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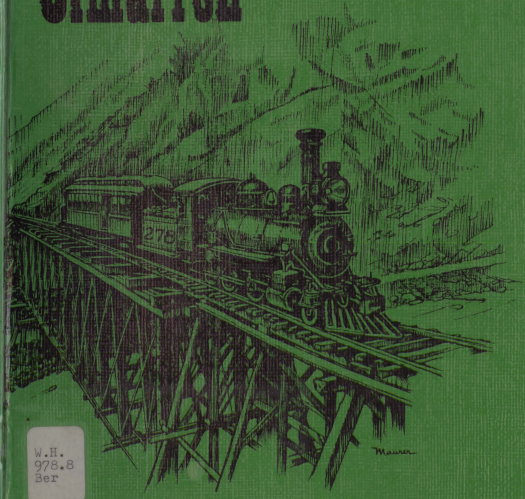
Cimarron



By Glenn Berry

Preface

If there ever was a historian who didn't quote a wrong date, name or place, his name should be immortalized. This little booklet from my own memory was enjoyable for me to record and is true to the best of my humble efforts. Any deletions are unintentional and knowing there were many I never knew or heard of I offer my apologies too.

CIMARRON

Wright Brothers store, on the south side of the street, road, way, or whatever you want to call it, was the only store in town at that time and many families lived out of it for all their needs. A pretty dress with ruffles and a slenderizing effect, dancing around the floor on a big river lass was the one you saw in a bolt of goods reposing on Wright's Dry Good shelf the week before. Neetsfoot, harness oil, shared the shelf with turpentine and Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Fresh beef was no problem as Jim Page's Meat Wagon delivered fresh butchered meat every other day off the load from his Little Cimarron Ranch to his Montrose market. Fresh vegetables found their way to the baskets in the cave from many frugal ranchwives' gardens.

Foreign to the modern market since the early thirties was the ice house. Families, neighbors, and passerbys were brought together for the annual ice harvest. Ponds were filled in the fall and fenced livestock away from them as yellow ice was not, even in those days, considered healthy. The Wrights contracted their ice house, filled and clean spruce sawdust bedded and covered the blocks of ice, which according to the winter, ran from three to eighteen inches in

thickness. The cave in the back of the store was dug out of the bank, lined with logs, some one to five feet of dirt covered the entire shebang. Always in the center of the floor, sat a large tub made by cutting a wooden barrel in half and floating in ice would be soda pop, and on rare occasions, unlabled bottles which floated as serene and harmless as a bottle of strawberry soda, until the cork was lifted.

Homebrew in those days would put modern 6% beer in a weaker category than ditch water. No respectable Cimarron resident was without bottles, malt, and the finished product.

The Telluride Brewery bottled and sold with labels marked "Near Beer" a concoction that, as one oldtimer put it, "should have been put back in the horse." At any rate, it served a purpose; the near bear would be dumped and home brew put in the bottles where it would float in the cave tub innocent as a lamb and unsuspected by the feds.

A couple area residents up the Creek bought corn chopped to fatten out hogs, even though there wasn't a hog on the place. However, they marketed them in gallon jugs. Just a fraction less explosive than TNT.

Every man leaves his marks or his tracks, some in the form of a building, others a road, or trail, many in a progeny carrying on his name while a few leave history of service to his fellow men.

One character who made history in Cimarron was a Jim Mahan, whose ancestors were from the bogs of Ireland. His vocation was varied and couldn't be pinned to any one job, but of one activity he was noted, and remembered painfully by many. He was a rough and tumble fighter. One leg was a couple inches shorter than the other. When he rocked back on that short leg and camp up, bones cracked. He was a brother of Sadie Kinsigan, wife of Laurance who lived up on the peninsula. Oh, Jim left his marks all right in the shape of scars and broken noses, but no drifting, broke miner or cowboy left hungry as long as Jim had a dime in his pocket.

Ma Pitts, another resident whose little cabin on the bank of the river was always good for a handout. Typical pioneer, her girlhood was spent in the Paradox Valley where she married Pitts, a rancher who starved out of Paradox and when the railroad came in, went to railroading. Her son,

Ed, a stockman at Crawford and Black Mesa, her daughter, Nellie, wife of Denver Richardson that rode his engine to an upside down stop in the Gunnison River Canyon, grandmother of "Shorty" Richardson of Western State College. In fact, during World War I, everyone in Cimarron was related some way and a remark about the city dog would gain the animosity of someone, cause he was related some way.

Bill Brown, a grandson of Ma Pitts by her daughter Carry, grew up in Brush, over on the plains. His father K. Brown was a rancher. His mother passed away when he was four years old, and he grew up with a stepmother. Bill headed for the mountains and went to work at Vanadium, Colorado on the San Miguel River, then to the Railroad at Cimarron, where he met Marie Dudley, who was one of the beautiful waitresses at the then famous Black Canyon Hotel. The army, during World War I drafted Bill, and as newly weds, they moved to San Diego for Bill's training.

The last original building in Cimarron now sets on the point across from Newberry's store and built by Bill Brown, with the allotment money he had sent home to Marie. Oh yes, Bill's railraoding stopped when he whipped a division superintendent by the name of Dirkin who had ruled with an iron hand. If there had of been such a thing, the railroaders at Cimarron and Montrose would have presented Bill with the Rail Cross, Shovel Cross, or something.

With a wife like Marie, who still lives in Montrose, he couldn't lose. He later became a lumber merchant and a contractor; he died converted to the Mormon Church and a super missionary.

While we are on the Pitts family, Ed was punching cows before he could walk and was known as a super stockman. No fancy show stuff, but always good cows that raised lots of calves. He headquartered at Crawford where he and Birdie raised their family.

Ed was batching in Hotchkiss after Birdie died and Bill Brown came to visit him. Ed was frying a little patty of hamburger and complaining that he was out of meat. Bill said, "Why don't you get some gainsburger?" Next day

Ed went to the butcher shop and asked for gainsburger. The butcher said, "Well, you got you a dog, did you?" Ed said, "Hell no, I want it for dinner." Whereupon the butcher explained that it was dog food and Ed turned the shop blue cussing Bill Brown.

In his prime, many a new hat was jerked off a head and colomageed, which was what he would yell as he beat it to a pulp on the owner's head. Needless to say, many fights were instigated that way. Last time I saw him was at Birdie's funeral. I said kinda low as I shook his hand, "God bless you Ed." He bawled out "God bless you too," and could have been heard a block away; darned if I don't believe he meant it.

Rufe Berry who was a native of the Indian Territory and with his brother Joe, my father, cowboyed for the St. Louis Land and Cattle Company in the Territory. Came through Butte Valley in the 70's. Done the packing for the D.&.R.G. exploratory survey in 1879 and homesteaded on Hastings Mesa when they surveyed the Rio Grande Southern. Sold his homestead to Ward and Brown, one of the early day cow outfits of the area. He then moved his family to Cimarron and bought 160 acres in the hay meadows of the Little Cimarron. His hay crop he fed to his half dozen teams and the surplus to Jim Page.

He built the Halfway House on the Big Blue in 1913 and was the road overseer for Gunnison County from the County Line at Maurers to Pine Creek on the Blue. Sixteen children was his progeny. The boys, bronc riders, the girls, all family-oriented. The county road he maintained with his large percheron teams and when the winter snows hid any vestige of the road in many places. He hauled ties

for John and Andy, the area timbermen on the Big Blue where the ditch comes out of the Blue and crosses the Blue divide.

Sundays found the young folks gathered at some corral on the Blue or the Big Cimarron for the weekly bronc rides and picnics. The girls packed the lunches and the boys rode the broncs or steers whichever was the most handy. Ruffe took his turn along with the kids at riding broncs though he was past his 75th birthday then.

Discharged in June 1919, I came to Cimarron to visit my kin. The day after I got there was Sunday and a picnic and bronc ride was held on the Big Cimarron. My turn came to ride and my dear cousins picked out an old mare, blazed face, pig eyed, and pin eared. She had a colt on her. My dear cousins said let's let Glenn have the old mare, she's easy and he's just back from the war. The old mare went high, crocked, and turned her belly to the sun. It was bad enough to get bucked off by an old mare, but to

get bucked over the fence was worse. My dear cousins, all of which are six feet under now, are still, I am sure, smiling because the old mare was "Lightfoot" the champion bucking horse of the Montrose fair and rodeo for several years.

Henry Berry, the second oldest one of Ruffe was the government trapper for the Cimarron area and always kept a pack of hounds for trailing Lion and cats (bobcats).

The young folks would, on various occasions, have chicken roasts. Ranch women on both creeks would donate a couple of hens when it came their turn toward the success of these occasions. Oh, they wouldn't know it and flock reductions was blamed on the coyotes.

Henry and his wife Ella lived at the forks of the rivers and Ella had a flock of plymouth rock hens. Unbeknownst to them, their turn came and the meeting was held about a half mile up the creek from their house. Several of the boys went up on the side of the canyon and

started howling like coyotes. Henry's hounds took off and up the hill they went. A couple other boys with gunny sacks slipped into Ella's chicken house and bagged a couple of fat hens before the hounds got back.

Up at the fire the hens were dressed and put on a spit to roast while someone went and invited Henry and Ella to the party. The chickens were roasted and each was enjoying a portion when Henry quit eating and said, "Say! Where did you get these chickens?" No one made a sound and he said, "I might have known when the hounds took off up the canyon side that Ella had lost some chickens." We laughed till it hurt and Ella did too, after she had shed a few tears.

Ella was a Brower and raised on the first ranch up the big river from the forks on the right hand side, which was originally the Brown Homestead, among the first on the Butte.

In 1905 the town of Montrose decided to improve its water system which made a change on the big Cimarron which will be there until the millennium.

The Cimarron ditch takes the water from that crystal stream ten miles up the big Cimarron from Cerro Summit and winds through aspen, oak and service to Cerro Summit where Bastwick fork ranchers take their share and the city of Montrose takes the balance in a ten mile buried pipeline to the filtration facility.

The building of a canal like that was, in those days, no small job. First the trees were felled and stumps pulled, then the brush cut and all piled off the right of way, then the heavy sod plows, pulled with at least four head of horses, and all this before the fresnos scooped the dirt and rocks out and made a ditch.

No old timer ever missed the handle of a fresno or slip sometime in his life if he was ever around construction. A slip was a 2½ foot wide pancake turner that you held the handle so it would dig while a husky team of horses, mules or oxen would pull it. When it hit a rock or a stump the

handle would fly up and you would be in orbit if you didn't let go. A fresno was much the same only wider, shallower and twice as dangerous. Records are not available, but the Cimarron ditch, I'll wager, furnished a livelihood for several doctors during its construction.

The last ranch on the Cimarron side of Cerro Summit was homesteaded in the '80's and was a road camp for Otto Mears earlier. During my time I seen one of the owners make a living with a couple teams of horses pulling cars through the dobe mud on Cerro. For mud to build up on a car wheel till it stuck out 12 or 14 inches was common. When those chunks froze, watch out. Our low clearance, big wheel cars now would flounder.

The last ranch on the east side of the valley, still habitable, is the George Soderquist Homestead, laying as you start up the Blue Divide. George was raised above Colona on a little truck ranch run by his parents who raised a family selling eggs, chickens, berries and vegetables in Ouray.

George got in on the ditch out of the big Blue Creek and made some fine meadows after he pulled the oak and sage off. Water gushing off a cliff as you start up the

Blue looks for real, but George steered his waste water to the top of the cliff where it doesn't cut an arroyo but makes a pleasant sight. Soderquists have been "Salt of the Earth" for many generations. George's son with his wife and family now operate the old homestead.

Over the hill south a mile was the Aramatage Homestead where it was proven that a family could live on a garden patch, milk cow, chickens and love. Well maybe a little government beef (deer), which we all ate or went hungry many times. Mr. and Mrs., of course, are long since passed away as did Lee, their oldest son, who got curious about a duck's nest in the center of a pond up the divide a few miles. He attempted to swim out to it, got cramps and he and Henry Berry, who tryed to save him, drowned in the pond not much bigger than your front yard. Dottie, his kid sister, married a railroader and lives in Pueblo where they raised their family. It will hurry Dottie to be four feet tall and she told me on the bus one day that she could recall what all the men's belt buckles looked like at the

dances. Billie Price homesteaded just southeast of the Armatages and developed a fine spread milking cows and railroading.

Coming down from Jim Page's cow camps one evening, I stopped at Billie Price's place for supper. He was just starting out to milk and said if I would turn the separator he would get to supper quicker. I turned it and watched the cream flow out of the cream spout till in hungry desperation I took a cup, filled it with warm cream and "down the hatch." You can't ever be as sick as I was, didn't even get to eat supper, I just rode on. Mr. Price laughed about at the last time I saw him but I have never been able to get a good belly laugh out of it yet.

South of Price's and heading up the Little Cimarron Meadow benches is the old Billie Boot Homestead that he sold to Jim Page. Several hundred tons of hay was harvested each year on that ranch and fed to cattle that eventually found their way to the meat block of Page's Market in Montrose. Jim was a frugal, honest businessman and

had I stayed with my cowboy job with him I would have grew my grey beard on the Cimarron. His pride and joy was two purebred Percheron horses which he loved to drive. In fact, long after I left the Cimarron we came back fishing, slid off the road, and upset about a mile up the creek from Page's ranch. He brought the Percheron horses up with a derrick cable and righted my poor sedan and pulled me back on the road.

The Page Ranch along with my old homestead on the Big Blue is now owned by the Nichols family. Octave owns my old spread and I am glad to see it in good hands. The Nichols family pushed sheep from Utah desert to the upper Cimarron for many years. Johnny Marshal, who married Ruffe Berry's oldest daughter "Florence", moved camp for Jones and then for Nichols, if my memory serves me right. On the Little Cimarron Creek bottom lives the Birds. Mrs. Bird's son Clyde Vandenburg, became a successful movie something or other and yet always came back to the Cimarron for kicks. His brother, Claude, stayed with ranching.

The upper ranch on the peninsula between the two rivers was homesteaded by Sadie Kensigan, a school teacher at Western State College, and was run by Lawrence and Wilbur, her brothers. My wife's sister Marie helped them one winter and while visiting them my better half to be said Wilbur rode up to Butte Lake, which was ice locked, cut a hole in the ice and as the fish jumped for oxygen he knocked them over with a club. Nice story but he brought home two flour sacks full of trout which they froze.

Indians of the Ute Tribe considered Butte Lake and its area a sacred ground and to this day charcoal from their signal fires can be dug up on top of the Butte. A day's horseback ride from Chief Ouray's ranch above Montrose was the distance they packed him before they buried him, which the burying part has been disputed by some well-informed historians. Wherever they left him, I am inclined to believe it overlooked the Cimarron Valley.

Down the peninsula a couple miles is where Chas Berry, Rufe's oldest son ran a hay ranch and raised his

family of three boys and three girls. Ella his wife worked like a hired man and so did all his children. His first place on the Cimarron was at the mouth of Dobe Creek where I helped him put up hay in 1919 and where I first met my wife, poor little darlin', has been putting up with me ever since. Below Ruffe's ranch on the old county road was the Richardson ranch and was at one time a show place. Their summer range was on the upper peninsula and had he known the times we corralled and rode his steers, history would have stopped for some of us.

Across the road in the low, log house, lived Laurance Kensigan of the upper peninsula, who with his wife Sadie, put up baled hay, which in those days was the Cadillac way of putting up hay. A team of horses hooked to a sweep and which kept them going around in the same track, some 40 feet in diameter, each round stepping over the drive rod that pulled the bales. Oh, it was primitive but many a hay rancher would like one even now. Betty survives them and lives in Grand Junction.

Down the road west in a cut stone house lived Jake Maurer and his wife, there they raised one son who died of the flue in 1918, Helen who married John Soderquist and survives him living at Colona.

Mike who has run the ranch for 40 years now and who raised his family there still, along with his son run a good spread with combined sheep and cattle pasturing in the summer on the Big Blue and Forest. Jake a fugual German never allowed a season go by without every female animal on the ranch producing its young. His stud horse was kept busy if not by him, his neighbors, studs, bulls and bucks were always first priority, a hard man to starve out and a good citizen.

Up Dobe Creek where the old highway crossed it was a large frame house that Sam Flore lived in, he originated over in the Dallas Divide, Hastings Mesa County and had a brother Ben and sister who still live over there in that area or did. Sam believed in living off the land and like the Cerro Summit Rancher kept a team harnessed to pull cars out of the mud

hole across the creek from his house. Water from the field on top of the Mesa was the source of the mud and culverts put in by the County just didn't seem to be able to drain the water away, they plugged up quite often. Sam had a homestead on Fitzpatrick Mesa where he pastured his stock. North of his homestead was Tom Topliss' homestead and as Sam covered the rim and trail, Topliss had to cross his land, which is always is a burr under the blanket for a stockman. Sam ordered Tom to not cross his land anymore and emphasized it by killing Tom when he opened Sam's gate and started his cattle through. Tom's boy who was with him, dashed home and spread the news. Two family's lives were changed by that.

The Topliss family later moved from their place below Maurer's to Grand Junction where some of them still reside and did carry on a contracting business. Feelings were high on the Cimarron after the shooting.

During the teens, 20's, and 30's hundreds of thousands of head of sheep moved up the Little Cimarron and Blue Mesa to end up on or near Uncompahgre Peak and Lake City. Each year during the migration many sheep strayed off from the flocks and were picked up by local ranchers, all being legal as a stray was fair game for the person catching it. There has been a couple fair-sized bands of sheep started that way during my acquaintance with the area.

Soapy Smith lived on Dobe Creek with his wife, Nellie, who was a duaghter of Bert Brower. Don't ask me why the name Soapy, he was a fine individual.

Just above Smith was Mrs. Huser and son Gene who bought my homestead on the Big Blue. They were trying to put together a spread, and did. Hard-working, great people.

John Spurgen homesteaded the Huser place and took people horseback through Spurgen gulch to fish in the Gunnison River. It made a good deal for him and was worth the money to the flatlanders.

One family just below Topliss had the neighbors all upset because when Riddle (never heard his first name) bought the place it had a better than fair house on it. He proceeded to tear the house down and move his wife and I never knew how many kids, into a boarded up tent. Maybe health reasons but that is what he did; guess maybe his names explains it.

Just below Riddle's, Art Berry bought an acreage and put up a few tourist cabins and a restaurant. More cabins and an improved restaurant is still there and is owned by Larry and Linda Griffin who bought the place in 1977 and have with their children Lori and Mike made a most desirable stop for natives and travelers with the campground, cabins, fish pond and restaurant where some of the finest wood slab clocks are sold.

Those who went to the school house at the forks will remember the hassle over its location. Bill Wright's family has made a fine residence out of it now.

Art Berry was burned to death on California Mesa when his borther in law's house caught fire one cold winter night. His son Kenneth works for the town of Ridgway after spending many years in the mines at Silverton, Ouray and Naturita.

The Hurd family lived at the oldest place on the Cimarron which was located where Highway 50 passes Emmit Elzondo's buck pasture or at the forks of the rivers as we always described it.

A man by the name of Pat Trine built it for a stage stop and welcome it was to the bedraggled wayfarers who had fought their way over Blue Mesa and down S of a B Hill to have only to crawl up Blue Divide again before they wore out their brakes getting down to the river. Pat buried his wife and two daughters where the big pile of gravel now stands at the forks, their graves unknown to the contractors who covered them up or dug them up.

A retired couple homesteaded on the west side of the Blue Divide. Their name was Longton and no hungry traveler ever was turned away from Grandma Longton's door. We riders coming from cow camps would always leave off a haunch of meat at "Longma Grampton's" as we called her and of course, eat most of it before we went on down the valley.

Between Longton's and Soderquists was the Henry Walker place. Henry taught the Berry school at the upper end of the north south county road that went past Ruffe's place, and at the foot of the Blue Mesa hill. His wife Nettie ran the ranch and their son Wallace (Red) became a carpenter. Now retired, he lives on Orchard Mesa out of Grand Junction.

A pair of Swedes had a tie camp on the Big Blue and hacked (cut) ties for the railroad for many years. Many a log house still standing was hughed by John and Andy.

Their settlement with the railroad for their stacks of ties was looked forward to not only by them but by Ruffe Berry, who hauled them, and young bucks, including myself, for packing them out of the woods on burros to the pile where the hauler could get to them.

The teens, 20's and 30's were times when if you didn't work you didn't eat. Young folks worked, was better off for it.

In the late teens a Basque boy from Spain came to Cimarron and went to work for the Fitzpatricks. He lived with the sheep and became a top herder. I first met him at a sheep camp on Blue Mesa, his two dogs, him and myself ate mutton and some kind of fry bread, washed down with peppermint tea. I could not understand a word he said but his invite to get off my horse and eat was understandable in any man's language. The hearty meal was enjoyed and he didn't have to be told that in so many words.

My invite to my camp (gestures, of course) was accepted and he enjoyed the beef steaks and sourdough biscuits. A mutual friendship has existed through these sixty some odd years while we both left tracks over Western Colorado and Eastern Utah. Him in banking and livestock and myself in manufacturing and mining. Oh, by the way, his name, Ernest Elizondo. Big Cimarron in summer and North 12th in Grand Junction in the winter. Besides Curecanti Creek, State-line and West Water, to name just a few of his bailiwicks.

Starting up the Big Cimmaron where Doc Orms now lives was the Andy Enbalm Ranch. Andy was a forest ranger and worked out of the Gunnison supervisor's office. With six mules and two horses, I packed grub, dynamite and men to his trail camps, starting at Western State College and ending up at the top of Fairview Mountain. I'm getting a ways from Cimarron but anyway that was my association with Andy. An efficient, honest Swede.

Next was Bert Brower in the meadow a mile up the big river from the forks. Bert and his wife raised a family of girls whose progeny helps populate Montrose County. Honest, hardworking women whose work (like most other women) is taken for granted.

Up the river on the east side was, and as far as I know, is the Whittingham Ranch that was noted for the big stacks of Timothy hay and good stock presided over in later years by Johnny "Whit", who incidentally was one of the toll dancers that Dotty Armatage mentioned. The Whittingham contribution to the Cimarron Country was large and generous.

On the West side of the Big Cimarron on the first bench was the "Dutch" Veo Ranch, worked 24 hours a day by Dutch and Hattie, who had several children when she married Dutch. He also had several children when he married Hattie. Then they together had several children. Word has it that Hattie called, "Dutch, you better get out there, your kids and my kids is beating hell out of our kids." The ranch, a haven for so many, still reflects the efforts of that great family and the integrity of those parents. Art Berry and myself contracted to break twelve head of horses for Dutch while we packed ties for the Swedes. Try herding a group of burros up a trail through a forest on an unbroke horse. We did, for $10.00 a head. The going horse breaking contract in those days was "ride 'em three times and pull their tail", they're broke.

You find the Veo progeny when you enter the Cimarron Valley from the east, Mrs. Soderquist's, and until you leave it on Cerro on the west Buck Veo's son on the ease side of Cerro.

On the river below Veo's was the Stilman Schildt Ranch settled by him in 1879 with his wife Lucy, whose maiden name was Moore. Stilman and his wife lived at the forks of the Big and Little Blue several years where the ½ way house later was built. The Schildt's furnished meals for the freightors and immigrants. Later Stilman ran a toll station on Cerro Summit for Otto Mears. He must have had a few teams to help them through the mud during wet weather. Years later when cars traveled it free and a rain storm came along, you had to make reservations to go in the ditch. The Schildts had eight children, three boys and five girls. Their third youngest, Lucy Boring, still resides on South Second Street in Montrose.

Billie McMinn homesteaded above the Schildts and at about the same time and was noted as a hunter and trapper.

The name frontier moved out when the railroads moved in, so it was with Cimarron. Trine's stage stop at the forks of the rivers soon went by the wayside when trains began pulling up out of Black Canyon and an eating house was built, Cimarron became a town.

The Indians moved out, the buffalo had been gone some time, antelope was killed off and sold to the markets, deer in 1910 was scarce as hens' teeth and the meat diet from the markets changed from game to beef. Southeastern Utah had for 50 years been raising cattle for the markets and as a small boy I helped drive cattle from Monticello, Utah, others came from Mexico, and the mining town markets were supplied along with the Black Canyon Hotel at the railroad division point.

My first introduction to the niceties of Cimarron was in June 1919 when I came back from World War I. As the passenger train I rode came through the world-famous scar called Black Canyon, we were stopped by a rock slide which as luck would have it was all small enough so several men could roll them off the track. Our first indication of trouble was when the train came from a dashing ten miles per hour speed to a screeching halt, upsetting a pompous salesman who had ignored the conductor's warning "not to stand in the isle." Gathering him up was kinda like

picking up a half-filled sack of beans from the middle. All hands crawled off and walked up to where the train crew was rolling rocks, about the time the section men got there we were cleaned up. Incidentally, when the engineer"big holed her" (emergency braking, and all engines were called as females) the engineer blew four long blasts on the whistle, we passengers didn't know whether that meant how many rocks or tons, or hours we would be there, of course, it was calling the section crew.

Rocks we rolled, throwed and grunted (some of the passengers just grunted and didn't lift a pound) off the rails. However, we were soon stopped in front of the Hotel. A little man with a white towel tied around his 24 inch waist and a black skull cap covering his bald head was vigorously beating on a steel triangle and you might not think it but the railroad would have gone out of business had it not been for Ed Goff beating the triangle.

At the door, a smiling, astute gentleman ushered you in, he was Fred Laso, and tables were set as if you were all royalty. Linen table clothes, genuine silver settings, goblets filled with water and an array of waitresses that would have made Zigfield turn on.

A complete five-course dinner cost you $1.25. Waitresses in their black and white uniforms was swarming over you as if you were the only person there. Some of those beauties were Marie Dudley, my wife's half-sister and later married to Bill Brown, "Girtie" (Gertrude to you) and her sister Myrtle Kansigan, who later became Mrs. Art Berry, Ruby Gates, later Mrs. Collett, Ester Jones, (who wrote home for stamps because she didn't want to change a quarter,) and her sister Gene of Whitewater. Of course, there were more people worked there but at different times. Waitresses got $25 per month and room and board.

The cook I never met but I was told he also baked all the bread and pastries they served. So much for the Black Canyon Hotel.

Cimarron was a division point for the D. &. R. G. and because of the steep grade over Cerro Summit there had to be helper engines to get trains over the hump.

A round house with a few stalls for repairs, coal chute and water tank and all adjoining the stock yards which the Park Service has made a replica of now.

Chester Gates was the round house foreman and his brother Jack, Harry Gates, Denver Richardson (a son-in-law

of Ma Pitts), Frank Donaldson, Bill Price, W. R. Cady and Bill Brown also fired or run an engine out of Cimmarron. Old man Rusk (that's all we ever called him) his boy Frank, Johnny McIntyre, were all engineers and firemen. Linscott was the station agent.

The Valley and town had, and still has people, weddings, funerals, shootings, and progress always was and always will be.

The Vigils

Pioneers to my generation are some of the people I have mentioned. Pioneers to the current generation can well include the Vigils, Ben and Sally. Ben, born in Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1925, schooled there and later became a heavy equipment operator for Lowdermilk Construction Company that was in 1952.

That was the honeymoon trip delayed. Having met Sally Martinez in Espanola, New Mexico, Ben the ever one to recognize a bargain tied her tight and how smart he was. Ben recognizing that pay checks stop at most inopertune times started a car repair shop and filling station just east of the bridge across the Lake Fork at old Sapinero. Not to be outdone Sally started a filling station, enchiladas, chile and pie. Needless to say both filling stations prospered. Then came the Blue Mesa Dam, away went Santerellas Store and Hotel, the Hartman Hotel, section house long deserted and a score of ranches, resorts and private cabins, together with Ben and Sally's filling stations.

In 1962 the Vigils bought a location in Cimarron where the old round house and stockyards were once located. The

hand pump Ben pumped gas with didn't tell you how much nor spit hairs on the gallons but it got you gas. Sally started with a 10 x 20 dining room with a lean-to kitchen, the whole thing would fit in their kitchen alone now.

Winter and summer we who traveled that highway knew when we left Grand Junction or Gunnison, that we would eat, or should I say fill up, at Cimarron.

Came the day when I stopped to fill up and Ben was setting on a large back-hoe digging a hole. He told me of the plan, little did I think a man and wife, two teenage boys and two small girls would almost single-handedly build the finest restaurant in West Colorado. (Don't argue with me, when I want your opinion, I'll give it to you.)

Well enough for Sally's new filling station. If there is a worthwhile project in the county, Ben is into it. Governors, congressmen, senators, and local politicians all call him by his first name, and well they should.

The Vigils are working on the "Christ of the Traveler" statue which will be a granite statue set on the brow of the hill east to the restaurant and filling station. Ben runs a wrecker and after years of seeing the killings and cripplings of the travelers, he was inspired to put up the statues which I am sure will inspire travelers to heed the still small voice and show more compassion and forgiveness for their fellow men. Besides the statue will be there to encourage men to live, not to join him prematurely. Ben, Sally, and your sons, Patrick and Raymond, and daughters, Margie and Marion, God bless you.

Later historians will, I hope, do a better job of recognizing the National Park Service for the way they have made a truly wonderful recreation park out of the Curecanti area.

Bob Haugen who was responsible for the preservation of the railroad trestle at the foot of Cimarron Canyon.

Carl Gilbert who talked the City of Montrose out of old Engine No. 278 and caboose.

Don Hill who rustled the stock cars and done so much leg work and who in my book has made a tremendous contribution to the area.

Glen Alexander for his overall supervision and backing would that all beaurocrats would make the honest effort these men and many more I have not mentioned have made.

It takes a lot of doing to make a country and a book as long as a sled track couldn't record the work, joys and sorrows that has gone into the making of the Cimarron as you see it now. You've just read the feeble effort to record some, a small some of the people, happenings, and places. Only records long since destroyed, lost or unknown could bring the deeds and names of those pioneers not mentioned here of which these are many.

I have purposely omitted pictures because pictures of all I have mentioned would be impossible. To those who gave me names and dates, I thank, especially Marie Brown and Lucy Boring.

The printed price of this booklet is exactly the cost to print.