, and breeds — some beef critters, some stock animals. The cattle were not used to each other, nor had they been on the trail long enough to learn how to travel together. And there were thirty bulls! When the boys stopped to grab a bite of lunch, they could watch a dozen bull fights. The worst trouble maker was

a ponderous white bull with wicked horns, who set about whipping everything in sight.

By the time the boys had shoved the cattle over Gore Range, across Muddy and Troublesome creeks, and over Gunsight trail to Corral Creek, Big White had bloodied up most of his rivals and had hooked his horns in a pack horse.

This was the worst season of the year in which to travel. A gray froth of mosquitoes could be seen a mile away over sagebrush and creek bottom. In addition to mosquitoes, little black flies and deer flies ate men and beasts alike.

At Corral Creek camp, the cattle were so fretful they would not bed down till after midnight. A couple of camps later, part way up the pass, a stiff wind blew away the mosquitoes and for a change the boys could eat supper without eating and breathing mosquitoes, and the stock could graze in comparative peace in an alpine meadow. The wind also brought rumblings of storm, to which no one paid much attention. The meadow was partly enclosed by down timber and rocks, and the boys added a barricade or two. The only way the herd could get out was through a narrow passage which could be easily guarded. Doc and Bob rode first night shift. Logan and Billy pulled off their saddles and were asleep almost before they hit their blankets.

It seemed to Logan he had barely shut his eyes when he was jarred awake by a cannon clap of thunder and buckets of rain in his face. Lightning leaped among the rocks. In one of the flashes Logan glimpsed Doc and Bob hunkered at the foot of his blanket. He did not blame them for deserting their post. Here on top of the world nobody with any sense fooled around with lightning. The next thunder came not from the heavens but from the stampeding herd. An army of men could not have held those frightened cattle.

Though the storm passed before long, there was not a thing the boys could do about the cattle till dawn. Luckily, the horses had been securely picketed. Only a handful of cattle that had got up against a deadfall were still in the park. The rest were scattered down the mountain.

The boys were hoping Big White was lost for good, but they eventually found him along with the rest. Though the storm had washed his scarred hide, it had done nothing to sweeten his disposition. He was more on the prod than ever. The only difference was that his hoofs were now a little sore from walking on rocks, and he lagged behind. Logan, "riding drag," became a target for his ill temper. Anyone unfortunate enough to "ride drag," ate dirt, chased stragglers, and had plenty of grief without having to dodge a couple of tons of bull.

At Rollinsville, a short distance down the eastern slope, Billy picked up a little black bull from a rancher. All the boys needed was another bull. This one, being a friendly sort and having no horns, was a pushover for Big White.

Slammed into the dust, Little Black lay there panting while Logan applied his quirt to the aggressor. But Little Black did not stay down. By and by he managed to struggle to his feet and put a careful distance between himself and Big White.

That day the cattle followed the wagon road through Golden Gate Canyon. By noon Big White had fallen a quarter of a mile behind and had the road to himself.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, there was the little black bull traveling along beside him in the other wheel track. Little Black was grumbling. With every step he grumbled. Big White rolled his eyes, stiffened his neck, and began a bellow. Logan barely had time to rock back in his saddle when the explosion came.

Surprisingly, it was not Little Black that went down. It was the old browbeater himself that hit the ground broadside with an earth shattering thud. The smaller bull had beat him to the punch, butted him in the stomach with all his strength, and then taken off running as fast as he could go. Like a black shadow he lost himself in the herd ahead.

It was a considerable while before Big White could wheeze again and get all four legs under him. A dose of his own medicine had given him such a lesson in manners that he was too “stove up” to do any more meanness the rest of the way to the stockyards.

And for the first time on the whole wearisome drive Logan had something to chuckle over — thanks to the little black bull!



Finger Rock, Egeria Park near Yampa, Colorado

NOTES

CRAWFORD CHILDREN

Lulie, Logan, and John got a big head start on Mary, the fourth child, who was not born till 1882.

SNOWSHOES

Snowshoes was the local word for the narrow slats now called *skis*. Settlers also walked on *web shoes*.

BEAR RIVER — YAMPA RIVER

Two names for the same river. *Yampa* was the Indian name and referred to the edible tubers that grew in profusion in this region. *Bear* was the white man's name and, of course, referred to the great number of bear everywhere. Old settlers usually called the stream *Bear River* and the country it traversed *Yampa Valley*. Both names were in use at the time of the Hayden Survey in the early seventies.

RANKIN CREEK

Where Gunn Creek turned back north, the Crawfords called it Rankin Creek. Only a few people knew how to get through that rock country. Rankin Creek was no doubt named for Joe Rankin, the scout who rode for help when Thornburgh's troops were beleaguered at the time of the Meeker Massacre in 1879. Gunn Creek was named for J. Wallace Gunn, the first regular minister in Steamboat Springs. He served the Union Church, and later the Congregational Church.

HOT SPRINGS

Originally, the hot springs north of town were closely surrounded by timber, which was burned off by some prospectors.

BROWN'S PARK — BROWN'S HOLE

Though *Brown's Park* became the official name, *Brown's Hole*, was the original name, and most old timers stuck to it — especially those responsible for law enforcement. During the years when court was held at Hahn's Peak, most of the law breakers came from the remote northwest corner of the state, and the county was put to great expense to catch them and bring them to trial. *Hole* probably seemed a more appropriate name than *Park*.

CROPPY

Of all the horses Logan ever rode, Croppy was his favorite. Croppy's sire was a one-mile race horse belonging to Jack Hill of Hill's Hole in Middle Park. His mother was Puss, a little buckskin Indian pony owned by "Uncle" Johnny Tow (pronounced to rhyme with *cow*), a prospector and trapper who roamed northwestern Colorado in the 1870's.

It was probably in the fall of 1878 when Pa, hunting on the mountain near Fish Creek, happened on Uncle Johnny's camp and found the old fellow so sick and cold he could not even get himself a drink of water. Pa stayed with him that night, heated rocks to warm him, and next day managed to get him to the Crawford cabin, where he lived three weeks. He was the first white person, as far as anyone knew, to be buried in Steamboat Springs (on the Island).

He left his twelve or fourteen mares and colts to Ma, who had taken tender care of him. To quote Logan: "All were smoky or buckskin-tough, wiry, pot bellied, and ugly. One had a black line down her back. Puss was the best of the lot. We used her more than any of the others."