COAL:

THE CREAM OF NORTHWESTERN COLORADO

by

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PREFACE

The settlement of the Trans-Mississippi West has held the interest of Americans for well over a century. Those who participated realized they were involved in an unique experience, and those who followed have spent many hours dreaming about life on the frontier. Scholars have analyzed and interpreted trapping, gold mining, railroading, and ranching. A glance at the volumes of material that has been written and collected suggest that every major activity has been thoroughly covered. However, the history of coal mining in the western United States is a wide open field for original research.

Scholars generally agree that settlement of the west would have been vastly different without the railroads. The first trans-continental railroad, the Union Pacific, operated coal mines in southwestern Wyoming. The Rio Grande layed tracks to coalfields before going to the gold fields. One of the primary products shipped by rail was coal. Yet, despite the significance of coal to the transportation frontier, little is known of the mines.

Gold and silver mining towns and mining methods have held a consuming interest for many people. These urban centers could not have flourished without fuel to warm the homes and the smelters could not have operated without coke and fuel. Fuel for the cities and industries came from coal.

Early settlers were aware of the significance of coal, and coal was mined at numerous points. At each of these locations there developed a complex social system that ran the full gamut of life--a life that was vital to opening and sustaining western cities, industries, and railroads.

Coal: The Cream of Northwestern Colorado is an effort to take a broad look at the social, economic, and political institutions of a single coal mining area. The first chapters deal with the opening of the coalfield

and place it in relation to other regions and events of the period. Later chapters examine the broad outlines of northwestern Colorado's society. The work attempts to touch on numerous aspects of the mining history. It is hoped that readers will develop an appreciation for the complexities of the mining area. Perhaps we can go beyond the studies of labor relations and bloody strikes and view the entire picture. Labor relations are important to the history but they are not the sum of the whole.

The Yampa Coalfield was the center piece for the dreams and aspirations of Denver empire builders. David H. Moffat and his followers placed the future of their railroad on the coal mines. The settlers who peopled the region depended upon the railroad for their link with civilization and the railroad in turn depended upon the mines. Through the years the mining district with its center at Oak Creek, Colorado, has experienced a series of boom and bust, change and stagnation, violence and tranquillity. Coal was the "cream of Routt County" upon which the institutions of society fed. Coal formed the foundation upon which northwestern Colorado tied itself to civilization or barbarism. Despite the current emphasis upon tourism and skiing, coal remains the life giving substance of the "empire."

Researching material, primarily from local sources, for this book was exciting and rewarding. But time and distance were major obstacles. For example, it is a ninety mile round trip to the small county library at Steamboat Springs, and the very small Yampa Library has limited resources. Two fine people, Joy Handloff at Steamboat Springs and Nancy Nielsen at Yampa, patiently, competently, and successfully were able to place in my hands necessary documents. To achieve that feat took true dedication and a willingness to tread a maze of library mystery. Of course, the Three Rivers Library System played a key role in the procurement of material.

Written documents on coal mining history are restricted and limited.

Ususally available material is quite formal and deals primarily with technical matters. It is difficult to find data that reveals the people of the coal mines. Without the full cooperation of folks who gave freely of their time and knowledge it would have been impossible to record a broad scope history of the Yampa Coalfield. The final chapters depend heavily upon oral histories. To the people who shared their memories, I extend a million thanks.

For many years Helen Pierce of Oak Creek, Colorado, has collected photographs of northwestern Colorado's coal mining history. She has willingly and freely allowed the Colorado State Historical Society to copy her material. Thanks Helen, because if it were not for you and your labors the archival record would be a barren waste land. All historians are indebted to you and people like you.

December 1981 Paul Bonnifield

Yampa, Colorado

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CHAPTER I

COAL: A FORCE TO OPEN THE FRONTIER

The Oak Hills Edna Mine placed a sign along the highway that proclaimed "Coal the Cream of Northwestern Colorado." As cream is the primary life giving substance of whole milk so coal is the primary force in the social and economic history of the Yampa Valley. The Yampa Coalfield with its focus at Oak Creek, Colorado, has wended its way through a turbulent history as varied as the tundras, mountains, and semi-deserts that form the Yampa Valley. As time marched from the past to the present a combination of complex forces has combined to produce a tantalizing mixture of contradictions, rich as thick golden cream that has risen, elusive as cream violently stirred among the milk. At the center of the history is the story of developing and maintaining coal mines in a remote section of the state. To accomplish this feat required men of broad vision who understood the basics of developing western industries, cities, and transportation. Coal was needed to fuel the progress. Average citizens played a critical role by mining the coal and maintaining the allied industries. The combination of opposites--people with power, weakness; wealth, poverty; love, hate; greed, generosity--amalgamated to etch the history of coal mining in Northwestern Colorado.

Without fossil fuel settling the west would have been very difficult if not impossible. Early explorers and pioneers recognized the significance of coal in their lives. On their trip to the west coast Lewis and Clark located coal deposits on the upper Missouri River. Six years before gold was discovered in California, Charles Fremont noted coal deposits on the Laramie Plains.[1] As the American army advanced over Raton Mountain in 1846, Lt. W. H. Emory wrote in his diary, "It was reported to me that, at

Captain Sumner's camp, about 7 miles above where we encamped last night, and 12 miles from the summit, an immense field of coal crops out; this seam being 30 feet deep."[2]

Four years later a group of argonauts bound for California stopped to test the sands along a stream emptying into the South Platte River. Here a man named Ralston found gold, but the lure of California pulled the travelers on. John Beck who was with Ralston made the trip to California, became discouraged, and returned to Georgia. While in Georgia, Beck contaced William Green Russell and they set out to reexamine Ralston's earlier discovery. In 1858 the prospectors traveled up the Arkansas River to the mountain where they crossed to the South Platte River and Ralston Creek. No gold was found on Ralston Creek and many of the party retraced their steps across the plains. Russell and a few followers were more determined and moved their search to other streams where gold was found. Soon rumors of gold spread through the more settled regions to the east. The following year, 1859, the rush to Pikes Peak began.[3]

Coal miners trekked west with the gold rushers. "The first claim to coal lands was recorded in December, 1859, on the basis of a discovery made about a month earlier. The vein of coal was located on the east bank of Monument Creek nearly opposite the butte."[4] Accompanying the opening of coal mining activity on Monument creek was the opening of coal mines on Ralston Creek. Gold was not found on Ralston Creek, but in 1860 mines along it banks were producing fuel for Denver, Golden, Blackhawk, and Central City.[5] Near the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River in April 1860 Hosea Hoopingarner, Jesse Frazer, Clark Harrington and John W. Leland staked a coal claim. The coal proved to be high quality and was first used for blacksmithing in Canon City.[6]

During the excitement to get rich quickly, men of greater vision

pondered the problems of a transcontinental railroad. In 1861 W. H. Russell and Bela M. Hughes of the Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express joined Lt. E. L. Berthoud and the veteran mountain man Jim Bridger in their effort to discover a practical railroad route directly west from Denver and Golden.[7] Berthoud reported that he had discovered a suitable pass through the mountains and "that the country traversed west of the pass was fine valleys and that excellent coal abounded."[8]

In 1865 Hughes organized a large party of men in Salt Lake City, Utah, and surveyed a route eastward through the Yampa Valley over Gore Pass and across the Front Range by a pass north of James Peak. In 1866 John Quincy Adams Rollins began work on a wagon road through the pass used by Hughes.[9] When David H. Moffat built the Denver Northwestern & Pacific into the Yampa Valley he followed the Hughes and Rollins surveys. No doubt Moffat and his associates, one of whom was Hughes, knew a great deal about northwestern Colorado's resources including coal deposits at a very early date in Colorado history.

The early pioneers recognized the importance of coal to the Rocky Mountain region. On November 13, 1869, the Denver Gas Company was organized. A few months later a city paper reported, "Lamps right out on the street! . . . everyone is . . . talking about something called gas that's made from coal, and how you can have it come right into your house through pipes." The editor went on to say that Denver was "getting fancier."[10] He might have added that the city was also more dependent upon coal.

The federal government in 1867 acknowledged the importance of coal to the west when F. V. Hayden was sent to make a geological survey. Hayden wrote:

The construction of the Pacific Rail Roads across the continent

> is bringing about the dawn of a new era in the progress of the west. . . . The eart is now called upon more earnestly than ever before to yield up her treasures of gold, silver, copper, iron, and mineral fuel, and the existence of the last two minerals in the west, in workable quantities, is one of the most important practical questions of the day.[11]

The Hayden Survey found no deposits of marketable coal in Nebraska, but the coal along the Union Pacific and near Denver had a promising future. A coal mine on Pole Creek some twenty miles south of Cheyenne, Wyoming, was selling coal for $25 per ton. Coal from the Marshall Mine on South Boulder Creek was receiving $4 per ton at the mine and in Denver ~~coal~~ was selling for $12 to $16 per ton. The day Hayden visited the Marshall Mine it produced 73 tons ~~of coal~~ with a mine value of $292. By the mid-1860s Marshall had used local iron ore, which was plentiful, and local coal to produce pig iron. After noting the large iron deposits Hayden observed, "If the mineral fuel which is found here in such great abundance can be made useful for smelting purposes, these lignite and iron ore beds will exert the same kind of influence over the progress of the great west that Pennsylvania exerts over all the contiguous states."[12]

Railroads were vital to the remote communities, and coal was vital to the railroads. These two facts were clearly recognized by leaders of Colorado. When the Union Pacific bypassed Colorado cities in favor of a route through Wyoming, Denver businessmen organized and constructed the Denver Pacific to link their city to the transcontinental system. When the Denver Pacific construction reached Hughes (Brighton, Colorado) in 1870, David H. Moffat, John Evans, W. H. Cheesman and Hughes organized the Boulder Valley Railroad to tap the rich coal beds at Erie, Colorado. The Kansas Pacific arrived in Denver in 1870 and was soon shipping coal from Erie to

communities along its line as well as using Colorado coal to fire the steam engines.[13]

Upon completion of the Kansas Pacific to Denver, General W. J. Palmer organized the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad which was supposed to build south to Santa Fe and down the Rio Grande River. Construction began in 1870 and by 1872 the line was completed to Pueblo, Colorado. Here the railroad changed its direction "and a few months later Canon City and the coal-beds were reached." In 1875, after the national financial crisis, the railroad resumed construction south from Pueblo. The next year the line reached El Moro as its southern terminus. El Moro was in the heart of the vast southern Colorado coal field along Raton Mountain. The coal beds of Canon City and El Moro were critical for the railroad's revenue business.[14]

Gold, coal, and railroads were key links in opening Colorado. The early history of the northwestern part of the state follows the same pattern and is influenced by the same forces. Joseph Hahn crossed the Park Range into the Yampa Valley in search of gold. Hahn had fled Germany to Switzerland and then to the United States. In 1860 he was among the hordes of gold seekers at Georgetown, Colorado. No one knows when he left Georgetown or what route he traveled to the Yampa Valley. But he did locate some promising gold prospects and returned to Georgetown to report his findings. However, further investigation of the discovery was delayed until 1865 when Hahn formed a partnership with William Doyle, Captain George Way and others to reinvestigate the earlier prospects. The prospectors traveled into North Park and over the divide where they located some gold and named the nearby mountain Hahns Peak. As winter approached most of the members of the party returned to civilization. Way left Doyle and Hahn at the prospects while he went after provisions. For some reason Way decided not to return, and in the spring of 1866 Doyle and Hahn began a

desperate trip from the snowbound region. Along the Muddy Creek in Middle Park Hahn died and Doyle was rescued more dead than alive and taken to Hot Sulphur Springs. For the next few years little is known about prospectors in the Hahns Peak district, but by 1874 enough work had been done to attract John V. Farwell and a group of wealthy Chicagoians to invest in the Purdy Mining Company. Farwell's mining venture led to the first permanent settlement and road into the Yampa Valley.[15]

While the gold prospectors were exploring the Hahns Peak region another group of explorers was advancing. The Morgan family was from Wales, "where the father was superintendent of one of the coal mines." When the family migrated to Colorado in 1864 the men went to work in the Pikeview Coal Mine. Then in 1867 David, Tom, and Charlie moved to Rawlins, Wyoming, where they began freighting supplies to the Indian Agency at Meeker. The supply road traveled across the Yampa Coalfield and the outcroppings on Lay Creek. Later the Morgan brothers established a trading post at the mouth of Elkhead Creek on the Yampa River. They also ranched in the Axial Basin where a large coal vein is clearly visible.[16]

David Morgan was an observant and ambitious man. Among his many interests was mining. He was a self-taught geologist who later received recognization for his studies in the discipline. His geological and mining work took him across the area from the Laramie River to central Utah. He also located and claimed a large tract of anthracite coal near Pilot Knob.[17] Without doubt Morgan was the first amateur to closely study the coal field; however, the first official report of the Yampa Coalfield was made by S. F. Emmons in 1872 while working on the Fortieth Parallel Survey.[18]

While Emmons was working on his survey, in Sedalia, Missouri, James H. and Margaret E. Crawford and their three children, Lulie, Logan, and John, were preparing to move to Colorado. After crossing the plains the family

arrived at Empire, Colorado, where snow prevented their crossing Berthoud Pass. After wintering in comfort near Golden, the Crawfords traveled over Rollins Pass to Hot Sulphur Springs where the family rested. Here James organized a small party and took a wagon over Gore Pass to Egeria Park. The men crossed the park to Oak Creek where they struck the coal field. They followed a trail over the divides which separate Oak Creek, Trout Creek, and Middle Creek. After fording Middle Creek the party crossed Twenty Mile Park (so named because Crawford thought it was twenty miles across the park) and traveled on to Morgan's trading post. At one of the camps while crossing from Oak Creek to Morgans the party burned coal from an outcropping in a camp fire.

From the trading post Crawford and an unidentified companion moved up the Yampa River until they located the hot springs Crawford had been seeking since he left Missouri. Here he built a small cabin and staked a claim. As soon as Crawford perfected his claim he "formed a company to promote the interests of the property." In the company was A. E. Lea, J. P. Maxwell, A. J. Macky, and O. C. Cheney of Boulder, Colorado. Crawford somehow knew exactly where he wanted to go and what to expect from the time he left Missouri. He also had influence enough that in 1878 he was able to visit with Governor John L. Routt about the mail service to Steamboat Springs, Colorado. That summer a mail route was established into the Yampa Valley.[19]

The prospectors, settlers, government surveyors, and promoters proclaimed the merits of the Yampa Valley until the attention of powerful men was gained. By 1881 northwestern Colorado had become a "pawn" in the games empire builders played as they maneuvered to build railroads and tap western Colorado's mineral, agricultural, and coal wealth.

Men of wealth, power, and influence did not stake their fortunes without first checking the facts. In 1881 an engineer, Ezekiel Shelton,

was hired by a group of Denver businessmen to examine and locate coal deposits in Routt County. After arriving he located and opened a mine in Coal Mine Gulch north of Hayden, Colorado.[20] For the next several years he continued to investigate the Yampa Coalfield.

Shelton admitted he was hired to investigate the coal field, but there were other early settlers who are suspected of similar employment. They were less candid; therefore, their intentions are harder to grasp.

The Burlington Railroad had more than a casual interest in developing the Yampa Valley. The line did extensive construction work on the Blue River near Breckenridge, Colorado, and H. A. Sumner was employed as a locating engineer to find a route through the mountains directly west of Denver. Along his survey some work was done in the South Boulder Canyon. Work was also done in Glenwood Canyon. By 1886 when the project was abandoned the railroad had spent nearly one-half million dollars on planning and developing a route.

The Burlington also did some grading work near Glenwood Springs, Colorado, which would have taken the railway away from the Yampa Coalfield but into the coal beds of Garfield County. Another railroad was also interested in the Yampa Valley. In April, 1881, the Denver Utah & Pacific, organized by Moffat, began work in the South Boulder Canyon. This railroad also had plans of constructing over the divide and building west either by the Colorado River or Yampa River drainage which was the same choice as the Burlington. The D U & P failed to be more than a paper railroad.[21]

The Denver and Rio Grande and the Colorado Midland railroads were also playing the game of empire building. Men in the "know" were aware that during the 1870s coal mining was one of Colorado's fastest growing industries. In 1873 the state coal mines reported production of 69,977 tons. Ten years later the mines produced 1,061,479 tons with a value of

$2,388,328. "The industry of coke-making may be said to have begun in the state of Colorado in the year 1879." In 1880 there were 200 ovens which produced coke valued at $145,226.[22] Frank Fossett's Colorado: Its Gold and Silver Mines first published in 1880 found the state's coal production important enough that he included a chapter on the mineral plus several references throughout the book. The coal was used for domestic purposes in Colorado and neighboring states. It was also used to manufacture illuminating gas and to fire the furnaces of the smelters. The important Boston and Colorado Smelter at Argo used nearly 60 tons of coal per day.[23] At Pueblo the Colorado Coal and Iron Company built its iron works and began production in November 1880.

The leader of the Colorado Midland Railroad, James John Hagerman, fully recognized the importance of coal for his railroad and the mining industry:

> Leadville uses fully [100,000] tons of coal and 60,000 tons of coke per annum. This is all furnished by the D. & R. G. R. R. from Canon City and El Moro. . . . The immense deposits of coal at Elk Creek--the present proposed terminus of our road--are only 103 miles from Leadville, and in hauling coal and coke to that place we would have to overcome a difference of elevation of about 2,000 feet. In our estimates of business you will see that we have only figured on furnishing 20,000 tons of coke and 30,000 tons of coal to Leadville, . . . our gross earnings from Leadville business will exceed one million per annum. I believe our operating expenses would not exceed 50% of the gross earnings.[24]

It is interesting that the proposed terminus for the railroad at that time was the coal field in Garfield County, Colorado, rather than a few miles to the south at the silver mines at Aspen, Colorado. "Of course it would be absolutely necessary," wrote Hagerman, "that the large coal

deposits at the terminus of our road on Grand River (Colorado River) and at Elk Creek should be under the control of the friends of the Railroad Company." J. B. Wheeler, one of the Midland's leading financial backers, had control of a large amount of coal land. The plan called for Hagerman, Wheeler and others to form a separate coal company owned by selected men of the railroad.[25]

In a letter to T. M. Davis dated July 20, 1886, Hagerman expressed his alarm and indignation at a threat to his prospective control over the coalfield. John Cleveland Osgood who later was a primary organizer of Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, Victor American mines, and the community of Redstone, Colorado, was busy constructing the Colorado Railway Company's line up the Crystal River. Hagerman was firmly convinced that Osgood was in "charge of all the coal interest on the Burlington."[26]

Although Hagerman was not pleased with the threat to his control of the coalfield which he later shared with the Denver and Rio Grande, he was busy planning an extension of his road west from Glenwood to the White River. The proposed line would take him though the Danforth Hills and Grand Hogback coalfield. The Danforth Hills and the Yampa coal beds are separated by the easily accessible Axial Basin. Thus entry by railroad into the Yampa Valley was in the offing.

Clearly the railroads were interested in the Yampa and neighboring coalfields. Although Shelton was the only pioneer who frankly admitted that he was employed to locate coal mines in the Yampa Valley, there were others who seem to have similar connections. L. L. and John M. Breeze were in the mining and legal business at Breckenridge before they moved to the Yampa Valley in 1881. Lee Tower, who was related to the Breeze family, "did some scouting for rail people with an eye to building a railroad into the region."[27] Lewis H. Breeze arrived in the Yampa Valley in 1881 and was

soon appointed Treasurer of Routt County. Shortly a cousin, George Walker, settled on a claim where he mined coal for the local market. Walker's Coal Bank and Walker's Gulch soon became land marks south of Craig, Colorado. Within this family there were lawyers, railroad employees, county officials, and coal miners. It seems to be more than just a coincidence that the Breezes arrived at the same time Shelton was doing his investigations.

The location of Craig suggests that the founders knew a great deal about the Yampa Coalfield. Immediately north of the town is the massive Trout Creek sandstone outcropping. The Trout Creek sandstone is one of the two key geological formations used to identify the structure of the coalfield. Near the sandstone is the remains of an old volcano (Cedar Mountain). The volcano suggests that the volatile matter may have been burned from the coal. This would have left a very high grade coal.

During the 1880s several settlers without railroad or mining connections arrived in the Yampa Valley. In 1883, Archie McLachlan and David and Donald (Dan) Taylor believed they saw an opportunity to better themselves by moving to the valley. A year later the men began their adventures along the Yampa River. The Taylors were blacksmiths and the need for their craft in the new area soon found them solidly established. Although coal deposits were nearby, the Taylors found it unsatisfactory for their work. For a few years they made charcoal from Cedar trees. But the discovery of high quality blacksmith coal on the Yampa River below the mouth of the Williams Fork provided an adequate supply of coal. Find the coal and getting it were two separate problems. The only time that coal could be hauled from the mine was during the winter months while the river was frozen. On numerous occasions the ice would give way under the sledge and team, and on one trip from the mine a horse was drowned.[28] Throughout the 1880s Shelton, Breeze, Taylor and others opened several coal mines. By

the late 1880s the boundaries of the Yampa Coalfield were well known.

Routt County coal attracted attention in 1886 when anthracite was reported in the Pilot Knob region. "My attention was recently called to an alleged discovery of a true anthracite coal which was said to occur in Routt County, on the head waters of the Elk Head creek and on a branch of the Elk River," wrote Frederic F. Chisolm, "and as the matter was one of considerable interest to the Union Pacific railway; I went to the location as soon as possible to ascertain its value." Although the season was late and snow prevented Chisolm from making a thorough study of the field, he did find anthracite coal. He believed that the anthracite field was "not very extensive."[29] By comparing the description of the coal veins Chisolm checked with later investigations by others it appears that he was on the Crawford anthracite property.

During the summer of 1887 David Morgan, Jacob R. Harding and Ora Haley were returning by the Deep Creek trail to their homes after doing business at Hahns Peak when they stopped for lunch on the divide above the Hayden Valley. While the others were resting Morgan did a little prospecting and found anthracite float in a small stream. He soon located the veins and filed a claim. However, the other men in the party did not consider the discovery worth following up.[30]

About the same time Morgan was locating his anthracite claim, James Wadge and his bride Sarah Jane were locating at the west end of the Yampa Canyon (later known as Mt. Harris). James had come to the United States from England in 1880 and worked in the mines at Silver Plume, Colorado, until he moved to the Yampa Valley. He then traveled to England where he and Sarah were married before returning to the United States. Within a short time after the Wadges located their claim they were busy helping build the road down the canyon. After its completion their home became a

road stop and stage station. Wadge also began coal mining. With his wife's help he opened a mine on Wolf Creek. The first coal from the mine was hauled in Sarah's apron. He later opened a mine across the river. In the mines he uncovered a high quality coal which attracted the local market.[31]

Several miles south of the Wadge Mine where the Egeria Park trail crossed Oak Creek and ascended the divide to Trout Creek by way of Egeria Gulch in the late 1880s William Mahoney opened a coal mine. Residents could purchase a wagon load of coal at the mine for a dollar regardless of the wagon's size. Some enterprising settlers would so overload their wagons that they could not be moved. Mahoney was soon followed by Pete James[32] who opened the Pinnacle vein on upper Oak Creek. When the railroad finnally arrived the Wadge, Mahoney, and James mines became centers of coal mining activities.[33]

On Trout Creek at the mouth of Egeria Gulch in 1889 Joseph Benson (Ben) and William Male began a coal mining and ranching operation. The Male family had been miners in Cornwall, England, before John C. Male came to the United States where they settled at Beach Lake, Pennsylvania. At Beach Lake the family engaged in coal mining and ranching. Thus it was natural for Ben and William to combine ranching and mining when they arrived in Colorado. Soon after the brothers established themselves on Trout Creek two more brothers and their sister Susan and her husband John Wesley Van Wert came to southern Routt County. The "clan" was able to establish control over valuable coal land. As county commissioner at the turn of the century Ben was most helpful to the Denver Northwestern & Pacific which was laying track to the Yampa Valley.[34]

With the increased settlement of the region and the developments in the coal mines the extent and variations of the field were becoming better

understood. In a 1904 edition of Camp and Plant (a Colorado Fuel and Iron Company publication) an unidentified author gives us a glimpse into his diary. In 1889 he and a group of geologists traveled from Denver to Glenwood Springs and over the Flattop Mountains to inspect a part of the Yampa Coalfield. Since the party did not take the stage road into the region, it is suspected that they had specific business in out-of-the-way places. After reaching the headwaters of the Yampa River the party traveled to the mouth of Coal Creek (already named by 1889). After camping that night the party labored up a steep mountain while prospecting for coal float until they found the coal veins close to the igneous rock formation. There was a possibility of anthracite. Since the conditions for anthracite were present the geologists were compelled to investigate. The igneous rock could have burned off the coal's volatile matter. After locating the coal outcroppings they found three separate veins of bituminous coal and an opening where someone else had staked his claim.

With the outcroppings already claimed the men did not tarry long on Coal Creek. They soon broke camp and traveled by the most direct route possible to Steamboat Springs where the head of the party bought more provisions and met with friends. While there the diarist noted:

> With the rapid settling up then in progress, the growing agricultural and stock interests and the abundance of coal which we heard of nearby, we then concluded it would not be long before a railroad would be pushed through this valley to open up a large, undeveloped territory.[34]

After resting and resupplying the party headed for Deep Creek; part of the trip was on a rude wagon road built to haul anthracite. At the head of the creek the party spent several days investigating the anthracite deposits. Later they moved on to investigate the anthracite on the

headwaters of Elkhead Creek. While inspecting the coal deposits they were on the lookout for possible railroad routes to the coal. Since the party knew exactly where they were going and what they were looking for, it can reasonably be assumed that they had been employed to check the anthracite coal on the Crawford, Morgan, and Shelton banks. They were also to investigate coal deposits on Coal Creek. After satisfying themselves the party traveled to Hayden and across Twenty Mile Park. While crossing the park the men saw several coal openings and veins, but these did not detain the travelers.[35]

The author of the article noted, "the coal looked clean and bright, but what the extent of the field [anthracite] would be could not be determined without a diamond drill."[36] During the following winter a crew worked a diamond drill along parts of the coal field. The exact results of their work is unknown, but a map of Colorado Fuel & Iron Company holdings in 1893 shows that they had two coal claims in Routt County. The land on Elkhead Mountain had anthracite coal. The Peacock Mine on the Snake River had dry domestic coal.[37]

By the end of the 1880s knowledgeable men in Colorado were becoming more aware of the importance of coal to the state. "And however productive the mines of gold and silver of this highly favored State may become," wrote J. S. Newberry, professor at the Colorado School of Mines, "I cannot but think that her coal mines will prove the most important sources of her wealth."[38] Newberry's prophecy had a solid foundation. Colorado coal production for 1882 had an average value per ton at the mine of $2.25 with a total value of $2,388,328. Although the average value at the mine dropped from $2.25 to $1.61 per ton by 1892 the total value was $5,104,112. In 1882 the state reported producing 1,061,479 tons of coal. In 1892 some 4,102,389 tons of coal were produced.[39] With the crash of the silver

market and the severe national depression starting in 1893, Colorado entered a very difficult period of her history. As the weight of the hard years bore down mines and smelters closed, railroad business dropped, and railroads went into receivership. In 1892 Colorado ranked sixth among coal producing states, and although production dropped 1,270,980 tons the following year the industry was one of the least affected by the depression. After 1893 the coal business began to recover quickly, for coal was being shipped to Kansas, Nebraska, Texas and as far east as Shreveport, Louisiana.[40]

As the depression gripped the state the Denver Times published a glowing article on the state's coal mines. The Creede Candle reprinted the article which claimed that the state had sold $8,000,000 worth of coal the previous year and the production of $1,000 worth of coal employed five times more men than the production of $1,000 worth of silver. "So it will be seen," concluded the article, "that it is by no means silver that is keeping us going, and that in a few years, instead of Colorado being the silver state, par excellence, it will be the great coal state of the West, with the black diamond as king."[41] Robert Athearn observed in The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, "it was a less glamorous part of the mining industry that helped [the D & R G] through this time of trouble. Its heaviest traffic was coal and coke, 80 per cent of which was carried outside the state for sale."[42]

With the growth in interest by residents of Colorado in coal, Routt County became more important. The county first reported coal production in 1889 with a tonnage of 1,491. After that, reported tonnage dropped off to 330 tons in 1892. During the depression years Routt County's reported tonnage remained near the 1,000 ton mark until the turn of the century. Before the depression took its toll on Colorado development the Mineral

Resources Division of the United States Geological Survey examined the Yampa Coalfield. In the 1892 report, R. C. Hill argued, "the total area of accessible and inaccessible measures assumed to contain coal seams of workable thickness will aggregate about 1,100 square miles."[43] The study included coal deposits near Lay Creek on the west and Oak Creek on the east, California Park to the north and the Flat Top Mountains to the south. Over this vast area the investigators found coals ranging from a low grade of lignite to a high grade anthracite. The reconnaissance work was hampered by the lack of development in the field, and that would not occur until a railroad reached the Yampa Valley. Despite the difficulties, Hill was optimistic for "the agricultural and grazing resources of the region, coupled with the superior quality and variety of the coals and the existence of a practicable route for a through line of road, have already attracted the attention of railway men."[44]

The gateway to the region, Gore Canyon, was claimed by the Denver and Rio Grande, Burlington, Denver Utah and Pacific, and the Union Pacific.[45] Those railroads plus the Colorado Midland and Santa Fe were in a desperate battle over domain and access to the Pacific. Although most of the direct struggle was between the Colorado Midland and the Rio Grande along the Colorado River, the route through the Yampa Valley loomed large in the background.

One of Colorado's more important families arrived in the Yampa Valley in 1889 when Sam Cary established his homestead near Hayden. At the time Robert and John Cary were active in hardware, mining, smelting and other businesses at Leadville. Supported by the fortune gained in the mining region the Carys purchased ranches in the Yampa Valley until they were among the largest in the region. On the ranch they experimented with livestock and crops. They also built fabulous homes on the ranch where

they entertained numerous "VIPs" including the Crown Prince of Belgium.[46] Although the full extent of the Cary's involvement in Yampa Valley coal activities is not clear, it is clear that they were deeply involved in the building of the Moffat Railroad and the organization of the West Hayden town site.

While the Cary family was establishing their ranch, other important people were being connected to Routt County. Articles of Incorporation were filed at Leadville in 1893 for the Rocky Mountain Coal and Iron Company which planned to mine coal in several counties including Routt. Among the organizers were John C. Osgood and G. H. Prentiss.[47] Osgood later controlled the Victor American mines which operated the Pinnacle and Wadge mines in Routt County. The Prentiss family name is connected with the actual opening of the coal mines on Oak Creek including the Pinnacle and Keystone mines. When one considers how companies gained control of large sections of coal land at this period of our nation's history, suspicions of secret activities arise.

Congress passed an act in 1873 which provided for the transfer of coal land into private hands. Under the law a person could obtain 160 acres and associations could take 360 acres of coal land for $10 per acre if a completed railroad was more than fifteen miles away. The same land would cost $20 if the railway was closer. Under the law little land was sold as coal land. The size of the claim was too small to attract economical mining, thus firms that planned to spend large amounts of money to build a railroad and open mines purchased land gained under the homestead act. "Dummy entrymen" were often used to establish the claims. "Legitimate business could not be fostered by law which did not lend itself to profitable development."[48] After the turn of the century the federal government began legal actions to recover coal land they claimed was

gained by fraudulent use of dummy entrymen. The case against the Burgess tract, part of the Pinnacle Mine, dated back to 1893, the same year the Rocky Mountain Coal and Iron Company organized to mine Routt County coal.[49]

The depression was becoming a thing of the past and Colorado was prospering from the gold mining activity at Cripple Creek by the summer of 1896 when William G. and Anne Evans journeyed into northwestern Colorado. In the Yampa Valley Evans found "immeasurable fields of rich soil, millions of acres of ungrazed grassland, unexplored beds of coal, and whole ranges of virgin timberland--an empire unrealized."[50] Evans was soon stirring the blood of Moffat to realize his long dream of building a railroad directly west from Denver.

Moffat and Evans were not the only ones interested in developing the empire. The Steamboat Pilot for October 27, 1897, reported that J. C. Teller, nephew of the wealthy Senator H. M. Teller, was at Fort Steele, Wyoming, looking over the possibilities of building south to Saratoga and Grand Encampment, Wyoming, and into Middle Park, Colorado, via the Hahns Peak and Columbine mining districts. Later that year Routt County learned that the Utah Central was considering building east from Salt Lake City to the gilsonite beds along the Colorado-Utah line. To build on into northwestern Colorado was an easy step.[51] Early in 1898 knowledgeable people were speculating that the construction of the Colorado and Northwestern from Boulder to Ward, Colorado, was a ploy before the line announced its real purpose to build into the northwestern part of the state. The secret action was necessary, folks believed, because "a tacit, if not actual, agreement not to build westward exists among all the big plains lines practically terminating at Denver."[52] But the Burlington, Santa Fe, Missouri Pacific, or Rock Island were interested in occupying an area larger than many of the eastern states. In 1900 the Burlington, Union

Pacific, and W. A. Clark's Utah Railroad were surveying routes into the vast empire that beckoned.

Northwestern Colorado offered much to men of energy and vision. The gilsonite beds were located in the late 1870s by Samuel Gilson and used for sealing barrels and asphalt. Although there had been years of planning to build a railroad to the field and develop the area, the obstacles were so many that nothing of significance was accomplished until after the turn of the century. The gilsonite beds were valued at over a billion dollars by the federal government in 1897. After publication of the federal report, gilsonite alone could stir the imagination of ambitious men.[53] But it did not stand alone. In 1897 the Royal Flush and Tom Thumb mines in the Hahns Peak district began working high paying ore. This brought new life to the old gold mining district. The developments were promptly reported by local newspapers. Near Steamboat Springs a high quality onyx was discovered. And the most exciting new discovery was copper primarily in the Battle Lake and North Park areas. But Copper Ridge near Steamboat Springs drew considerable attention.[54] On the Colorado River near McCoy, Colorado, another deposit of copper was located. At the Copper King Mine, later to be Copper Spur on the Moffat Road, J. J. Hagerman and F. G. Wipp invested considerable amounts of money. They installed the first gasoline engine in Routt County--a 25 horse power engine for the mine's hoist. Hagerman we met earlier with the Colorado Midland; W[illegible]p was a wealthy Cripple Creek mine operator. Near the Copper King was the America Mine which also held great promise.[55] Accompanying the gilsonite, onyx, gold, silver, and copper excitement was interest in coal and oil. The Yampa Coalfield was estimated in 1899 to cover 1,250,000 acres, "or more than the black diamond wealth of Pennsylvania."[56]

By 1900 men of influence and power began to visit Routt County.

During the spring Arthur Willett and L. F. Dawson vacationed in the region. Dawson and Willett were associated with N. P. Hill, E. G. Kindred and C. R. Barnard in the Routt County Investment Company. This company was especially interested in oil, coal and mineral lands.[57] N. P. Hill was involved in a Florence, Colorado, oil business.[58] In June a man who had made and lost and made again several fortunes in Colorado mining, B. Clark Wheeler, made a hurried trip from Aspen to Routt County. He collected several specimans of copper, coal and oil which he exhibited at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia.[59]

Three or four miles north of the stage road on Tow Creek, oil issued from the ground with the water of a large spring. For years residents of the county had skimmed the oil from the water to obtain lubricants.[60] In 1900 these oil springs were drawing the attention of outside men. By August, Dawson, Hill and associates had organized the Routt County Improvement Company. This company controlled 4,000 acres of oil and 10,000 acres of coal land. On the William Hitchen ranch about six miles west of Steamboat Springs they drilled an oil well. At the same time B. Clark Wheeler and friends were establishing themselves on lands adjacent to the Improvement Company. A third firm was the Northwestern Oil and Coal Company which leased from a Steamboat Springs banker, F. E. Milner, a ranch west of the Hitchen property. The oil lease included some promising coal land.[61] Near the Milner land was Coalview, so named because a large vein is featured on the south bank of the Yampa River in clear view of any traveler on the highway.

The third company to enter the field was the Colorado and California Oil Company. This company controlled 3,600 acres of oil land in Routt County and did extensive work in Rio Blanco County. While picking up their oil land they also acquired 320 acres of anthracite land.[62] During the

years 1900-1901 several oil companies were organized, and wells were drilled near Tow Creek, west of Hayden and on Hunt Creek northwest of Yampa, Colorado. Part of the wells did produce oil and the Northwestern Oil and Coal Company did install a pump in one of their wells. But the big activity was coal.

In the late 1890s Sam Adams and Dr. A. A. Johnson came to Steamboat Springs and began acquiring coal lands for their eastern investors. Soon the map of the county showed lands owned by the Yellow Jacket Coal Company, Toponas Coal and Land Company, Elkhead Anthracite Coal Company, Colorado Anthracite Coal Company, Wisconsin Coal Mines, and others.

In the fall of 1900, G. H. Smedley applied ~~to the town of~~ Steamboat Springs for a franchise to sell electricity in the community.[63] After receiving the franchise, Smedley built his electrical generation plant which was fired by coal from the Yampa Valley Electric Mine. The mine was located on Oak Creek where the Arrowhead Mine was later developed. Although the dip of the coal was very steep which hampered mining and the coal had to be hauled several miles by wagon before it reached the generators, the project proved that Yampa Valley coal was an excellent steam coal. All that remained was to build a railroad to haul the fuel to the market.

CHAPTER II

AN EMPIRE UNREALIZED

In February 1902 David H. Moffat, Jr. sent a telegram to William G. Evans and Gerald Hughes in New York City telling them to "Return at once, I have decided to build a steam railroad from Denver to Salt Lake City."[1] Why did he wish to build a railroad that was sure to bring all the weight of powerful eastern men down on his head? When the announcement was made Moffat was 63 years old. He had risen to great social heights and material wealth. Most of his old associates were dead or retired. It was the custom for men of his age and position to quietly endow universities, libraries and civic projects. No one would have blamed him if he had retired to enjoy the fruits of his life's labor.

Moffat, an old veteran of western railroad wars, had played a hand in the Denver Pacific, Boulder Valley, Denver & Rio Grande, South Park & Pacific, Colorado Southern, and numerous lesser railroads. During his years of railroading he had caused numerous surveys to be made across the Front Range. He was well informed of the physical and financial dangers of building a railroad over the mountains. He also knew of the agreement made among powerful railroad interests not to enter the region between the Rio Grande and Union Pacific Railroads. To avoid the wrath for some time he had been using various ploys to mask his movement. In fact in February 1902 Evans and Hughes were in New York raising money for one of the ploys. Moffat's plan was risky and complex. To gain the west coast Moffat planned to build to Salt Lake City, Utah, where the railroad would connect with the Clark Road which continued on to Los Angeles, California. However, in July 1902 Edward H. Harriman purchased Clark's railway. This panicked most of Moffat's supporters, and it was not too late for him to back out; but

Moffat continued with his project.[2] Why?

Moffat was a practical man who had mastered the hard ways of the business world of his day. He was also a dreamer who could dream big dreams and work to make those dreams a reality. During the earlier years Moffat had often worked with John Evans to make Denver a leading city. But John was gone and in his stead was William. In 1896 William and his sister Anne Evans had visited northwestern Colorado. After the vacation Evans encouraged Moffat to build a railroad directly west from Denver. Evans could also have big dreams. When the western railroad projects first began in Colorado, Bela M. Hughes, a close associate of William H. Russell of Pony Express fame, had traveled with Lt. E. L. Berthoud as they surveyed a railroad route west from Denver. He also in 1865 surveyed the route from Salt Lake City, Utah, eastward through the Yampa Valley. Afterwards Hughes had played a vital role in building Denver as the "Queen City of the Rockies." By 1902 Gerald Hughes had taken the torch. Soon after Moffat's exciting announcement H. A. Sumner joined the battle to force a railroad over the mountains. Sumner knew what he was about. He had been locating engineer for several railroads including the attempt by the Burlington to cross the mountains via the South Boulder Canyon and Rollins Pass route. Why build the railroad? Moffat, Evans, Hughes, Sumner, and others believed that northwestern Colorado was an empire unrealized and they set about building an empire.

After Bela Hughes' survey there were several quiet looks into the area's untapped treasures. The start of railroad construction began a period of open inspection of the Yampa Coalfield. A number of experts inspected and reported on the coal measures and their findings were publically heralded. In order to see the region as they did, using our imaginations, we take ourselves back through time. We will observe the

findings of that generation and not encumber ourselves with facts learned by later generations. The time for debating the merits between older and more recent theories will have to wait.

On a pleasant summer day we alight from the train at Wolcott, Colorado. After we are quickly introduced to our host and stage driver a few pleasantries are passed and we board the stage for the long ride to the Yampa Coalfield. The road leads over a steep divide between the Eagle and Grand (Colorado) rivers. At the Grand River the red dirt and rocks of ancient deserts are evident. From the river we begin the climb up Red Dirt Hill towards Egeria Park. As the coach makes its way, the travelers are sped through a region deeply scarred from a violent geological past.

After reaching the crest of the hill, the road leads down to Egeria Creek and up the gentle grade until it reaches the summit of Five Pine Mesa. From this vantage point many of the features of the upper Yampa Valley can be identified. To the west is the snow laced Flat Top Mountains. Although their tops reach timberline, they do not have the rugged peaks of most Colorado mountains. The crown of the Flat Tops is covered with igneous rocks from a great lava flow. Near the center a large glacial valley forces its way into the mountains. In that valley is Coal Creek where some coal veins were inspected and claimed as early as 1889. The eastern edge of the Yampa Valley is defined by Green Ridge with its ~~clear~~ obvious evidence of volcanic activity. Some twenty miles to the north is a long ridge covered with scrub oaks that clearly define the boundary of Egeria Park. From Five Pine Mesa the road leads across open sagebrush country to the community of Yampa. As we travel we see the remains of extensive volcanic activity. There is Sleeping Lion Rock, Finger Rock, Eagle Rocks, Big Butte, and Little Butte. Now we pass the Devil's Grave north of Yampa where the tell tale marks of the Crectaceous Period become readily apparent, but this region is

too old for coal bearing stratas. Where the Yampa River turns sharply to wind its way between Green Ridge and Thorp Mountain, we take a road over a low divide and down to Oak Creek. Setting well up Oak Hills from the creek, we find the James mines. Here we meet Professor Weston who will guide us through his 1903 inspection of the Yampa Coalfield.

In February 1903 the highly respected mining engineer William Weston visited the James mines as he inspected the coalfield for the Denver Northwestern and Pacific. Weston found that James was working two seams of coal. One seam was twelve feet high. The other seam, across the gulch, had five feet of blacksmith coal. By making his inspection during the winter Weston found the answer to the vital question: Could the mine be worked during the winter? That winter James was mining coal and local residents were hauling it to Yampa.[3]

By 1903 large investors owned strategically located coal mines. The James mines were owned by the Denver and Northwestern Fuel Company. Next down Oak Creek was the Shuster Mine owned by the Moffat Railroad. The mining property was adjacent to Shuster's ranch where a group of men from Leadville and Cripple Creek, Colorado, established the Oak Creek Town Company. Between the Shuster and James mines was the Walker prospect. The prospect had peacock coal of excellent quality. Below the Shuster Mine was the Eller Mine owned by S. M. Perry, a trustee of the Denver Northwestern and Pacific Railroad. Nearby was the Myers Mine which had been discovered initially during a hunting trip. While hunting on Oak Hills Henry Myers wounded a deer. The animal tried to escape through the brush, but Myers followed close behind. The chase crossed an outcropping of coal, and it was here that the Myers family later opened their mine.[4]

On down Oak Creek was the Chambers Mine. Lauren Miller Chambers was born to Joseph and Cynthia Chambers on October 26, 1874, at Waverly, Iowa. After receiving his basic education at Waverly he entered Iowa State

College (University) in 1898. While earning a degree in mining engineering he starred as a guard on the football team. In 1901 he married Hazel L. Bearshear and moved to Denver where he was employed by the Northern Coal Company. Soon he was ushered off to Routt County where he established a coal claim and looked after the interests of the Juniper Coal Company. Later he became superintendent of the Juniper Mine. During the early years of opening the Yampa Coalfield, Chambers was also superintendent of the Morrison Coal Company and the McKinley Coal Company. These mines were near the old James property. Later he was superintendent of the Haybro Mine. Owners of the Haybro Mine were the major stockholders in the Juniper Mine. When the Juniper closed in 1914 the buildings were moved to Haybro. Thus Chambers played an important role as dummy entryman and coal mine developer. He passed away in 1931 while working on a Mississippi River flood control project.[5]

Weston visited the coalfield to determine the quality of the coal. He was looking for thick, pure veins of coal that could be economically worked. The higher the carbon content the better the fuel. Routt County coal ranges from approximately 20 percent waste to over 55 percent waste--ash, moisture, volatile matter, sulphur, etc. At the James Mine, Weston's samples showed that the coal in the five foot seam had a moisture content of 3.50 percent, a volatile matter content of 32.00 percent, an ash content of 4.50 percent and a fixed carbon content of 60.00 percent. In the twelve foot seam the coal contained 3.00 percent moisture, 37.00 percent volatile matter, 4.50 percent ash, and 55.50 percent fixed carbon. William P. Headden visited the James Mine in 1907 and found the twelve foot seam to be a fourteen foot seam and the quality of coal slightly improved. The air dried coal had a BTU of 12,758 and the pure coal's BTU was 13,802 with a 0.521 percent sulphur content. That was high quality coal in a large vein.[6]

The wagon road that climbed Oak Hills from the Shuster Mine led over the divide and down Egeria Gulch (later Mule Gulch) to Ben Male's ranch on Trout Creek. On the ridge above Male's home appear the massive Trout Creek sandstone formation. The formation runs in a northwesterly direction establishing a readily visible landmark which separates two of the three coal series. The coal below the Trout Creek sandstone is in the lower series and the oldest beds. N. M. Fenneman and Hoyt S. Gale of the U. S. Geological Survey, 1906, found the coal in Male's Mine to be eight feet thick; however, the upper three feet had been left for roof. An near the crest of the divide between Oak Creek and Trout Creek the coal deposits of the middle series were known to exist. On lower Trout Creek near the Eddy post office several prospects were opened and the Jones Mine showed signs of extensive work. In the area the formations were broken and numerous faults occurred which made it very difficult to locate the lower strata of coal.[7]

From Trout Creek the road led over another sharp divide and down to Middle Creek. Where the road crossed the steam near the old Dunkley road intersection an outcropping of coal from the middle series was easily seen. By following down Middle Creek it was possible to reach the Hutchinson mines. The Hutchinson family worked a nine foot six inch seam. Close by there were prospects in other large veins of the middle coal group.

By moving to the west, Twentymile Park opens to the traveler. Across the park in clear view is the massive light colored formation of the Twentymile sandstone. The formation runs towards the north and is readily recognizable. The Twentymile sandstone marks the division between the middle and upper coal stratas. Within Twentymile Park along Foidel Canyon numerous coal outcroppings were present. On Fish Creek the Toponas Coal and Land Company acquired large tracts of land and opened a large seam

measuring fourteen feet thick. Weston found the coal contained 4.50 percent moisture, 39.20 percent volatile matter, 2.30 percent ash, and 55.80 percent fixed carbon.[8]

About one-half mile south of the Toponas Coal and Land Company mines Fish Creek enters a canyon that breaches the Williams Mountains. The range is lower than many of the mountains further south, but despite the lack of impressive size the Williams Mountains have their unique characteristics. The mountains run counter to the coal ranges and stream courses of Twentymile Park thus slicing the coal beds and turning them up until they are nearly vertical. Here the Yampa Coalfield terminates. From several prominent points the lay of the land west of Oak Creek is easily gleaned. There are numerous divides and by using these divides early geologists and mining engineers separated the coal field into sections: Oak Creek, Trout Creek, Twentymile Park, Wolf Creek, Sage and Dry Creeks, Williams Fork, Craig (upper and lower), Willihan (at Lay), Pilot Knob anthracite and the Flat Top Mountains. It is obvious that the coal beds "have been subject to strong earth pressure, which has folded up in long anticlines and synclines the coal measures with the other formations." Accompanying the evidences of powerful earth movements were the dikes and massive volcanic remains. These forces changed the coal from a low grade lignite to sub-bituminous, bituminous, and anthracite.[9]

On our imaginary journey we have gained our bearings and are ready to meet an array of noted experts. After thanking Mr. Weston for his work we hurry on. From Fish Creek the road leads west across Grassy, Sage, and Dry creeks to the Hayden Gulch coal. In 1903, H. F. Parsons and Charles A. Liddell inspected Hayden Gulch. Their work gives some insight into the methods used to locate and evaluate coal. In Hayden Gulch near the Williams Fork River all the coal beds are exposed and can be identified.

In an old ant hill Parsons and Liddell found particles of coal that had been exposed to weathering for some time, yet the particles remained shiny indicating they resisted weathering. The coal in the outcropping proved promising. "The fact that it withstands the weather, breaks without dust, burns with a long flame, has a glossy hard surface and is compacted, are properties indicating it to be a bituminous grade," reported Parsons and Liddell. "They are properties required by a good steam coal so that it will stand transportation. A disintegrating lignite containing large quantities of water and ash are of little value because it cannot be handled and does not give a proportionate amount of heat."[10]

The scientists noted that the coal measures dipped with the drainage "so that little trouble will be encountered from water." The location of the coal in the mountain sides would give the necessary height from the mine portals for a gravity powered tipple, "making it very inexpensive to handle a large tonnage." With the coal veins reaching the surface the expense of digging shafts and rock tunnels would be avoided.[11]

Weston, Fenneman, and Gale examined the coalfield west of Hayden, Colorado, but the other experts were satisfied to stop at this point with an acknowledgement that the community was near the center of the field. None of the men were interested in the upper coal series of lignite. The eminent geologist Arthur Lakes made several trips through the Yampa Valley. In 1905 he published reports on his studies of the coal measures along the Yampa River between Steamboat Springs and Hayden. "The general appearance of the seams," Lakes observed, "as well as the coal they contained, was very striking. They appeared to be remarkable free from ordinary impurities, such as bone, bands of shale, etc., and other foreign matter." The Wadge seam was eleven feet thick without a sign of impurities. "It [was] one mass of glittering, sparkling hard coal, an ideal coal seam."

The twenty foot coal seam located in the same general area was excellent coal with a parting near the middle which would allow "the seam to be worked in two benches conveniently." The coal dipped gently into the mountain allowing for easy mining and no gas had been discovered in the coal deposits. "The field [was] admirably situated for accessibility, development and transportation," concluded Lakes. "The seams [were] almost ideal in their physical condition, quality and purity."[12]

After inspecting the coalfield in 1903, Parsons and Liddell observed that Routt County "only awaits the construction of [railroads], the installation of modern machinery and western enterprise to be converted into a country, like the rest of Colorado, teeming with wealth and activity."[13]

The area which drew the most attention was the anthracite coal. In 1902 Etienne A. Ritter inspected the Yampa Coalfield. Ritter had studied at the University of Geneva and the School of Mines of Paris; he had been a member of the Geological Survey of France and Algeria. While in Europe he had inspected mines across the continent. After coming to the United States, he inspected several mines throughout the west. Ritter had made a special study of western coalfields. Based on his credentials, Ritter's statements carried great weight with people who wanted to know about the coal deposits of northwestern Colorado. After describing the geological features of Pilot Knob, Ritter explained that the Crawford tract, which was the best developed, had four seams of coal. Two of the veins were semi-bituminous and bituminous measuring six and seven feet thich. Two veins were anthracite. One vein was three feet thick and another ten feet thick. On the west side of Pilot Knob a few miles from the Crawford mines were several prospects, one of which was in an anthracite vein five feet high. The North, Middle, and South forks of Deep Creek cut through the

coal deposit along the east side of Pilot Knob. The outcroppings ranged from lignite to anthracite coal. Although Ritter did not state the size of the anthracite field in terms of square miles, he gave the impression that the area was extensive. In summing up his investigation he stated, "The grade of the coal in many cases warrants belief in a bright future for these fields."[14]

Arthur Lakes back in 1889 wrote on the wonderful coal deposits in Routt County. Several years later, 1903, he explained some of the problems of determining the size of the anthracite field. "At various points along the margin of [Pilot Knob[the same anthracite, or other seams of like nature have been opened by prospect holes. There is evidently a considerable area of this anthracite coal here," Lakes wrote. "How much, however, is anthracite . . . it is not a present possible to tell, the anthracite condition depending on the close proximity or not of the accompanying intrusive sheet of lava."[15] Three years later Lakes commented, "In this mountain [Pilot Knob] appear some puzzling anomalies. Coal in one part of the mountain may be changed to anthracite and in another part under apparently similar favorable conditions it remains unchanged."[16] Estimates of the size of the anthracite field ranged from eight square miles to forty square miles. Weston, who was closely associated with the Denver Northwestern and Pacific, made the largest estimate based on the size of the igneous sheet that overlaid the coal and the distance between various prospects and mines.[17]

In 1900, the Ninth Biennial Report of the Inspector of Coal Mines: State of Colorado estimated the value of the 1,200 acre Crawford anthracite tract. "Assuming that three-fourths of this property is underlaid with a fourteen foot anthracite seam, 17,424,000 tons could be extracted, at three dollars per ton at the mine, it would net $52,272,000 for one seam."[18]

The total thickness of all the veins was estimated at forty feet, but no dollar value was placed on the entire coal value. Why bother? Fifty-two million, two hundred and seventy-two thousand dollars was enough to excite the imagination of anyone. Crawford's coal property was slightly less than two square miles. The 1906 U. S. Geological Survey reported, "The area covered by this survey of the field is approximately 1,200 square miles, and this is practically the extent of the Yampa coal field."[19] The total vertical measurement of the workable coal as estimated by William P. Headden was seventy-five feet. Fenneman and Gale estimated the field to contain 39,000,000,000 tons of coal. R. L. Herrick believed that the field contain 16,000,000,000 tons of workable coal.[20]

The Yampa Coalfield contained measures for a wide variety of uses. Fenneman and Gale noted, "The success at the coal-testing plant at St. Louis of experiments in converting low-grade coals into producer-gas and the utilization of this gas in a gas engine was so pronounced that it seems almost possible to look ahead to the time when the subbituminous coals and even the lignites, will be utilized in this way for the production of power."[21] Coal gasification could make the low grade deposits of the upper series quite attractive. Besides coal, Routt County offered oil, copper, onyx, gold, silver, mineral hot springs, gilsonite, and agriculture. That was enough to launch a railroad into the empire of northwestern Colorado.

Ritter and others of his time recognized the importance of agriculture and other minerals for the development of the region, but the coal deposits were of primary significance. Since lignite was being mined near Denver and that production could be easily increased, the success of the Yampa Valley coal depended upon its high grade deposits "which [were] opened in several localities."[22] Even the superior quality coal would meet its competitors. But many leading men of the state believed "coal mining [had

become] the leading industry of the state."[23] The statistics supported their contention. The value of coal to the state indicated a bright future. The year before Colorado went into the deep economic depression (1892) the annual value of the state's coal was $5,685,112. By 1900 the annual value of the coal was nearly equal to that of the pre-depression. In 1902, when Moffat announced his intentions to build the Denver Northwestern and Pacific, the annual value of Colorado coal was $8,397,812. In 1907, Oak Creek's first year of production, the annual value of the state's coal was $14,296,012. Coal at the mine sold for an average of $1.37 per ton in 1892 and for $1.33 per ton in 1909. Coal production and value had increased at a tremendous rade. In 1872 there were 68,540 tons of coal produced in Colorado; in 1882 some 1,061,479 tons were produced; in 1892 3,510,830 tons were produced; in 1902 the per annum production stood at 7,401,343 tons; and in 1909 there were 10,716,936 tons of coal produced. The reports of the state coal mine inspectors for these years show numerous new mines opening. In some instances powerful eastern investors backed large mining companies. For example, near Trinidad, Colorado, James A. Ownbey developed a large tract of coal land for powerful banker J. P. Morgan and Santa Fe railroad executive B. P. Cheney.[24]

An open letter from Weston to W. A. Deuel, General Manager of the Denver Northwestern and Pacific makes it quite clear that the railroad people had given deep thought to the prospects of marketing Routt County coal. The coal field was near the geographic center of the region west of the Mississippi, a region noted for poor quality coal and ready markets. When considering the quality of western coal, F. V. Hayden believed that in the western states, "There is no true coal at all."[25] But the Moffat railroad people believed they would open an unique mining region with the only anthracite and semi-anthracite on the Pacific slope and large amounts

of high quality bituminous coal. In Colorado it was assumed that the anthracite and bituminous coals would totally defeat the lignite coals from the northern field.

The smog problem in Denver was serious enough in the early 1900s that the city was considering a smoke ordinance. If the ordinance passed, Weston believed "the markets . . . for anthracites and semi-anthracites would be still further strengthened."[26] On the plains thousands of new homesteaders, who were practicing the new methods of dry-land farming, would open another large market for coal.

The officials of the Denver Northwestern and Pacific believed Yampa Valley coal had a bright future: east of Denver the bituminous coals could be successfully marketed in Kansas City and Omaha. Anthracite could be marketed further east. On the west coast where over 90 percent of the coal was imported, it was hoped Routt County coals would command a high price in the leading communities. Steam ships that largely depended upon coals from Scotland and Wales would readily use Yampa Valley bituminous. The Uintah Basin of Utah was being settled at the same time the railroad was being constructed, and the region 150 miles long and 100 miles wide promised substantial markets for coal. The hematite deposits of the Uintah and Wahsatch Ranges held the prospects for developing a major steel industry. Although Weston did not offer any projected tonnage figures for coal shipments west from the Yampa Valley, he noted that the market area east to the Missouri River consumed 30,000 tons of coal per day. He believed that northwestern Colorado coals had a potential market for 10,000,000 tons per year ~~day~~ at a minimum of 3,000,000 tons per year. If the coal only commanded one-third of the Denver market, some 2,000 tons per day would be sold.[27] The promoters of northwestern Colorado coal had checked their product and market and were sure of their facts--for them the construction of the

mountain railroad was fully justified.

Knowing about the high quality coal and its potential markets did not answer another of the basic questions. "Everybody of common sense [knew] that an isolated 160 acres of land owned by a private individual could not become a producer of coal."[28] The amount of coal in the small tract would not pay the cost of developing the mine and constructing a railroad. To gain control of substantial acres of coal, several investment companies were organized. During the fiscal year ending in June 1903, the federal land office at Glenwood Springs reported a record sales of Routt County coal lands. At the price of $10 per acre the federal government had received $250,000 for approximately 25,000 acres.[29] In August, T. W. Hewitt, Gus Appleman, Orville Dart, and a reporter from the Yampa Leader traveled from Oak Creek across Twentymile Park examining the coalfield and potential coal investments. The reporter described how the party traveled from the James Mine and the John Larkins home on Oak Creek over the mountains filled with coal. "Nearly all of this land has been filed on," wrote the reporter, "yet we did not see a single prospect hole." The reporter also expressed his disapproval, but there was little secrecy in what was occurring.[30]

Samuel G. Adams came to Routt County in the late 1890s where he made a special study of the coal and minerals. In 1901 he and Charles Leckenby organized a real estate company interested in coal, oil, town and ranch properties.[31] In a special edition of the Steamboat Pilot dated March 1903 a full page was used to advertise the Routt County Investment Company. A. L. Pollard was president of the company and Adams, the local representative and probably the author of the article, frankly stated the purpose of the company: "The object of the company is to provide high class investments in Northwestern Colorado and to secure capital to develop

the coal, mineral and other resources which will prove lucrative investments with the completion of the new railroad." The company was owned by people from Iowa, Denver, and Routt County, and it had already spent large sums of money. The investment firm had organized several companies "and secure[d] possession of the cream of the soft and coking coal lands in the county."[32] Adams was not misleading anyone. Pollard was president of the Denver and Northwestern Fuel Company. The company owned the James Mine and several acres on Oak Creek; they also had large holdings on Trout Creek south of the Eddy post office.[33]

In 1900 while Adams and his associates were busy gaining control over coal lands, another group of investors organized the Elkhead Anthracite Coal Company and did extensive work of exposing and developing various coal veins.[34] Professor A. A. Johnson formerly of the University of Wyoming moved to Steamboat Springs where in 1905 he paid $80,000 for David Morgan's 800 acres of anthracite coal near Pilot Knob. Johnson was acting as agent for the Yampa Fuel and Iron Company headed by B. L. Dorsey and friends from Iowa, Wisconsin and Missouri.[35] In 1906 the Steamboat Pilot reported, "Mr. Dorsey was the first outside capitalist to realize the possibilities of Routt county as a coal country." The same paper reported that Dorsey had paid $200,000 for the Crawford anthracite tract (Elkhead Anthracite). It was also reported that Dorsey had organized a $10,000,000 corporation and had control, either by ownership or option, of 75,000 acres of coal lands.[36] The acreage seems to be exaggerated, but the Yampa Fuel and Iron Company did control vast amounts of Routt County coal.

There were other large coal companies claiming valuable property. The Toponas Coal and Land Company had large holdings in Twentymile Park on Fish Creek; the company also was connected to Johnson and probably Dorsey.[37] At Lay, Colorado, Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Wallihan, old timers in the region, had

helped the Wisconsin Fuel and Mining Company gain control of several acres of excellent coal land. Some of the principals in the Yampa Fuel and Iron Company were from Milwaukee.[38]

Along with the larger companies there were small firms attempting to get in on a good thing. In January 1902 the Yellow Jacket Coal Company was organized. Within a few months it was reorganized into the American Fuel and Iron Company. The firm's leader was Dr. E. A. Hewitt of Denver and many of the investors were school teachers in the Denver area. Their land holdings were in the neighborhood of the Yampa Valley Electric Mine on Oak Creek. At the time of organization there was a question of the company's financial ability to develop the property. Among other small companies was the Colorado Anthracite Coal Company which controlled 3,000 acres of the Shelton tract and was owned by a group from Boulder, Colorado. A group of Greeley, Colorado, men controlled 1,500 acres of property west of Craig, Colorado. The land was along the Yampa River near the mouth of the Williams Fork River. Thus their holdings were in the same area that David and Don Taylor mined blacksmith coal during the 1890s.[39]

How were the companies gaining control of large tracts of coal land when the federal law restricted 160 acres to an individual and 320 acres to an association when filing? The companies were using "dummy entrymen," i.e., individuals were hired to claim and prove up on the land. Since agricultural land could be gained by a free homestead without paying the $10 per acre charged for coal land, few people dug prospect holes and located coal. They knew what they were about. Folks in frontier areas deperately needed roads, schools and other services and when land was transferred to private ownership, it "pays taxes and has a chance of some day being developed."[40] Many people in Routt County readily agreed with the Steamboat Pilot when it stated, "For the way land affairs were being

conducted at that time there was little or no secret about the matter and it was considered legitimate."[41] While considering the Coal Lands Act of 1873 in his book, Our Landed Heritage, Roy M. Robbins stated, "Legitimate business could not be fostered by law which did not lend itself to profitable development."[42]

People in Routt County watched with anxious expectations as the Moffat Road labored through South Boulder Canyon and over the Continental Divide. The tempo of life along the railroad survey increased as the actual railroad moved closer. By the time construction was through Gore Canyon, all things seemed possible. The editor of the Yampa Leader in 1906 boldly announced, "Immense Anthracite . . . Deposit Known to Exist Within Fourteen Miles of the Town of Yampa."[43] The field was supposed to be larger than the anthracite field at Pilot Knob, much more accessible by rail and closer to the Denver market. The year before some coal prospecting and development work was done in the Flat Top Mountains. Under the ancient lava beds prospectors had located the valuable coal which had been hidden by rock slides and debris.

Adding to the excitement was a statement attributed to Hoyt S. Gale of the U. S. Geological survey. He reportedly said he was "positive that the entire White River plateau [was] underlaid with enormous deposits of anthracite coal."[44] The excitement stirred up some activity. In 1907 the Yampa Leader reported that J. J. Hostettler was working a diamond drill prospecting for coal near the head of Watson Creek.[45] The bubble passed suddenly and little was heard of anthracite coal in the Flat Tops after 1907.

The boom excitement reached a faster pace when Dorsey started railroad surveys from the Moffat Railroad survey at Hayden and Steamboat Springs to the anthracite field at Pilot Knob. Caught up in the excitement, Hayden,

Colorado, became quite a town with a newspaper and several new businesses. In June 1903, Harry C. Wood started publishing the Routt County Republican. A few months earlier the Hayden Coal Company with a capital stock of $500,000 had been organized. The big news was that Robert J. Cary, Sr. and Moffat had agreed that the first permanent terminal of the railroad would be at Hayden. On the basis of the agreement the Carys spent substantial amounts developing West Hayden where it was intended to have a large railroad yards and a branch line running north to the anthracite field and a second branch line running south into the Sage Creek, Dry Creek and Hayden Gulch region. To add to the luster of the town was the hope of getting the county seat. To promote the Yampa Coalfield, at their ranch west of Hayden, the Carys entertained some very important people from France and Belgium including the Crown Prince of Belgium. For folks accustomed to the frontier the presence of the dignitaries meant something very exciting was "in the wind."[46]

While Hayden was preparing for a big boom, residents of Steamboat Springs were busy preparing for prosperous development. In the community new businesses were erected and older firms were refurbisheng. Businessmen were sure the town would become a major center for mining, ranching and logging. Investors were certain the numerous hot springs and mineral springs would attract tourists and people seeking medicinal waters.

The real center of activity was occurring at the old Ben Mahoney Mine and ranch on Oak Creek. Mahoney's property had been purchased by a man named Shuster. The progression of events shifted to Ed Bell who had gained a place in history as sheriff during the bitter 1903-1904 strike at Cripple Creek, Sam Bell, D. C. Williams, John Sharpe, K. B. Wiley, Lou Parsons, A. Rollestone of Cripple Creek and Ed Icholtz of Denver. These men organized on November 21, 1906, the Oak Creek Town, Land, and Mining Company

and purchased the Shuster ranch. In the late fall of 1907 a small group of people set up tents along Oak Creek and began developing the town. By February the town had Bell Merchandise store and Miss E. G. Pepple's Mercantile store. In the Pepple store was a post office although it was not officially recognized. In April 1908 some twenty-one voters approved the incorporation of the town of Oak Creek. It was the upstart town that soon became the center of activity in Routt County.[47]

As soon as winter turned to spring and allowed construction the town boom began. It was spurred on by mine development and railroad construction. In June the town of Oak Creek boasted of having a newspaper, two general stores, "a hotel, lumber yard, short order restaurant, two barber shops, billard hall, two saloons, laundry, livery barn, and dairy."[48] A year later the Oak Creek Times truthfully acknowledged that a "genuine Boom [was] on in Oak Creek." At the time nearly 100 buildings were under construction. The biggest problem was getting enough material. Among the numerous buildings needing materials were the school and Episcopal Church. Oak Creek expected to be one of the most modern communities; with electrical power generated at the Oak Hills Mine the town fathers planned to have electricity in town.[49]

Prior to the organization of Oak Creek the main road followed the Yampa River and avoided the Oak Creek Canyon. By 1909 the road from Huggins on the main thoroughfare to Oak Creek was being improved and a new road was built south of the town of Oak Creek along the stream of Oak Creek past the James and Larkins mines to the Yampa-Pinnacle-Dunkley road. From Oak Creek another road climbed Oak Hills and entered the Trout Creek and Twentymile Park region. Thus Oak Creek was convenient for travel except to Steamboat Springs. There was only one sour note in the Oak Creek highway system: the wagon road down the stream was closed by the county

commissioners in response to a request by the Oak Hills-Perry Mine. It was argued that the road going through the middle of the mine property would hinder operation. The closing of the road forced the development of another road over the brow of Thorp Mountain and down a gulch to the Chambers ranch. This section of road had several steep pulls that discouraged travel.[50]

The Steamboat Pilot reported on February 13, 1907, that the Moffat Railroad had agreed to construct a yards, stockyards, and other facilities at Oak Creek. And apparently there were some agreements reached between the railroad and the town builders. But the harmony did not last long. The fight over the road down Oak Creek stirred hard feelings and the clash of interests became bitter over railroad right-of-ways. Among the first activities of the town company was to locate "lots" astride the railroad survey. Some of the lots were sold; thus the railroad had to purchase high cost town lots from several owners rather than low cost agricultural land. The railroad brought suit against Ed Bell, president of the Oak Creek Town, Land, and Mining Company, and Miss Dorothy Snare who owned some of the lots. Snare was hardly an innocent victim since she was a close friend of the Ed Bell family. Apparently the case was settled out of court and the railroad gained its right-of-way. But both sides found ways to continue the battle.[51] The railroad refused to put in a roundhouse or yards. For several months there was no station or depot in Oak Creek. Without a station, people had trouble getting their railroad freight and catching the passenger train.

The quarrel led to the railroad putting their yards, roundhouse, and other facilities needed to serve the mines at Wilson Siding some four miles southeast of Oak Creek. Here the community of Phippsburg was developed. Phippsburg was a combination railroad and mining camp. The Oak Hills Mine

(or Perry Mine or Moffat Mine as it was often called) was owned by the directors of the Moffat Railroad, and due to limited space for a mining camp near the mine and the fight with Oak Creek, the miners were housed at Phippsburg and commuted by rail.

Building the railroad over the Front Range and through Gore Canyon had exacted a high toll, and "Moffat placed his hope [for success] in pushing the Denver Northwestern and Pacific into the coal fields of Oak Creek." To help build the road, D. C. Dodge raised enough money "to get rails laid into the coal field and Steamboat Springs."[52] Northwestern Colorado farmers, ranchers and communities depended on the railroad to solve their transportation problems. In the final analysis, the years of hard toiling--working, planning, and dreaming--for big shots and plain folks alike depended upon the successful mining of a three mile stretch of land along Oak Creek.

In 1908, Sam Perry, a trustee of the Moffat Road, and his son Robert "Bob" were very much aware of the importance of the Oak Hills Mine. They rose to the occasion and began developing the most modern coal mine for its time in Colorado. Some months before the railroad arrived, the Perrys had employed several men to drive tunnels so that a large force of miners could begin work as soon as the railroad arrived. To move the coal out of the mine a double track main haulage way was driven into the mountain 400 feet. To bring the cars out of the mine, the Perrys installed the largest hoist in the state; it weighed 280 tons and the crank shaft alone weighed 40 tons.[53] The hoist set on a concrete foundation which was novel for its day. Since sand and gravel deposits were not near the mine, it was necessary to build an elaborate rock crusher and pulverize sandstone. Accompanying the work in the mine and at the hoist were numerous other tasks.

Another novelty of the time was a large corrugated steel warehouse.

To house the men, several cottages were built near the mine and in Phippsburg. At the mine a boarding house to handle 95 men was built and at Phippsburg another boarding house which was envisioned to accomodate 250 men was under construction in 1908. At the mine Sam Perry had a residence built and for several years Bob Perry occupied the house. To furnish electricity, four big boilers were installed and to raise the big smokestacks was an engineering feat in the frontier region. Steps were underway to install scales that could weigh railroad cars six at a time. The Perry Mine, as the Oak Hills Mine was then called locally, was designed to be the biggest mine in the state.[54]

Although the Perrys were leading the Oak Creek mining district, E. W. McKinley, Sr. and son, E. S. Jr., were actively developing the Routt County Fuel Company property at the old James and Larkin mines. The mine sat well up on the hill and nearly a mile south of the railroad. In the town of Oak Creek a tipple and spur track were designed. From the tipple to a bench it was necessary to build a long incline gravity tram. Coal was brought from the mine to the tram by a "dinky" engine. The Routt County Fuel Company Mine, soon known locally as the Pinnacle Mine, was not as large an operation as the Perry Mine.[55]

In 1909 the McKinleys withdrew from Routt County Fuel and organized the Yampa Valley Mine. About 1910 the McKinleys built a railroad from Pallas up Oak Creek to their tipple at White City; however, for a couple of years they used the Routt County tram and tipple to load coal. Because of its limited haulage system to the railroad, the Yampa Valley Mine was the smallest mine at Oak Creek. To the north of the Perry Mine was the Juniper Mine. Herea camp, power plant, tipple, scales, and tracks were built.

A tremendous amount of work still remained to be completed at the Parry Mine when the railroad reached the property in September, 1908; and

the other mines had only begun development. However, the feat of reaching the coalfield was enough to cause a celebration. When the first load of coal reached Denver, there was a parade with all the trappings as a wagon loaded with Yampa Valley coal was taken to the Shirley Hotel for testing in the furnaces. During the celebration, I. B. Allen, secretary of the Shirley Investment Company, commented, "It cost over $10,000,000 to make possible the bringing of that car to this city."[56] Allen could have added, in 1881 Ezekiel Shelton came to Routt County to locate coal for a railroad, and finally in 1908 that dream was realized.

In the Yampa Valley, coal production increased dramatically. The Yampa Coalfield produced 3,000 tons in 1908. The following year 92,154 tons of coal were marketed. In 1910 Oak Creek mines produced 254,467 tons of coal. That year the Perry Mine produced 120,438 tons, the Pinnacle Mine produced 77,949 tons, the Juniper Mine produced 43,249 tons, the McKinley Mine produced 9,432 tons, and the James Mine (part of the Pinnacle-McKinley holdings) produced 3,003 tons of coal. On the shoulders of the Perry, Pinnacle, Juniper, and McKinley mines rested the future of an empire.[57]

CHAPTER III

THE FIGHT FOR EMPIRE

The dawn of the twentieth century ushered in great hopes for the future. America was a major industrial power and the flood of new inventions promised a life style freer from the age old struggles against grinding toil, hunger, and disease. It was a time when progress held splendid promises. The new century also offered new vistas for ~~government and~~ political life as the Progressive Era began its run through history. Among those who opposed the Progressives were the giants of industry who saw the new century as an opportunity to build empires of staggering proportions. Edward H. Harriman, George Gould, J. P. Morgan, James J. Hill, and John D. Rockefeller had visions of empires controlled by railroads, oil, steel, and coal. Hill controlled the Great Northern, Morgan the Northern Pacific, Harriman the Union Pacific, and Gould and Rockefeller the Missouri Pacific and Denver and Rio Grande railroads. Thus the struggle in the west for dominancy was of immense proportions.

The battle was complex and vicious. Morgan, Hill and Harriman clashed in an expensive war over the Burlington Railroad which controlled access to Chicago for the Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and Union Pacific. The result was the formation of the Northern Securities Company. Meanwhile, feeling safe to proceed with his plans Harriman gained control of the Central Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads. The deal eventually cost $197,000,000.[1] Harriman also took control of William A. Clark's San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad. With the Oregon Short Line, the Central Pacific, Clark's road, and the Southern Pacific, the owners of the Union Pacific virtually controlled west coast freight.

Gould and Rockefeller gained control of the Missouri Pacific, Denver

and Rio Grande and in 1901 purchased the Rio Grande Western and its subsidiary the Utah Fuel Company with its coal land. At Salt Lake City Harriman successfully b ttled up Gould's contract with the west coast. To escape the trap, Gould was forced to build the Western Pacific.[2]

While the giants of Wall Street were battling for control of western railroads, they were also engaged in battles for control of the nation's steel mills and coal deposits. In 1901 Morgan organized the United States Steel Corporation with a capital stock of nearly a billion dollars, and in 1907 the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company was added to the holdings. In 1902 Gould and Rockefeller countered by gaining control of the Colorado Fuel and Iron with its vast acreages of coal.[3] The Union Pacific also controlled thousands of acres of Wyoming and Colorado coal lands. The giants of western coal, steel and railroads were aware of the west coast's need for coal and they contended over the markets.

We get a hint of the importance of coal to railroads by noting a few statistics. Robert Athearn in his The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad pointed out that during the depression of the 1890s, the D & R G's "heaviest traffic was in coal and coke, 80 per cent of which was carried outside the state for sale."[4] In Colorado in 1898 Gould's railroad served coal mines in the following counties: El Paso, one mine; Fremont, four mines; Gunnison, three mines; Garfield, two mines; Los Animas, one mine; La Plata, four mines; Mesa, one mine; Weld, two mines; Huerfano, eight mines. At the same time Harriman's Union Pacific served the following Colorado coal mines by counties: Boulder, eighteen mines; El Paso, one mine; Las Animas, seven mines; Weld, two mines. The Denver & Rio Grande and the Union Pacific combined served fifty-two Colorado coal mines, and they would not look kindly on any railroad that threatened this valuable source of revenue.[5]

David H. Moffat announced in 1902 that he was going to build a railroad directly west from Denver to Salt Lake City and the Pacific coast. The railroad would help develop vast coal and iron resources and break the monopoly of eastern power. Harriman and Gould set out to destroy Moffat and his Denver Northwestern and Pacific. Harriman's purchase of Clark's railroad in July 1902 was a devastating blow to Gould and Moffat alike. The news of the purchase unnerved much of the eastern financial support for the northwestern Colorado line. After making a quick trip to New York to reassure his support, Moffat commented, "We have met active opposition from the strong financial combination controlling the roads north of Denver."[6] Harriman and Gould were able to dry up most of the eastern financial support for the new line. "By God," replied Moffat to the pressure, "the road will be built, if I have to go out and drive spikes myself."[7] With the acceptance of battle, Moffat charged into the fight.

The show down between Moffat and Harriman came in the fight over the Gore Canyon. The Gore Canyon offered a water level passage through the Gore Range and at Orestod a line could be built to the Rio Grande tracks at Dotsero--the Dotsero cutoff. If Moffat breached the canyon, a main line west of Denver would be virtually assured even if Moffat and Gould were both ruined. In 1903, Gould had demanded that Moffat share his survey through the canyon with the Denver and Rio Grande. To this demand Moffat refused. The principal contenders fully understood the importance of the canyon. Back in the 1880s the Burlington had spent a large sum surveying and planning a railroad through Gore Canyon and either to Dotsero or into the Yampa Valley. As Moffat approached Gore Canyon, Morgan saw an opportunity to connect his Burlington line with the west coast. Thus the fight for the canyon was of large moment to several important groups, but Moffat was forced to stand alone against Harriman.[8]

To stop the construction of the Denver Northwestern and Pacific an electric power company filed on dam sites at the mouth of Gore Canyon and made moves toward organizing electric power companies to place dams in Yampa Canyon between Steamboat Springs and Hayden and at other critical points along the railroad survey. After a long and costly court battle, Charles J. Hughes, attorney for the Denver Northwestern and Pacific, was able to prove the dam the New Century Power Company proposed to build at the Gore Canyon was a fraud. Then the Department of Interior announced that it planned a dam at Gore Canyon, and the federal Land Office at Glenwood Springs conveniently misplaced the records of the Moffat survey. Investigation proved that the mouth of Gore Canyon was unsuitable for a dam and the Interior Department had done an inadequate job of planning. Finally President Theodore Roosevelt sent Carl Ewald to investigate the matter. Roosevelt then called representatives from the Moffat Road and the Interior Department into his office. Roosevelt addressed members of the Interior Department, "Oh, yes, you represent the power companies and the opposition railroads."[9] Moffat had won the battle for Gore Canyon, but the struggle for financial aid, the construction of the railroad over the continental divide, and operating the railroad over the "Hill" had left him unable to build beyond Yarmony on the Colorado River.

In December 1907, Col. D. C. Dodge, who had won fame and fortune in Colorado railroads, traveled to the Yampa Valley with Sam Perry. Here "Colonel Dodge saw the great unopened empire that Evans had seen in 1896." The Steamboat Pilot for January 15, 1908, announced that David C. Dodge, Thomas F. Walsh, John F. Campion, Lawrence C. Phipps, Sr., Henry M. Porter, Charles Boettcher, Charles J. Hughes, Jr., William Byrd, and Samuel M. Perry had organized the Denver-Steamboat Construction Company. The company was to build the railroad from "Yarmony through the extensive coal fields

of the Oak Hills district in Routt county to Steamboat Springs." When Dodge visited the valley and saw the coal field he thought the railroad had a chance of surviving.[10]

The arrival of the Denver Northwestern and Pacific at the Yampa Coalfield in September 1908 was a great moment for Oak Creek and Routt County. The activities at the Perry Mine and the railroad seemed to assure the promised boom. And the region around Oak Creek was already experiencing a boom. But those folks who were knowledgeable of the actual conditions realized that the prosperity was more apparent than real. The railroad came very close to folding before it reached the valley, and it would take several good revenue years before it would be able to build further west than Steamboat Springs. Good revenue for the railroad required vast shipments of coal from strong coal companies. How strong were the mines? The coal mines had been organized in the time honored method for that industry. But under President Theodore Roosevelt the rules of the game were markedly changed.

Roosevelt and the Progressives were deeply concerned with conservation of natural resources and restriction of monopolistic powers of big corporations. The headlines of the June 13, 1906, edition of the Steamboat Pilot read, "CONTROL--Government May Control Coal Land--Afraid Of Trust." The article which followed explained that in a recent dispatch Roosevelt had withdrawn from "entry of all government coal land preparatory to the formulation of legislation that will perpetually insure their protection against monopoly and combination."

The Steamboat Pilot for August 8 announced, "Confirmation has been received of the withdrawal from entry of a large tract of land in Routt county. It includes some of the best coal lands and some agricultural ground." The same newspaper bitterly announced on October 24 that the

government "Takes It All--Routt County Hasn't Any Land Remaining." In the article that followed the reporter explained, "What the state hasn't got and what has not been put into timber reserves will now be withdrawn as coal land."[11] To the people who supported conservation and control of big business the announcements were good news, but for the residents of Routt County who had plans of developing the resources with the accompanying economic prosperity the withdrawal of coal land came as a severe blow.

Roosevelt sent a sharp tremor through northwestern Colorado in March 1907 with the announcement that the government was going "to probe land frauds." General M. C. Burch and his aides, Ernest Knaebel, F. A. Maynard, S. R. Rish, E. H. Long, and H. H. Schwartz, were appointed special assistants to the attorney general to conduct a complete investigation. In fact the government had been investigating dummy entries for the previous five years.[12]

General Burch did not waste any time. In May the Wisconsin Coal Mining Company at Lay, Colorado, was indicted for obtaining their coal land by fraud. Named in the case were the old pioneers and photographers Allen G. and Mary A. Wallihan. The land in question was patented by Mr. and Mrs. Wallihan, Fred H. Wallihan, Henry M. Benjamin, Cyrus J. Williams, John I. LeDain, J. Boyd Wallihan and Ruth Wallihan.[13]

The Wallihan case presented some interesting questions. As pioneers they had spent nearly a quarter of a century living in a lonely region of sage brush and they believed they had earned the right to benefit from the fruits of the land and their labor. Was it wrong for them to take advantage of a good thing and include their friends and relatives? Each person had filed on 160 acres and met the requirements of the law; each had paid the government the required fee of $10 per acre. Each had received a title to the land. After receiving the title they then sold the land to

the Wisconsin Coal Mining Company. The government argued that the Wallihans had entered into a conspiracy to defraud the government. The prosecution argued that the Wallihans were "dummy entrymen" who had reached an agreement to file on the coal land for the mining company and bypass the intent of the law. Without a doubt the use of "dummies" was common throughout the west, and if the federal reserves were to be preserved it was necessary to stop the time honored practice.

The action of the Wallihans and many other dummy entrymen of Routt County found sympathy among local folks, but not all the "dummies" were frontiersmen taking advantage of an opportunity. In fact the organization of companies and the role of various men were full of deception and dishonesty. The Yampa Leader for July 13, 1907, enlarged the list of names of men indicted in the Wisconsin Coal Mining Company case. Among those indicted were several wealthy men from Wisconsin who were related to leading figures in the Yampa Anthracite Coal Company based in St. Louis, Missouri. Apparently the Yampa Anthracite Coal Company gained control of large acreages of coal through very corrupt methods. The sheriff in St. Louis and the president of a bricklayers union filled out and handed out blank entry forms among their deputies and members and had them signed. These forms were later filed on Routt County coal lands. The connection between the various companies and men was complex. Walter S. Price, notary public, justice of the peace, insurance agent, and real estate man at Hayden, worked closely with Arie Keitel, the local agent for the Yampa Anthracite Coal Company. Arie's brother Fred W. Keitel was the Denver connection for both the Wisconsin and the Yampa Anthracite companies. He was also related by marriage to some of the leaders in both companies. In the case against the American Fuel and Iron Company which claimed 2,000 acres of coal along Oak Creek in the neighborhood of Junction City, Fred W.

Keitel's name appears as general manager of the company. The corruption and the subtle connection of men and companies gave President Roosevelt and his supporters, of which the Yampa Leader was one, good reasons to be concerned about the threat of trusts.[14]

The people whom Keitel represented were not the only ones interested in investing in Routt County coal. Near the turn of the century Sam Adams and A. L. Pollard acquired investment lands in northwestern Colorado. On May 13, 1907, the Union Land Company was incorporated and soon various properties including that of the Denver and Northwestern Fuel Company on Oak Creek and Trout Creek came under the land company's control.[15] In October 1909, T. B. Allin, Frank McDonough, C. S. Millard, B. L. Smith, Sam Adams, A. L. Pollard and others were indicted for fraudulently acquiring coal land. The case against the Union Land Company was especially important to the future of Routt County. Part of the land in question was leased by the Routt County Fuel Company which was operating the Pinnacle Mine southwest of the town of Oak Creek. The mine was the second largest producer in the district and vital to the railroad. The railroad in turn was vital to meet the transportation needs of the residents of the Yampa Valley.[16]

In December 1909 the defendants of the Union Land Company stood trial. During the trial several witnesses testified that "they got $100 for their coal right, for the way land affairs were being conducted at that time there was little or no secret about the matter and it was considered legitimate." Despite the testimony the case was thrown out of court because criminal conspiracy was not proven. The biggest blow to the government's case occurred when Judge Robert E. Lewis ruled that a letter from McDonough to J. W. Atwell was self incriminating and violated the constitutional rights of the accused.[17]

The legal action did not end with the judge's decision; the struggle over the title to the coal lands continued for several years. In May 1911 the federal land office at Glenwood Springs canceled filings on 2,000 acres of coal land near Oak Creek which had not been patented. In October the federal government struck a stunning blow to the Union Land Company. The government seized 4,400 tons of coal shipped by the Routt County Fuel Company. It was claimed that the coal had been mined from the Burgess tract of the Pinnacle Mine. It was further claimed that nearly 90,000 tons of coal had been illegally mined and the government sought restitution. The coal seizure threatened to close the mine with its accompanying damage. However, the mine was still able to operate although on a restricted basis by working the James and Walker tracts which were not under attack. The next move of the government came in August 1912 when it began attacks against the title of coal property where the Moffat Coal Company was working. Apparently the titles were clean because nothing came of the charges, but it did wear down the mining firm's ability to resist. In October 1912 the government and the Union Land Company came to terms. The government retained nearly 7,000 acres on Trout Creek and the Union Land Company maintained title to several thousand acres on Oak Creek. This cleared the way for the Routt County Fuel Company and the Yampa Valley Coal Company to begin more extensive mining. It also allowed the reopening for settlement of Twentymile Park.[18]

The fight over title to the coal land was long and expensive. Without doubt the coal companies had acquired a large portion of their land illegally. But the federal government's actions during the lengthy struggle was not always honorable. In August 1906 the federal government withdrew several sections of coal land from entry. The next month McDonough as attorney for entrymen was allowed to file patents on 7,000

acres of coal land. Then in October the government again withdrew the land. Two years later McDonough and the Union Land Company were taken to court for illegally obtaining the land. When the case was finally settled the federal government again had title to the coal lands. Through the turn of events the government was guilty of gross inconsistency if not blatant entrapment.[19]

Most of the settlers in Routt County were not dummy entrymen. They had taken up their claims to homesteads and coal land in good faith as provided by the law. Many of them had proved up on their land before the new coal lands act was passed in 1909. Instead of the government honoring the filings as the law provided, the patents were withheld. After the act of 1909 was passed the government sent out affidavits to the homesteaders requiring that they "waive all claim to coal or other minerals under their claim."[20] No provisions of the new law made it retroactive, but it was administered as if such a provision existed. People who should have had clear title to their land were denied what was their legal right. Without clear title to the property the residents were uncertain of their future and limited in their choices. If they mortgaged or sold the land they ran the risk of being indicted as dummy entrymen. But the government did collect taxes on the property. The Steamboat Pilot reported the case of one homesteader who was informed that a special agent had filed a protest against his claim. The case was heard in the Glenwood Springs land office and went against the homesteader. However, the homesteader did not receive notice of the charges against him until after the hearing; thus he was not present to defend himself and lost his land. It should also be kept in mind that the land office holding the hearings and pressing for strong legal action against the coal companies was the same federal agency found to be in collusion with Harriman during the railroad fight for Gore Canyon.[21]

During the court cases the statute of limitations was often considered. In 1911 the attorneys for the federal government argued "that statute of limitations does not begin to run against the entry until the government has some notice of the fraud." In replying to the attorneys, Judge Lewis stated, "The facts are against you and the law is against you."[23] Despite the judge's ruling the government later seized 4,400 tons of coal mined by the Routt County Fuel Company. The authorities "claim[ed] that fraud was committed in 1893 in proving up on the land." By 1911 the statute of limitations had run its term.[23] Clearly the federal attorneys were not opposed to bending the law to their advantage while condemning others for doing the same thing.

The fight over coal property in the Yampa Valley was not restricted to a contest between the federal government and the people who claimed the land. In 1907 the Rocky Mountain News broke a story of corruption and fraud in the state school lands. The Egeria Fuel Company had leased several thousand acres from the state. The lease was later illegally extended for forty years. Some of the members of the state land board apparently received a payoff. On investigating the work of the company it was found that very little developing had been done but the stockholders had been charged substantial sums for development work. Adding a different slant to the story the Yampa Leader believed that T. M. Patterson, a proprietor in the Rocky Mountain News, was a heavy investor in the northern Colorado coalfield (primarily in Boulder and Weld counties). Samuel H. Wood, the author of the News story, was a disappointed office seeker out to get revenge. The editor of the Leader believed that the Denver newspaper and report were not entirely honest. Bot the Rocky Mountain News and the Yampa Leader had a lot of truth in their stories.[24]

In 1911 William Weston assessed the condition of Routt County. "The

fates," he wrote, "so far seem to have been against the development and marketing of the product of the Yampa coal field. The adverse agents have been many and powerful." The power of Harriman and Gould to prevent financing the Denver Northwestern and Pacific combined with the Gore Canyon fight had taken a dreadful toll on the railroad. "The long-continued activity of the government agents," Weston bemoaned, "in digging up and attacking titles to the coal lands, . . . mak[es] capital timid of going in there."[25] Firms were having difficulty finding financial aid. The Wisconsin Coal Mining Company, the Yampa Anthracite, Toponas Coal and Land, and the American Fuel and Iron did not survive the fight. On July 9, 1913, the Continental Trust Company brought a foreclosure suit against the Union Land Company. On November 22, 1915, the bankrupt company's property was sold at public auction for $200,000. In 1910 James Crawford began foreclosure proceedings against B. L. Dorsey's Yampa Fuel and Iron Company. Dorsey had big plans for developing the anthracite coal near Pilot Knob. He was planning on building a branch railroad from Hayden to the anthracite field. The land in the Crawford, Morgan and Shelton tracts had clear titles dating back to the 1880s, so here there was no danger of long court actions. But the financing of the Yampa Fuel and Iron, which would have been a large operation, was stopped by the same powerful interests that blocked financing of Moffat's railroad.[26]

The railroad arrived at the coal field in a weak financial condition. Harriman and Gould had drained the road of needed financial aid. Unable to raise enough capital, Moffat could not meet the cost of constructing a tunnel through the Front Range. As a result, the Denver Northwestern and Pacific was forced to fight the never ending battle against storms, slides, ice and steep grades on the "Hill" as the railroaders called the 12,000 foot high Rollins Pass. Besides costing enormous amounts to operate the

railroad it bottled up coal trains when the market was good and let them run when the markets were weak. Since the flow of cars could not be regulated, the mines often did not get cars when they were needed. In the early spring of 1911 David Moffat made his last stand for his railroad. Shortly after his death in March, 1911, the Denver Northwestern and Pacific went into receivership. "His death," wrote Robert Atheran, "without doubt brought sighs of relief from the Rio Grande owners, who had for over a decade feared his success. His threat was the most serious they had yet encountered."[27]

While the government and powerful financial forces were laying heavy blows on the mining and railroad interests, folks in northwestern Colorado were also struggling to hold their empire. Although the surface events looked promising, the undercurrents were dragging the expected boom down. For years the Steamboat Pilot had play an important role in promoting Routt County and its resources. Leading citizens in the county had worked hard to get a railroad. During the fight for coal land near Lay, the Steamboat Pilot expressed some of the disappointment: "The land pays taxes and has a chance some day of being developed although from the looks of things some of it will pay for itself in taxes before transportation is near enough to make a productive coal mine."[28]

Residents in Craig and Hayden could heartily agree with the editor of the newspaper. People in Craig had hoped to benefit from the railroad, but the line stopped at Steamboat Springs. Hayden citizens had plans of becoming a railroad, mining and ranching center. The railroad did not reach Hayden, the coal company that was going to build the branch line to the anthracite field went into bankruptcy and Phippsburg became the railroad center while Steamboat Springs was the terminal. The rails did reach Steamboat Springs and some new businesses were established; the

luxury Cabin Hotel was built, and the hot and mineral springs were improved. But the expected growth in tourism did not materialize. The community of Yampa hoped to become a railroad and ranching center. But the railroad built through the town. Although the shipping and communication problems of the Yampa Valley were improved with the arrival of the Moffat Road, the anticipated boom did not grow beyond a flare.

At Oak Creek with the mines and construction crews there was a sense of excitement. But even here conditions were turbulent. The community had a tremendous amount of work to be done before it could be a thriving entity. The town found it did not have sufficient money to accomplish many of the tasks, not did it have credit to borrow the necessary money. To get some of the work done the city council passed a poll tax. On May 14, 1908, all able-bodied citizens between 21 and 50 years of age were required to work one day on the streets or pay an added tax of $3.00. The ordinance failed to accomplish anything of significance. Bridges over the steam Oak Creek were badly needed but not constructed for some time. The rerouting of the stream as a result of railroad construction caused flood problems in the lower part of town--again little was done.

Despite the pressing needs the Town Board was unstable and embroiled in fights to control the saloons. The period from 1908 to 1911 witnessed a continual change in mayors, trustees and police magistrates. Often the council could not conduct business because it lacked a quorum. The case of Albert Severson illustrates some of the undercurrents that hurt the community. On July 6, 1908, Bart Steinbeck and W. W. Helm were nominated to fill a council vacancy caused by Louis F. Castello's resignation. Steinbeck received three votes while T. B. Parker and Severson voted for Helm. Upon the defeat of his candidate Severson protested that Steinbeck was not elected by a legal majority. In response to Severson's protest, a

motion was made that mayor George W. Grow close Sevenson's saloon. Although not yet sworn in, the newly elected Steinbeck voted to close Sevenson's business. At the next board meeting Steinbeck was again elected to office and sworn in but his vote during the previous meeting and before the swearing in was still counted. Then the Town Board removed Sevenson from office. And Trustee Keegan was appointed as a committee of one to close Sevenson's saloon. Sevenson responded by getting an injunction which stopped the town from doing business. Sevenson rested his case on the legality of the town's incorporation. Apparently he had a strong case which was settled out of court; Sevenson then moved on to greener pastures.[29]

The town minutes for the period 1908 to 1912 suggest that liquor licenses were given to those who had the right connections in city hall. On November 6, 1908, retail liquor licenses were granted to W. H. Stonehouse, G. F. Watt and Tom Pierson. Stonehouse and Watt were ex-trustees and Pierson was connected with the Oak Creek Town Land and Mining Company. At the same meeting D. J. Reidy who had been police magistrate was denied a license and the marshal was instructed to close his business at once. Apparently a payoff was made and Reidy was granted a liquor license at a later date.[30]

Oak Creek in 1910 consisted of only a few rude streets and buildings and a person could easily walk to any place in town. Keeping in step with the dreams of villages becoming might cities ambitious men began promoting a street car line. The profits were made in selling the street cars and not operating them. During the effort to sell the community the transportation system, Mayor George W. Hale charged trustees W. S. Glass, William Schultz and Levi Yoakum for offering to take a bribe on construction of a street car line. In his turn to be accused, Mayor Hale was charged

with trying to bribe the three trustees. The Oak Creek Times described the "situation as quite badly tangled."[31]

The city council soon changed, but the corruption continued. Conditions became so bad that during the 1910 election a group of citizens attempted to oust the organized politicians. Since the reformers were late in getting organized they could not get their names on the ballots, so they began a write-in campaign. E. S. McKinley, Jr., who was in charge of the McKinley Mine south of Oak Creek, nearly defeated G. W. Huffman in the mayor's race. The other write-in candidates also made a strong showing, but when the dust cleared the entrenched political leaders still held the reins of power.

During the difficult period when it was not certain that the empire of northwestern Colorado could be held even though the railroad had arrived, the county leaders began bickering among themselves. Since Oak Creek was the only community that could boast of a boomtown, the mining town became the target of many insults and slights. Generally the newspapers in Yampa, Hayden and Steamboat Springs only mentioned Oak Creek when the town's shortcomings could be exploited. The Steamboat Pilot and the Routt County Sentinel referred to Oak Creek as "that mining camp," and demeaning stories were covered with zeal and sensation. The Oak Creek Times met the challenge with a banner proclaiming Oak Creek "the town of prosperity, the town at the mines, the town with a payroll." The Times proudly boasted that the 1911 property evaluation in the town was up 27 percent which represented over 36 percent of the entire county's gain for the previous year. Meanwhile Steamboat Springs had gained only one-fourth of one percent, Hayden showed a loss of twelve and a half percent, and Yampa had a loss of ten percent property evaluation.[32] During the trying period instead of the communities banding together in a common struggle they came

apart.

The town of Oak Creek boasted its gains based on the development of the mines, and they were developing but at a much slower rate than originally expected. The Perry Mine did extensive work in 1908 so it was ready to ship coal when the railroad arrived, but the Pinnacle Mine did not begin work on their tram and tipple until after the road reached the coalfield and development took more than a year. The Juniper Mine north of Oak Creek also traveled at a snail's pace in developing and the Yampa Valley Mine was not organized until after the railroad arrive and it did not have its own tipple and shipping facilities until 1911. The old Yampa Valley Electric Mine at Junction City did not operate during the period to 1911. At the Perry Mine which opened with enthusiasm in 1908 problems soon began to arise. The coal in No. 1 Mine proved to be lensed shaped and inconsistent with many partings and faults. This forced the opening of No. 2 Mine and by 1912 the Perry Mine, now owned by the Moffat Coal Company, began work on the No. 3 Mine up Argo Gulch. Part of the growth was due to increased coal demand, but the necessity of finding a high quality and consistent seam of coal prompted much of the expansion.

Accompanying the task of starting the mines was the threat of labor war. Coal miners throughout the district had justifiable reasons for demanding better conditions, but a complete walkout in 1910 would have destroyed the mines in the Yampa Valley. At the Perry Mine in July some of the men struck and production was reduced. But the other mines continued to operate. At the Juniper Mine union organizers and agitators were dismissed. The town of Oak Creek took up the cause of the miners and Justice Ewing fined pit boss Joe Mathew $100 for "discriminating against union men employed at the Juniper mine." The owner of Bell Merchantile, Sam Bell who had been involved in the 1903 Cripple Creek Strike, extended

credit to the union. The 1910 strike in the Yampa Coalfield never really got started although the same strike was strongly felt across the northern Colorado coalfield.[33]

Adding to the woes of the Yampa Valley mines was the weather. The winter of 1911 was very mild and the demand for coal was sharply reduced. Without the orders for coal the mines did not work steadily which resulted in reduced payrolls and purchasing power of the employees. The end result was a recession.

By the late summer of 1911 all seemed to be in disarray in the "promised empire" of northwestern Colorado. The railroad was bankrupt and its future uncertain. Many communities in Routt County had seen their hopes for a bright future dashed. The government was stopping coal shipments and the ownership of the coal lands was tangled in the courts. The prospects for massive coal shipments from numerous mines were lost in the world of dreams. Labor was restless and preparing for war. The only boom town, Oak Creek, was caught in a mire of political bickering and corruption. It was a dark period.

CHAPTER IV

CONTINUING STRUGGLE AND THE BIG STRIKE

As folks in northwestern Colorado gathered to celebrate the new year of 1912, they looked forward to an uncertain future--slow progress at the coal mines and labor unrest. The Denver and Salt Lake (Moffat Road) was on the verge of being abandoned and with it the prospects of adequate transportation and communication for agriculture, mining and settlements hung in the balance. The crucial question was could the coal mines in the Oak Creek district generate enough revenue to support the troubled railroad and could the railroad be extended from Steamboat Springs westward in order that more coal mines could be added to the critical transportation system's revenue.

Despite the trying events associated with the government's attempts to regain title to the coal property, the industrial intrigue directed against the railroad and the various coal mining firms, the whims of nature in operating the line over the Hill, the Oak Creek coal mines were showing promise of success. In 1908 one mine produced 3,000 tons of coal, the next year five mines produced 92,154 tons of coal; in 1910 the same mines increased production to 254,162 tons. In 1911 another mine was added to the Oak Creek district and the area produced 372,325 tons of coal. In 1912 the six mines produced 441,002 tons of coal.[1] Of the seventeen Colorado counties producing coal in 1911, Routt County ranked seventh. Although the rankings did not change in 1912, Routt County moved to within 48,377 tons of coal of its rival Weld--a well established coal producing county.[2] Despite the gains Oak Creek coal production did not reach the earlier expectations of the coal field promoters and investors, yet the region was showing steady and substantial gains.

The success of the Oak Creek mines was sufficient to encourage William Evans, Samuel Perry, D. C. Dodge, Lawrence Phipps, Charles Boettcher and Newman Erb to extend the Denver and Salt Lake Railroad west from Steamboat Springs to Craig. In December 1912, the first contract for the forty mile extention was let. The road from Steamboat to Craig ran through the most fertile agricultural section of the Yampa Valley and promised to increase revenues from grain and livestock. In the Yampa Canyon, as the region was then called, the coal deposits near the Wadge Mine became accessible to market. From Hayden extention lines into the anthracite and Dry Creek coal areas was possible. In 1912, Moffat County was created out of the western section of Routt County. Here the railroad would serve another county seat town and the growth that accompanied opening a new section for settlement. The expansion also gave the railroad the appearance of vitality. However, in the final analysis, the success of the venture depended upon the coal mines at Oak Creek and Mt. Harris.[3]

The railroad construction continued through 1913 and by the summer of 1914 coal mine investors were satisfied that adequate rail service was available and they began developing their mines. The big mine in the new district was the Mt. Harris Mine owned by the Colorado-Utah Coal Company with Byron and George Harris as the principle investors. Starting in June 1914, several men were employed in sinking the main and ventilation tunnels. Others were busy constructing a very large tipple for its day. The tipple handled 2,000 tons of coal every twenty-four hours. To get the coal from the mine to the tipple and railroad cars it was necessary to build a large steel bridge over the Yampa River. By the end of the summer, the substantial mining camp of Mt. Harris was firmly established. The Colorado-Utah Mine soon became one of the larges mines in the state.[4]

Meanwhile two miles east of Mt. Harris surveyors laid out the

operations of the Bear River Mine and camp. The Bear River Mine was designed to produce approximately 500 tons per day and the trackage for the tipple was about three and one-half miles long. The mining camp with its several large buildings with concrete foundations was located on the hill above the mine and along the county road (now U. S. 40). Due to financial difficulties and trouble with the government, the Bear River Mine was slow developing.[5]

South and east of the Bear River, Albert Allen was able to interest E. S. and W. S. McKinley, who operated mines near Oak Creek, in joining him and others in developing a mine. The mine set well south of the river and required an extensive spur and a shay engine to bring the coal from the mine to the tipple and railroad.[6] Due to the grade and the distance from the railroad, the Allen Mine never became a major producer.

Near Milner, Colorado, W. W. and C. H. Curtis opened a mine which included two miles of spur track and a bridge across the river. One half a mile east of Curtis's Mine the O'Neil Mining Company opened a mine at McGregor. With the opening of these mines the Yampa field took on new life and a greater degree of permanence.[7] But, perhaps the most encouraging sign of success of the coalfield was the arrival in 1915 of one of the major coal mining companies in the state. That year John C. Osgood and his Victor American Coal Company began development work on the Wadge Mine at Mt. Harris. While the development work was in progress, the Victor American took over the Routt County Fuel and the Yampa Valley mines near Oak Creek. The two mines were united into the Pinnacle Mine. In time the Wadge and the Pinnacle became leading mines in the state.[8]

The future in 1912 was very uncertain for residents of northwestern Colorado, but by 1915 the coal mines were expanding and becoming firmly established. In 1912 the county had only six reporting mines with a

production of 441,002 tons of coal per year. In 1915 there were some 18 producing coal mines with a total production of 846,459 tons. The county stood fourth among the state's coal producing counties. In 1917 Routt County's coal production was 1,057,685 tons of coal from 22 mines, and the county remained fourth in ranking of coal producing counties. During each month of a six month period the mines produced more coal than was produced during the entire year of 1909.[9]

As the mines increased production and became firmly established, the mining communities began to discard the frontier camp appearance in favor of a more established order. Oak Creek, the leading mining community in the field, began extensive use of electric lights which were furnished by the Pinnacle Mine. After a serious fire, the town began a conserted effort to install its own water works. In July 1912 Fisher Dempsey Construction Company, the low bidders with a bid of $26,691, was awarded a contract to construct the city water works.[10] Accompanying the construction of a city water works was a renewed interest in a community sewage system, sidewalks, and street improvements. Other progressive civic developments were the annexation of development areas around the town.

Intertwined with the physical developments of the mines and mining communities was another continuing struggle. For several years before 1912, labor unions and mine management had been girding themselves for a showdown battle. Accompanying the struggle was the fight for a new type of government. During the city elections of 1909-1911, the competing parties were connected with the saloons, gambling halls and prostitution. Generally, the officers were inclined to protect their interests and look for what graft they could take out of the town treasury. During the election of 1912, with C. A. Pankey heading the Socialist Party ticket, local politics developed a deeper and broader philosophy. Pankey, J. L.

Alspaugh, J. B. Sullivan, and T. W. Vliet won the mayor and trustee offices by wide margins. In 1913, "the Socialist ticket elected every condidate in this election, defeating the Taxpayers' Party by big majorities."[11] Thus as a prerequisite to the big strike of 1913-1914 the miners in the Oak Creek district were gaining political support from the leading mining towns in the county. And within the town limits was located the Pinnacle tipple and adjacent to the city boundary was the Moffat Mine. With the support of the town, the miners held key positions in the upcoming fight. In addition the town could, and did, furnish the miners with food and shelter.

The miners were also making preliminary advances at Phippsburg. With the reorganization of the railroad and Moffat Mine in 1912 the city lots in the mining and railroad town went on the market for private homes. Although the mine still held a powerful hand in Phippsburg, its grip on the camp was slipping, and the miners had another point where they could rally for the pending struggle.

Colorado was a hard and dangerous place for coal miners to work. Based on a 25 year average, in 1911 the state killed 5.71 men for every 1,000 working in the mines. Of the 22 coal producing states in the nation, only New Mexico, North Dakota, Utah and Wyoming had worse records of fatalities. Wyoming and Utah killed over 11 men for every 1,000 working in the mines. The most disastrous year in Colorado coal mining history, 1910, witnessed the death of "seventy-five men in the Primero, fifty-six in the Strakville, seventy-nine in the Delagua explosions, and ten in the Leyden fire, a total of 220. Ninety-nine men were killed by falls of rock and coal, or run over by motor trips, etc."[12]

One, but by no means the only, cause of the disastrous mine explosions was the mining practice which allowed each miner to place and set off his own explosive charges. If the black powder sent fire into the dust or

natural gas rather than blowing down the coal, many lives were lost. To avoid this danger many of the more progressive mines began using shotfirers to set off the charges. These specially skilled men would shoot the coal down after the shift quit work and went out of the mine. By simply reducing the number of men in the mine at the time of shooting down the coal, mine safety was greatly enhanced.

The sad fact is that shotfirers also provided another means by which the miners were exploited. At the Moffat Mine in 1910, miners were paid thirty-five cents per ton of coal mined. The miner was expected to furnish his own tools, power, etc. He set his own props and did all the dead work. When the Moffat Mine employed shotfirers, the miners were charged additional sums for powder, blacksmith, commuter travel and hospitalization. The hospital fee and the commuter charge were already sore spots among the miners. A hospital did not exist in Oak Creek until late 1910, and the men wanted to live in Oak Creek to avoid the commuter fee. Adding to the sore spots was the charge for the shotfirers wages, and many of the miners preferred to shoot their own coal. Often the shotfirer did a sloppy job of shooting down the coal in a miner's room unless certain added considerations were extended in his direction (bribes), thus adding exploitation on to exploitation. The result was a strike at the Moffat Mine in June and July of 1910.[13]

The strike threatened to spread to other mines. At the Juniper Mine strike organizers and union supporters were sent down the road. Joe Mathews, the pit boss, was fined $100 by Justice Ewing of Oak Creek for "discriminating against union men." Mathews appealed the case and things seemed to go on as normal. Apparently the strike never amounted to much, for after the first of September nothing more was heard of it. However, this small beginning disclosed some interesting aspect to the nature of Oak

Creek and Steamboat Springs. In Oak Creek, Frank Campbell and the United Mine Workers received support. The Oak Creek Times attempted to remain objective in its coverage. The city government found a pit boss guilty of discrimination, and Sam Bell, who ran one of the town's leading stores and had won a certain amount of fame for his work in breaking the Cripple Creek strike in 1903, extended credit to Campbell and the Union. The bill was never paid. The Routt County Sentinel on July 1, 1910, came out with an article strongly supporting the union and very sympathetic to the cause of the miners.

The continuing struggle between labor and management became more sharply divided and escalated in intensity throughout the state; however, the mines in Routt County were only a small backwash of the main theater. In the northern coalfield at Erie, Colorado, the miners walked out in 1910 and many remained out until after the big strike of 1913-14. Fanning the flames of unrest was the question of mine safety which could no longer be ignored. Governor John Shafroth appointed a committee to examine the state coal mine laws and make recommendations for improvements. In the spring of 1913 the state legislature passed a coal mine act which established a strong coal mine inspection department and in time a very good mine safety record.

At Trinidad, Colorado, in September, 1913, the United Mine Workers decided to call a state wide strike if their demands were not met. The Union had seven demands. Recognization of the union and increased wages were the first two. The third was for an eight-hour day. At the time the state had an eight-hour law on the books. The miners wanted the law enforced as they interpreted it. The fourth demand was for pay for doing dead work--timbering, removing falls, boning coal, etc. These tasks were necessary in a mine and required considerable time, but the miners were not

paid for the work. Since miners were paid by the ton for coal, often they did not place sufficient mine props which was non-pay labor. The lack of sufficient timbering encouraged falls of rock and coal which were the biggest killers in Colorado mines. The fifth demand called for a checkweighman elected by the miners at the mine scales. Since the miners were paid by the ton of coal mined, they most certainly wanted the weights to be honest. In some mines 2,400 pounds was considered a ton when figuring the pay of the miners, but 2,000 pounds was considered a ton when the public was purchasing the coal. It was this type of robbery the men wanted stopped by making sure the scales were properly balanced and read. The sixth demand was the right to trade and live where the miners pleased. Under Colorado law the miners had that right, but the law was not enforced, and in some cases the miners were virtual prisoners held by the mine. The seventh demand called for the enforcement of the Colorado coal mine safety laws. When management refused to meet the union's demands a strike was called. The Oak Creek miners pitched right in with the miners in the northern and southern coalfields when they walked out on September 23, 1913. Due to its size, location and short history, the great Colorado coal strike of 1913-1914 took on a different aspect in Routt County than it did in other parts of the state.

After the men walked out in the Oak Creek district conditions were quiet for several weeks. Through the month of October, 1913, the mines remained closed and there was no danger of violence. At the Junction City Mine, George H. Miller signed the union agreement. By October 10, the mine was working and one newspaper predicted that an eighty man crew would soon be steadily employed.

One of the mysteries of the strike during this stage was the miners moving their families into tent cities. One of the tent camps was at the

town pasture right next to the town of Oak Creek. Another of the tent camps was at the Gilruth ranch about four miles northeast of Oak Creek and along the Yampa River. It was a beautiful place to camp out and go fishing. However, housing was available for many of the miners in the town of Oak Creek and the community was strongly supportive of the strikers.[15] Apparently the union wanted the people in tent communities at this early date for reasons of their own. The tent camps gave the illusion of people being driven from their homes which had strong propaganda possibilities, and by keeping the miners in tent camps, the union had a better chance of controlling its members and fostering stronger union support and esprit de corp.

The strike in the Yampa Valley took on the attributes of the autumn season. In September and October things were peaceful and life had a certain quiet tranquillity. But everyone knew that winter was coming with its harsh demands. Late in October, S. M. Perry of the Moffat Mine, Lewis A. Hayden of the Juniper Mine, P. M. Peltier of the Yampa Valley Mine, and E. L. Prentiss of the Routt County Fuel Company reached an agreement on the terms they would offer the strikers. Through the local newspapers and not the union the offer was made known:

First---Scales will be provided. [Miners were paid by the ton but some of the mines did not have scales to weigh their coal]

Second--Abolishment of fare to miners between Oak Hills and Phippsburg.

Third---Men can board, room and trade where desired.

Fourth--Two pay days per month.

Fifth---All employees desiring to return to work can without any discrimination.

Sixth---Increased compensation as per schedule here-to attached.

Hand mining, 55 cents per ton of 2,000 pounds

Machine mining, 38 cents per ton of 2,000 pounds

Underground labor, 40 cents per hour

Tipple men, 30 cents per hour

Unclassified labor, $2.50 for nine hours[16]

In the November 5th edition of the Steamboat Pilot the mine operators provided a statement concerning their thoughts about the strike:

> The [operators] have always considered the relations with their employees generally satisfactory in view of the strong competition and other serious experienced difficulties attendant upon the opening and development of the Routt county coal fields. For reasons over which we as operators have no control our investments have not be renumerative and satisfactory to date and our employees alone have profited by our efforts. . . .
>
> The railroad now has an extensive amount of new equipment and the market this fall promised to be such as to enable us to establish and extend our market and afford regular and satisfactory employment to a largely increased force. This unfortunate and we believe unwarranted strike as concerns the Routt county fields has undoubtedly seriously menaced and retarded the full development of our properties and deferred placing them upon a paying basis, as well as adversely affected communities generally in the district. . . . Complaints and irregularities should always be carefully considered and adjusted as far as possible and as rapidly as conditions and expediency will permit and this can be accomplished if parties deal together without outside interference.
>
> We are willing to unite with you and all other business

interests in an endeavor to restore the resumption of business conditions and prosperity.[17]

The operator's claim that profits were not satisfactory was probably correct. But the claim that the miners were the only ones to profit was less than frank. The operators had profited from rents for lodging, sales prices for items bought at company stores, tools and mining equipment sold to the men, etc. At this time in Colorado's history much of the profit from mines came from goods sold to the miners rather than the sale of coal.

The mine operators were not heartless men who spent their lives in fiendish schemes. Old timers, including underground miners, who personally knew Bob Perry spoke highly of the man's honesty, humanity and character. He attempted to run a good mine that considered the welfare of the men. From their vista of the problem, Perry, Hayden, Peltier and Prentiss honestly felt that the strike was unwarranted and without proper foundation or cause. To them the union represented outside agitators who had unscrupulous and unholy objectives.

Early in the strike the two forces reached to resolve the differences. The Oak Creek miners' demands were the installation of scales at all the mines and the abolition of the fare from Phippsburg to the Moffat Mine. The pay scale demands were "that all veins of coal over six feet shall be paid for at 60 cents a ton; from four to six feet at 65 cents per ton; and from three to four feet at 75 cents a ton; under three feet shall be deficient work."[18] Of course the local union agreed with the state demands for recognization of the union, eight hour day and enforcement of the state laws.

The operators' offer was a compromise which contained many tempting bits to the strikers. Wages were to be raised from 50 cents per ton to 55 cents per ton. The union wanted 60 cents for coal the height of the working

veins at the big mines. The union won their point on scales, fare, board and room, and enforcement of the law. The union wanted an eight hour day; the operators offered a nine hour day; the men were working ten hour days. Although the union was not recognized formally, informally it was recognized by everyone, and it would receive credit for any improvements in and about the mines.

The operators' offer had many points worthy of consideration by the strikers. "But the local union rejected it on the grounds that it was too indefinite and did not bind the operators for any specified time."[19] As the strike progressed, wages, laws, mine safety, living conditions, etc. were soon pushed aside as the primary issue came to the forefront--recognization of the union. The union leaders throughout the state were as sure that they had a holy mission to complete as the operators were positive that the unions came straight from hell. Under these conditions there was little room for compromise. By the time the Routt County coal operators had made their offer, the strike had degenerated into a shooting war in the southern district, and by the time the union had rejected the Yampa Valley operators' offer, troops were being stationed in the war torn coalfields of Las Animas and Huerfano counties. Although the Oak Creek district was only a small side show compared to the grand events happening elsewhere, the miners, operators and communities in the Yampa Valley were ready and willing to take part in the heated squabble.

As militia went into the southern part of the state, Sheriff A. H. Chivington began disarming strikers in the Oak Creek district. At the same time he announced he would "furnish protection to anyone who desired to work in the mines."[20] With that assurance the operators announced that they would begin work at the mines as "open shops."

Opening the mines required that the property and strikebreakers be

protected from the strikers. Located at the north edge of the mine district, the Junction City Mine, which was the smallest in the district, had signed the union contract and was in little danger of attack. The next mine to the south was the Juniper. Because the Moffat Mine formed a buffer and there were no direct roads to the mine, there was little danger to this property. South of the Juniper was the Moffat Mine.

The Moffat Mine was the largest in the district and had a common boundary with the town of Oak Creek. Since much of the miners' animosity was vented at the Moffat Mine and it was vulnerable to attack, elaborate defenses were manned. The property was fenced and search lights and gun turrets were built on the hill above town. Anyone walking along the Denver and Salt Lake tracks in Oak Creek was sure to be brought under a search light. One elderly woman recalled how the light operator "used to pick my boy friend . . . and me up when we used to walk down the tracks towards the Perry Mine. He'd keep it on us all the time, so we were well chaperoned."[21]

The Routt County Fuel Company's tipple and long gravity tram were the most exposed targets for any attack. The tipple set in the town with miners' homes around it. A person walking along the tram was exposed to a sniper who could be hiding in numerous places. The Yampa Valley Mine was far enough south of Oak Creek that it was not a ready target, nor was the mine large enough to generate the intense feeling that was directed towards the Moffat and Pinnacle Mine.

Because of its location the first violence between the strikers and the operators in the Yampa Coalfield occurred near the Pinnacle tipple. On November 4, 1913, six men stepped off the late afternoon passenger train in Oak Creek. The men were to beef up the guard force at the Pinnacle Mine, but through that wonderful system of mysterious communications, the strikers

had learned of the men coming and were at the depot to greet them. A large number of strikers followed the guards from the depot to a hotel; however, the presence of Sheriff Chivington and his deputies backed by Marshal Harding Decker prevented any trouble. The next day the men started to walk to the mine tipple when they were surrounded by a large crowd of men and women. The mob shouted several taunts and insults; then someone threw a rock at the mine guards. Soon the whole crowd was stoning the six defenseless men. The sheriff and his men arrived in time to save the guards. Later, they were taken to Pallas, Colorado, and placed on the first train for Denver. The following day H. Deweese, who had come to the strike zone in September to organize the mine guard, walked uptown to eat lunch as was his habit. On his return to the Pinnacle tipple he was intercepted by a large crowd. Again words were shouted and rocks thrown. "One man . . . struck [Deweese] in the face" with a club. Deweese was able to break free and run to the safety of the tipple. Later that day Chivington ordered Deweese to leave the mine district; the order was promptly obeyed.[22]

After the encounter with the Pinnacle Mine guards an uneasy calm settled over the community. Then on Monday, November 10, Sheriff Chivington made a business trip to Denver; he returned to the strike district on Wednesday. The exact nature of the business was not known, but many of the strikers believed that Chivington had reached an agreement with the mine operators to import strikebreakers. On November 16, four Mexicans arrived on the train. The sheriff met the men and hurried them to the Moffat Mine property where they could be guarded. The four men objected to working at the mine when they learned that the miners were on strike, but the sheriff insisted that they had signed a contract to work. Later that afternoon the four men were allowed to walk into Oak Creek. Here they told several strikers that the mining companies were beginning to import strikebreakers

and the sheriff was in alliance with the companies.[23]

At once tempers flared and wild threats were made by the strikers. Bob Perry, the Moffat Mine superintendent, attempted to restore order before any real damage was done. He denied having any part in importing strikebreakers and further stated that the four men had been hired by the railroad as section hands. He challenged the strikers to contact the railroad for verification. That was done. The railroad readily confirmed Perry's statement. It was never publically known if the four men were strikebreakers, section men, or union agitators. But regardless of the truth of the situation, their presence helped move events at Oak Creek closer to the boiling point.[24]

That night several women and children were moved to safe places. Shorty Hamidy recalled how he and his mother spent the night in the bank basement. Conditions were tense during the night with several shots being fired and loud voices being heard. With the light of day came quiet. Miraculously nobody had been hurt during the night. That day Mrs. Hamidy and her smaller children moved to the tent camp on the Gilruth ranch.[25]

During the tense situation, a rare jewel of comedy occurred; however, it was not fully appreciated until later. Many people, including the sheriff, feared someone might become violent while drunk and start some serious trouble. To reduce the chance of a drunken riot the saloon keepers were asked to maintain sensible hours; to the request they readily complied. The saloons opened at seven in the morning and closed promptly at ten in the evening. These seemed to be sensible hours for no drunken riots occurred that winter; but anyone wanting a drink had fifteen hours out of every twenty-four to do so. Years later old timers joked about how long it would taken them to get drunk enough to cause a riot. To the credit of the saloon keepers it should be remembered that they ran a very tight ship and

did not allow things to get out of hand.[26]

While events in the Oak Creek district oscillated between extremely tense moments with acts of violence and periods of uncertain peace, the Steamboat Pilot reported:

> Conditions in other districts of the state are worse than in the week previous. Several mine guards were waylaid and killed near LaVeta and the governor threatens to call upon the United States government for troops if there is not an improvement . . .
>
> The burning and destruction of bridges continues in the southern field, the governor is informed, and other property had suffered damage at the hands of the strikers. This disarmament of the strikers and guards have been meagerly successful, and each replenishing their supply of guns and ammunition after giving up their arms . . .[27]

Across the southern coalfield, hot and bloody war prevailed. Meanwhile in the Yampa Coalfield, "all of the mines [were] working in a small way, although the Perry mine [had] increased its force to fifty men. All the operators profess to be able to continue work and increase their forces of miners steadily."[28]

Towards the end of November the Catholic priest, Father Martin Meyers was attacked by strikers and severely beaten. The reason for the assault is unclear. Perhaps the attackers harbored an anti-cleric feeling which was quite strong among many of the foreigners, or the attack may have been related to the strike. Regardless of the reason for the attack, the event was used as a pretext to gather up several strikers and take them to jail in Steamboat Springs. Shortly afterwards, Frank Garnier, head of the United Mine Workers at Oak Creek, went to Steamboat Springs to arrange for legal assistance for the men. While there, he was arrested by Under-Sheriff

Frye. That same day, Oak Creek's pro-union mayor A. C. Pankey was arrested. Pankey had just returned to Oak Creek from business in Denver. The arrest of Garnier and Pankey foretold the extent people were willing to go to end the strike.[29]

Early in the strike the Steamboat Pilot and the Routt County Sentinel, both county seat town newspapers, began attacking the union. On November 12, under the headlines "Convicted of Stealing Coal," the Pilot told its readers about the plight of a school teacher who was forced to steal coal. The whole thing was a sham created by the local literary society. The newspaper concluded that "it only shows another effect of the coal strike and the high prices of coal." At the time the article was written there was no coal shortage in the county and the Yampa Valley Electric Mine was working under union agreement; so coal prices should not have been abnormally high. A week later the same paper reported "Taxpayers restless over cost of strike. It cost $100 a day to keep sheriff and men in Oak Creek." In December the Sentinel carried a lengthly article based on the findings of a Pueblo grand jury. The article laid all the blame for the labor war on the union.[30]

To reduce the anti-union feeling that the papers were fostering, Garnier rented a theater in Steamboat Springs and held a public discussion on the strike. The Pilot noted that "Mr. Garnier was temperate and fair in his remarks and made a good showing for the miners . . ." Garnier did go into detail on many of the grievances of the strikers; he also admitted he was an agitator and defended the role of agitators. The newspaper concluded its report on Garnier's talk by observing that the audience showed "no enthusiasm nor evidence of approval . . ."[31] The union had lost the support of that segment of the population. While the major county newspapers were vigorously opposing the union, the Yampa Leader took an objective approach

and in the November 14 edition, the duplicity of the operators received rough treatment. The copies of the Oak Creek Times for the strike period have been lost to history. The Hayden Republican was neutral towards the strike. Thus the Yampa Leader was not powerful enough to help the union cause in the Oak Creek district.

The Christmas season of 1913 was not a time of joy for many of the residents of the Yampa Valley. With bright hopes the strike was begun. By December the United Mine Workers' promise to provide the strikers with food and shelter was under a severe test. The cost of the strike throughout the state was a heavy drain on the union treasury, and side show areas such as the Yampa Valley were far down the line of preferences. In the final analysis, it was up to the local residents to take care of their own. Most of the stores in Oak Creek furnished the strikers with substantial amounts of credit for food and the necessities of life. Dominic Hamidy extended so much credit to strikers that his North Pole Import-Export Store was forced to close. Sam Bell provided the strikers with extensive credit, but as Christmas approached he was forced to restrict or completely stop credit for many of the strikers. As the bitter cold of Routt County winter descended on the strikers' tent communities, the future presented grim and harsh prospects.

A few days before Christmas a group of women entered Bell's Mercantile Store to purchase a few items for the holiday. When Bell refused to sell the women anything on credit, they lost their tempers and dragged him from the store. In the ally the poor man was severely beaten about the head and shoulders with a 2 X 4. A good many men including the sheriff watched the assault on Bell. After the struggle was over, the sheriff arrested some of the spectators.[32] Later that day a boy of sixteen, Herbert Fulton, became loud and insulting at some strikers. The strikers took offense and thumped

on the lad's head and body. Again several men were arrested and taken to Steamboat Springs to jail. District Attorney Gentry came up from Meeker, Colorado, and released the strikers on the lesser counts and issued more severe charges. The trial against the strikers and their leaders began on December 29, 1913.[33]

The trial placed two sharply different societies against each other. Oak Creek was a growing community with several licensed saloons and other businesses which operated without a license. Along with the drinking was gambling and loose women. It was a town of violence with numerous fights and the city government was corrupt. Despite its more seamy side the mining community was the town with the payroll and it did have hard money in continuous circulation. It was also a community of many languages and life styles. There were Italians, Austrians, Slovaks, Croatians, Greeks, English, French, German, Swedes, and Japanese in the community.

The people in the Steamboat Springs area were much more homogeneous. The majority of the residents had been born in America and traveled to the Yampa Valley to take up homesteads. The community had a common identity associated with the soil, crops, and stock. These were people who worked nearly every day of their life from early in the morning until late in the evening. Because of their long hours it was hard for them to sympathize with the miners who wanted an eight hour day. The dangers and hardships associated with working stock and farming equipment were numerous. For example, it was not unusual for a person to be kicked by a horse or mule and to be bucked off a horse and severely injured was a common occurrence. With so many dangers in their own lives, it was hard for homesteaders to become deeply concerned about the dangers in the mine. The homesteader had only a subsistence wage. In fact, many homesteaders on Morrison Creek and in the Twentymile area worked in the mines during the winter months in

order to have some cash. The distinctly different vistas from which the miners and the homesteaders saw the world caused marked differences in their beliefs in what was right and should be done. Presumeably the Steamboat Pilot and the Routt County Sentinel reflected the community's attitudes towards foreigners. Both of the newspapers had a strong prejudice against people who were not born in the United States.

Once the trial began the deep seated feelings became apparent. The Pilot reported "a particularly bitter feeling was aroused against Martin Steinhardt, who was an Austrian by his street talk wherein he said he would not be a citizen of this country." The trial continued for nine days at which time Justice Mallory ruled that the defendants should be held on $300 bonds until the district court session in late January. As the trial came to a close the anti-strike forces at Steamboat Springs made their move. Let the Pilot tell us what happened:

> There has been a great deal of dissatisfaction with the Oak Creek situation throughout the county for some time. The taxpayers know that under the circumstances it has been necessary to keep a great many deputies in the field to preserve order and the expense has been running up to a figure larger than the county could stand. There have been repeated threats among taxpayers to treat the situation as in times past the sheep situation was treated.
>
> During the afternoon of the last day of the trial a number of businessmen met to discuss the entire strike situation as it was effecting the taxpayers. An organization was affected so quietly that it did not become known on the streets. . . . The first knowledge of the movement was a few minutes before the conclusion of the trial before Justice Mallory when about seventy-five business men entered the court room and remained standing in

> the back of the room until the justice announced his decision and adjourned court.
>
> At this time the men moved forward and asked that they be allowed to make a statement. A spokesman was put forward to announce the demands of the taxpayers, which was that Frank Garnier, . . . John Ferguson, . . . and Martin Stinehardt . . . be required to leave the county within twenty-four hours. . . . The statement made that the organization did not come for argument, but simply to present their demands.[34]

After the ultimatum was issued the Steamboatites withdrew to another hall. Here Dr. H. C. Dodge took charge of organizing the "Taxpayers League." The enlarged group drew up another set of demands: Frank Garnier, John Ferguson, Alex Ferguson, Rusty Ferguson, Thomas Bryant, John Howard, Peter Cisnero, J. E. Thompson, Martin Stinehardt, Jim Sullivan, John Creek, W. M. Doyle, Tom Piercen, Dave Reedy, James Ray, K. Clemens, Charles Stark and Mike Pritcher were to leave Routt County at once. Among the list were several men who were not miners on strike. Tom Piercen was one of the leading investors in the Oak Creek Town Company and he was a leading businessman. W. M. Doyle ran saloons, cat houses, and other businesses. Jim Sullivan and Dave Reedy were on the Oak Creek city council. The Taxpayers League demanded "that within a reasonably short time, all ablebodied men in Oak Creek camp shall be at work or leave the camp." It is interesting that Oak Creek was called a camp when it was one of the largest and richest communities in northwestern Colorado. One suspects that community pride and jealousy played an important role in the motives of the Taxpayers League. The final demand called for no interferance with miners as they went to and from work. The Yampa Leader found the action of the league to be "unfortunate and ill advised."[35] At Hayden "many people

hardly knew where they stood." However, "the general opinion was that the strike should not be handled with gloves, but with a firm hand."[36]

In response to the Taxpayers League the United Mine Workers "advised [their] men in Routt county to stand on their right as citizens, to refuse to be deported and to shoot to kill if any other than a bona fide peace officer attempts to interfere with them." The union went on to tell their members, "anyone who allows himself to be deported, who has not violated any law, is not fit to be a citizen of any country, and I don't want him coming whining about me. If he kills the man that tries it we're back of him."[37] Those were hard words and could easily lead to a blood bath. In response to the situation Governor Ammons sent the militia to Oak Creek.

Why were troops stationed at Oak Creek? Although some of the methods used were questionable, local law enforcement officers had stayed in control of the strike zone. The operators were importing strikebreakers to work in their mines before the league became involved, and the arrival of the troops did not affect the mining activities. In answer to the question, the Taxpayers League was simply a political ploy to justify bringing in the militia. This shifted the cost of keeping peace from the county to the state.

The arrival of Captain Dorn and Company G Second Regiment of the state militia was met with displeasure by the residents of southern Routt County. "Pinkey" Lewis, who was fireman on the train that brought the militia to Oak Creek, recalled the train stopped for water at Volcano. While there Captain Dorn began instructing the conductor and engineer on how to water their engine. As an expression of their feelings, the train crew set the car with the militia on the siding and went off and left it. Another train later brought the militia into the district. It was this type of nuisance resistance rather than any overt acts that exemplify the relations between

the militia and the people of the strike district.

By January 1914 the United Mine Workers were confronted with several problems. The strike in the southern district was taking much of the union's talent and treasury. Meanwhile at Oak Creek the union ranks were beginning to crumble. A miner named Jensen had put forth his best for the union cause, but the bitter cold and snow of winter was taking its toll on him and his family. Finally in late January he decided to move his family from one of the tent communities into a house in Oak Creek. There was some belief that he also planned to go back to work since the mines were operating at nearly full capacity. To make an example of Jensen and discourage other members of the rank and file from breaking away, a group of union men went to Jensen's home and destroyed nearly all his household belongings and beat Jensen severely. The strikers might have killed him except for the timely arrival of Captain Dorn and a large force of militia.[38] The fact that the union was having to use force to control its members made it clear that the strike in the Yampa Coalfield had been broken. Soon Garnier, Pankey, and other union and political leaders left the district.

On February 19, Dave Reedy, who had been ordered to leave Oak Creek by the Taxpayers League, but like most of those ordered to leave had stayed, walked into Walker Mercantile Company to purchase a few items. Suddenly Raymond Burt of the Baldwin-Phelps Detective Agency drew a gun and shot Reedy in the face. "There seems to have been no provocation for the shooting, other than that there had been trouble at a previous time." The wound to Reedy was not too serious, and Burt was arrested and the legal process started.

In mid-March the raw edges of the strikers and strikebreakers were beginning to grate on each other. One pay day the strikebreakers gathered in the town saloons and began their drinking and carousing. The strikers

who were broke and wished they could join in on the revelry began insulting the strikebreakers. Words were exchanged between the two groups and a few scuffles ensued. As the day progressed the tone of the anger became more intense and both sides sought weapons. After dark shots were heard near the Pinnacle tipple. Excited men rushed to the area and found the bodies of Jack Gill and Don Motto. Both Gill and Motto were strikers, and the threat of open warfare was present. Although the remainder of the night was tense with an occasional shout and shot, folks stopped short of war. One of the dead men, Gill, was the principal witness for Reedy in the case against Burt. After the shooting, Sheriff Chivington arrested A. H. House and A. D. Perkins. Before his death from wounds, Motto identified House as one of the men who attacked him and Gill.[40] After being arraigned, House was released on bond to await trial. While waiting the June session of the district court, House worked as a rope rider at Moffat Mine. On May 15, while taking a string of cars into the mine, "other cars, in some unaccountable manner, got loose behind him and crushed his life out."[41]

Late on the night of May 2, 1914, the Pioneer Rooming House caught fire. John Snow and Bob Dogget died in the flames and "more people would of died but a man coming home from a dance discovered the fire and risked his life running from door to door waking people. Mr. and Mrs. Clapper who ran the boarding house awoke to find their ceiling all afire." One witness frankly states, "It was no accident as someone had fired both stair cases."[42] Before the inferno was brought under control thirteen businesses were destroyed. "For months . . . Sam Bell [had] kept a watchman at his building, and he feared something of this character would occur, but on that evening dismissed him." The only building on the block not destroyed by the fire was the union hall.[43]

The union continued the strike at least in name until December 1914,

but in reality the strike in the Oak Creek district was over by the spring of 1914. On March 16, the Hayden brothers were granted a charter of incorporation for the Haybro Mine located just north of the Juniper Mine. Lewis Hayden was superintendent of the Juniper and in a position to know if a new mine could find the necessary labor to begin development. During the summer, the mining district at Mt. Harris was opened and began shipping coal.[44] In June the mines reported that they set a new coal shipping record. That month the Oak Creek district shipped "1489 carloads, an amount almost 50 per cent higher than in any previous June."[45]

As the winter of 1914 drew upon the Yampa Valley, everyone could look to the future with a sense of uncertainity. The Union had taken up a noble cause, but for the most part they had been beaten badly in the northwestern Colorado coalfield, and only events outside the field could salvage any victory for the miners. The mine operators had fought a noble fight to open the coalfield and make its product available to the public. The future was uncertain although the field had been extended to include the Mt. Harris district. No one was sure the railroad would survive and without it, none of the mines or industrial efforts could last. All that remained was to continue the struggle.

CHAPTER V

DIGGING COAL

The history of the Yampa Coalfield is the chronicle of people locked in a struggle over the most basic forces of greed, power and glory. Giants of industry, government, and unions measured their rivals in an effort to gain supremacy. Gamblers and outlaws dealt their cards and played their hands. Mingling in with the battles of the warring giants tread the humble folks who mined the coal and built the solid foundation of society. The folks who worked the mines had skin of black, red, yellow and white hues. They spoke the languages of the Far East, Near East, Eastern Europe, Western Europe and native American. Regardless of an individual's place of origin, social position, monetary standing or political affiliation, the dark and damp of mother nature's mines recognized no difference. The mountain exacted a high toll paid in blood and flesh from the men who dared to go into the bowels of the earth to extract the carbon fuel.

The men who went into the mines had a recklessness about them that often resulted in death or serious injury. Such was the nature of the men involved in the first reported mine death in the Yampa Valley. On January 8, 1900, Jacob Cross and Clarence Wyatt began reopening and developing the Morgan Mine on Deep Creek. The two men had a number of chores to do before the mine would be safe. For several years the property had been worked "in a careless, haphazard manner, by inexperienced miners." Although Cross and Wyatt placed timbers in the mine before beginning their development work, they were also of that class of men who did their work in a careless, haphazard manner. In order to provide working room they stopped setting props within ten feet of the face. "About a foot inside of the props a smooth slip running at right angles to the working place

penetrated the roof." Wyatt, who was an inexperienced and somewhat timid miner, called Cross's "attention to the dangerous condition of the roof, adding that he could push his hand into the opening, but [Cross] did not heed his warning and worked along, encouraging [Wyatt] to do likewise." Suddenly the rock gave way and Cross paid the supreme price for his recklessness.[1]

A person can feel the nonchalant attitude of A. R. Allen as he walked out of the Oak Hills Mine on June 14, 1909, to get material and assistance with his electrical work. James W. Colbert and William Smith were busy painting when Allen approached them to solicit aid. The two painters, who were bored with their job, readily agreed to help deliver material into the mine. The trio gathered the necessary items and loaded them on a mine car and pushed it over the "knuckle" without attaching the cable. All three men jumped into the mine car and off they went, down the twenty-seven degree incline. "One of the men was at the brake, but it was absolutely useless in checking the speed of the car as it plunged down into the bowels of the earth at a terrific speed." Finally the car jumped the track and hurled Smith and Colbert to their death. Allen was badly injured and a crew of men working along the track narrowly averted the onrushing car.[2]

The nonchalant recklessness of the miners approached absurdity at times. For example: Tony Brouszos and John Jinko entered the Haybro bath house fully expecting to clean up and go home. However, one of the men had forgotten to put a small can of black powder in its proper place before entering the bath house. Now powder was strickly forbidden in the bath house, but the miner did not want to walk back out into the cold until he showered. So he decided to hide the powder until after cleaning up; then he would put it in the proper place. The miner chose the electrical switch box which was convienent to hide the powder. The obvious happened--the

electrical current set off the powder killing Brouszos and seriously injuring Jinko.[3]

There were some mine accidents which combined recklessness and crime. On December 15, 1911, Edward S. McKinley, Jr. walked into the Yampa Valley Mine to inspect some of the deeper workings. McKinley who was a son of a wealthy Denver family who had provided him with the best education was of that reckless breed of mine operator who took chances and worked as their own superintendent. During the tense conditions which existed between management and labor and McKinley and Oak Creek politicians, it was foolhardy for a superintendent to leave himself exposed. But McKinley went into a remote section of the mine and was returning to the surface when he saw a string of mine cars rushing at him. The approaching cars were timed so they would meet the mine superintendent at a narrow section of the mine. McKinley tried to press against the rib and found it was too narrow so he turned and attempted to out run the cars. But he slipped and the cars rushed over him. The badly crushed man was hurried from the mine and placed on a special train for Denver. As the train neared Yarmony, McKinley died. Since mine cars frequently broke loose, McKinley's death was carried simply as another mine accident.[4]

The fact that the section of the mine was remote and not working and the runaway cars were perfectly timed the suspicion of foul play is present. The hard feelings between labor and management could provide a clue to the motive. However, during the city election of 1910 the Citizens' Ticket was the only organized party on the ballot. "But there was some feeling over the election as three names were written in." E. S. McKinley, Jr. came very close to defeating the incumbent, G. W. Hoffman. Although it is not fully known what caused the "feeling," vice was involved.[5]

The story of Allen House and his death during the big strike of 1913-

1914 suggest foul play. In the spring of 1914 House had been identified as one of the men who murdered Jack Gill and Don Motto. Gill was the star witness to an earlier shooting; thus the killings have an involved twist. House, who was out on bond until his trial, was working as a rope rider at the Moffat Mine when "other cars, in some unaccountable manner got loose behind him and crushed his life out."[6]

Most of the men who worked in Colorado mines had exhibited a certain amount of boldness, vision and ambition when they left their homes in either Europe or Asia. But once they reached the mining districts of the state, they added a romantic flavor to the language of the communities. It is possible to get an indication of the strength of the various nationalities by looking at the accident records. In 1911, killed in Colorado mines were one Bulgarian, eleven Italians, eight Mexicans, six Poles, eight Slavs, one Hungarian, two Englishmen, twelve Americans, eleven Austrians, one German, two Montenegrins, one Tyrolian, one Greek, one Swede, one Japanese, one Turk, and one Russian. Although the men had a boldness, they were inexperienced, and State Inspector of Coal Mines James Dalrymple noted, "the person who is so incompetent that he knows practically nothing about the business in which he is engaged, and is unable to understand what is being said to him by those in charge, should not be held responsible for any accident to himself or others through his action."[7]

The vast majority of the mine accidents were caused by falls of rock or coal which could have been avoided had the mining area been properly timbered. But with seventeen different languages being spoken it was impossible to instruct men on the proper method for timbering. Adding to the confusion was the lack of agreement upon what constituted proper timbering. Then the mines did not always have useable timbers available. In some cases props were placed in the mining area but it was understood

that they were to be used sparingly. In other cases the miners were charged for props which were decducted from their meager wages.

At the Moffat Mine on the morning of May 18, 1910, Henry Newman harnessed his mule and began the morning round of picking up loaded mine cars. As he approached the area W. B. McCardy and George McChessie were mining, McCardy was scaling the roof. Newman, who was unaware of the danger, came on; McCardy, who was unaware of Newman's presence, gave no warning. He simply jumped clear as the rock fell. Newman never knew what hit him, and McChessie, who did not have any warning either, was seriously injured.[8]

Even the best and most careful miners met their match in the mines. William Hillier Sr. was a highly respected experienced miner at the Juniper Mine. Hillier began his mining career in Wales in 1882. After coming to the United States he had worked in the mines at Erie, Colorado. With the opening of the Yampa Coalfield, he moved his family to the Juniper Mine. In March, 1912, he was engaged in one of the most hazardous occupations in the mines--pulling pillars.[9]

As a mine is developed, rooms and road ways are cut through the coal. These become the rips and pillars of the mine. The pillars contain approximately fifty percent of the mine's coal and hold most of the weight of the overburden. Since so much coal is in the pillars it is necessary to mine that coal after the area is fully developed--worked out. Since removing the coal also requires that the roof of the mine be allowed to cave, pulling the pillars is a highly dangerous occupation. As weight settles on the rips the coal tends to pop out. In fact, many miners took jobs of pulling pillars because the coal would easily pop out which allowed a large amount for loading with a minimum of labor. But often the coal popped out and struck the miner. And to keep the roof from caving on the

miner it was necessary to set "breaker rows" with extreme care. In the "cave area" the roof was supposed to fall, but the cave area was the area no miner went into. The area between the cave and the mining area was an exact line defined by the "breaker row." The "breaker row" broke the rock at a certain point allowing a select place to remain safe while the other areas were deadly. Of course setting the "breaker row" was a precise craft. As coal was removed from the pillar the roof begins settling which causes rocks to break. These "bumps" send a minor earthquake through the mine. A bump can and often does break rock loose inside the mining area. In these cases the pillar or "stump" works as an unwanted breaker row in that it shears the rock off at the coal and allows it to fall in the work area. With modern equipment men work far enough from the coal that they avoid many of the rocks that fell on earlier miners equipped with only a pick and shovel.[10]

In the time honored fashion of pulling pillars, William Hillier, Sr. began his work on March 16, 1912. With the courage and confidence that comes with long years of practice the fifty-nine year old miner swung his pick at the coal. Suddenly the face exploded outwards and the roof collapsed. Hillier was found with numerous injuries and rushed by rail to Yampa where Dr. J. H. Cole did all he could. Later William Hillier, Jr. took his father to Lafayette, Colorado, for burial. On the return trip he chanced to meet his brother-in-law Thomas Irwin. Irwin had many years experience in the coal mines although he was still a young man. Like so many miners of his day he had drifted from mining camp to mining camp as work and personal whim dictated. Upon meeting Hillier Jr. and learning of the fate of the older man, Irwin decided to go to Oak Creek and go to work. Since most of the family was working at the Juniper Mine it was natural for Irwin to seek work at the same place. The Oak Creek Times reported,

"Thomas Irwin was killed by a fall of coal while pulling pillars in the Juniper mine on Saturday. The accident occurred in the same room, in the same manner, and within 10 minutes of the same time of day as that which killed William Hillier, Sr."[11]

Because of the hazards associated with pillar pulling most miners refused to be involved with the work. In some mines pillar pulling operations would go for extended periods without anyone working at the task. In the Keystone Mine development work had forged ahead without any effort to pull pillars for so long a period that the pressure was becoming astronomical on the pillars. Once pillar pulling began the danger was so great that most miners refused to do the work. For several years Fontaine Villa, a special type of miner, was the only man working as pillar puller in the mine. When he got into trouble with the law and was sent to prison, pillar pulling at the Keystone Mine stopped until Villa returned. By that time conditions were in a real mess. He took up where he left off. Villa could strike the coal with his pick and coal exploded from the face. With a charmed life, Villa worked at this dangerous task without serious mishap.[12]

In the Haybro #3 shaft mine after the development work was completed, the coal was mined by a longwall method in some areas. Longwalling, as the name implies, requires a long wall of coal which is mined as a continuous unit. By this system a breaker row was set along the length of the face and the men extracted the coal. As the coal was extracted new breaker rows were set and the men progressed through the mine. The cave area was always right behind them, and in essence everyone was involved in pulling a massive pillar. Although longwalling had its dangers, it had some distinct advantages. Since there were no work areas for dust or gas to collect, the chance of mine explosions was sharply reduced. By longwalling the sections of the roof that might rot after periods of being

exposed to the atmosphere was reduced because once the men finished an area the roof soon caved and no one would ever go back in it. More important, the pressure as the mountain settled was continually being relieved.[13]

In mines like the Keystone the weight of the roof became a critical problem during the last years the mine worked. The mine was continuously bumping and dribbling rock from the roof. In the nine foot coal on the south side of the mine the popping coal would reach well back into the mining area. One of the more capable cutting machine operators, Floyd Lewis and his assistant Gordon Steele would set their machine and then go back from the face several feet and plug the machine in. Lewis would stay at the "nib" and listen to the machine as it was bombarded by coal and rock as it slashed into the vein. When the machine bogged down, Lewis would pull the nib and wait until the mine settled down. Then he and Steele would go and clean the coal off the machine and prepare to make another cut. They mined a lot of coal without having to shoot it down.[14]

Despite the dangers and hardships, the mines were a place of opportunity for many residents of Routt County. H. A. Todd came to the Yampa Valley ahead of the railroad and stopped for a time at Toponas where he helped John Herold with the stage station. In fact the Herold and Todd families were related and it was through this connection that the Todds were induced to leave the Trinidad area where Todd worked as a mechanic. With the arrival of the railroad Todd found plenty of employment at the Moffat Mine.[15]

Keeping with the times Todd also wanted a ranch so he bought a relinquishment on Morrison Creek. Ranching was a hard business on the small homesteads. Only by uniting their efforts were the folks able to get their small homes, usually two room log structures, built. An in times of sickness families united to put up the hay and do the necessary

chores. But too often there were "too few cows" and too many dogs and kids on the homestead. And subsistence living was the best that the land could provide. The old men were another problem. Often older bachelors took up homesteads as a place of retirement. These men built cabins but failed to plant crops, even a simple garden or potato patch. When winter came some of the bachelors became snowbound and died of starvation. Alfie Cole who was one of the more prosperous men on Morrison Creek would butcher during the worst of the winter and call on his neighbors to help care for the older men. Everyone who had some extra potatoes, cheese, etc. would meet at Cole's home and make up sacks of food which were taken to the old bachelors. Since the snow was deep, it was a difficult task to reach these men. On some occasions the rescue parties found the old men sick and in desperate need. This always required further effort to get them to help. Usually the sick were taken to an already overcrowded homesteader's home where he was nursed to health.

The efforts to help folks was heroic and did foster a special feeling of brotherhood. But the poverty of the homesteaders was inescapable. They were so poor that they could not afford a pair of overshoes although overshoes were ~~low~~ priced. People throughout the valley, not exclusively on Morrison Creek, used gunny sacks for overshoes. The sack was folded like a diaper and wrapped and tied around the foot. Newspapers and cardboard were used for lining to add warmth. When folks went to visit they would take their gunny sack overshoes off and leave them in a corner as a normal act when they entered a home. For these poor folks, cash and opportunity had to come from someplace other than the small homestead.

H. A. Todd would leave his family when the mines began working large crews during the fall. He would remain at the mines until late spring. In the spring of 1914, Todd was working at the tipple of the Junction City

Mine. Since this was during the big strike it should be noted that the Junction City Mine had settled with the union. Todd's job was to empty the loads and send the mine cars back into the mine. He was pushing an empty car out of the way when a string of eight loads broke loose behind him. The loads caught Todd as he tried to jump clear badly breaking his leg. There was no one working with him, so with great pain he had to shove the loaded cars off himself and then drag himself to a window to call for help. Adding to his agony was the fact that the mine had no provisions to take care of the injured man. It took over an hour to summons a doctor. The doctor arrived and Todd was put in a wagon and hauled by slow team nearly fifteen miles to the hospital in Yampa. Finally, several hours after the accident, Dr. Cole amputated the leg. As the Yampa Leader noted, "Todd [had] a wife and several small children to support [and] this accident will be a hard blow to him."[16] The accident was a burden on the entire family, and to help relieve part of the hardship the children sought employment at the mines as soon as they were old enough. Thus the coal mines were both the source of anguish and the road out of poverty.

J. Frank Anthony was less fortunate than H. A. Todd. Anthony came to Routt County in 1905 and homesteaded on Morrison Creek. He remained on the property until it was proved up, then moved to Oak Creek to earn cash for further improvement on the land. Anthony was employed at the Moffat Mine to switch the pit cars at Argo Gulch. While he was pushing a string of empties a string of loads caught him and crushed him between the cars. A few hours later, the homesteader who had dreams of improving his ranch was dead.[17]

Fred Todd and two brothers left Oak Creek during the winter of 1917 to work at Bear River. On January 19, 1917, he and two other miners were walking out of the mine at the end of the shift when they met the shot

firer. Todd informed the shot firer that they had loaded their own holes. This made the shot firer angry and he let the men know that they were in violation of the rules. But Fred, who was convinced that the shot firer had been breaking up too much coal and generally not doing his work right, was more anxious to see the results of his work than worry about the shot firer. So he followed the shot firer back into the mine. After the blast, Todd stepped into the room without sounding the roof. His carelessness resulted in instant death when ten ton of rock fell from the roof.[18]

Thus, some of the homesteaders who sought opportunity in the mines only found disaster. But Earnest "Dude" Todd, whose father lost his leg, was able to find success in the mines. Todd's neighbor, Mrs. Skinner who cooked at the Merchants Cafe in Oak Creek, recommended Dude to the barn boss at the Moffat Mine. In the course of events he was hired. Dude was an ambitious man who decided early in life that he would not be just another miner. To further himself he studied electrical engineering. Since the Moffat Mine was using electricity in its operation, Dude soon had one of the better jobs in the mine. From this point he entered local politics and before he retired from business he had become a successful man.

The Haybro Mine proved an unique opportunity for George Heinke and his family. The Heinke family arrived in the spring of 1914 just as the Hayden brothers were opening their mine on top of Oak Hills. Heinke began working a team and wagon when the development work started; later he worked as blacksmith and he continued in various capacties with the mine for thirty years. For many of those years he walked a mile from his homestead to the mine. Much of the time he was able to work night shifts which allowed him an opportunity to work both the homestead and the mine.[19]

Although Heinke's homestead was closer to the mine than most, it was a common occurance for homesteaders to work in the mines during the winter

months. Through the years these people divided into two distinct groups. Some of the homesteaders were primarily interested in mining with the homestead as a supplement. Other homesteaders viewed the mine as a supplement to the ranch.

After World War I Heinke returned to his old job as blacksmith at the Haybro #2 slope mine, but the war and a desire to make more money pulled him into the mine. His first mining job was highly profitable for experience; however, the work was most demanding and he was often wet from the waist down. The area he and his "buddies" worked was called the "water hole" and was very wet. They constantly had to keep the hand operated pump working. When a fuse was lit to shoot the coal down, Heinke and his partner would have to drag the pump into the clear as they sought cover. When they returned to the working area it was necessary to drag the pump back into place and begin pumping immediately. Loading coal was harder work than normal because of the water. More than once Heinke and his buddy lost an entire Monday's mining because the mine area had filled with water while the mine was idle on Sunday. After more than a year of working in the water, Heinke was moved to another area of the mine. Here the face was split by a layer of rock at just the right level for loading cars. Johnny Mathews, who was an expert with a cutting machine, would cut the coal just above the split. Heinke and his buddy drilled the holes and shot down the coal while Mathews was cutting another area nearby. With the coal easy to load and the men being paid for rock work, Heinke was able to make a very good living.

The mines were a mixed blessing for the men who worked at them, but beasts underground generally suffered extensively. During the first years of the mines horses and mules were the primary means of moving coal to and from the main haulage road. In the Moffat Mine it was a common practice to

hook a mule and a horse to a string of cars. The horse was used as a leader. Nearly all the animals were bruised and punctured where an irate drive had used a sprag as a whip. Some mules like old Capp became notoriously dangerous. He kicked, struck and bit with a deadliness. He hated the mines so badly it was necessary to blindfold him to get him into the mine. Any man who worked him risked his life; however, despite his cantankerous nature Capp was sought after by rope riders. It was generally agreed that when Capp refued to enter a mining area it was too dangerous. More often than not the mule's instinct proved correct.[20]

The stereotype mine accident involves the miner with a pick and shovel, but handling mine cars was a dangerous business. In the Oak Creek district there were nine fatalities to men handling coal cars in an eight year period between 1911-1919. None of the fatalities had identical causes. For example, Tony Velotti, age sixteen, was hired to throw a switch on the gravity tram at the Yampa Valley Mine. Normally one would believe that throwing a switch was a safe occupation. On August 25, 1911, the young man threw the switch after a string of loads had passed when suddenly a taunt cable came out from under the cars and whipped with such force that the boy's legs were broken at the knees and he was thrown to the ground with such force that he received a deadly brain concussion.[21] Velatti's death could have been avoided if the tram system had been better designed.

Joe Parina's death was harder for the miners to understand. He and his buddy had loaded two cars of coal, and Parina started the loads towards the room entry. To this point everything was normal for a mine. The men followed the time honored practice of driving their room slightly up grade so loads could be dropped easily to the entry and empties brought to the face. Along these gentle grades cars rarely picked up much speed and usually could be stopped easily. But for Parina, who was riding the lead

car, something happened and he fell under the cars. The first his partner knew of the accident was when he heard Parina cry that soft cry which sends chills through the listener, "Buddy." Men in the mine considered Parina's death just one of those things which goes with the job.[22]

In the mines of the Oak Creek district there were sections that had grades of 25 percent or more, and in all sections of the mine the grade was sharp. Because of the grades there were special problems in handling the cars. In fact, over steep sections men were hired to sprag the wheels. Sprags were pointed metal rods with wooden handles placed in the wheels. This form of rough lock was often the only braking system used to control cars down steep grades. "Spragers," the men who put the sprags in, soon became adept at spraging a wheel while the wheels were turning at fast speeds. The idea was to not stop the car because it would be difficult to start; however, if the sprag was not put in place the car would run away. John S. Munson was working as a sprager at Haybro No. 2 when a trip of loaded cars passed on it way outside. But the loads were too heavy for the hoist. Instead of the cars coming to a slow stop and slipping slowly back to a lesser grade the cable broke. Munson had no idea that a string of runaway cars was coming at him until it was too late.[23]

In this accident we find another characteristic of some of the miners. James Fulton who was the rope rider on the ill fated trip realized that the loads were too heavy but he failed to stop the trip while in a relatively safe place. He saw Munson when he passed, but when he reported the accident he said no one was hurt. It was not until a trackman found Munson's light that his body was dug out of the wreckage. Fulton was not heartless, but he was a man of his time with a nonchalant attitude, and when no one screamed he assumed no one was hurt.[24]

To avoid many of the accidents caused by steep grades--broken cables

or clevises--mines often surveyed development areas on gentle grades and allowed roadways to meander. This was advantageous to men who moved the cars with horses and mules from the mining area to the main haulage road. On the main haulage roads it was necessary to avoid the twists and turns which resulted in sharp angles and steep grades. Only through the progression of shaker pans, shuttle cars and conveyor belts was the tragic accident rate reduced.

Despite the tragic reality of Routt County mine accidents, certain accidents had a slap stick comic character. One young Russian miner, Steve Chirkoses, was walking from the Moffat Mine to the bunkhouse after the shift. Meanwhile the switch engine was working in the mine yards. Since the engine was heading towards the bunkhouse, the miner decided to swing aboard between the tender and the engine. He reached up and hooked the grab iron like a professional and swung between the tender and the engine expecting to alight in the stirrups of a ladder. But there were no stirrups or ladder, just the grab iron. The accident cost Chirkoses his left arm.[25]

Then for some of the victims death came as a welcome relief to a tragic life. Dr. Andrew Hays had begun life in County Mayo, Ireland, and like so many people of his time the call of western gold was strong enough to bring him to Colorado. Unlike most miners Hayes was among the more fortunate at Cripple Creek. Although he was getting on towards middle age when he struck it rich, he used his wealth to seek a life long dream of becoming a medical doctor. In 1891 he received his degree from the University of Colorado and the next year received a degree for post graduate work from the University of Denver. He then returned to Cripple Creek where he continued to do well. As Cripple Creek wound down Hayes moved to Yampa in 1906. Here he bought a ranch south of town and engaged in

several business ventures. By 1916 Hayes was getting on in years, bad business ventures and inconsistant personal habits had taken their toll. In the late fall he was in Oak Creek without a dollar looking for a job in the mines. He had recently been working at a saw mill near Toponas, but his physical condition was such that he could not work at either the mines or the saw mill. Rejected in Oak Creek, Hayes drifted to Mt. Harris where he was employed to work in the cook house at the Routt-Pinnacle Mine. He had only worked a couple of days when he fell under a mine train working in the yards. No one ever knew why or how he came to his death.[26]

The miners were complex men with paradoxes. The term "buddy" meant a special partnership between men working together in the mine. Among them developed a sense of loyalty and respect. If a person was your "buddy" he was ready and willing to stand by you through thick and thin. Paradoxically miners exploited each other with gusto. The blacksmith often exacted a consideration from miners for keeping their tools sharp. If the added fee was not paid a miner would find that his picks and drill bits were not sharp and ready to go when the shift began. Rope riders often exacted a tribute for setting cars. If the demands were not met, the rope rider would be slow at picking up and spotting cars. Under some conditions the miner would wait hours without a car to load. Since he was paid by the ton, the long idle periods were costly.[27]

Dude Todd recalled while he was underground electrical superintendent he went through the mine one morning with mine foreman Jack Bond. At each room Bond would step through the entry and reach down and take two dollars from the dinner pail. He came into a room where John Mackinnie was working and looked into the pail. There wasn't any money for the mine boss. Bond asked the miner why there wasn't any money in the pail. Mackinnie told how his family was sick and he had needed the money for medicine. The mine

boss listened to the story and then told the miner that he would have four dollars in the dinner bucket the next day or he would go down to the water hole. John replied that he could not stand being sent to the water hole. At this point Todd paid the four dollars. As the two men continued thier inspection Todd questioned why the mine boss had been so hard on the miner. He was told that the system assured that he had good miners in good places in order to maintain high tonnage.[28]

Jack Harvey was running the hoist on 7 and 8 upper when Bond and Todd came by on their rounds of inspection. Bond asked Harvey if he had "a couple of extra shifts on your statement this last time." Bond replied, "What I figured is we would go fifty-fifty on those. One for you and one for me." "No," Harvey responded, "let's just have them on there each time." Bond then walked out of sight around a curve in the mine. Here he waited until a trip of loads was brought up to the hoist. As Harvey started a trip of empties down, Bond struck the emergency bell. Harvey feared someone was down on the track and brought the trip to an abrupt stop. In the process he broke the wire rope. Bond then stepped back around the curve and said, "I seen the whole thing happen; nothing but carelessness on your part." Bond fired Harvey immediately. Harvey, who had found a way to get paid for extra shifts, suddenly found himself without a job. The corruption and exploitation ran throughout the coal mining industry.

Todd, who had been a body guard of Bob Perry, was able to discuss with the mine superintendent the corruption which occurred in the mine. Perry was unaware of what was going on, but when pressed to learn what he would do about the corruption, Todd was told nothing would be done. Perry stated that it was necessary for the mine to make a profit and if it required that the mine bosses and others make something on the side in order to assure the

profit, then they would be allowed to do so.

A few years later Todd was the company checkweighman. He had not been working long when the foreman of the steam generator plant came into the scale office and began setting the scales to weigh light. The difference in the recorded coal weight and the true weight was used to operate the steam plant without any expense to the mine. The foreman's action clearly indicated it was a common practice to falsify the scales. In this case Todd was able to stop the coal theft, but it was only a hollow victory.

During the 1920s at the Moffat Mine there were two checkweighmen--one represented the miners and the other the company. The company man, Todd, would weigh the car and call out the weight. The miner's checkweighman would inspect the scales and take the miner's number tag off the car. He would record the weight and number then place the number tag on a peg board. Often the number tags were lost, misplaced, or stolen. The miner's checkweighman formed a racket with other miners and rope riders. The rope rider would remove the correct number tag. The checkweighman recorded all unidentified cars to certain miners. After pay day the gang would split their ill gotten gain.

One of the major objectives of early union efforts was to have a miner's checkweighman. After the employees achieved their goal at the Moffat Mine, corruption continued. Conditions got so bad that in the late 1920s the miners abandoned their hard won gain. Todd, the company checkweighman, was elected to serve as the miners' checkweighman.

The miners were not only exploited at every turn, their lives were dominated by the mine. When the shift changed it was not a certainty that a person would be able to go home at the end of the day. One evening Todd, who was working as an electrician, came out of the mine fully expecting to go home to a special birthday party the folks were having for his wife. At

the checkout stand stood the superintendent who would pick certain men, hand them a light and tell them to get a dinner bucket; they were to report back in the mine. On this particular evening Mr. Alexander handed Todd a light and told him to go back and ride (as rope rider) 7 and 8 lower. When Todd protested he was told that the regular rope rider had been letting the tonnage slip so the superintendent had layed him off for a week. Todd knew that if he refused he would be blacklisted and unable to find another job in the district. So Todd got a dinner bucket and returned to the mine. And every other day for a week he worked his regular shift as electrician and then worked as a rope rider. Meanwhile the regular rope rider cooled his heels.

There was an interesting twist to the system of sending men back into the mine after a shift. If a man was a good worker, he could rest assured that he would be sent back into the mine. And the process of meeting men and sending them back happened often enough that the miners began to take steps to avoid being sent back into the mine. The best method to avoid being sent back was to sluff off on the job. If a miner had a reputation of being only a mediocre hand he could stop work at quitting time. Of course mediocrity reduced coal production and general efficiency.

The survival of the fittest system had harsh reprecussions in the Oak Creek district. At the Keystone Mine the Japanese leased one section. The Japanese were paying the mine bosses including the superintendent so well that they had first choice on all the mine cars. Carl Steele, who was working as outside w(e)igh boss, recalled that he would spend all morning dumping the 200 or so cars that had been loaded by the Japanese. Then the other miners would have a few cars distributed to them. About two or three o'clock the rope riders would start gathering all the mine cars and storing them in order that the Japanese would have plenty of cars when they were

ready to load. Since the mines averaged working only two and three days a week most of the year, the poor fellow that could not get cars could not make a living no matter how hard he was willing to work. Of course the Japanese were simply better organized than the other miners.[29]

Since there were more men working at the mine than there was equipment why wasn't the labor force reduced? There was money and power in having a large force of men. The miners furnished their own equipment, paid a fee for the blacksmith, hospital, etc. They did not get paid for any dead work which included setting props, laying track, boning coal, and pumping water. The miners had to buy their carbide for their lamps and their black powder from the company. It was commonly understood that mine bosses received a percentage of the amount charged by an employment firm for finding a man a job. A person would go into one of the Denver employment offices seeking a job. For a certain fee the employment firm found the man a job. Often the fee was divided between the employment firm and the employer. Thus the mines kept a large force, and the men were continually being turned over. Carl Steele recalled seeing one man fired because he did not have any tools. He had taken his tools to the blacksmith, but the blacksmith had failed to get them ready. The boss was aware of this fact, but the removal of one man made an opportunity for another to go to work.[30]

All of the larger mines in the Yampa Coalfield kept their own boarding house and company town. Mt. Harris, which at one time was the largest town in the county, was a company town. By keeping large forces of men the company was able to profit from their stores, cook houses, and bunk houses.

By firing someone every day, men were uncertain about the security of their job. This constant turmoil gave many men an opportunity to exploit their fellow workers. It was generally believed that the mine kept spies among the men. If anyone began talking about organizing a union, he was

soon called on the carpet or fired. By the 1920s, Todd was among a small group of men who slipped off one night to Phippsburg to discuss the prospects of forming a union. The next morning he was called into the superintendent's office to expaain his union activity. Since Todd was a highly skilled electrician who could not be easily replaced, he was not fired. But common miners in similar situations were dismissed immediately.[31]

The problem of keeping up with ownership of coal took another step once the coal was shipped from the mine. In the transportation of coal all types of problems occurred. Often the coal was handled by a broker who might be working closely with a dealer. Once the coal arrived at the dealer's sheds he might alter the weights or let the coal set until demerage charges ate up the profits. Coal brokers could select the mines which they would give the best deal to. In their hands rested the power to make or break many small mines. Often these mines were milked for all possible profits.

The self feeding system of corruption affected everyone and every group. The system tended to detract attention from mining and resulted in slower development of better technological advancements which ultimately improved mining conditions. Among those who most resisted change were the contract miners who were preyed upon so heavily by everyone else in the mine.[32]

The companies did not look at mining in terms of simply getting out coal. For example, it was generally agreed that shot firers could make the mines much safer. The shot would be fired by experts when most of the men were out of the mine. This would replace the random shooting which was common. When the Moffat Mine first started using shot firers in 1910, the miners were charged the cost of the shot firers' wages. This was a major point of contention during the strike of 1910. Because the company would

not assume the cost of the shot firers, it was not until the 1920s and 1930s that shot firers replaced the random shooting method in all the Routt County mines. The same problem existed with cutting machines. Miners received less for coal cut by machine than coal shot on the solid. So the use of cutting machines was slow in developing.

The Pinnacle Mine paid fifty cents per keg for black powder and sold it to the miners for $3.00 per keg. Fifty foot of fuse cost the mine fifty cents while the miner paid $1.25, ~~for fifty foot of fuse~~. The system of charging the miners for everything necessary in the mine made it profitable to operate a mine even if coal was not produced.[33]

Miners were paid by the ton of coal produced. It was impossible for a miner at the Pinnacle to put three tons of coal on a three ton mine car. At least the scales never showed that much coal. And the miners were paid $1.00 per ton. If there was any rock in the car the price was dropped to fifty cents per ton. Regardless of how hard a miner worked to sort out the rock he could figure that each day at least one car of coal would be docked for rock. If the mine car had too much bone the company would not pay for the car. Thus the miner received nothing; however, the mine sold that load of coal for $4.00 per ton.[34]

Most of the men looked to the union for help. After the strike of 1913-14 the prospects for the men becoming organized were bleak, but during World War I the federal government pressured recognition of unions. In August, 1917, the men at the Colorado Utah Mine at Mt. Harris struck. The Oak Creek Times reported that the two day strike "was one of the most peaceful on record." The emphasis on peaceful suggests what people expected during a mine strike. The union organizers, R. F. Robinson of Trinidad and Robert Llewellyn of Oak Creek, talked the men into going back to work. The men also were able to openly send delegates to the United Mine Workers

convention in Denver. Several months earlier the Yampa Coalfield operators were surprised to learn that the Victor-American mines which operated the Wadge Mine at Mt. Harris and the Pinnacle Mine at Oak Creek had recognized the union. With the recognition of the union came substantial increases in wages and union officials were treated with respect when they visited the coalfields and addressed the miners.[35]

The war ended and so did the cooperation between the mine owners and the union. In the fall of 1919 the United Mine Workers prepared for a national strike. It was commonly believed that a national strike would affect Routt County. But some local union leaders noted privately "that the employees at present are receiving excellent pay, and most of them are satisfied and will remain at work."[36] Through October 1919 the union and the operators wrangled. On a national level in November non-contract mines struck. Among them were the Moffat, Haybro, and McGreggor. The Moffat and Haybro mines were two of the three major mines in the Oak Creek distric while the McGreggor Mine was a small mine on the fringes of the Mt. Harris district. The size and location of the mines suggest the strength and resistance to the union in the two Routt County coal districts. In November, a federal judge ordered that the national strike be ended and some of the men at Oak Creek went back to work, but most of the men ignored the order and stayed on strike. As a result a small detatchment of the Colorado National Guard was sent to Oak Creek. However, the strike was peaceful, and in December 1919 Federal Fuel Administrator Harry A. Garfield recommended a 14 per cent wage increase for the miners. With the wage increase the strike ended and the troops left for their homes.[37]

In the fall of 1921 Colorado Fuel and Iron announced that it was reducing wages 30 percent. Other coal operators soon fell into line and reduced wages, and the men struck. Shortly after the strike started in a

mining district martial law was declared and troops sent in. When the strike at Mt. Harris began, George W. Harris, president of the Colorado-Utah Coal Company asked Governor Oliver H. Shoup to send in troops. Since the county did not want the expense of maintaining deputies at Mt. Harris it was quickly agreed to bring in the "Rangers" as they were called. Conditions at Mt. Harris were confusing. In the company town the operators were able to bring a tremendous amount of pressure on the union leadership, and the Rangers were used against the strikers. But five men whom George Harris described as "radical members" of the union were able to keep the strike going until January 1922.[38]

Then in April 1922 the United Mine Workers called a national strike. A week before the strike began Rangers were sent to Oak Creek and Mt. Harris. The big blow to the Yampa Valley miners came when W. H. Huff, president of Victor-American Fuel Company announced, "we have determined to open all mines . . . on an open shop basis as soon as the demand for coal warrants." Huff went on to say, "this is our only alternative, inasmuch as the men are on strike, because of orders from Indianapolis headquarters." The strike remained peaceful, but the open shop and nonunion policies of the operators took its toll on the miners.[39]

The men at the Moffat Mine organized a union and walked out in 1922. But the union did not last long. The last union meeting was attended by "Old Man" Ballard the financial secretary, Bill Sealy, and Ben Reary.[40] In August the Moffat Mine reopened with a force of about 150 men, and at the same time the Pinnacle Mine was working a large force. With the threat of scabs moving in and the troops already in the district, the union collapsed in the Yampa Coalfield.

Ironically, while the men were on strike for better wages and working conditions with some protection, the newspapers were carrying a series of

articles about the plight of the men at the Elk Creek Mine at Milner. These men had been paid in rubber checks or not paid at all. One woman had put her husband's pay check in the bank and then written checks on the balance. Later she was arrested for passing bad checks. When the truth was discovered, the charges were dropped.[41]

The miners sought justice and payment through Carl DeLochte, deputy state labor commissioner. The deputy commissioner arranged for the payment of about 25 percent of the wages owed and made a deal with the miners to return to work. The men would produce the coal and the deputy commissioner would handle the sale of the coal until the debt owed the men was settled. In a later report to the governer, the deputy commissioner claimed the men "produced about forty-six cars of coal. Out of this number of cars, owing to the slack market, twenty-six cars were held for demurrage in Denver and elsewhere and the profit entirely lost." The profit on the remaining cars was paid to the men. The miners' "record showed 82 cars of coal shipped instead of 46." Finally W. W. Curtis was forced to take control of several of his mines near Milner and make good on the wages. In addition to the Elk Creek Mine, the miners took over the Roman Coal Company until the wages owed them was worked out.[42]

The next serious union unrest occurred in 1928 when the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) organized the men. Prior to the strike some major changes had occurred at the Moffat Mine. Bob Perry had become very sick and no longer stayed at the mine. A new mine superintendent, Mr. Buckner, took over the mine. One miner described Mr. Buckner as "a scab burner." In the coal mines in Oklahoma, Buckner had ruled with an iron hand. At the Moffat Mine he attempted to do the same. When the men went down in the mine in the morning, Buckner would close a door behind them and lock it. No man was to come out of the mine until 4 p.m. The locking of the door

did not last long when the mine boss Jack Bond set a charge against the door and blew the entire thing to pieces.[43]

Although the men had plenty of reason to strike, the strike of 1928 did not last long. Scabs moving in and the threat of further reprisals soon brought the strike to an end. After the strike was over, Ben Reary and about twenty other men were black balled. Reary went to Moffat County where he found a job. After several weeks Bond contacted him and the other men who had been black balled. They were told that the mine would rehire them as haulage men. So Reary talked to Bond and then went to talk to Buckner. The superintendent told Reary, "We don't have nothing for you." "Okay," Reary replied and turned to leave. Buckner stopped Reary and pointed to the back door and said, "No, you take this door." Reary looked the superintendent in the eye and said, "No, you go to hell. I'm going out the way I want to go out." At that time Reary was a big man who had gained a reputation as being a good fighter in a town with a lot of men who could fight.[44]

A week later Perry came to the mine and Bond sent for the black listed men. When they arrived he instructed them to talk to Perry. Reary and the others were quite willing to talk to Perry and they believed they would get a fair hearing. After talking to the men Perry called the superintendent out on the porch where everyone was standing. Perry asked, "Why don't you hire these fellows back?" "No, no," Buckner responded, "they will never work no more here." Perry replied, "Mr. Buckner, you are out of a job." In front of the men he had black balled, Buckner suffered the humiliation of being fired. Reary and the others were immediately rehired. In a few years Reary became a face boss at the Moffat Mine.[45]

It wasn't until the New Deal legislation of 1933 that the miners finally became solidly organized. By that time the Yampa Coalfield was

also experiencing some major changes. The leadership of the Moffat and Haybro mines changed with the death and retirement in the Perry and Hayden families. Many of the original miners who had immigrated to the United States in their youth were now getting older, and their children were starting to play a larger role in the history of the coalfield. With the new people came a more assimilated group. No longer could Greeks, Italians, and Austrians be easily turned against each other. In 1913, the Colorado Coal Mine Inspector became a power for safety in the mines. By the 1920s the state coal inspectors were having a positive impact on mine safety. Adding to the other changes was the advancement of new mine technology. By the 1930s Yampa Valley mines were changing.

CHAPTER VI

DIGGING MORE COAL

Digging coal became a proud trade for many residents of the Yampa Valley. The dangers and exploitation of mines were recognized but were not allowed to dominate their lives. These men took events in and around the mines in stride and built useful and productive lives. Some ventured into small wagon mine operations where they were their own boss. Others worked in the mines and were often promoted to higher positions. Some of the miners left the pit after a time to become merchants and businessmen. For the majority of the men being a miner without special recognition was enough.[1]

Joe Petronovich was still a boy when his father began taking him into the Pinnacle Mine. At that time each miner received only two cars to load and was paid only a dollar a car. By listing Joe as a miner the Petronovich family could get another car and sometimes two to load. The father also wanted to teach his son to work, so Joe was required to load his own cars when they reached the working area. From that time on Petronovich was a miner.

At an early age Petronovich would go up Oak Creek to the settling pond where he crossed over and traveled up a steep road on Seven Points hill to Brazilia Hastings Mine. Petronovich helped his equally young friend Early Hastings mine coal. The two boys would drill and shoot the coal, set their timbers and rails and load the coal--they were miners.

Since the Hastings Mine was a small operation, they used Quaker (Aspen) trees for rail underground. The trees which were plentiful near the mine were cut and hewed for track. Outside the mine regular iron mine rails were used for the tipple and scales. Another mine that used wooden rails

was the Juniper; however, these rails were made from scrub oak and capped with a piece of iron. After the coal reached the tipple at the Hastings Mine it was a major undertaking to get it to market. When wagons were loaded it was necessary to rough lock the wheels so they could not turn. Even with the brakes firmly set the team would have to hold back as the load snaked down the steep road.

As Petronovich grew older he followed the footsteps of his father and brothers into the Pinnacle Mine. From loading cars the boy graduated to driving a horse in the mine. Unlike the Moffat Mine that used mules, the Pinnacle used horses underground. Men who worked horses were expected to feed and care for their animals on their own time, and the pay for a nine hour day was $4.48. Petronovich, like most men who worked underground, decided that more money could be made for the same amount of work by being a contract miner. So after his apprenticeship he began working as a coal digger.

When he began mining, the work was primarily done by hand. The miner would first set a timber so he could brace his drill. He would then drill the holes for shooting, shoot the coal down, lay his track up to the coal, place any timbers needed and then begin loading coal. To load a car required a tremendous amount of lifting and carrying. A big change in the mines came in 1927 when Superintendent Jones at the Pinnacle invented a conveyor. Jones's conveyor had a series of pans about eighteen inches wide and six feet long. Jones's invention was cable and wheel driven. The principle was to shake the coal out of the mining area through a series of jerks. Under Jones's system a miner could set up in different places in the room. These shaker conveyors eliminated a tremendous amount of lifting carrying. Later the Joy Mining Company studied Jones's system and made several improvements. One of the primary improvements was the elimination

of the cumbersome cable system. At one end of the shaker was mounted a swivel section which could be easily placed next to the working area. With shakers the miners only had to turn much of the coal over and rake it into the pans.

With the introduction of shakers came a restructuring of mine labor. Crews replaced individual miners. The crews consisted of a cutting machine operator and his helper. At the lower end of the shaker was a man who "chunked" the cars (loaded them). He would load one car then another and so on until the trip was ready to be taken out. Two men loaded coal into the shaker.

The crew would start in the right hand corner and clean the coal out, then move on to the left. When room permitted, the cutting machine was set up and the operator began "sumping." The reason they always started in the right hand corner was to avoid the coal dust that the chain kicked out as it spun clockwise. By the time the men had finished loading the coal next to the face the machine would be far enough along that the men could begin drilling their holes and preparing to shoot down the next day's coal.

Another system adopted in the Pinnacle was the use of the "duck bill" shaker pan. This was a telescope pan which allowed for one man loading. To work the duck bill system required a fine sense of skill and timing. As the shaker moved the operator would ratchit the pans into place. Frank Petronovich was the first man to run a duck bill at the Pinnacle. One day his brother Joe who was helping his father timber came upon Frank sitting on a cart and directing the duck bill like it had eyes. Frank offered to let his younger brother run the machine. "I never worked so hard in all my life," commented Joe. "I was whipped." Some days later Joe and his father returned to the area to set timbers while the rest of the mine was idle. So Joe started up the duck bill and finally mastered the necessary timing

with the stroke of the shakers to make the machine work. Then it was easy; a person could sit and load at least part of the coal.

The miners in the Yampa Coalfield could and did take pride in the advancements of the system of transporting coal; however, in other concerns of mining the coalfield lagged sadly behind. When the Vulcan Mine at New Castle, Colorado, exploded on February 18, 1896, the state coal mine inspector stated, "The mine, in my opinion, was in good and safe condition, and there was no accumulation of gas or dust." Given the state of the technology and knowledge about coal mines in 1896 the inspector was probably justified in his opinion. The Vulcan Mine was ventilated with two large fans and an elaborate water sprinkling system to keep the dust down. However, technology failed the miners and one of the state's worst mine disaster occurred.[2] A few years after the Vulcan Mine disaster the Victor-American Mining Company began experimenting with rock dust in their mines in the southern coalfield. These experiments were the result of major disasters in that region.

Northwestern Colorado had not made any major efforts to protect their mines against dust despite the need for strict mine protection and a full awareness of the dangers. Nearly a quarter of a century after the Vulcan disaster on February 12, 1921, disaster struck the Argo Mine of the Moffat Coal Company. Dude Todd vividly recalled what happened. In the afternoon he and George Davis were repairing a cutting machine in the south entry. In this section of the mine the men were longwalling and there were numerous timbers set and a large open area which had not caved. Covering the entire mining area was a thick layer of coal dust. As fast as the men drilled the holes in the long face, the fire boss was loading them with black powder. Todd said to David, "I don't think that fellow should be in here. Look at the way he is lining them up; he is going to shoot those off

the trolly." After watching a few minutes Todd and Davis approached the shot firer and inquired about his intentions. They were told, "I'm figuring on going to the dance tonight. When that last hole is drilled, I'm going to hook them together and stick them on the trolly." With the high voltage he could shoot several charges at once. Since the area was being longwalled there was an unusually large number of charges in a confined space.

Todd and Davis hurried with repairing the machine and headed out of the mine. They reached the portal and turned down Argo Gulch. Meanwhile in the mine a shot blew out sending dust into the air. The other shots fired and the mine rocked with a mighty dust explosion. H. H. Hyde, the night engineer, heard the rumbling and dived for cover outside the entry to the Argo Mine. Soon the entry shed, equipment, timbers, dirt and mine debris were crashing against the opposite canyon wall some 300 feet away. Weaver Sharp, Samuel Patrick and Edward Hamidy were nearing the portal when the mine exploded. Deeper in the mine were Henry Wagner and C. Testas. All five men were killed. Luckily only five men were still in the mine. On February 12, 1921, no one in Oak Creek danced at the Lincoln Day celebration. And the shot firer never danced again.[3]

Moffat Mine superintendent John Alexander quickly began work to transfer the air from the No. 1 Mine to the No. 2 Mine. He also set men to work rebuilding the fan at Argo Gulch. By special train rescue workers from all corners of Routt County began gathering at the mine. Probably the most prominent man was Tom Allen, superintendent at the Amalgamated Fuel Company at Milner. Allen was well known across the state for his knowledge of mine safety and rescue. Within a few years of the Argo disaster Allen became head of the State Coal Mine Inspection Department. Here he established a fantastic record for safety. However, in 1921 he was among

those men going into the mine to search for the dead. In the No. 1 Mine the rescue team met one of the most lucky men in the Moffat Mine. Albert Bacco, shot firer in No. 1, had been thrown around by the force of the explosion, but two mine cars deflected part of the force of the explosion and he was able to escape ahead of the deadly gases.[4]

Joe Matthews who had been at the defunct Juniper Mine and was mine boss at the Haybro Mine nearly lost his life leading a rescue team. He walked into an area of bad air. But after being taken to the hospital he recovered. Shorty Hamidy who worked at the Pinnacle Mine and was on the rescue team rushed to the Moffat. Upon learning that his brother was among the men still in the mine he started to plunge into the deadly smoke. Only the stiff resistance of Todd, who was much bigger than Shorty, prevented another accident. Adding to the irony of the day was the circumstances of Ed Hamidy's death. He was running the hoist for J. A. Kennedy who was staying home to attend the dance.[5]

The most bitter part of the disaster was the fact that the deaths could have been avoided. If the rules concerning the operations of the shot firer had been strictly followed there would not have been any dust explosion. But in the Moffat Mine there was no system established to soak the dust with water. And such a system was not established until the early 1930s--nearly a decade after the Argo explosion. Rock dusting on a useful scale was never done in the Moffat Mine.

The lack of an adequate water system had other harmful aspects. In the Pinnacle Mine men working the cutting machines were engulfed in so much coal dust that the machine operator and his helper could not see each other's light. At the Moffat Mine Ben reary recalled that during the 1920s he was working a cutting machine. During that time he and his buddy would have to take turns going out of the room to get fresh air. Recalling those

days Reary stated, "A lot of times you'd have to throw up" to get the coal dust out of your system.[6] After adequate water systems were installed in the mines it was possible to control much of the dust by sprinkling. In passing it should be noted that the Keystone Mine "made so much water" that dust control was not a problem except with the cutting machine.

Associated with using water to control dust was the problem of ventilation. With the Pinnacle, Moffat, Keystone and Haybro mines being over a mile deep and working many different levels, the problems of providing an adequate air supply was complicated. In the Moffat Mine forced air fans were installed in Argo Gulch and at the tipple at No. 2. Later a rock tunnel was driven to Mule Gulch where an exhaust fan was installed. With the opening in Mule Gulch the ventilation system combined the principles of natural air flow caused by difference in temperature and elevation with a fan. With the Mule Gulch opening which tunneled through the mountain, good air supplies reached the working areas of the mine.

The Pinnacle Mine had powerful fans, but most of its air came from natural ventilation. The mine was driven clear through the mountain at different elevations. In the morning a strong flow of air would move in one dirrection. In the evening the air would reverse itself. The Moffat and the Pinnacle mines were at different elevations and direction of slope. During the development the two mines drove entries between the mines. As a result both mines were well ventilated by natural forces; however, fans were also used if any mining was underway.

One old timer willingly "admitted they had good air" at the Pinnacle.[7] The Haybro Mine was unique in that it was the only shaft mine in the Yampa Coalfield. The shaft in the No. 3 Mine was 368 feet deep with an extension of 300 feet to the No. 4 Mine. To get air into the mine two parallel shafts were dug which allowed for an intake and return. Since the entries

were so close together, it was necessary to ventilate the mine with fans without extensive natural ventilation to assist the process.

Equipment, gas, dust and ventilation were all important forces in the mine, but as every miner knew, the roof was the boss. In all of the mines in the Yampa Coalfield, roof conditions varied extensively. In some areas the roof was slate, in others it was strong sandstone, and in yet others it was a mixture of slate and sand. In places there were "pots" which were ancient tree stumps in the roof. Since these were shaped like a bee hive and not held firmly in the roof they could and did fall out without warning. Some areas had a roof which was filled with fossil remains. The roof of the Keystone had many places with fossils and tracks of large animals.

As the mine was developed, the mountain shifted and changed its weight. These shifts caused fracturing high up in the roof. Then in one area of a mine there might be water while another would be dry. And the climate in the mines changed as the seasons changed. In winter the mines dried out while in the spring water levels were high. The changes in climatic conditions cuased weathering of the roof. As a result sections which were very safe when first mined might become dangerous later.

To grasp the subtle changes in the mine's roof was a fine art--an art which highly skilled miners developed over long years working in the same mine. While underground, good miners were constantly aware of the sounds and smells of the mine. The rhythm of the dripping of water was closely monitored by the subconscious while the conscious part of the miner was occupied with the normal activities of life. As long as the dripping remained steady all went well. Let the dripping stop or pick up in tempo and immediately the experienced miner was alive to the problems. If the dripping increased much it was time to get out of the area because it was likely to cave in. Sound becomes such a part of the miner's life that

"horse play" was prohibited; this prohibition was strictly enforced. Horse play can be described as a miner throwing a stone here and there to confuse other miners who were listening to the sounds of the mine. Of course horse play could and did lead to some major accidents. A miner would hear a sound and assume it was his buddy tossing rocks when in fact it was the roof giving a warning that a large rock was about to fall.

The variations in the roof caused extensive problems in timbering. In four foot coal there was not as much chance of the props breaking in the middle when they took weight. In eight foot coal the chances of props breaking in the middle were greater and in higher coal the chances for props breaking in the middle were still greater when weight was taken. Of course the longer the prop was, the harder it was to set. The light four foot props were easily set by one man while setting a sixteen foot prop required a crew. The only way they were wedged into place was by climbing a ladder. As a result miners tended to set fewer props in higher coal. If a long prop was not properly plumbed and wedged it could fall and seriously hurt someone; a short prop would only lean up against the mine if not properly set.

The old Colowyo Mine south of Craid was a twenty-four foot vein. Because of the height involved, props were not used. The miners would first mine out the lower half of a section and then shoot the top coal down in an arched formation. By arching, the men were able to get adequate roof protection.

At the Streeter Mine, also south of Craig, two levels were worked. The pillar sections of the upper level were not kept in line with the lower sections although the vertical distance between the two mines was not great. Early one morning while no one was in the mine it exploded. Some men believe the upper level fell into the lower level. No one ever

reentered the mine; therefore, no one is absolutely certain what happened.

Roof control in the Bear River Mine east of Mt. Harris was unusually difficult during the late 1930s and early 1940s. During those years the pillars were being pulled and the mine permanently closed. The vein was nearly twenty feet high with a hard rock split near the center. The vein lay at two sharp angles along both the vertical and horizontal planes. To control the roof it was necessary to set three and sometimes four rows of props on the high side. On the lower side one row of props was usually sufficient. All the props were set at three foot intervals and rows were staggered. As the top coal was worked temporary props were also set. Even with the extensive attempts to control the roof and make conditions safe, Charley Fedinec recalled that he "spent more time running than mining."[8]

One of the big problems in pulling the pillars was caused by the method the mine had been developed. Part of the mine had been developed by the room method. Here narrow pillars separated the various rooms. Other sections of the mine were developed by the use of cross cuts and entries. Here large block pillars stood. Over the years different mine bosses and miners had taken out the coal by the quickest and easiest method regardless of the long term consequences. The complexities of the mine made adequate roof control virtually impossible. Many times the roof would settle so heavily that pillar stumps were crushed out and props scattered asunder. Miraculously the final years of the Bear River Mine passed without a major disaster, but thousands of tons of coal were abandoned in stumps and pillars.

The life of the miner was a continual challenge. Even when the men were not actually working at the mine they had to be concerned about what was going on at the mine. For example, no one knew for certain if the mine would work the next day. In Oak Creek everyone who worked at the Pinnacle

Mine would step outside about 5:00 p. m. to listen for the tipple whistle. If it blew only once it meant "no work;" three blasts meant work the next day. After the whistle was sounded for the Pinnacle Mine the miners for the Moffat would step outside and listen for the whistle from their mine. Starting sometime in the 1930s after the highway was built through the mine district and employees of Keystone and Haybro mines began living in Oak Creek and driving or walking to work, a peg board system was established in Oak Creek. If a mine was going to work the next day, the mines reported to merchants in Oak Creek and they would place a notice on a common bulletin board. One of the chores of the kids was to walk downtown every evening and check the bulletin board to see which mines were working.

The signal that there would be a day's work did not always result in a day's work actually being offered. Many times Shorty Hamidy and his fellow workers got up early and trudged through deep snow and winter cold along the steep Pinnacle tram to reach the mine. After reaching the mine they were informed that the railroad would not be able to deliver cars; as a result there would not be any work. Amidst muttering the men would return home. After the completion of the Moffat Tunnel in the late 1920s the frequency of the railroad failing to deliver cars was reduced, but it was never certain that promised cars would actually be available.

Another example of the miners' awareness of the operations at the mine although they were not actually working was through the electrical system. During the early years of Oak Creek the Moffat and Pinnacle mines produced electrical power for the town as well as the mines. When all the mine equipment was working and several lights were on in town the power overload resulted in dim lighting of homes and businesses. At certain times the mines shut down for lunch. These were regular stops that were predictable and everyone expected the light in town to suddenly brighten at an appointed

time. It was also a common practice to shut down all the equipment when there was a serious accident at a mine. On the occasions when the lights of town suddenly became bright at an unappointed time, the lumps gathered in people's throats and dance halls and saloons became quiet. Through the passage of time the electrical system was improved at the mines and in town; as a result the fluctuation of the lights was not as pronounced.

One of the most dramatic changes in mining was the shift from muscle power to mechanical power. In 1914 George Heinke went to work as a teamster for the Haybro Mine. When he started work the company was developing a mine in the Lennox vein on top of Oak Hill. One of Heinke's primary jobs was hauling grocery and camp supplies from the railroad track to the boarding house. The straight line distance between the two points was about 1,000 feet; however, the angle was nearly vertical. To gain the necessary elevation Heinke first traveled north over the saddle between Oak Creek and Trout Creek and then doubled back to the mine. The route was considerably less than ten miles, but it took nearly half a day for a man with a team and loaded wagon to go from the tracks to the boarding house. If Heinke had to haul coal from the mine to the boarding house after he unloaded his groceries, he would not have enough time to return by road to the tracks before dark. Often he would unhitch the team and follow them down the steep tram which connected the mine with the track. Early the next morning he would drive his team up the tram to get the wagon and make the return trip to the track. As a result it was not unusual to take a day and a half to make a round trip with mine supplies. With a truck the same trip could be completed in a matter of minutes.

Teams remained an important source of power around the mines for years. In 1927 Carl Steele inquired for work at the Keystone Mine which was in the early stage of development. The boss offered him a job and $8.00 per day

if he had a team and wagon. Steele did not have a team at the time, but he told the boss he did and then began looking for a team and wagon. After walking into Oak Creek he stopped at a grocery store and told the owner about his need for a team. The merchant surprised Steele by telling him that a local rancher owed a large bill at the store and was wanting to trade a team and wagon for the bill. The merchant and the miner soon reached an agreement and then sought out the rancher where a deal was made for the team, wagon and a load of hay. With the horses, Steele hauled mine equipment as it reached the mine. After a few weeks, Steele purchased another team and hired a man at $4.00 per day to move dirt. With a team and fresno roads were built, fills were made, and other earth work completed. With a tremendous amount of sweat and sore muscles the necessary work was completed. As a contrast, at the end of World War II, Steele worked for the Keystone Mine as a truck driver. With comparatively little effort he did much more work per day than he had done when the mine was first opened.

A sense of the impact of trucks on the early mining in northwestern Colorado is achieved by looking at the coal shipments in Moffat County. Although the railroad reached Craig in 1914, the production of coal in the county was only 3,173 tons in 1920. Fifteen years later, 1935, the county only mined 6,812 tons of coal. However, in 1935 an improved highway from Craig south through Streeter to Meeker was under construction. Just four years later 56,065 tons of coal was produced in Moffat County. The first rush of the Moffat County coal mining boom came during the last half of the great depression. During World War II, Moffat County coal production continued to grow although hampered at times by gas and rubber rationing.[9]

Between the time the mines opened in 1908 and 1950 there were many changes in the mines, but some things changed little once they were

established. The Hayden brothers began their search for a suitable coal mine with the opening of the Juniper Mine in 1909, but by 1915 the mine was closed. In 1914 the brothers opened Haybro No. 1 with its long tram. The Lennox coal was not of sufficient quality for marketing. To find better coal the No. 2 slope mine was opened in a ten foot vein. Again the coal was not of marketable quality. In 1920 the 368 foot shaft was dug at the Haybro Mine. From the time the shaft, hoist, cages, etc. were installed until the mine closed in the late 1940s very few changes occurred.

George Heinke who started with the mine in 1914 had worked at numerous mine jobs before becoming a cager. In 1945 he was working at his usual station doing the same tasks he had done for years. Just outside the cage was a sag in the track. Here a car was held until another was brought up. The cager would give the standing car a push to get it started before the car coming off the cage rolled into the sag. Then both cars would roll down to the weigh house. One morning in January 1945, Heinke tried to start a car but it would not roll. The load coming off the cage struck the man and the standing load and crushed him between a 12 X 12 timber standing next to the track. Heinke was badly hurt and out of work for more than a year. When he returned to work he ran the company pool hall. The dangerous system of handling coal including the placement of the 12 X 12 timber was established in 1920 and remained in 1945 when Heinke was hurt. It was not changed after the accident.

Unable to work at the mine Heinke returned to work in August 1946 running the company pool hall; but even at this late date the forces of the company town were still very much in effect at Haybro. The company gave him $4.00 in cash and $10.00 worth of script for the cash register. He was expected to push company script. And many people made large sums of money

handling script. For instance, a miner who wanted to change ten dollars worth of script for cash would approach certain Oak Creek merchants. The merchant would give the miner $7.50 for the script. The merchant would take the script to the mine where he received $9.00 in cash. The mine officials pocketed $1.00.

Heinke was also held strictly accountable for everything in the pool hall. One Sunday he came to work and saw $4.60 worth of gas rung up on the gas pump. The tipple boss was the only other person who had a key to the pump, but he denied getting the gas. As a result, Heinke quit working for the Haybro Mine after thirty years service.

Despite the seeming unchanging nature of the mine, change came. From 1908 until the mid-1950s domestic coal was the primary market. During the early years the major demand was for lump coal. Slack or stoker coal, as it was later called, could not be marketed. Outside each of the larger mines huge mounds of slack were piled up. During high water, teams and fresnos would dump mountains of fine coal into streams. Miners in the mine left as much dust as possible on the floor. This added to the danger of dust explosion. In the 1930s more people began installing stoker furnaces in their homes and businesses. This created a new market for the slack or stoker coal and reduced the amount of coal wasted. But the biggest change in the mines came with the replacement of coal by natural gas and electricity. The shift in fuel forced the closing of many mines, and the underground mines that survived were forced to adopt new technology. The big shift in mining was from underground mines to strip mines which supply fuel for electrical power plants.

As a kind of omen of the dark days that lay ahead for coal mining, on January 27, 1942, the night shift of the Wadge Mine at Mt. Harris was working near a fault when they struck a pocket of natural gas. A spark

from either a trolly or cutting machine ignited the gas. "Only four men of a night shift of 38 miners staggered back to the surface," reported one newspaper. It is incorrect to say the four men staggered to the surface. Joe Gall, Bill Fickle, Elmer Everson and Mike Atansoff were working ahead of the other men when they "heard a dull thud and then smelled smoke."[10] The four men ran with all their strength and speed to reach the surface ahead of the deadly gas. The remaining thirty-four men were trapped 3,000 feet from the portal in the worst mine disaster in Routt County history.

In the disaster Mrs. Ralph Cable lost a brother and three brothers-in-law. Men in rescue crews saw things they would never forget. Machines, props and rails were twisted and strewn about the mine as if tossed and broken by some vengeful giant. Many of the bodies were burned beyond recognization. Charley Fedinec remembered seeing one body burned so badly it resembled a leather glove that had been twisted and chared by fire. The entire rescue operation was traumatic, but perhaps the worst for the rescue operation was when they entered a section of the mine not disturbed by the explosion. Here the rescuers found the bodies of miners who had crawled and struggled to get to the fresh air of another section of the mine. The lifeless bodies were found within a few feet of the stopping door that led to safety and life. Among those killed were Frank Shepard and Charley Baker. Three days earlier Shepard had quit his job on the railroad and begun working at the mine. Baker was working at the Knez Mine when World War II began; he was afraid that he would be killed in the war.

Sometime before the Wadge explosion, the Colorado Coal Mine Inspection Department had organized women's groups. Although the disaster was harsh on the survivers, "women's safety groups from Routt County immediately responded in caring for the families of the stricken, eliminating the usual hysteria so prevalent at such a time."[11] In time order was restored and

life in Routt County mining camps returned to normal.

CHAPTER VII

WAGON MINES

The history of the Yampa Valley's coal mines centered around the big "railroad" mines with large labor forces and payrolls. But associated with the big mines was a profusion of smaller mines. The wagon mines, without railroad connections, varied in size and asperations. Many of the mines were simply ranching community efforts in which the neighborhood cooperated in supplying their winter coal. Occasionally the ranchers would hire an experienced miner for a few weeks to work the vein. Often the folks simply mined the coal themselves. These ranching community mines only operated a few weeks each year. Many times the mine was never recorded or leases obtained. The next step up in the hierarchy of mines was the individually owned and operated mine--ranch mine. Generally the owner mined coal as his primary source of income; however, the mine was connected with a small ranching operation. Next in ascending order was the individually owned mine where the owner was solely engaged in the mining business. The last level of wagon mines was the large mine with several owners and a large labor force. These mines were often a stock scheme rather than a legitimate mining operation.

While only sixteen years old, Joe Knez left his native Germany and made his way across the United States to the Cameo Mine near Grand Junction, Colorado. Here he and his brother Mike Knez received their introduction to coal mining. Later they moved to Montana and the Dakotas. At an unknown point along their journey, Joe was contacted by the owners of the Walker Mine in Moffat County, Colorado. Having reached a lease agreement, in 1914 with his young wife seated beside him in the box of a covered wagon, Knez arrived at the old Walker Mine south of Craig. From that moment until his

death in 1964, Knez was attached to wagon mines and a small ranch on what, in time, became known as Knez Divide.[1]

The first several years were a mixture of success and failure as he searched for a suitable mine. Under a leasing agreement with the White Company, an English based firm, Knez spent his first three years operating the Walker Mine. The mine had high quality coal and an eight foot vein which soon enabled him to establish himself as the primary supplier of coal to the community of Craig. During those first years there was some speculation that he was the spearhead for a major coal mining boom. Although the railroad arrived at Craig the same year he began mining, it was apparent by 1917 that Craig was not destined for a coal mining boom. After dropping the Walker lease, Knez opened a mine across the gulch and three quarters of a mile up the hill from the Walker Mine. He had not mined far into the Walker vein, as the coal was locally known, before the seam pinched out and he found himself without a mine.

Knez was not a man easily defeated. He recrossed the gulch and opened a third mine above the Walker Mine property. The portal to the third mine was only a few feet above the water level. Despite its location in the gulch, Knez worked this mine for several years. But a flash flood filled the mine and forced him to seek yet another location. His next effort was higher up the hillside and safe from external flooding. But he had not mined far when the roof and flood began to "make" water. Soon he was forced to put in a large pump. Eventually the mine was making so much water that he was forced to abandon the operation. Thus within three quarters of a mile along the same gulch Knez had worked an excellent eight foot vein, had a vein pinch out, had a mine destroyed by a flash flood, and had another mine destroyed because it "made" too much water. Near Knez's mines, Mat Satfire opened a mine in the Walker vein, but the vein had split

and only forty-two inches of coal remained. Thus within a confined area there was a multitude of mining conditions.

Finally in 1932 Knez found a suitable vein of coal. The coal vein varied from eight feet to twelve feet thick and had two distinct grades of coal. The lower one third of the vein was a block coal. Then there was a four inch soap stone. The upper two thirds of the coal was a stringy type of coal. Both coals were well received in the local market. However, another mine in the same gulch had such a poor grade of coal that it could not be sold . Knez became very determined when he learned that his competitor was selling coal in Craig by claiming it was Knez coal.

The last Knez Mine was worked for nearly thirty years with varying degrees of success. At times it was strictly a family operation while at other times a substantial labor force was hired and coal shipped by rail, but in the main the mine was a two or three man operation. Most of the equipment was worn and in some cases items that had never been intended for mining were pressed into use. Quite often the mine had critical shortages of needed material.

The shortcomings often led to serious mine hazards. Raymond Knez recalled operating a hoist without a bell or signal system. On one occasion Raymond was helping raise the track grade in the mine. While he was working with the car the outside hoist man, thinking everything was clear, started the car to the surface. The taunt wire rope and the work being done to the track bound the car and raised one end against the roof. Raymond who was leaning over the car at the time was pinned against the roof. Luck was with Raymond for under the strain the hoist engine sputtered to a stop. But the hoist man, more determined than ever, restarted the engine and tightened the cable; again, Raymond who had not been able to free himself was pinned against the roof. The process would

have resulted in his death except that Joe Knez who was helping raise the track rushed around a pillar and pulled a pin in a clevis releasing the cable. Shortly after the near tragedy a signal system was installed at the mine.

Old and worn out mine equipment frustrated miners. On one occasion a miner became so disgusted with a decrepit pit car that he deliberately turned it loose on a grade that led to a flooded section of the mine. When Knez learned the fate of the car his temper flared and he fired the culprit. However, three days later he rehired the miner.

In the mine the floor pitched and heaved dramatically over short areas. The uneven floor made the task of the hoist man very difficult. Charley Fedinec who operated the hoist for extended periods recalled that while dropping the empty cars it was necessary to let them run wild at a certain point or they would not make it over a stiff grade some 300 yards beneath the surface. Once the cars were over this point they had to be checked quickly or they would crash into the working area. Only with a sense of feel could the hoist operator tell where his cars were in the mine and what should be done to handle the cars. Since the floor was uneven throughout the mine the cars ran with a series of jerks which sent false signals to the hoist operator. As a result the hoist man was never sure where his cars were located in the mine. Of course coming out with loaded cars was equally as bad since the loads either ran ahead or hung back on the cable. Despite the shortcomings of the system Knez never had a serious runaway with his mine cars.

Because the wagon mine returned only a small profit Knez depended heavily upon antiquated methods for mining. He was still shooting on the solid many years after other mines in the field had begun using cutting machines. Knez would first drill and shoot the coal below the soap stone

and then mine it out for a distance of six feet. Then he would drop the higher coal with a couple of shots of powder. The system of shooting coal on the solid caused extensive dust and slack, but it did not require electrical power with its hazards.

The use of explosives in the mine had the apparent dangers. On one occasion Ben Martins had lit the fuse with his carbide lamp and returned to the safety of the cross cut where he counted the shots as they exploded. After completing the count and waiting a moment, Martins returned to the face. As he entered the room another shot went off. He had miscounted the explosions and the fuse had burned slower than expected. Raymond Knez described Martins after the explosion, "He wasn't permanently hurt, but he looked like he had been sacking wild cats when the sack broke." Charley Fedinec vividly remembered the time that he and Joe Knez lit the fuses and started to leave the face when the roof began to violently sluff rocks. For what seemed to be eternity the two men hugged the rib hoping that they would not be hit by a rock or the fuses explode the powder. Finally they were able to slip along the rib to the cross cut and escape. Despite the encounter with the roof, Fedinec maintained that the Knez Mine had a good roof. He compared the roof to that at the Bear River Mine where he set props one day and returned the next to find that the weight from the roof had crushed out the cap piece and wedge. The Knez Mine never had that much weight on the props, and the area that the roof dribbled was very localized.

The Knez Mine like many wagon mines combined mining with a small ranching operation. On the land enough crops were raised to feed a few animals and produce eggs, milk and other food products. And during the depression Joe Knez was a blessing to many men looking for a way to survive. He gave several people temporary employment and kept them until they were well fed and had a new set of clothing. One young man stayed for nearly

two years. Most of these men were not necessarily needed for either the mining or ranching operation, but hungry men did not leave the Knez door.

One of the more tragic stories at the Knez Mine concerned Charley Baker. Baker was working at the Knez Mine when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. After the shift as the crew passed by the tipple he commented, "I sure hope I don't have to go to the war because I know I'll get killed." Shortly afterwards Baker left the Knez Mine and began working in the Wadge Mine at Mt. Harris. On the night of January 27, 1942, Charley Baker was among the thirty-four men killed in the only gas explosion in the history of the Yampa Coalfield.

The Knez mining operation was loosely run and at times risks were high; but there was never a man killed in the mine. The bigger mines, Streeter and Colowyo in Axial Basin, did kill and permanently injure men. For example in the Colowyo Mine the coal was lifted to the surface by a single "fast trip" hoist without a bell or phone hoist signal. The hoist man would drop an empty to the parting (switch) and here a man would quickly remove the wire rope and attach it to a full car. On one occasion Raymond Knez, who was trucking from the mine to the tipple in Craig, saw a man being dragged out of the mine. Knez flagged the hoist man to stop and the injured man was freed. Later, they learned that the hoist had been tightened before the man could get clear. He was knocked down by the car and dragged over the ties to the surface. On another occasion a frayed wire rope broke as a trip was being hoisted to the surface. The runaway car jumped the parting and struck the cableman. The next day he died. So despite Knez's loose operation he was not any worse than the bigger mines. Loosely run mines were just a sign of the time.

In marked contrast to the Knez Mine was Apex Mine in upper Trout Creek Canyon. In 1925 converting from coal to oil fired locomotives forced the

George Steele family to leave their home in the coal mining area of eastern Oklahoma. The family moved to northwestern Colorado; here seventeen year old Carl Steele began working in the boiler room at the Haybro Mine north of Oak Creek. Soon he moved on to the Keystone Mine which was just opening. After working teams on the outside for several months, Steele entered the mine as a contract miner.[2]

Being a young man full of energy and ambition he "scissor billed" to earn more money. He would put in his shift working in the mine. Then he would go to his "batch" (place where he was staying) and fix supper and rest awhile. After resting Steele would "scissor bill"--return to the mine and drill his holes, shoot on the solid, set his props, and lay the needed track. By putting in the long hours with its hard work, Steele was able to save a little money. In 1927 Steele became the checkweighman at the tipple. He stayed at this job for nearly fifteen years.

After the depression hit Routt County the coal mines were only working two or three days every two weeks during the busy months and during the slack seasons of spring and summer the mines did not open for several days at a time. To help themselves through the difficult period, Carl and his father George Steele and his brother Victor (Vic) decided to open a small wagon mine. At the time Carl was living on upper Trout Creek, so the three men began looking for coal outcroppings near his home. Soon they located a vein and opened it to its four foot height. Although the vein was classified as low coal (a thin vein) it was high in British Thermo Units (BTUs) while low in ash, moisture and volatile matter. Within a few weeks after the three men opened the vein they realized that they were working a small pocket of coal at the extreme southern edge of the coalfield. Once the coal played out due to a fault, the Steeles prospected down the canyon a few hundred yards where high on the hill they located the same vein and

opened Apex #1.

Carl continued working at the Keystone Mine when it operated, and on days the Keystone was idle he worked at the Apex. With his savings and wages he bought powder, props and material for the Apex. Besides a great deal of perserverance, the Steeles were fortunate to locate the Apex which had the best coal in the county. After building a chute down the hill to a tipple along the county road Steeles began hauling coal into Oak Creek where a ready market was available. Later Carl observed, "If you could mine it [Apex coal] you could sell it." Steele was able to get a premium price of $4.00 a ton for his lump coal delivered in Oak Creek, and the Denver and Salt Lake Railroad bought his "mine run slack" for $1.50 a ton delivered to the depot in Oak Creek. Some hardy souls would haul coal from the Apex during the spring although the only time a truck or wagon could get over the road was at night while the ground was frozen.

After the Apex became firmly established Steele left the Keystone Mine. When World War II began, Carl went to work at the coal mines in Rock Springs, Wyoming. Here the mines were extremely dangerous and Steele "told the boss he was quitting." The boss replied, "It's either this or Japan." Steele believed that "Japan was better." However he returned to Oak Creek and remained in the mines.[3]

Steeles operated their mine with a great deal of care for safety and mine innovation. The floor in the Apex Mine was rough and the pitch of the coal was steep, but they mined their coal on the grade. This way cars could be hoisted and dropped at steady rates. They offset their pillars in order that no long sections of roof were left unsupported. As soon as they could afford a steam generator they began generating electricity for a cutting machine. Props were always kept firmly and evenly in place. When rock dusting to reduce the chances of dust explosions was promoted in the

Yampa Valley, Steeles were among the first to adopt the system. In 1943 Carl told the mine inspector, "I've always been afraid of an explosion with men in the mine." The inspector assured Steele that "he had nothing to worry about." That was a Monday morning. Two days later, September 20, 1943, Joe Glass was killed in a dust explosion at the Apex #1 Mine.

During World War II the Steeles were working several men and after each shift Carl Steele would go into the mine to help Glass tamp the powder and set the charges. At quitting time on September 20, Glass phoned the survace and told his boss not to worry about coming into the mine. He had only a couple of holes left to tamp and he would light the charges and be right out. Since Glass was an experienced miner, Steele readily agreed and walked to his home in the little mine camp. Suddenly Steele heard a roar and rushed to his doorway to look out. He arrived in time to see smoke, fire and mine debris arching from the mouth of the mine to the opposite canyon wall. After restoring ventilation and the arrival of inspectors and rescue crews, men began looking for Glass. The badly burned body was found near the coal face. When the miners reached the face the cause of the explosion became clearly apparent--a blowout shot and coal dust. Glass had set two charges. One charge was to open a cross cut; the second charge was in the face of the cross cut being intersected. The first shot blew through and stirred the dust in the roadway. Into this dust the second shot fired its flames. With that, the whole mine errupted.

After the accident Steele began looking for better ways to control the dust. He realized that in the Keystone Mine there was always water present. After setting idle overnight a coal face collected so much moisture that a miner could write in the dew. The coal dust was held in a soggy mass on the floor. By contrast the Apex Mine was extra dry. To get water in the mine, Steele dug a ditch from a nearby gulch and directed the

spring runoff into the mine. Here the water was stored and pumped to each working area. Every morning the miners were required to soak down their working area and roadways.

In 1946 Carl Steele sold the Apex Mine to Angelo Boscia and returned to the Keystone Mine as a truck driver. Angelo was one of those interesting characters who worked or owned various wagon mines. At one time Angelo worked at the Knez Mine where he was affectionately known as "Spagget." While he was rope riding and Charley Fedinec was running the hoist they set the record of getting well over a hundred cars of coal to the surface in a single shift. In a larger mine this amount of coal hoisted to the surface was only a small amount for a day's work. At the Knez Mine with its limited labor force producing a hundred tons of coal in a shift was indeed high production. Angelo had also worked for the Steeles. Carl Steele described Angelo as a hard working man who was "hard headed and determined." While Angelo was the mine boss at Apex Mine he talked the crew into joining him in a wagon mine venture near Mt. Harris. With high hope the entire crew quit the Apex Mine and headed for greener grass. About three weeks later they returned looking for their old jobs.

After Angelo bought the Apex Mine he worked alone most of the time. Although his mining system was "old fashioned" (hand tools and a burro or pony for haulage) he did well for several years. Then in the early 1950s the big mines began to close as a result of a major shift to natural gas and electricity for domestic fuel. As the mines closed and unemployment ran high, Angelo furnished many of the people with free coal. Since he worked alone, people would often load and weigh their own coal while he was in the mine. Usually the folks let Angelo know how much coal they got and settled up with him; but not everyone was honest.

It was Angelo's good heartedness that resulted in him losing the mine.

In 1956 a large number of older miners approached Angelo and asked for work. Angelo explained that he could not afford to hire them and pay the union's coal royalty and wages. He was simply too small a mine and his markets were too limited. He also pointed out that a group of Oak Creek businessmen had tried to keep the Keystone Mine open but the cost had proven too high. The miners told Angelo "they would all like to be in the union because they were near their pension and had their cards, but that won't have no bearing on you [Angelo]. We'll just work along as best we can and whatever we make we'll take and shut up." Angelo reconsidered and signed a small contract to supply coal as well as the union contract. So he put the miners to work and gave them all he could afford in wages. After a time the men demanded the full sum of the union contract including back pay. He could not pay the bill so the men took him to court and got a judgment against the mine. He was forced to sell the mine. Carl Steele bluntly stated, "Those guys had no business doing that to Angelo."

Angelo suspected something might happen. In September before he hired the men he showed Steele his figures for wages and coal shipments. He concluded, "If things go the way I think they will, I'll be broke by December." In December he went broke.

By the early 1950s most of the mines in the Oak Creek district were closing and the owners of the Keystone Mine decided to close the operation. This would put nearly fifty men out of work. To keep the men employed, Lucienne Stetson, Shorty Hamidy, Dutch Casper and Mr. Bonnie, a coal salesman, leased the mine. The Oak Creek businessmen hoped to break even and keep the families in the community off the relief rolls. The business people were small shop keepers (merchantile store, hardware store, etc.) and could not withstand large losses over an extended period of time. To help the production they wanted to take the miners into the mines on idle

days to load the small pit cars. This would greatly help production since it was often after 11:00 a.m. before the first trip of coal reached the surface if the men waited until production days to start loading the mine cars. The shift ended at 3:15 in order that the men could be at the portal at the end of their eight hours; thus little coal was brought out of the mine on production days. By not having to pay the tipple help on the idle days and being able to start them loading railroad cars sooner on production days the mine could produce enough coal to remain operating. However, the union maintained that if one man was worked all the men had to work. The Oak Creek businessmen said, "That's alright if you want to put your tipple men downstairs. Let them go down and load coal if they want to."[4] The union refused to accept the offer. When the miners were told that the mine would close, they responded, "You guys won't close it down."[5] After the mine was closed and the investors had lost their money, the union was willing to negotiate; but it was too late.

After the Oak Creek businessmen gave up in 1958, Fred Nesbith suggested to Carl Steele that he lease the mine and make it into a truck mine. Nesbith who also owned an interest in the Boulder Valley Mine agreed to furnish the equipment and set a reasonable rate of lease. So Steele and his sons, Duane and Gordon, took over the Keystone Mine and operated it as a wagon mine. When Steele started operations at Keystone he needed some men and he was offered the same deal Angelo had. Recalled Carl, "Boy, I stayed right with the contract because I knowed not to trust 'em." Soon as possible Steele added more modern equipment and cut the employment to just the family. When the United Mine Workers demanded continuation of paying forty cents a ton royalties while withholding any benefits to the Steeles, the family completely dropped the union. During the early years Carl Steele had worked to organize the United Mine Workers and in 1933 he was

among the first Keystone miners to join the union. It was a bitter personal experience when he left the union.

When Steele first began working at Keystone in the 1920s three large springs near the mine drained into Oak Creek. Probably because of fear of water in the mine the area had been bypassed for several years. Once the mine was opened the springs dried up, but the mine made a lot of water. At the time the big mining operation ceased working, a pump with a five inch pipe line and powered by a seventy-five horse power engine was needed to keep the water level down in the mine. The Steele family decided that it would be uneconomical for them to pump the mine, so they began pulling pillars at the water's edge. For nearly a decade they worked ahead of the rising water.

While the Steele family was working the Keystone Mine, Leo and Eugene Sullivan had purchased the Apex Mine. Sullivans worked the No. 1 entry until several hundred feet from the portal they struck water. To avoid the cost of pumping water the Sullivans moved their operation up Trout Creek a few hundred feet and opened Apex #2. In 1966 Eugene Sullivan had a heart attack and the brothers decided to lease or sell the mine. At the same time the Steeles were being pressed hard by the rising water in the old Keystone Mine and decided to move their operation back to the Apex Mine.

Through the years the Steele family became highly respected miners. Ethel Steele (Mrs. Carl) was the first woman in Colorado to receive shot firer papers. She also was an expert miner. Jim Collins who worked in the mine for several years recalled that Mrs. Steele could build stoppings that were superb. In the low coal she could out travel any of the men. All the men in the mine respected her.

Gordon Steele began mining in the old Keystone Mine while it was still developing rooms. Here he learned to operate cutting machines. He also

spent one winter working outside on the coal washer. (The mine washed the coal to separate the slack and impurities from the coal.) The washer was a cold, wet job in the winter. Gordon also worked in the timber a couple of years before the family began pulling pillars at Keystone. As a miner Gordon was a true professional. He developed and installed a safety electrical cable for shuttle cars and loaders ten years before the federal government required the system in the mine.

Duane Steele worked underground, but he is best remembered for handling the tipple. Folks liked to stop by to visit with Duane because there was always a sense of being welcome. By 1970 the Apex Mine had more customers than it could supply. People would take their truck or pickup out to the mine and park it in line and come back the next day to get their load of coal. At times the line of vehicles would be well over a quarter of a mile long. The wagon mine was providing the people of Routt County with a much needed service.

In 1969 the federal government took control of regulating the safety in coal mines. Under the new regulations many small mines were driven out of business. As Gordon Steele pointed out, when mine safety was analyzed in terms of man hours spent in the mines the small mines had as good a safety record as the large mines. Another method of analyzing was comparing tons of coal produced to the number of man hours necessary to produce the coal. By comparing production to man hours the mines with large capital resources and the most modern technology had the best safety record. Also the United Mine Workers were pushing for federal control of mine safety and generally the large mines were union mines while the wagon mines were non-union. Wagon mines were generally run by the owners who were fiercely independent and individualistic. Of course, government bureaucrats who function in a world of committees were not well received by the wagon miner.

When the federal inspectors first arrived in Routt County they were filled with zeal. And one zealous inspector began telling Johnny Mathews how to run his mine. He never finished for Mathews turned his back on the inspector and walked off leaving him standing. Mathews, who had given thirty years of his life to develope that hole in the ground, never returned to his mine. In his youth Mathews had seen many mine bosses exploit the common workers. He had worked hard to escape the vicious system. To Mathews the zealous federal coal mine inspectors had all the marks of the tyrannical mine bosses. Before Mathews would submit to a new boss, he would turn his back on a life long dream and labor.[6]

The Steeles challenged the government inspectors on several points. Carl questioned the intelligence of requiring extensive rock dusting. He maintained that although rock dusting stopped mine explosions, it caused silicosis, a deadly lung disease. The inspectors were busy asserting their authority and did not care to have the regulations questioned. Tension grew when the federal men could not explain how silicia based rock dust was safe and would not cause death. Carl Steele, who suffered from a lung disease, was very sensitive to anything that endangered the respiratory system. In the end all the inspector could do was stand upon his dignity and read the printed page.

Federal coal inspectors can shut down a mine by simply saying it is shut down and no paper work is necessary for several hours. The accused are presumed guilty until they prove themselves innocent. Small mines cannot afford the cost of fighting their cases through the courts regardless of the innocence or guilt. With the adversary having virtually unlimited power, the Steele family realized the government would get them sooner or later.

In 1976 the Steeles sold their mine. In 1978 while working in Apex #2

for the Sunland Mining Corporation, the author was sitting on his shuttle car talking to a federal inspector. The inspector had just arrived from Utah and was expecting to be promoted to an executive office in Denver. As we visited he asked in a casual way if "Gordon Steele still worked in the mine." I replied that he was a face boss and an excellent miner. The inspector's attitude changed immediately. Within a few minutes we were closed down for the day with no specific violations cited. The crew was simply told that the mine was shut down while the inspectors went outside to lunch. That was about 10:00 a.m. The inspector returned about 2:00 p.m. and gave permission to resume work. However, the shift was nearly over. Clearly, the inspector had not been in Colorado or involved in the difficulties between the Steeles and the government; but he reacted as though he had a mission to drive a black listed man from the mine.

The full story of what happened in the conflict between the independent coal mine operators and the federal government may never be fully explained but enough is known to make it clear that the struggle became very personal and bitter on both sides.

In the Williams Mountains where the coal strata stood on end and coal mines were steep as "an ole cow's face," Louily Ciani opened his Pinnacle Mine. Unlike the Steeles who made money and paid their men's wages, Ciani was always broke. He was also reaching for big things. He could talk men into working all winter for him and when spring came Ciani did not have money enough to pay the wages. But come another year he could depend upon getting some of the same men back in the mine. Ciani himself was a hard working man whose deeds commanded respect from the miners and his visions of what could happen excited men. Somehow he was always able to raise enough money to keep operating. In 1958 he built a tipple in Hayden and began shipping coal. Again his money problems caused him to close and this

time he died of a heart attack before he was able to raise enough money to reopen. With Ciani's death, another wagon mine came to an end and a colorful figure went to his reward.[7]

The Seven Points Mine west of Phippsburg was a mixture of good and evil. In the mid-1920s Elmer Margerum, Brazilia Hastings, and George Gwynn opened small wagon mines on Seven Points Hill. None of the mines developed into anything resembling a big operation. Then in 1930 a group of Nebraska investors purchased the coal and started promotion of a big mining operation. They built a bunk house, "cook shack," and loading dock. To overcome the very steep grade from the mine to the valley floor, a tram right-of-way was cut through the oak brush and a tram was partly built. Coal from the mine was trucked to the railroad and shoveled into cars.

Apparently the activity at the mine was designed to attract investors rather than develop the mine. From the time the Seven Points Mine opened until it closed several years later it was in deep financial trouble and of course the depression aggravated the problem. "Homesteaders over there [near Seven Points]," commented a resident, "ate potatoes and went without because the mine didn't pay [wages]."[8]

John Morey who had a small ranch in the valley below the mine had several "scrapes" with the mine. He was hired to shovel coal back in the box cars, but he was never paid for the work. When Gwynn took over the mine and his wife cooked for the men, Morey sold beef to the mine. He was not paid for the meat. Gwynn did not pay his hired men except when they took him to court. Mrs. Gwynn ran a dirty boarding house. Billy Conley stopped by the boarding house one day while driving a truck and asked for something to eat. Mrs. Gwynn directed him towards a room and told him to go cut himself a piece of meat. He walked into the meat room and found it full of cats and on a closer look saw where the rats had been eating the

meat. Conley swallowed deeply and decided he was not hungry. Although most people in southern Routt County had a high level of tolerance, the Seven Points Mine had several bitter enemies.

On one occasion Gwynn wanted to change the road from the railroad to his mine. To do so he had to cross Morey's property. Morey refused to sell the right-of-way and was taken to court. While the case was pending Morey took a heavy chain and log and blocked the road which Gwynn had put in ahead of the court decision. Gwynn countered by reporting Morey's bootleg activity to the authorities. In response to the report, Morey's ranch was thoroughly searched and an empty whiskey bottle discovered. The cork smelled of liquor and the suspect was arrested. In due time Morey admitted to bootlegging and was sentenced to work several days with a team and slip on the county roads. At the court hearing Gwynn was awarded a right-of-way and Morey was to receive $110 for his property.

Gwynn built the road but he did not pay his debt. Morey was told that he could collect his money in coal at the rate of $3.00 per ton at the mine. He also had to find his own buyer. After searching for someone to buy the coal, he and Harry Metziner reached an agreement for three loads if Morey first hauled off the poor coal that Metziner had bought from the Arthur Mine. Thus, Morey had to clean out a man's coal shed and dispose of the poor coal before he could make the long trip to the mine and hand load coal for sale in Phippsburg. Probably no one in the history of Routt County worked so hard to collect the money granted him by law.

Although generally the Seven Points Mine had very high quality coal and the slope was gentle, near the end of the mine's operation the miners struck impurities in the vein which added to the mine operator's problems. In the early 1940s Seven Points was winding down its operation. An unidentified man got a judgement against the rails used in the tram and

tipple. Morey was contracted to stack the rail near the road where they could be easily loaded on a truck. While Morey was working he overheard a conversation between a couple of men at the mine. Under the coal lease the federal government would not allow the improvements to be removed from the property. Morey and his friends figured that Gwynn and his friends were going to let them stack the rails and then prevent them from taking them off the property. Later the rail would disappear.

By previous arrangement, Walt Jones in his truck arrived at the Seven Points Mine early one Sunday morning. A crew of men loaded the rail and hauled them to Morey's place and put them on his property. With a chuckle one old timer recalls how it was after ten o'clock before Gwynn could get his truck started and go to Oak Creek after Judge Walker. When Judge Walker, who was in close affiliation with Gwynn, arrived at the mine the rails were already removed. The judge threatened to file charges on the men for stealing the rail, but the threat was not carried out. Shortly afterwards Gwynn moved to Georgetwon, Colorado, where he worked a hard rock mine until his death.[9]

Carl Steele who knew Gwynn recognized his shortcomings but added, "He was just an old tough miner."[10] Like Gwynn, by the end of World War II all the people in the Seven Points area had moved on. In the early 1950s a Mr. Dunn attempted to reopen Seven Points as a strip mine. Some overburden was removed and a small amount of coal hauled to market. But this effort was minute and short lived. Except for some core drilling and promotion talk in 1978 the mines on Seven Points remain quiet.

There were literally hundreds of wagon mines ranging from prospect holes to large active mines. Each of the mines had its own story. With our present economy the wagon miners are a thing of history. The folks like the Knez and Steele families who accomplished a real service to the

community are gone. The operations like the Seven Points that stirred so much trouble will never trouble again. Men like Louily Ciani who could excite the best in men's energy and vision are lost to the mining industry. They were the eccentrics and individualists of their time.

CHAPTER VIII

MAKING A REPUTATION

At one time residents of Oak Creek proudly boasted that a half dozen of the nation's toughest men could arrive in town as the sun began to set and before the sun set, a match for each man would have been found. No one ever attempted to prove the validity of the boast. From the days of Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch through the underground mining era Routt County had its share of tough people. In fact, the arrival of the first settlers in Egeria Park was the result of crime and violence.

In 1881, William, Albert, and Tom Bird were operating a small dairy and a freighting business at Breckenridge, Colorado. One morning they found their horses were gone. The three brothers and a group of their friends followed the trail of the animals north along the Blue River and across the Grand (Colorado) River. Soon it became apparent that thieves were taking the horses across Gore Pass and into Egeria Park. In lower Egeria Park on what later became known as Watson Creek, the horses were discovered grazing peacefully near the stream. The owners rode directly to the horses and began gathering them. Suddenly a shot was fired from the willows along the stream and Tom Bird was mortally wounded. Immediately a sharp fight followed. Out numbered and out gunned, two horse thieves attempted to escape, but they were soon cornered near an abrupt rock formation on the Devil's Grave. Here the final act of violence was carried out.[1]

After burying the dead, the Bird party spent a few days examining the Yampa Valley. It is reasonable to assume that they were aware of the plans to build a railroad into the valley. Satisfied with what they saw and what the future promised, the party decided to recruit more settlers and move

into the valley. During the winter of 1881-1882, Albert Bird went to Dade County, Missouri, where he recruited friends and relatives. With the return of warm weather the pilgrims moved into the Lower Egeria Park.

Without homes or fields the homesteaders had a multitude of things to do. One of their first tasks was to build houses. A party of men set up a logging camp near Gardner Park and were busy cutting house logs when thieves raided their camp. The outlaws took a large share of the food and other supplies including a new pair of boots belonging to John Phillips. As soon as the robbery was discovered William and Albert Bird, Riley Wilson, John Phippips, and Ed Watson gave chase. The outlaws were overtaken on Oak Hills near the later site of Haybro. In a sharp gunfight the criminals were killed. Since robbing a camp of food and clothing was among the worst crimes on the frontier where starvation and exposure were a constant threat, the thieves were left unburied for several weeks. Finally the Routt County sheriff, who had been notified of the gunfight, arranged to have the dead men laid to rest.[2]

In 1884, Joe Ward and Charles Fox took up a ranch where the town of Yampa, Colorado, was later established. The pair was part of a ring that was butchering beef and selling the meat at Leadville, Colorado. In the fall the rustlers quarreled over their ill-gotten gain and Ward killed Fox. Mark Choate and L. L. Wilson arrested Ward. Justice of the Peace Alex Gray performed the duties of coroner and judge. Since both men were equally undesirable in the community, "no tears were shed because of the loss of Fox."[3] Ward was banished from Egeria Park. Sometime later he was shot while traveling from his home near the Government Bridge west of Craig to Rawlins, Wyoming. Thus from the outset, Routt County began developing a reputation of being a tough region.

During the period 1908-1914 the Oak Creek mining district was

comparatively quiet. The mines had been shipping coal for nearly a year before a crime was reported in the newspaper. At a later and more exciting time, it is doubtful if the editor of the Oak Creek Times would have devoted a full column to the "Phippsburg Robber Bound Over." Mrs. Julia Shoemacher and Mrs. Catherine Jasper had each rented two rooms of a mine "cottage" at Phippsburg. Joe Hobart while visiting Mrs. Shoemacher stepped into Mrs. Jasper's bedroom. Here he was caught stealing $25 from her purse. Hobart tried to fake his way out by playing drunk and falling off the bed. That did not work and off he went to jail. Thus ended the tale of the "Phippsburg Robber Bound Over."[4]

Although the story of the crime at Phippsburg was sufficiently dull, it does provide us with some information about the living conditions in the mining camp. The two women had divided a four room cottage; the two rooms provided extremely cramped living quarters. Since Phippsburg in 1909 was a company town housing miners and railroad men, despite the "Mrs." attached to the two women's names, there could be only one occupation open for unattached women in the mining camp.

There was at least one saloon in Phippsburg although the property deed to the railroad and mining company prohibited the sale of liquor in the town. Without doubt, prostitution and liquor were two of the basic elements in the community's early history.

Another undesirable aspect of northwestern Colorado's unseemly reputation was labor exploitation. For example, P. A. Clutter and his wife Minnie and their large family had traveled from Missouri to Routt County during the spring of 1910. On lower Elk River Minnie found employment helping Mrs. O. P. Grant with the housework. When it came time to settle the wages, Mr. Grant and his associate Walter Miller refused payment. An argument followed and Grant and Miller both drew guns and shot down the

unarmed Mr. Clutter. The two gunmen were arrested. Grant, who was described as a "law abiding citizen and . . . well-to-do," was sentenced to nine months at the state reformatory.[5] Miller, who was described as "a half-breed and his reputation [was] not the best," was sentenced to ten to twenty-five years in the state penitentiary.[6]

Closely associated with disputes over wages were tragic arguments over debts. On a cold winter day in January 1914, John F. McWilliams and H. N. Runyan went to Phippsburg on business. On their return to their homesteads on Hunt Creek, McWilliams dropped Runyan off at his home and drove the team on to his own home. McWilliams had not been home long when another neighbor, George Williams, came to collect a debt. Words were exchanged and Williams shot McWilliams. Hearing the shots Runyan hurried to the victim's home while the assailant went to yet another neighbor's home.[7] How this case was disposed of is uncertain. But since the killing happened at about the same time the Taxpayers League was demonstrating against the strikers at Oak Creek, it is worthwile spending a few moments considering violence in Routt County which was not strike related.

A few months after the McWilliams murder a group of citizens held a meeting at the Elkhead district school. The meeting was peaceful and no one entered into any heated discussions. After the meeting was over the men started for the corral to get their horses. James Oldham untied his horse and led him out as if he planned to mount then drew a gun and began shooting. Soon Clifford Fulton lay mortally wounded and his brother Charlie Fulton was seriously wounded. Sam Lighthizer who disarmed Oldham was slightly wounded. The trouble between Oldham and his neighbors was long standing. At one time the Fultons had brought charges against Oldham for insanity, but he was released by a Hahns Peak jury. Later Oldham was awarded $1,500 in damages against the Fultons. The insanity charge was

filed again by a group at Hayden. Again the case was dismissed. Next a group of Hayden men collected $1,000 which was given to Oldham if he would leave the county. He accepted the money and went to Craig for a few days and then returned home. Of course the last chapter was the shooting of the Fulton brothers.[8] There have been many legends grow around the Oldham shooting and there are those who support him and those who condemn him. Without a doubt, he was a dangerous man.

Since the McWilliams and Oldham cases occurred approximately the same time as the strike trouble at Oak Creek, let us compare a few facts. Paradoxically, residents of the county were paying a large sum to get a man to leave while at the same time the Taxpayers League was issuing ultimatums to the strikers. In the strike zone two men were dilled during the spring of 1914. In the non-strike zone two men were killed and two men wounded. The facts suggest that the "times" generally were violent and the events at Oak Creek fit a general pattern of society and the union-management problem was only a portion of a larger social upheaval.

The Oak Creek Town, Land, and Mining Company was organized by men who were very familiar with the more seamy side of Cripple Creek and Leadville. Keeping with their backgrounds, the town founders planned for Oak Creek to be a wide open mining town. Liquor, gambling, and girls were to be plentiful for miners with money. In the freewheeling atmosphere only the strong could survive.

In any community which gains a reputation for being tough there is a tremendous amount of social pressure upon some of its residents. For A. W. Newcomb, who brought a past and a drinking problem with him, the wide open activity of Oak Creek proved too much. Within a week of his arrival he took a large drink of carbolic acid and ended his life.[9]

The story of Albert Schempp was harder for residents to understand.

Schempp had immigrated from Germany, and he was ranching in Deer Park when Oak Creek was organized. Seeing opportunity, he moved his family into the community and became one of the solid citizens. He developed the first addition to the town (Schempp Addition). As the town grew and prospered, so did Schempp; however, the wide open town and World War I proved too much for him. By 1917 he was an alcoholic living in a shack at the back of the family lot. Separated although not divorced, he was constantly abusing and threatening his wife and children. Finally after a long drinking bout and abusing his family Schempp took his own life.[10]

No community reputation can be firmly established unless there is sufficient opportunity for speculation and gossip. In the early years of Oak Creek it found sufficient opportunity to consider events in their "more juicy" aspect when in 1910 the Oak Creek Times carried an article about the accidental shooting of W. R. Black. He and Sam Klocko were hunting when, so the story went, Klocko stumbled and accidently fired his shotgun. The shot hit Black in the right side and back. Immediately help was summoned for Black, and Klocko hurried into town and packed his bags. In time Black recovered and Klocko returned to Oak Creek for a short time.[11]

On the surface was a tragic but innocent story of an accidental shooting. But folks in Oak Creek knew Black was not an ordinary man. He built "Brooklyn," the red light district in Steamboat Springs and was also the power behind "Hickory Flats" in Oak Creek. He was also deeply involved in the liquor and gambling traffic of the mining districts. And some community residents suspected that Mr. Black was involved with a local rancher in a cattle rustling and slaughter house business. In order to maintain his many illegal operations Black had to "walk on" people from time to time. Regardless of the truth of the shooting, many local residents developed their own version. And Klocko's sudden flight from the

Yampa Valley only added to the versions of what happened.[12]

During the period 1908-1914 Oak Creek had a turbulent time of struggling to maintain the mining district, but there was nothing to give the community a widely heralded reputation for being a tough town. In 1915 residents were sure the mining district would survive, and the mine payrolls were becoming quite large. At the same time the state of Colorado began its prohibition efforts. Oak Creek was sufficiently isolated that there was little fear of outside interferance. In 1915 Oak Creek made its bid for a reputation as a tough town.

In 1915 when the crime rate was very high, accidental shootings added to the overall tension and excitement. When the Oak Creek Times reported the accidental shooting of Nick Pappas by Tony Pappas, the paper made it very clear that the two men were the best of friends. Although bot men were Greeks and had the same last name they were not related. While working as "buddies" at the Yampa Valley Mine and staying at the same boarding house the men had become close friends. On a crisp spring morning the men took an old weather beaten shotgun and went rabbit hunting. While the men were crossing a gulch the gun accidently discharged and Nick Pappas was fatally wounded.[13]

There are many ingredients which go into giving a community a reputation for being tough, but whether the community is called Dodge City, Tombstone, or Oak Creek, the cornerstone to its reputation as a tough town is that it is, in fact, a tough town. Beginning in 1915 and continuing for serveral years afterwards, Oak Creek and the areas it influenced was violent and often cruel. Ignore the fist fights and street brawls which were plentiful and petty and concentrate on the many violent crimes; we thus gain a sense of how tough Oak Creek really was.

Joe Santo was an Austrian who had come to the United States to find a

better life. He drifted for a few years until he arrived in Oak Creek. He lived a normal miner's life until he went on an extended drinking "binge." While drunk he met his neighbor Steve Suvada near the railroad depot. The two men exchanged sharp words that led to a fist fight. Santo then went home where he got his gun and waited for Suvada. After shooting his neighbor ten times Santo began shooting at everything in sight. Finally Marshal Jim Ray and G. F. Watt were able to disarm Santo.[14]

A few months before Santo went on the rampage, Ray had married Mary Aline Smith. At the time of the marriage Smith was one of the hostesses at Reidy's house of ill fame. Although Ray tried to provide a good home, the marriage had a rocky road to travel from the outset. The bride never really left her previous profession and kept attending the dances unescorted where she "was often found in the company of other men."[15] Ray was both marshal and half owner of the Big Six Saloon. The business was one of the more wide open establishments in town. The marriage partner's professional differences led to numerous quarrels. On November 7, Mary got gloriously drunk and went to the dance at Doyle's Saloon. Doyle's business was a combination drinking and whore house. When Ray learned of his wife's whereabouts he got her and took her home. When they arrived home they met Judge William Phelps who was also involved in liquor, gambling, and prostitution. Phelps and Ray went off on some business. So Mary decided she should go back downtown. Ray met his wife before she got to her destination and they returned home. Here they went into the kitchen and began quarrelling in low voices. They did not want Bill Irwin who was sleeping in the front bedroom or A. S. Brown who was sleeping on the couch to hear them. In this turbulent situation Ray told his wife to shut up and slapped her. She in turn did the unlady like act of drawing a gun and killing him. The court later sentenced Mrs. Ray to serve ten to twenty

years although she pleaded self defense.[16]

Just two weeks before the Ray murder a Dominec Gabriel attempted to force his attention upon a young mother. Gabriel dropped by his victim's home late one afternoon and started to rape the mother. The woman grabbed a pistol and fired a shot which missed Gabriel. She then tried to fire twice more but the gun misfired. Gabriel who had slowed his advances when the weapon came into play, began laughing at his victim as the gun misfired. But the woman was not yet defeated; she quickly stepped to a chest of drawers and drew another pistol. This time the gun worked and she did not miss her target. At the court hearing it was learned that Gabriel had attacked another woman a month earlier and at that time an attempt was made to have him arrested. However, due to a loophole in the law he escaped justice. When all the facts were considered the woman was let free without any charges.[17]

Routt County's cruelist murder in 1915 was not connected with the mining camps. At a sheepherder's camp in Red Park near the Wyoming line, Jose Valardo, Cerrillo Velasquez, and Marquez Quinta were sharing camp. The herders sent Valardo to Columbine to get supplies; while there Valardo cashed Velasquez's paycheck and spent the money on himself. When Valardo returned to camp sharp words were exchanged over the spending of Velasquez's paycheck. That night Valardo murdered Velasquez as he slept and Quinta as he tried to escape.[18]

Without a doubt, by 1915 Oak Creek and to a lesser extent the rest of Routt County was inhabitated with citizens who were quick to use a gun to settle their differences. However, in 1916 regional crimes had a particularly cruel twist to them.

In June a fisherman below Steamboat Springs found the body of a new born baby which had been strangled. It did not take authorities long to

figure that the body could not come down the river from above the town. At the upper end of town the Service (pronounced Sarvice) Lumber Company had a line across the river to catch its logs. But below the lumber yard was Mr. Black's Little Brooklyn. It was speculated that one of the ladies of the night had given birth to an unfortunate child.[19] No one was arrested for the crime; however, feeling ran high against the murder.

On July 4, Al Todd decided to set the labor of his homestead aside for the day and go fishing on Morrison Creek. Upon reaching the stream he crossed over the boundary line onto Jake Augster's homestead. Here Todd busied himself catching grasshoppers for bait. He looked up to see Augster holding a gun. Augster had come to Oak Creek before the big strike of 1913-14 and worked in the mines. During the strike he was active in the union and gained a reputation for his willingness to fight. After the strike ended Auguster was unable to find work in the mines so he moved to Morrison Creek and took up a homestead. As a homesteader he was not effective. But Todd, who was also a bachelor, tried to help his neighbor. During the winter of 1915-16 Augster who did not have a cabin agreed to pay his share on the board bill if he could batch with Todd. The verbal contract was made and the men lived together through the winter. When spring came Augster refused to pay any of the food bill or help Todd with any of the spring work. Todd attempted to secure his investments by taking a rifle and small bundle from Augster. On that fatal July 4, Augster saw Todd leave his cabin and followed him. At the moment he chose, the killer stepped up and "gut" shot Todd and left him to die.

Since picnics were a tradition for Independence Day, the P. J. Gardner and Ed Herold families were near enough to hear the shot and curious enough to go investigate. By the time they reached Todd's cabin the wounded man had dragged himself to his home and was attempting to protect himself from

further assault if it came. Todd was made as comfortable as possible in a wagon, and the neighbors and the wounded man started for Oak Creek. Several hours later Todd died without reaching the doctor. Augster, who was soon arrested, never showed any signs of regret for killing his neighbor. And the court only sentenced him to serve a term of one to eight years in the state penitentiary.[20]

The Todd murder case was just settled when Clate Watt shot William Doyle. While at Cripple Creek, Watt and an accomplice had kidnapped a wholesale liquor man and taken him to an abandoned mine. Here the victim was dangled over an open shaft until he disc osed the location of some money. For his part in the crime Watt was sent to prison. Upon his release he came to Oak Creek where he worked as a muscle man for one of the town factions. A rival faction, William Doyle and his wife Anne, ran several houses, sold bootleg whiskey, and controlled a large part of the town's gambling. Doyle was also the only man who could compete with Black for control of the town's night life business. In the "wee" hours of an invigorating fall morning, Watt, who was merrily drunk, went to Doyle's rooming house and stood in front of one of the doors and sang at the top of his lungs. Anne Doyle came out in the hall and asked Watt to leave but this only encouraged him to sing with more gusto. So William Doyle got up and came out in the hall where the rabble rouser was enjoying himself. Doyle, without ceremony, picked up Watt and threw him down to the first landing on the stairs. Doyle them calmly walked down the steps to Watt and pitched the man the rest of the way down.

At first Watt was willing to forget and forgive, but when he went on another drinking spree and his friends began to chide him about letting Doyle rough him up, Watt swore to get revenge. One afternoon in mid-October Doyle had to go to Steamboat Springs and Craig to pay his fines

and settle a sheriff's sale which resulted from several court convictions the Doyles had recently received. Watt vowed that Doyle would never leave town. He got his rifle and went to the depot where he found Doyle standing near the stove with a few other folks. When Doyle saw Watt he said, "You're not one of those bad men who go around carrying a gun are you Clate?" Watt replied, "I guess not a bad man" and raised his rifle and shot Doyle in the middle. But Doyle, who was tougher than most men, took the shot and then walked back to his saloon where he was put to bed and the doctors called.[21]

The town marshal heard the shot and came on the run. But when Watt refused to surrender, the lawman stepped back. For several hours Watt paraded through town with his rifle. Finally when he went into the Imperial Pool Hall, Clem Eiler disarmed the gunman and the sheriff was called. At a later trial Watt was found not guilty. The jury believed that Watt had fired in self defense.[22]

The primary reason Watt received such a light sentence was his close relationship to Frank Watt who was a leading figure in Oak Creek and a man with a tremendous amount of influence in the right places. And in 1916, Oak Creek was in the throes of a power struggle. One political leader readily admitted that the sheriff and court in Routt County were bought. When the highest bidder wanted someone removed or a favorable court decision handed down, it was done. And in late 1916 there were powerful men who wanted Doyle removed from the county or brought into line. And the series of court cases for bootlegging, prostitution, and gambling had failed to bring Doyle into line; therefore he was shot.[23]

Oak Creek was so wide open in 1916 that in an article headlined "Prohibition Some Joke" the editor of the Oak Creek Times told how many quarts of whiskey, wine, and beer arrived in Oak Creek in July and August. He also knew the price of each item and how much was on hand.[24] The editor

might have gone on to say that crime of all types was becoming a way of life. A January 1917 grand jury issued so many indictments that it took two full columns of the Oak Creek Times to list them. William Doyle had eight separate charges, Joe Postlich had seven charges, and M. B. Higgins had six charges. With the exception of Frank Miller who was charged with stealing a sheep, all the indictments listed in the paper were against people from Oak Creek and vicinity. None of the indictments were against the Black faction.[25]

Despite the court, crime continued. No one became overly concerned when Tony Ferraro blew out Jim Vassos's brains, or when Jose Villalobos cut up Juan Sanceda's abdomen with a sickle, or when Caspar Weberskirch shot Jim Johns through both legs. It was generally believed that the victims were "Greek Johns" too friendly with someone else's wife.[26] Residents found a bit of humor in the time Sam Guvo got drunk and went to a public dance at Pallas. Guvo entered the dance hall and moved to the center of the floor where he began shouting abuses and generally causing trouble. When Mrs. Pete Rhodes tried to talk Guvo into leaving, he drew a knife. Pete Rhodes, who was standing nearby, drew a gun and shot Guvo in the rump. Guvo fell to the floor yelling and then got up and ran outside.[27] But when Jack Cummings followed a five year old girl to an outside toilet and then attacked her, the town acted with dispatch. Cummings who narrowly avoided being lynched was sentenced to life in prison.[28]

The one crime which went the furtherest toward giving Oak Creek a reputation of being a tough town occurred on October 5, 1916. The Moffat Mine superintendent, Robert (Bob) Perry, stepped outside to tend to nature before going to bed; suddenly two Greek miners confronted him with weapons. They forced the mine superintendent back into the house and searched the

premises for guns and money. After satisfying themselves that they had all the money, the kidnappers marched Perry across the mine property and up the hill behind where the machine gun and search light had stood during the strike. Near morning the three men stopped on the divide between Little Trout Creek and Oak Creek. After a brief rest, George Kastseqianes and Jim Karagounis forced Perry to write a $15,000 ransom note which was sent to his father, Samuel Perry, the principal owner of the Moffat Mine and a leader in the railroad. After one of the kidnappers mailed the letter the trio moved on to the divide between Middle Creek and Trout Creek. Here they waited for Sam's response. It was not long in coming. Perry organized a group of detectives and took a special train for Oak Creek.

While the train was hurrying to the Yampa Valley, it began to rain on the fugitives. The moisture helped loosen Bob Perry's bonds; meanwhile the miserable weather caused the kidnappers to become careless. Although not completely free from his ropes, Bob was able to get a rifle from the sleeping kidnappers. In the fight which followed, Perry shot Kastseqianes and Karagounis fled. Then Perry who was still partially bound hurried to a ranch for help.

One of the mysteries that surrounds the case is what happened after Perry and Karagounis fled leaving Kastseqianes shot from a large caliber rifle. When investigators found the kidnapper's body, the lawmen claimed that it had been robbed and the man had been shot through the head with a small caliber bullet. After the discovery of the dead man and identifying him as one of the Greeks, Sam Perry and his hired detectives went on a witch hunt. Many Greeks were arrested and some detained for a long time without any evidence. Finally the wanted man was spotted drinking from one of the springs at Steamboat Springs. After his arrest he was charged with kidnapping and murder. It was maintained that Bob Perry's shot would not

have killed the man who was so badly wounded that he could not escape. Karagounis denied the murder charge. Since all the witnesses have passed on to their reward, history will never disclose if Karagounis was framed for murder.[29]

Although the mines wanted to give the public image that they were safe places for labor and management, the facts are that Oak Creek's violent crimes reached deep into the mines. It was a common practice in the mines for various types of underground workers to exploit other classes of workers. Rope riders often did not provide the miners with the necessary cars and equipment unless the rider received a cash payment. When a rope rider named Johnson refused to provide Alfonso Zupo with rail for the room, harsh words were exchanged and Johnson hit Zupo with a piece of steel causing a terrible head injury.[30] Apparently Zupo survived the attack and Johnson went unpunished.

A more serious attack on a miner occurred at the Haybro Mine. When the mine first opened, its portal was on top of Oak Hill and the mine was connected to the railroad by a long tram. As a shift ended on September 26, 1915, a miner finished loading two large loads of coal. After the work was completed the rope rider took the cars to the surface while the miner followed at a distance. When the loads reached the surface it was discovered that the coal was piled too high to fit under the timbers at the head of the tram. The mine boss told Matt Gaffney to unload part of the coal. The miner arrived in time to see his coal being unloaded--coal which he was paid by the ton to mine and on which he often received a short count in tonnage. Without hesitation the miner attacked Gaffney with a short piece of rail. After the assault the miner fled and Gaffney was hurried to a hospital in Steamboat Springs where he later died.[31]

On a lighter note were the capers of Lee Parfet at the Pinnacle Mine.

Parfet was the weighmaster at the mine and like many of the men he took a lot of guff from other employees. One day Parfet was shadow boxing at his place of work when H. J. Batman saw the activities. Batman began "ribbing" the would be boxer. One word led to another and soon the two men were throwing blows. Parfet was no match for Batman, so after the fight Parfet got a gun and came back to the tipple. At the time he arrived most of the men were eating lunch and at first did not believe Parfet when he told them to get out. But Batman, who had had the fight took Parfet serious and left. He was soon followed by the rest of the men. That worked so well that Parfet took his rifle while collecting his wages from J. W. Browning.[32] The residents of Oak Creek, who were becoming calloused, found more humor in Parfet's threats than anything dangerous. Most people realized that he was generally a very peaceful and likeable fellow.

Far less humorous was the death of Guadalupe Hernandez. Hernandez went to work in the No. 2 Mine of the Moffat Coal Company during the morning of April 13, 1917. When he did not show up to eat lunch with his friends they went looking for him. They found him dead in his mining room. Someone had hit him in the mid section and ruptured the small intestine. The motive nor the killer were never discovered.[33]

But the death of Cary Fulton provides us with more insight into the life at the mines. Fulton was a young, strapping man who enjoyed teasing everyone. On July 13, 1917, Fulton was running the tunnel motor, Horace Willey was running the hoist, and Harry Gray was working as a rope rider. At noon the three men sat down with a crew of track layers to eat. Fulton asked Gray, "What nationality are you?" Gray answered, "Same as you are, a white man." Fulton replied, "I don't believe you; I think you are a hunk." Of course, at this time in Oak Creek's history, feeling between the various nationalities ran high. Fulton kept kidding Gray about being a hunk and

Gray kept getting hotter. Then Fulton grabbed Gray by the foot. Gray countered by kicking Fulton in the face. Fulton shoved Gray over the hoist. At this point the other miners stopped the fight. But Fulton promised to take it up again once they were out of the mine. After work Fulton and Ernest Gwinn walked ahead and Gray and Leslie Hobbs and a third person followed as the shift made its way towards town. Suddenly Fulton turned around saying, "We might as well settle this right here," and started back towards Gray. Fulton, who was much the largest, grabbed Gray by the arms, but Gray who was terrified drew his sharp steel bell ringer and drove it into Fulton's chest. Fulton then turned and ran; however, the effect of the wound soon caused Fulton to fall.[34]

It is ironic that a life was taken over a silly quarrel over which nationality a person belonged to. In Oak Creek there was nearly every European nationality present. There were also Blacks and Japanese. The town itself was quite small by present standards. The business district was only four blocks long and the permanent population was well below a thousand. But, until after World War I, conflicts between nationalities were serious and often deadly.

Equally puzzling is the phenomenal crime rate. There were very few killings in Oak Creek until after the big strike, and the strike in the Oak Creek mining district was relatively peaceful. But the next year the murder rate climbed to well over a dozen and remained there for several years. Bootlegging and prostitution could be blamed for the high crime rate. But other towns in the valley also had bootlegging and prostitution without the murders. From 1914 until some time in the 1920s the largest mining district was at Mt. Harris. In the Mt. Harris district there were more mines and more people. So we cannot blame the crime rate on number of people or nationalities. Labor exploitation was as bad at Mt. Harris as it

was at Oak Creek, and the county's logging industry was worse for cheating the men than were the mines; therefore, labor exploitation cannot be singled out as causing the criminal activity.

The only thing that Oak Creek had that none of the other towns in the county did not have was a group of founding fathers who came to organize an open town that would rival Cripple Creek and Leadville. Whereas the mine owners at Mt. Harris kept a lid on their company town, the leaders at Oak Creek ignored the mine operators. The town had a socialist government during the strike and the residents were not too upset when Bob Perry was kidnapped. However, before the reader gets the wrong impression, Bob Perry personally was admired by most of the people in Oak Creek and those who worked for him at the mine. Bob stayed at the mine and suffered the fates of life with the local folks. But the people found it quite natural to admire Perry and ignore the mine. To add to the confusion at Oak Creek was the deadly game over which faction would control the gambling, bootlegging, and prostitution.

Regardless of the causes for the high violent crime rate, Oak Creek continued to build upon its reputation as a tough town. Even the town leaders were not exempt from adding to the reputation. One pleasant April day in 1918, G. F. Watt, a leader in the city government, dropped into the Herald office to collect a $10 gambling debt from Mrs. J. M. Childress. She became insulting and Watt returned in kind. He collected his money and left the newspaper office. Later in the day Watt met J. M. Childress and A. Jackson on the street and again words were exchanged. However, this time Childress and Jackson reached into their pockets and took out their pocket knives and prepared to cut up Watt. Watt, who had a reputation for being tough, hit Childress with all his strength and took most of the fight out of the editor. Meanwhile Jackson slashed Watt twice then the two newspaper

men took to their heels and fled into the Herald office. Soon a crowd gathered and threatened to lynch the newspaper people. Finally the town marshal arrived and put Jackson under arrest and escorted Mr. and Mrs. Childress out of town. Watt, who lost a lot of blood, mended after a few days.[35]

After the big strike, Oak Creek went on a rampage of violence, but 1919 was a placid and dull year. The community had its fist fights and turbulent moments, but these fit into the same pattern as the rest of northwestern Colorado. By 1921, the whole county had undergone some remarkable changes. In that year James and Arthur Durham had trouble with Superintendent Davis at the Morrison Mine. The miners claimed that they were being cheated on their wages. The argument became heated and Davis slapped James across the face. Just a few years earlier men had been killed for less than that, but Durham simply drew his gun and fired it into the floor. This served as a warning and also led to a jail sentence for the two miners.[36]

The following year Dan Borich, in a fit of rage, killed his wife and Joe Kezele. The assault of the victims was brutal, but nothing like the murders which occurred in 1916. However, "feeling ran high at Pallas and in Oak Creek and it was feared that an attempt might be made to take [Borich] out of jail and lynch him." G. F. Watt, the same man who had been in the knifing incident with the newspaper man back in 1918, had to hold a lynch mob off for a brief period.[37] Just a few years before several people had met their death during family problems and no one in Oak Creek got excited. How times had changed.

The county had also changed dramatically. In the spring of 1922 the county government was attempting to have the state of Wyoming return Belmont B. Magee. The Curtis Mine near Milner was notorious for cheating the men

out of their wages. And Magee, who was wanted for "defrauding workmen, short checks and various other infractions of the law," was one of the many leasers of the mine. The county was not satisfied with going through a few motions, its officials were also attempting to collect the wages from W. W. Curtis. And enough pressure was being placed in the right places that Curtis was cooperating.[38]

From 1915 through 1917 Oak Creek was a town in which anything went, and life was easily taken. What caused the change after 1917? The United States entered World War I, and for most of the residents of Routt and Moffat counties, President Woodrow Wilson's war aims as expressed in the Fourteen Points were not idle talk. The residents went to war to make the world a better place to live. Oak Creek in 1917 was a place which had drawn a considerable amount of attention for its dirt and rottenness. Thus the community came under extensive pressure to mend its ways. One of the most effective tools in getting the attention of the mining community was provided by Wilson's proclamation: "All male Austrians from the age of 14 years up who are not naturalized citizens, to refrain from violating the laws of the United States and so long as they shall conduct themselves according to the law, they will be undisturbed in peaceful occupations."[39]

The change in Oak Creek could very well have occurred under the pressure of the war even if the proclamation had never been made. All the communities became deeply involved in the war effort. On a per capita basis Yampa probably sent the most men to the service. However, mining communities like Mt. Harris and Oak Creek had a large number of immigrants who could not serve in the armed forces. To further help the war effort Red Cross chapters were established at many points. It was generally assumed that anyone not active in the Red Cross was not patriotic. Every community attempted to out do the others in its Red Cross work. And to the credit of

the people a tremendous amount was accomplished. Mt. Harris and Hayden were the most successful Red Cross units. "During the Second Red Cross War Fund Drive, the quota for Mt. Harris was fixed at $114. With a population of only 400, it rolled up the astounding total of $2,743. Then every working man in the camp pledged 2 per cent of his wages for the war." Every miner at Bear River also pledged two percent of his wages to the drive.[40] Although Oak Creek did not achieve the success of the other communities, it was a strong supporter of the Red Cross.

A miner at the Moffat Mine made some unfavorable comments about the Red Cross, so one of the Committee of Five requested that he be discharged from the mine on the grounds that he was a slacker. After the miner was fired he complained to the editor of the Oak Creek Times, who reported the miner to the Committee of Five. The miner was arrested "and made to explain why he so frequently denounced the work of the Red Cross."[41] Clearly the miner was handled in an autocratic manner, but often in history when patriotism, idealism, and reform are combined those who entertain different ideas are treated harshly.

With the idealism and reform movement that swept in came an opportunity to oust the powerful political leaders of Oak Creek. In 1918 the Taxpayers Party led by Dr. E. L. Morrow defeated the old Independent Party so soundly that the party died.[42] With the new men in political power, Oak Creek began cleaning up its underworld. Liquor, gambling, and prostitution remained, but the violence associated with the business was brought under control.

Some of the leading citizens in Oak Creek and Yampa decided to carry the reform movement further. The method used was the Ku Klux Klan. Several residents of Oak Creek were told to get out of town and crosses were burned on a hill above the town. For many residents the threat of the

Klan was unnerving.[43]

In southern Routt County the Klan was more a fad than a real threat. George Moraites, a Greek immigrant, arrived in Oak Creek in the early 1920s. Instead of going to work in the Moffat Mine as he originally planned, Moraites opened a shoe repair shop. During the years the Klan was at its height, he developed a strong business and became a leader in the community.

The Italian immigrant Dominic Hamidy had made his home in Oak Creek. During the big strike of 1913-14, Hamidy was running the Northpole Import-Export Store. Through the strike he extended so much credit to needy families that he was forced to close the store. When James Gilruth resigned from the Oak Creek city government in May 1918, the council appointed Hamidy to serve in the city government. Hamidy continued to be a respected resident through the 1920s.[44]

Sam and Angela Iacovetto left their native Italy to seek a better life in America. In 1913 they moved to Phippsburg, Colorado. Like so many foreigners who were hired as strikebreakers, when they learned of the strike it was too late to avoid continuing to work at the mines. The immigrants did not have money enough to leave and the striking union would not accept them into their ranks. Iacovetto rode the commuter train from Phippsburg to the Moffat Mine until the train was discontinued. Then he rode a horse to work. In time Iacovetto quit the mine and began working at the coal chute at the Phippsburg roundhouse. Here a crew of men were employed to shovel the coal from the cars into the coal chute. From the chute the coal was loaded into the locomotives.

In 1919, Iacovetto bought the Phippsburg Poolhall from J. J. Doyle. The pool hall, like the rest of the pool halls in southern Routt County, handled bootleg whiskey. Soon he began handling groceries and by 1922 his

primary source of business was groceries. During the 1920s Iacovetto's business grew.

Iacovetto was a foreigner, strikebreaker, and bootlegger; if the Klan had been a powerful force, Iacovetto's business would have died. But the true nature of the people became clearly evident in the case of Sam Iacovetto. Since he did not understand bookkeeping nor read English well, a grocery salesman kept his books. The books were honestly kept and Iacovetto was not cheated. He moved into the grocery business although Whitely's had a store across the street. Despite the competition by a non-foreigner, Iacovetto was able to expand his business. By the end of the decade of the 1920s the Iacovetto family was a well respected family in southern Routt County. None of this would have been possible had the Klan been a powerful force.[45]

Much more constructive than the Klan was the women's dedication to reform the region. With the passage of the XIX Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, women gained the right to vote. The women in Oak Creek, like their sisters throughout the nation, took the responsibility of government seriously. As part of their responsibility the Woman's Club put pressure on the Oak Creek government to keep the pool halls and soft drink parlors under close control. The women were effective in controlling although not eliminating the exploitation of young minors by the town's vices.

So often in the story of human events great crusades for serious goals are accompanied with moments of light humor. So it was with the crusade to clean up the Oak Creek government. To further their end the women attended one of the city council meetings. As a result the women adopted the following resolution: "The committee from the Woman's Club attending the meeting of the Board of Aldermen on Thursday evening, noticed the deplorable

condition of the room in which the meetings are held, therefore, Be it Resolved . . . the same be thoroughly cleaned, . . ."[46] The city councilmen who did not want the Woman's Clubto come down too hard on their pool halls and soft drink parlors got the brooms, pails, and other tools, and suffered the humiliation of literally cleaning out the city hall.

The pressure of the various reform movements had their impact upon the violent character of Oak Creek and the coal mining district. To keep in tune with the changing community a plank in the People's Party Platform of 1921 stated: ". . . the present candidates pledge themselves to continue the enforcement of the laws, the prohibition of the sale of intoxicating liquors and gambling; that no house of ill fame will be permitted to exist, nor immorality in any locality; that we intend as far as possible to see that Oak Creek is a model town . . ."[47]

Equally important to the reform movements in changing the mining district was the chance which occurred in the underworld. After World War I, Andy Black and his associates were in complete control of the town vices. Without a serious challenger, there was no need for the public violence. However, after 1920 Oak Creek remained a tough town; and at times the community's violent side flashed to the surface.

CHAPTER IX

CRIME AFTER 1920

The reform efforts during and immediately after World War I helped to control crime in northwestern Colorado. But Oak Creek and the adjacent coal mining district remained a region with a well deserved reputation. Here the shift from a wide open town where anything went to a wide open town that controlled the more repulsive aspects was slow in arriving. Often the reform was more apparent than real.

Between 1920 and 1925 open violence remained a part of community life. However, this period exhibited some subtle changes from the pre-World War I period. One of the subtle changes was that the local newspapers generally did not carry as detailed accounts of the violence and crime. Two examples of the change were the stories of "Two Austrians Held On Assault Charges" and "Near Shooting Affray Finishes Excitement." In the first article the editor of the Oak Creek Times covered the story of Mike Gulobovich and Jack Runuzijo assaulting George Perich. The newspaper only used one paragraph and no sensation to report the event. In the second story Marko Gavo and George Pavello had a very public fist fight on Sharpe Avenue. Gavo came out the worst in the fight. Afterwards he swore to get revenge. The story became more intriguing when Gavo's cousin, Louis Zulevich, met Pavello on Main Street; suddenly Zulevich drew a gun and shot at Pavello but missed. Pavello dived into the gutter and faked death. Zulevich became scared and ran off. Later all three men were arrested and the law took its course. To cover the story the local paper only used two paragraphs.[1] In an earlier period the Oak Creek Times would have used a full column to detail a blow by blow description of the event. The two county seat newspapers, the Steamboat Pilot and the Sentinel remained aloof of both stories;

however, during the period 1915-1918 these papers had field days covering similar excitement.

The Gavo, Pavello, and Zulevich story also provides some indication of how justice was handled in Oak Creek. All three men were arrested by Police Magistrate Ferdinand Luedke, and Justice S. M. Bell fined the three men $10 and costs for disturbing the peace. Further legal action against Gavo and Zulevich was taken under advisement and later dropped.

The case against R. S. "Dick" Phelps fell into the older pattern of law enforcement. Phelps was one of the gamblers and political hacks who had given Oak Creek its reputation. In 1909 he was police magistrate. He held the office only a month before he was replaced by another member of the political factions. Despite his removal from office Phelps continued to be one of Oak Creek's tough characters.

In February 1921 Phelps was gambling with L. M. Lamb when Lamb lost a large amount of money which resulted in Lamb and Phelps embroiled in a bitter argument. Since Phelps had a mean reputation, Lamb left the gambling hall to get a gun. About noon he returned and pointed the gun at Phelps and claimed he would kill him. Phelps grabbed the gun and pointed it at Lamb just as it went off. Lamb was seriously wounded and Phelps was wounded in the little finger. After the shooting, Marshal Dittemore arrested Phelps and Sheriff Charles W. Neiman was notified. The case involving Phelps was soon forgotten. Forgotten is the correct phrase since the case was never handled in a formal manner.[2] Phelps was an intricate part of the gambling element in Oak Creek, and that element took care of their members.

The counterweight to the protection of the inner circle was the story of W. H. Ewing. Ewing had been an Oak Creek police magistrate in 1909. He and Phelps had been involved in various aspects of the town's night life

for years. During the struggle between Andy Black and his supporters and William Doyle and his supporters, Phelps had stood with Black while Ewing supported Doyle. During the power struggle Ewing left Oak Creek and moved to a ranch near MacGregor, Colorado. From his ranch Ewing planned to operate a large bootlegging business in the Mt. Harris coal mining district. To further his plans he contacted R. H. and O. L. McDowell who were considered very successful whiskey makers from Tennessee. After an agreement was reached between the parties, the McDowells leased the Ewing ranch. The men had just started their business when Deputy Sheriff William Ketchens and George Long arrested the three. The McDowells were fined $100 each and Ewing was fined $300. Someone had turned Ewing in to the law at just the right moment to prevent competition from reaching the market.[3]

Despite the subtle changes that were occurring and the shift in the power structure, Oak Creek still had a vicious aspect that errupted from time to time. One of the saddest stories involved a fifteen year old girl, Annie Mudra, and her mother, Kathryn. The two women lived on a small ranch in Eckman Park while Mr. Mudra and his sons William and Joe lived in Oak Creek. Mr. Mudra worked as a pumper at the Moffat Mine and seldom went to the ranch, and the two boys attended school and were not at home often. Annie cracked up under the strain of the lonely life and a sick mother. She shot her mother and then buried her in a manure pile. Several weeks later the crime was discovered. In the process of time, Annie was tried and justice administered. What really happened on that lonely homestead history has kept a secret; the legends range from cold blooded murder to self defense to mercy killing.[4]

On March 21, 1922, Oak Creek had another tragic murder. Dan Borich had started life in Serbia of Turkish parents. At the age of 51 Borich was returning home from work at the mine when he met his wife and seven year

old daughter walking with Joe Keezle. Mr. and Mrs. Borich quarreled and Mr. Borich demanded money to leave the region. His wife refused. Mr. Borich drew his pocket knife and attacked his wife. Keezle attempted to stop the attack and "was disemboweled by Borich." At this point Mrs. Borich broke loose and ran for her life. Her wounds proved too much and soon her husband caught up and cut her throat. The primary witness was Borich's young daughter. The state of Colorado soon dispatched justice and in August 1922 Borich was executed.[5]

The Mudra and Borich murders involved the deep seated forces of loneliness, mental unrest, and passion. The 1923 case against Edward Carnes had all the elements of a wild west movie. On May 13 Carnes stepped into the Routt County garage where B. F. Williams, Velma Kennedy, J. D. Sparks and G. H. Snyder were working and visiting. "Carnes approached Williams and said that he heard that Williams had been talking about him and wanted to know whether it was so." Carnes went on to claim that he knew about Williams bootlegging while serving as a member of the city council. Then Carnes shoved Snyder and Williams hit Carnes. Next Carnes drew his gun and hit Williams and Snyder over the head. Defending himself Snyder grabbed a plank and hit Carnes over the head. At this point everyone stopped fighting. Williams left the garage with the parting remark, "Wait until I get a gun and I will kill him."[6]

Williams headed for home and Carnes went to his home. Soon afterwards Williams came parading down the street with a shotgun. He was going towards Carnes's home when he approached the Curry Hotel. At this point Carnes took aim from a window in his home and shot Williams in the hip. At that moment Charles Williams happened to be walking up the railroad tracks. He saw his brother shot and ran to his aid. When Charles picked up the shotgun, Carnes shot him in the leg. Then a brief gun fight occurred until

Charles made the safety of a water trough. Carnes then came out of his home and pointed his rifle at Charles, but when he realized Charles was helpless he lowered the gun and instructed someone to call the marshal. Four days later B. F. Williams died of the wound to the hip.

Carnes was charged with first degree murder in the death of B. F. Williams and a second charge of assault with intent to commit murder for shooting Charles Williams. Judge Charles E. Herrick held Carnes without bond on the murder charge. The case against Carnes became involved and required two hearings as the first trial resulted in a hung jury. Eventually Carnes was found guilty; however, several local residents felt he was framed. In the fight in the garage he had drawn his pistol and defended himself but he had not shot anyone. At the time the fight ended Williams had threatened Carnes. Later Williams, armed with a shotgun, was approaching Carnes's home. B. F. was shot in the hip and Charles was shot in the leg. None of the shots were aimed at a vital spot. When both men lay wounded Carnes did not kill the men, but rather had someone get the marshall.

In desperation Carnes escaped from the county jail before he was transferred to prison. Later United States Marshal Evart Wilson of Phippsburg and Detective E. Horn of the Pueblo police department spotted Carnes in the Kansas City Union Station. At this point the fugitive was arrested and returned to Colorado to serve life imprisonment.[7]

One gets a glimpse of the inconsistency of the county's legal system by comparing the Carnes case to the case of Pearl Aldrich. Through the winter of 1925 Leo B. and Pearl Aldrich made their homes in the Hickory Flats division of Oak Creek. The couple had several quarrels, and Leo moved to the home of Gus Coupan. One afternoon while Leo was sleeping on the couch Pearl entered the Coupan home, deliberately aimed a shotgun, and

shot her husband twice in the back. She was charged with felonious intent although she murdered her husband. Aldrich's intentions were much clearer than Carnes, but her legal charges were much lighter than his.[8]

The coal mines in Routt County would employ as many as 2,000 men during the peak of the annual production. Oak Creek was ready to satisfy the desires of the miners as they drifted through the valley. With the large transient population the community attracted many tough men. One of the toughest men was Slim Keller.

When Keller arrived from Oklahoma, he began working at the Haybro Mine. For several months he was just another miner going about his business. His trouble started when his mother was sick and he went to the company bookkeeper to get an advance on his pay. The bookkeeper explained that cash advances were against company policy. The two men had a heated argument and the bookkeeper took a stove poker and ran Keller out of the office. The next morning while Keller was still at the bath house, the bookkeeper stopped in to tend to some company business. The two men met and without ado Keller attacked the hapless bookkeeper and beat him very badly. When the passenger train arrived the bookkeeper was loaded on the train and taken to a Denver hospital where he remained in serious condition for several days. As for Keller, he got off without any brush with the law.

Keller was a heavy drinker and gambler, and he managed to stay in some type of trouble. On one occasion he was drinking and gambling in the Greek pool hall when he lost his money and tried to borrow from the other gamblers and stay in the game. Naturally they refused to gamble against their own money. Angered by the rebuff, Keller suddenly tipped the table over and broke off a leg. With the weapon he swung wildly at everyone in the room. Soon he was alone in the pool hall, and the patrons considered themselves lucky to escape without injury. Again Keller was not called to

accounts by the law.

On another occasion Keller was in the second floor dance hall of the Andy Black building when he and another miner got into a fight over the favor of one of the ladies. Keller literally threw the man down the stairs. The crumpled miner finally regained consciousness and made his way to safety.

Several months later Town Marshal Templeton started to arrest Keller when Slim decided to resist arrest. The marshal immediately drew his gun and hit Keller over the head. The unconscious man was drug to jail and uncermoniously locked up. After his release Keller hired Henry Moore to bait Templeton into a trap. Moore went to the second floor of the Piercen Building where a large dance was in progress. In front of Templeton he opened a bottle of moonshine and took a drink. Since the crime was committed in view of a large number of witnesses, Templeton was forced to arrest Moore. Moore ran down the steps and into the alley. The town marshal in hot pursuit never realized his danger until it was too late. From his hiding place Keller sprang like a wild man on Templeton. Soon the badly beaten lawman lay in the alley. After spending several days in the Oak Creek hospital, Templeton was put on a train and taken to a Denver hospital. Again a victim of Keller was close to death. Carl Steele commented, "The bastard would get away with stuff like that."[9]

Finally Keller drifted to Washington state where he worked as a highwayman. He would hide a car in some secluded place along the highway. Then he would go to a large town and purchase a bus ticket. When the bus neared the spot where he had his car, Keller would draw a gun and rob the passengers. Of course a big, rawboned man with a southern accent could only repeat the crime a limited number of times before his description was well known at the bus terminals. When the heat got too hot for Keller, he

returned to Oak Creek, where, without fear, he openly talked about his exploits in Washington.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s Keller drifted in and out of Oak Creek. He was always just a step ahead of the law. In the 1940s Keller asked Carl Steele to take him to the Victor American Mine. "I didn't want to have nothing to do with him. I knowed him for years," recalled Steele. After being asked several times, Steele agreed to Keller's request. About half way to the Pinnacle Mine they met a man walking down the road. Keller told Steele to stop the car because "he wanted to see this feller." So Steele pulled over and stopped. Keller rolled his window down as if to begin a conversation when suddenly the stranger stuck a 38 revolver in their faces. Steele was surprised and scared, but Keller grabbed the gun and quickly disarmed the man. After Keller released the stranger, Steele drove on. Keller quietly explained, as if having a gun pointed in his face was as common as eating, "We had an argument the night before." When Keller got out of the car at the Pinnacle store, Steele drove off.

On another occasion Keller and a friend were batching in a shack along Oak Creek between the Keystone and Haybro mines. The men got in an argument over something and Keller's batching partner ran from the shack to avoid the violent temper of Keller. As the terrified man ran, Keller calmly aimed a 4/10 shotgun and squeezed the trigger. The resulting wound was not serious, but the violence of the crime was clearly apparent. On yet another occasion in the late 1940s, Steele was in Minturn, Colorado, visiting an acquaintance who asked him to drive to Leadville, Colorado, to pick up another friend who was getting out of the hospital. Soon Steele learned that the hospitalized man had been stabbed several times by Keller. Two or three years later Steele learned that Keller had died of pneumonia. Thus ended the violent career of one of Oak Creek's tough men. But Keller

was only one of the tough men.[10]

Since no other community in northwestern Colorado had the same lawlessness as Oak Creek, it is necessary to ask why was the community so wide open and violent? Part of the answer is that the men who organized the Oak Creek Town, Land, and Mining Company planned a community similar to Leadville and Cripple Creek. Another factor is determining the character of the community was the fact that many of Oak Creek's leading citizens had wide experience in the underworld of Leadville and Cripple Creek. The fact that the coal mining community had a high percentage of foot loose single men with money to spend on gambling, liquor, and women encouraged a wide open community. But, one could argue, Mt. Harris had a large population of foot loose single men; yet the coal mining district was not wide open. It must be remembered that Mt. Harris was a company town, and the Colorado-Utah and the Victor-American mining companies did not allow the town businesses to go unchecked. After all the facts are analyzed, one stands above all the rest. Oak Creek was a tough, wide open town because the city and county governments allowed the community to be tough and wide open.

The town was tough that who profited?

One knowledgeable bartender stated, "The only ones who made money in Oak Creek were those being paid off."[11] Shorty Hamidy and Spiro Callas admit that there was probably a pay off along the line. Carl Steele commented that his long time neighbor, Pete Callas, told him that the Greek pool hall paid the county sheriff and district attorney a fortune. And Until the 1940s the Oak Creek city ordinance proveded: "A straight salary be paid the night marshal of $25.00 per month and that he be entitled extra without accounting to the town for whatever amount he may be able to collect from merchants for special police protection."[12] Although most people in Oak Creek recognized that the system was corrupt, very few people knew exactly how corrupt it really was. Of those who knew, most are

now dead or remain closed mouth. However, there was one man who provided some insight into the underworld of Oak Creek and Routt County.[13]

Earnest "Dude" Todd, who came to Morrison Creek with his family in 1903, grew to manhood with deep roots in the harshness of homesteads and coal mines. In early life he was also connected with two murders. One he witnessed, and as a result of the other he received property from the man's will. While Dude was still a boy his father lost a leg in a mine accident at the Yampa Valley Mine. Later a cousin, Fred Todd, was killed by falling rock in a mine and a friend, Hans Foilden, died of a lung infection resulting from breathing ash and dust while working at a coal mine electrical power plant. As a result, while still a young man, Todd had experienced a large dose of the harshness of life.

Todd also knew the brighter side of life. He had worked with Alfe Cole to feed and shelter the destitute bachelors on Morrison Creek. Todd had been an active part of the happy social life of the homesteaders. At the mines he had experienced the deep loyalty that one miner had for another. Because of the good he had experienced Todd had a healthy balance to his character.

Todd was an ambitious man who had many of the attributes necessary for success. He stood well over six feet tall and weighed nearly 200 pounds with rugged and handsome features. More importantly, Todd was well above average in intelligence and courage. When working in the Moffat Mine as a rope rider, he studied electrical engineering. In a few years he was a very capable electrician. That knowledge and ability gave him an immunity that ordinary miners did not have. Todd also studied the art of communication. Soon he became a master of the spoken word. He was also able to remember names and important facts about people. Finally, Todd had the uncanny touch for successful politics.

During the coal mine labor shortage caused by World War I, Todd went to work as a rope rider in the Moffat Mine. Soon his physical build, ambition, and talents were widely known at the mine. On the recommendation of the barn boss, Todd was appointed a deput sheriff and he worked part time as a bodyguard for the mine superintendent, Bob Perry--Perry feared another kidnapping attempt. As a bodyguard Todd won the trust of the mine operators. But he maintained his individuality and touch with the common miner. Although jostled by the labor unrest and corruption in the mines during the 1920s, Todd was able to walk the "tight rope" and gain the respect of many citizens. The ability to move within both the ranks of labor and management gave Todd a special vantage point from which to view events.

Todd's first real experience with unions came in 1922 when the mining companies broke the United Mine Workers organization in Oak Creek. The last union meeting was attended by the financial secretary Mr. Ballard, Bill Sealy, Ben Reary and a couple of other men.[14] In this union effort Todd played a very minor role. The next active effort to organize came in 1926 when the old union stalwarts joined with Manual Carlson, Rudy Mick, and a man known as Jumbo to lead the men on another strike. Although not a leader, Todd became an active member in the movement. After the strike several of the miners were black listed. Ben Reary was forced to go to Moffat County to find work in a non-mine related job. After approximately six months, the black list was lifted from Reary and about twenty other men who were key haulage men. Since Todd did not play a major role in the strike and at that time he had a vital position in electricity, he remained at the mine. Most of the black listed men had good credit in town, and Todd with other men took up collections to help some of the families. As a result of the experience as a body guard and an active union membership

Todd had good connections with both management and labor.[15]

Shortly after the strike Todd began working as the company's checkweighman. At this time the company hired a checkweighman and the miners hired a checkweighman. The idea was to insure that both parties were fairly represented. The men learned that their representative was a member of a group that was robbing the average miner. Coinciding with the discovery of the conspiracy was the revelation that Todd had prevented the foreman of the power plant from stealing coal to operate the plant. As a result Todd was chosen to represent both parties. Thus he developed a reputation for honesty.

At the same time Todd was moving up in Routt County political circles. By 1930 he was in control of the Oak Creek Democratic Party. Soon he became county chairman--he held that position for eleven years. He was a man who could be depended upon to deliver the votes. At the same time Edward C. Johnson from Craig, Colorado, was making his bid for political power. Johnson became governor and later United States senator. He remained in power for several years. Through Johnson, Todd had several doors opened to him. He was also able to establish several personal contacts with powerful people.

With the three contacts--the Moffat Mine, the labor movement, and the Democratic Party--Todd was in an unique position. He had an independent power base which allowed him a latitude of movement not available to everyone. He was also in a position to know what was going on in several fronts and he had a certain amount of immunity from other forces. Thus when he describes the seamy side of Routt County's history it must be listened to. We also must take the precaution to realize that his statements cannot be considered the final word on the subject.

In 1930 the franchise for electrical power to Oak Creek was to be

renewed, and the Colorado Utilities Company wanted to raise the price of electricity from ten cents to fifteen cents per kilowatt. The utility also wanted a twenty-five year franchise. If the town refused the offer, the company threatened to double the price to thirty cents per kilowatt. As a counter proposal, Todd argued that the town of Oak Creek could generate most of its required revenue if it established a municipal power system. Todd talked to the superintendent of the Moffat Mine, Bob Midell, about the advantages of a municipal system and the mine agreed to sell electricity at a very cheap rate to the town. So the stage was set for a power struggle.

The city political group in power in 1931 favored extending the franchise to the Colorado Utilities. Since all the steps were not completed for extending the franchise ahead of the regular town election, Mayor Walter Barnson and the council claimed no one was interested in an election and decided not to hold the regular election. But there were several people very interested in the election. In May 1931, at a city council meeting, officials of the power company explained the utility company's offer, and the city council was about to give its approval when Todd, who was not a member of the city council, interrupted and told the mayor, "Before you do that [approve the franchise], I don't think you have the authority. I don't think you have authority to sit in the chair you are sitting in. For you did not hold an election." After some heated words and a phone call to the district attorney, Ray Monson, the meeting broke up and a special election was held. In the special election Joseph Mathews was elected mayor and a completely new council replaced the old regime.

For three months before the struggle became public knowledge, Todd had spent part of each evening reading the electrical meters of residents of

Oak Creek. He had a reasonable estimate on the amount of electricity the community used, and through a contact in the utility company office he was able to determine the various costs in building and operating an adequate electrical system. With this information he was able to get the Moffat Mine to agree to sell electricity at three cents per kilowatt. The town in turn planned to sell the power at ten cents per kilowatt. With the profits the city government was to pay its costs of operating.

With the facts in hand Todd and his supporters called for a city election to approve the city going municipal. At a public meeting utility company officials and their supporters argued that the system was too expensive and that it was a money losing business unless the rates were at least fifteen cents per kilowatt. The opposition argued that the city could sell electricity at ten cents per kilowatt and make money. The people voted in favor of going municipal. Next, the city had the Colorado Utilities electrical system appraised preparatory to buying it. When Todd and the town leaders met with company officials to discuss the sale they were told that the company would not sell because "It was too good a deal." Rebuffed by the company the town began building a system along side the utility company.

"The last two or three days of construction Fred Foster followed [Todd] everywhere he went." When the construction crew was ready to put the final switch in before turning on the electricity, "Fred stepped up with an injunction." The power company had organized a group that argued that the election was illegal. During the election, a Mr. Sevada who had never been naturalized had voted. However, he was carried as a registered voter and had voted for years. Even if his vote and several other immigrants' votes had been thrown out, the municipal forces would still have a majority. Judge Charles E. Herrick ruled in favor of the public

utilities. This resulted in another court fight.

Mayor Mathews insisted that the town hire Perry Carpenter to represent the town. Carpenter was a powerful Republican and of course Oak Creek was Democratic. The residents of Hayden, Steamboat Springs, and Yampa had strong anti-Oak Creek feelings. At an earlier date Carpenter and Bob Perry had seriously courted the same girl. Perry won the girl's heart. The second court hearing had not progressed far when it became obvious that Carpenter was a better representative for the utility company than was Addisson Gooding who was the utility company lawyer. Although it was irregular Todd asked for a recess and the judge granted it. During the recess Munson was hired as a co-council for Oak Creek. Immediately upon resumption of the trial Munson asked for a thirty day extension while Oak Creek prepared a case. It is not certain if Carpenter had been bought by the utility company or if he was settling some old scores with a southern Routt County community.

Judge Ben Linsey, who as a juvenile judge, criminal judge, and state supreme court judge, was nationally known and respected recommended Miles Talmadge to represent Oak Creek in the fight against the utility company. After several attempts Todd was able to get Talmadge to represent the mining community. Upon agreeing to take the case Talmadge told Todd that he would not be to Steamboat Springs until the day of the trial. On that date, Talmadge instructed "Todd to hire a special train and load it full of residents of Oak Creek." The train was to arrive at the Rodeo Grounds crossing just as the trial began. Everyone was to get close together and march in force on the court house. (One suspects that Talmadge knew about Oak Creek's reputation.) As the noisy crowd approached, a person in the court room was to look out the window and comment upon Oak Creek's residents marching to demand justice.

On trial day a six car passenger train arrived at the appointed time. The people banded together and began their march. The "actor" looked out the court room window and played out his role. Many people in the court room cast quick and frightened glances at each other. Soon miners filled the court room and the halls of the court house. At the end of the trial Judge Herrick ruled in favor of the miners. The legal fight continued for some time and finally ended with a state supreme court ruling in favor of the town.

Todd frankly admits that through the hiring policy the Moffat Mine controlled many aspects of the Oak Creek government. In the fall of 1932, Superintendent Midill stopped Todd as he left the mine and informed him that the town wanted to hire him as manager. When Todd asked the superintendent "Why me?" he was told "Well for two reasons: I think you are honest and I think you have guts enough to fight it through. It's going to take both." Todd took the job.

Once the electrical system was operating a member of the Colorado Utilities shook Todd's hand and made another offer: "Just make this thing fail and I'll give you a job for life and give you $35,000 in unmarked money." Todd refused the offer. A few days later Todd started to enter city hall when two men grabbed him. They took him to the lower end of town and beat him nearly to death. As they left they told him "to get out of town." Later Todd was able to drag himself to Jimmy Hoit's house. Hoit got Todd to a doctor. But he did not leave town. Then his wife Elsie, who was very sick with leukemia, began receiving threatening phone calls. This also failed to stop Todd. Nearly a year had passed when one winter night two men kidnapped Todd and took him over the Twentymile road to the Mule Gulch road. Here they took their victim's shoes and coat and told him to leave the country. Luckily a rancher soon happened by and wrapped Todd in

a blanket and took him to his ranch.

After the electrical system was built, the court battles fought, and the two assaults, the electrical system became firmly established and the threats on Todd stopped. Fourteen months after the electrical system went into operation the town paid off the last electrical bond.

While the Oak Creek citizens were reforming the city government and putting it on a sound financial base, other reforms were undertaken. The town was proud of its reputation for being tough and many miners and loggers were anxious to "try on the town." However, the extent of the violence had reached an unacceptable level and the worst elements of the lawlessness had to be stopped.

The first target for cleaning up was Hickory Flats. From 1929 to 1933 Hickory Flats was an extremely dangerous place for patrons. Miners were mugged and drugged. In some cases the victims were robbed of their shoes and coats although it was winter. In two cases it was suspected by "those in the know" that miners had been badly beaten and then dumped on the railroad tracks in order that the beatings would like like a railroad accident.

To bring law to Hickory Flats, the town manager, the day marshal, and the night marshal raided the cribs every night. In the raids many of the leaders of the county were caught as well as ordinary miners and "timber beasts." The continual raids and accompanying fines and public exposure of those caught soon began to dry up the business in Hickory Flats. The girls were puzzled and complained bitterly: "I'm a good girl. I pay." When asked who they paid, the answer was Dick Phelps. When the lawmen pressed Phelps they learned that he charged the twenty-two prostitutes a $100 per month for protection. He kept 10% and gave the rest to Andy Black. After several raids Black closed his cribs in Hickory Flats. The

girls moved on. Two of the better known girls, Goldy and Birds Eye, moved to Craig where they continued to ply their trade for several years.

Cleaning up Hickory Flats did not end prostitution in Oak Creek, nor did the town intend to stop prostitution. Girls still worked in the upper floors of the Piercen and Black buildings. The house at the lower end of Main Street continued to operate. Despite the cleanup some ladies of the night did return to Hickory Flats.

The continuance of prostitution did not mean that the city government did not achieve their goal. The violence was stopped and the danger of being mugged or drugged ended. And the prostitutes who remained were not required to pay a fee for local protection. However, fees for county protection still remained.

Before continuing an examination of the crime in Oak Creek after 1920 it is necessary to back track a moment. The Moffat Mine controlled the Oak Creek city government in areas that concerned the mine. After the bitter struggle for control of bootlegging, prostitution, and gambling, Andy Black ran the vices around Oak Creek. Todd was a capable man who had an independent source of power; thus he could not be easily controlled by the mine or the gang. The municipal system and the cleaning up of the worst of crime assured Todd support of the Moffat Mine and many of the residents of Oak Creek. But Black and Todd were on opposite sides.

As a depression make work project and to improve the city water works, the city government decided to enlarge the Ed Rich Ditch and bids were sout sought. Stanley Larson of Steamboat Springs offered to bid if Todd would personally present it the night the bids were accepted. Todd agreed. When the city council met, the town clerk Ed Sumner stated that there was only one bid and presented a bid from Ed Harrison. At this point Todd presented Larson's bid with his bond. Larson's bid was about one-half the amount of

the Harrison bid, so the Larson bid was accepted by the city council.

The next morning Black came to the city hall and took Todd to a back room and closed the door. The conversation began: "You know you [Todd] are just getting a way too big for your britches." Black continue, "I run things around here, don't you know that?" After a brief discussion on who ran the town Black stated, "That bid was to go to Harrison. I had everything all fixed; then you stuck your nose in." Todd defended his action, "I think I did the right thing; I saved the town about $3,000." "No," retorted Black, "after this, young fella, you come to me with everything' I run the show around here." Todd refused to do Black's bidding.

With "Repeal in 1933," legalized liquor replaced most of the moonshine in Oak Creek. The city government controlled the local liquor licenses. But through various means Black was able to control most of the bars. Then Matt and Johnny Alverez decided to move out of the Black building and open a bar across the street in the Piercen Building. To make sure the move was legal, the Alverez brothers came to the city hall and inquired if the liquor license could be transferred from one building to another. After a call to the Secretary of State George Saunders, it was learned that the move was legal and that the liquor licenses could be transferred to the new location. So Matt and Johnny moved out of the Black building.

Shortly, Black came to the city hall and took Todd to a back room and shut the door. After a few preliminary remarks about Matt and Johnny moving, Black stated, "There is an understanding in this town that all liquor licenses will be in the Andy Black building." Todd replied, "There might have been one in the early days, Andy, but there isn't one now." "Well! You will be here until next election," answered Black.

The events involving Alverez's moving out of the Black building suggest

some of the changes occurring in Oak Creek. The obvious fact is that Black's power had eroded to the point that businessmen who had previously been under his control now dared to challenge his authority.

Black was not the only person fleecing the city government. One evening Todd happened by the city clerk's office when the water books were open. He noticed one of the carbons reported, "This property vacant, no money collected this six months." He knew the residence and knew a family had lived at the address for years. So Todd went to the home of the folks and got a copy of the original receipt. The original showed that $32 had been paid for the past six months. With the information Todd contacted Mayor Mathews. Mathews told Todd to investigate and find out how much money had been stolen from the city. Within a short time he discovered that at least $600 had been stolen. He also knew that Ed Sumner, the bookkeeper for the town and for the Moffat Mine, was the thief. The information which Todd had reported to the mayor somehow got to the Moffat Mine superintendent.

The morning after Todd made his report to the mayor, Moffat Mine Superintendent Bob Midill came to city hall; he took Todd to a back room and closed the door. Midill asked about the water rent theft. Todd told the superintendent and showed him the evidence. Midill stated, "You haven't forgot I got you this job have you?" Todd replied, "No, I haven't." "You know if I can get you in here I can get you out," continued Midill. Todd answered, "I know you can, but you can't make me dishonest. Besides, Bob, you don't dare do anything because I know too much about your bootleg whiskey deals." Midill reluctantly agreed, "Well for heaven's sake make it as light as you can 'cause I'll have to pay it. Sumner has me over a barrel." As mine bookkeeper Sumner knew that Midill had bootleg delivered with the mine props and the whiskey was charged to

the company.

Most of the city council had good jobs at the Moffat Mine and were reluctant to endanger their jobs by taking action against Sumner; however, Todd was able to persuade them to continue the investigation. One night during the heat of the controversy Sumner parked his car in front of Todd's home and began blowing the horn. Todd's wife Elsie was very sick, so Todd went out and asked Sumner not to honk the horn. Sumner demanded, "Get in here. I want to take you for a ride." Todd replied, "I'm not going anyplace with you. You're drunk." And Todd looked in the car seat and there was a pistol. "Well, I come up here to blow a couple of brains out--yours and mine," said Sumner. "I don't think you have guts enough to do either one of them," commented Todd as te turned around and walked back to the house. Sumner watched, then drove off.

After the conversation Todd pressed the town board to get rid of Sumner. Finally, Todd was instructed to get the town record books from Sumner. So he took both marshals and went to Sumner's house. They arrived just as Sumner was finishing burning the books. No doubt someone had tipped him off that Todd was on his way.

As the men watched the books burn Sumner said, "Well you got a little old $600 did you? You got my job, and you got my reputation. But there is $80,000 I got that you can't touch." At town board meetings Sumner would report that the town had paid off another water bond, but he would not have a bond to show. This had gone on for some time. And when Todd tried to get the board to force Sumner to produce the bonds, Todd was told to mind his own business. One evening Mayor Mathews told Todd, "This town board has all got good monthly jobs at the Moffat Coal Company under Bob Midill. We have to be careful what we do. We cannot do anything more to Ed Sumner. We just have to forget him and go ahead as best we can." Todd continued to

investigate and found that the bond holding companies had not been paid. Todd also found a check made out for $1,000 on which the mayor's name had been forged. The recipient of the check was Sumner. Finally Sumner was fired and forced out of Oak Creek. After leaving Oak Creek he went to Denver and bought a good middle class hotel and operated it for several years.

By 1940 Oak Creek had cleaned up the criminal element. The city government was run in a straight forward manner. Soon the city took control of Todd's slot machine business and used the proceeds to further finance the government. Although a person could easily find the vices of liquor, gambling, and prostitution, pedestrians were safe on the streets. Although fist fights continued, muggings and drugging did not occur. By 1951, the vices were covered up so well that many people did not know that prostitution and gambling were very active in Oak Creek.

The Oak Creek city government did not have a monopoly on corruption. The county coroners made money on the mining camp. If there was a mine accident the coroner would convene a selected group of people and investigate the death. Usually the company was absolved of all blame in the accident. In the late 1930s a miner with a reputation for hoarding money died. Since there were no known next of kin, the county coroner was called on to inventory the belongings. Todd and a couple of other men accompanied the coroner as he conducted his official business. While Todd was watching the inventory, a neighbor lady tapped on a window and got his attention. She motioned him to step near her. She pointed at the coroner and said, "He was in here last night." When the official investigation ended there had been no large sums of money found, but no one knows what was found in the unofficial investigation.

Todd went to Steamboat Springs as county sheriff during World War II.

He had campaigned on a platform to investigate the Bruner Case. The residents of Phippsburg believed that Bruner had murdered his wife. Two years after the murder nothing had been done nor had a body been found. In the mean time Bruner had left the county and he had also collected a large sum of money in a libel suit against the railroad. Finally Todd had Bruner arrested and brought to trial. During the trial a lawyer named Black from Salt Lake City attempted to bribe Todd into throwing the case. Todd refuse and the lawyer responded by showing Todd a silver dollar with the lady of liberty. The lawyer said, "This lady will judge the case." Later that evening Todd saw Attorney Black closeted with the judge in a room in the Harbor Hotel. The next day the silver dollars handed down their decision.

After a term as sheriff, political forces united to defeat Todd. He was also defeated in his political base in Oak Creek. So he moved to Mt. Harris where he went to work improving the mine's electrical system and increasing production.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s while Todd was at Mt. Harris, miners would come to his home to exchange mine scrip for cash. Most places gave $10 cash for $20 worth of scrip. Todd, who realized the advantage of having the miners on his side, gave a straight dollar trade--$10 cash for $10 worth of scrip.

While Todd was at Mt. Harris a miner robbed the post office; he was caught and taken to Steamboat Springs to jail. A miner named Chappa came to Todd and wanted to trade $20 worth of scrip for $20. Both Todd and Chappa had been personal friends for years, so Todd asked him what he wanted the money for. "My friend," stated Chappa, "is up there in jail at Steamboat. And if I can raise $80, why they will kick him out the back door." Todd gave Chappa the money. A couple of days later Frank Wilson,

another at Mt. Harris said, "I think I'll go up and visit [the man in jail]." Todd bet Wilson $5 that the man was not in jail, and the two men bet another $5 that the other one had made a bad bet. When Wilson got to Steamboat the jail was empty. Backdoor justice had held a session of court.

The chronicle of criminal activity which happened under the table is long. It includes judges who imposed stiff fines on miners and demanded payment in cash without a receipt. But enough has been offered to make it clear that Oak Creek had a well deserved reputation for being a tough town. The coal mining community was preyed upon by many parasites who were entrusted with upholding the highest calling of law and justice. The tough mining community was both hunter and hunted.

Before turning to other matters it must be emphasized that Todd and nearly twenty other people interviewed formally and informally state: <u>The majority of the people in and about Oak Creek were peaceful, hardworking, and loyal. They would not cheat, lie, or steal.</u>

CHAPTER X

ALLIED INDUSTRIES

From the time the Moffat Road arrived until the mid-point of the twentieth century, coal mining formed the core of southern Routt County's social, economic, and political life. More people were involved in coal mining and more money was gained in wages and production than any other industry in the valley. The coal mines were the primary reason the railroad continued to operate, and in turn, the railroad provided the vital transportation system. Despite the importance of the mines they could not survive without the assistance of the allied industries, primarily logging and ranching. The loggers furnished mine props and ties. The lumber from local mills was used in mine construction. Lumber that was shipped to eastern markets helped finance the railroad. Ranching furnished a high percentage of the food consumed in the mining camps, and in turn, ranchers were the primary market for small wagon mines. Homesteaders often served as both ranchers and miners. The people of the allied industries provided a colorful page to life in the Yampa Valley.

In the first excitement over the construction of a railroad into northwestern Colorado came the ranchers, coal miners, and loggers. About 1885, Harim Gardner came to lower Egeria Park to establish a sawmill. At the time he began the new adventure Gardner was an old man with years of experience in the lumber business. Despite his experience, he was short of funds, and the local residents pitched in and helped him build a water powered sawmill on the lower Stillwater. This sawmill supplied many of the settlers with sawed lumber for their homes and barns. Between Gardner's arrival and the opening of the valley to railroad service in 1908 many sawmills came and went in a haphazard fashion.[1]

As the railroad approached the coalfield there was a sense of urgency in the Oak Creek mining district. The newly born town was experiencing substantial development. The Moffat Mine owners were making heroic efforts to have the mines ready to ship coal when the tracks were laid. All the effort depended upon lumber for building--lumber that was hard to get. Where the community and mines were located on Oak Hills there was no saw timber and roads from the sawable timber to the mining area were few and very crude--a dilemma that required a prompt solution. When the railroad arrived at Oak Creek in the fall of 1908, men were busy building a road from the town of Oak Creek to the Routt County Fuel Company Mine. As soon as the snow melted the following spring, men and equipment began extending the road from the mine up the stream Oak Creek. The road was forced through a sharp canyon until it made a junction with the Yampa-Pinnacle-Dunkley road. The road connected the community of Pinnacle and the F. S. Chapman ranch with the town of Oak Creek. But more important to the mining district was the fact that the road connected the mines with the Chaffee and Albert sawmill on upper Oak Creek.[2]

To log in Routt County was to gamble against great odds. In the pre-First World War era the largest logging operation in Routt County was on Service Creek. Along the stream there were six logging camps operated by the lumber company and the logs were sent by a six mile long flume down the creek to a retaining pond near the Yampa River. In the spring the logs were forced into the river and run to Steamboat Springs. Here the logs were collected and sawed into lumber. The Service Creek Lumber Company which operated from 1915 to 1918 suffered because the native lumber shrank and warped so badly it could not command a market.

The American Sawmill on Green Ridge east of Phippsburg, Colorado, began about the time the Service Lumber Company went under. To market their

lumber it was necessary to haul by wagon or sledge the logs several miles to a lumber yard north of Phippsburg. The American Sawmill operated on a large scale until the late 1920s when a devastating forest fire raged through the timber. After the fire the principle owners of the mill dramatically changed their operation. They moved to Morrison Creek where mine props became the primary product produced. From the length of the props we get an idea of the height of the various coal veins. The longest mine props went to the Streeter Mine in Axial Basin. The average length of props for all the mines was nine feet. The shortest props were four feet long used by the Jacovich Mine on upper Trout Creek.

In 1921 Daniel Ray began a large logging operation in Newton Gulch on King Mountain southwest of Toponas, Colorado. Ray was an experienced lumberman from Arkansas who had suffered major losses from floods of the White River. In the hope of avoiding the disasters and recouping his financial losses, he took over the Colorado operation from a Lincoln, Nebraska, man. The operation had a large camp and sawmill in the "woods." Ray hired Ivan and Windy Decker to build a railroad siding at Toponas. Along the siding a planing mill and finished lumber yard was established. Ray's logging operation became the foundation for a continuous lumbering industry; however, through the years it was under several owners.

In keeping with the tradition of the mountain region, most of the transporting and cutting of logs was done during the winter months. Charley Ray, who was then sixteen years old, recalled his first trip up Newton Gulch. Lawrence "Doc" and Virgil Marshall piloted the family and their belongings along a winter wasteland in late November. Without fault the heavily laden sledges moved up the mountain to the logging camp. When spring came Charley discovered that the winter trail was over the top of willows higher than his head!

Life in the logging camp was complex with many of the aspects of a large community. At the camp there were enough families and children that a school was opened. During the winter months the camp was a bee hive of excitement as men and teams made the daily trips to Toponas where the lumber was finished and shipped to market. To make the round trip required that the men leave camp before daylight and return after dark. The cold of short winter days added to the hardships. Over these same roads supplies were hauled in from Yampa and Toponas.

The barn boss ruled the men and animals with a decisive hand. When Charley Ray reached the age of consent, he was sent to Yampa for a load of grain. Since the trip was made in the spring of the year, the road had deep stretches of mud and long patches of soft slush. On the return trip Charley pulled his team over some extremely difficult ground. He finally arrived in camp during the early hours of the morning. Since the trip was arduous, Charley decided to rest his team the next day. When his father inquired of Andy Rusk, the barn boss, if Charley's team could make the trip to Toponas, the barn boss decided that they could and Charley was instructed to load his wagon and head for the railroad lumber yards. Late that evening Rusk and his reluctant partner arrived at Toponas. Ray, following the path of many young loggers who thought they had been wronged, handed Rusk the lines to the team and quit the job. Without a different plan, young Ray caught an east bound freight train. A few miles east of Fraser, Colorado, Ray got off the train.

Ray spent the night in an abandoned sawmill; here he picked up several insects which he thought were lice. So he walked back to Fraser and bought a new set of clothing. With the purchase tucked safely under his arm he made his way to the Fraser River where he broke a hole in the ice and began to bathe. While he was taking a bath it began snowing and blowing. "If

he had been lousy [he] froze them off right there." Later that evening Ray went into the waiting room of the depot to spend the night. About 4:00 a.m. the superintendent of the Western Pavement Construction Company, Ralph Robbins, was picking up supplies for a sawmill. Robbins looked at Ray and "wanted to know what he was doing." Ray replied, "Well I damn sure ain't sleeping with you making all this racket." Within a short time the men had sized each other up and Ray was hired to work in the sawmill as a ragit setter.

Ray stayed in the Tabernash and Fraser area working in the woods three years. After leaving Robbins he went to work at Western Box for Jim Morrison. One winter day Guy and Roy Barker and Ray decided to leave the winter confines of the logging camp and enjoy the excitement of Tabernash. The long cold walk into town came perilously close to proving fatal for Roy Barker. He would have frozen to death if the other two men had not kept him going. When they walked into Joe Morgan's store it was 61° below zero. The ordeal caused Roy the loss of some toes on both feet and fingers on both hands.[3]

When he left the Tabernash and Fraser area, Ray returned to the Yampa Valley. Again he was following the path of many loggers, for it was a common practice for men to work a while in each area. And sawmill operators also had "migratorial tendencies." It was not unusual for operators to move from one area to another. Neal Ragling was a restless and wayward operator who had several sawmills in western Colorado. At various communities he developed a reputation for violence. In 1906 at Arrowhead, Colorado, Ragling killed Indian Charley. Later Ragling moved his logging operations to the Yampa Valley where he quickly became known for his drinking, gambling, and shotgun pay checks. It was common for Ragling to draw a gun on his employees when they attempted to collect their

pay. The employee facing a gun and realizing that Ragling would use it usually left the job without his pay.

While crossing Five Pine Mesa one summer evening in 1934 Ragling was stopped by one of his men. The men argued over wages and Ragling reached for a gun lying next to him on the car seat. This time he was too slow and his opponent too determined. Ragling had lived by the gun; in the end he died by the gun.[4]

In the logging business the financial risks were high and the opportunities to exploit labor were quite tempting. At this period of history employees had little recourse in the courts. Since most loggers were paid by the thousand of board feet, it was not unusual for an operator to cheat the loggers by having scant measurements. Allowances for board and room also varied; however, loggers were not charged a rent nor did they have a company store like the coal mining camps.

Successful logging operations were closely managed in every aspect; however, a well run operation was not necessarily oppressive or ridden with labor exploitation. In 1930 Charley's younger brother, Earl Ray, began working for Dick Webb whose principle logging operation was near the Dome. At that time Webb ran a tight logging camp. Unlike most logging operators, he did not allow drinking in camp. But gambling was a common recreation in all the camps.

Webb insisted on plenty of good food at the boarding house. Often the only woman in camp was a married woman hired to cook. She held a position of respect and command. Since there was no place to spend money in the camp and large accumulations of cash raised the risk of theft and violence, Webb did not have a regular payday. None-the-less, when the men wanted to draw their money they could always get it and scaling was always fair. This arrangement was agreeable to everyone.

Webb's operation had to contend with extremely damp and swampy ground near timberline. Because of the deep snow the trees were felled and decked during the summer. After the ground became frozen in the fall the trees were hauled to the sawmill and cut into lumber. Webb broke with the logging system in 1933. That year he had a contract to furnish 12 X 12's for the tunnels on the Dotsero cut-off. In order to meet the contract it was necessary to mill the logs during the summer months. To get the logs, four horses were hooked to the front running gears of a wagon. On this one end of a log was placed and then dragged to the mill. Since only one log at a time could be handled it was a slow process. But in 1933, when the depression was at its worst, to be able to sell any logs made the work worthwhile.[5]

During the depression Webb was trying to market his lumber in as many ways as possible and provide employment to several men. He was convinced that everyone had to work together. Although it would have been quicker and easier to saw out ties, he hired four men with broad axes to hew ties. By the 1930s experienced "tie hacks" were novelties from the past, but the men needed a job and Webb found them one. The comments of loggers suggests how hard the work involved in using a broad axe really was. "Timber beasts" of the period worked long hours of hard labor, but even these men spoke of using the broad axe as "hard work."[6]

In the Yampa Valley one of the best men with a broad axe was John Nelson. Nelson was first introduced to logging in his native Sweden. After immigrating to the United States he worked for a brief period as an Iowa farm laborer. Then he went to work in the woods. After working in the Michigan forest several months, he walked west to Montana. While there he worked as a sheep herder. Then he moved on to the forests of Idaho and Washington. He made the gold rush to Alaska but did not stay long. While

David H. Moffat was building his railroad Nelson, now a seasoned lumber jack, made his way to Fraser. In his thirty-eighth year he met and married Mattie McLind who was still a girl. In 1908, the Nelsons moved to the Yampa Valley. During the first winter, Mrs. Nelson stayed with the Albert Bird family while Mr. Nelson went to Wyoming to hack ties. In the spring he returned and the couple took up a homestead along Whipple Creek on Green Ridge.

For several years the Nelson family combined logging with homesteading. The couple cleared their land and built irrigation ditches. Mrs. Nelson often tended the cattle and milked the cows while her husband worked as a tie hack. Each year their holdings expanded and about 1920 Mrs. Nelson filed on an 160 acre timber claim at Whipple Creek Park. At the edge of the park Mr. Nelson, who was then in his late fifties, hewed out Aspen trees and built a cabin. After haying time each fall, Nelson would move to the timber claim making both railroad and mine ties. He also cut and sold mine props. In late February or early March, when the accumulated snow became too deep to allow profitable labor, Nelson returned home. With a reserve of energy and a mastery of the broad axe Nelson was able to profit in an area on Greenridge where most people soon went broke, gave up, and moved on. While others were deserting their land to the tax collector of the 1930s, John Nelson and his father-in-law, Victor McLind, built one of the outstanding hewed log homes of northwestern Colorado.

When the Nelsons arrived in the Yampa Valley there were many Swedes working for the railroad and in the timber. Within a few miles of the Nelson homestead were several sawmills and tie camps. On Mill Run Creek, an obscure stream which derived its name from the fact that the stream was used to fill the boilers of a steam sawmill, was a large camp with many Swedes and Irish laborers. On Lawson Bird Creek was a logging camp known

as the Swede Camp.

The mill on Mill Run Creek delivered lumber, props and ties to Steamboat Springs. The nearly fifty mile round trip was made through some of the most difficult freighting terrain in southern Routt County. From the sawmill, wagons in summer and sleds in winter labored over a brow of Green Ridge to the head of Raspberry Creek, down the steep narrow defile to the Yampa River where the main road was reached. From Steamboat Springs many of the props and ties went on to the mines in the Mt. Harris district. Usually the trips were long and arduous, but one freighter distinctly recalled the time a mountain lion followed him and his team up the steep grade of Raspberry Creek. "He let his team go at will and he never had to stop and rest them once."[7]

Near the head of Raspberry Creek a small community prospered for a brief period. On the corner of the Parker Brown ranch a school was built which doubled for a church on Sundays. Here loggers and homesteaders held community dances and other functions. With the changing technology of logging and the depression, the community died as people moved on to other activities.

The settlement on Green Ridge follows a typical pattern for a logging and homesteading community, but the settlement on Kelly Divide does not fit into any stereotype. Kelly Divide between the mouth of Egeria Canyon and the head of Conger Mesa is a steep, arid region. Very little land was suited for cultivation and there were no large stands of pine timber. To try to make a living on this rock and sage brush ridge by farming or logging took a special type of person. Tom Kelly for whom the divide was names was only one of the region's unique people. On his homestead he raised a few potatoes and did little else. However, he was well remembered for his mastery of limericks.[8]

At the section house at Eneria, "Momma" Encle ruled a domain of bootleggers. She made her product in a teakettle setting on the kitchen stove. On one occasion a federal agent arrived on the passenger train while Mrs. Encle was cooking a batch of whiskey. The train pulled into the water tank and whistled and presently a woman with a steaming kettle was seen going out the back door.[9] After the pressure of the law was gone she again set up her business. In order to get her supply of liquor to Oak Creek she would fill cream cans and send them to an Oak Creek creamery. For years she openly shipped her liquor by the passenger train. On more than one occasion her bootleg whiskey traveled on the same train as a federal agent.

While the railroad was being constructed the community of Highgrade was organized. Here a post office and other businesses were established. Once the railroad crews moved on, the business of the community died. But Lawrence and Maggie Davis had established themselves in the post office and were reluctant to move on. The key to keeping the post office and its accompanying pay was the number of cancellations of mail. To help the postal business the Davises planted a potato patch. And each holiday season after the harvest they would carefully wrap one potato and mail it to some friend or needy person. It was suspected that Kelly helped by sending along an appropriate limerick in some of the packages.

The most colorful individual on Kelly Divide was Frank Zupan. Zupan had his "batch" betwen tunnels 54 and 53 in Eneria Canyon. He cut timber and hewed them into ties on one side of the canyon and then skidded them down to Eneria Creek. In the creek he had built a dam with two water wheels. Attached to the gears of the water wheels was a long cable. Zupan hooked three ties to the cable and with the power of the water wheels he lifted them nearly 300 feet up a treacherous canyon wall to the railroad

tracks. After the ties reached the tracks, Zupan reversed the water wheels and rewound his cables. There was no logging operation, large or small, anywhere in northwestern Colorado that matched Zupan's operation for difficult terrain, nor was there any operation which displayed more ingenuity to overcome the difficulties.

Zupan was also an individualist in his own right. He simply did not take a bath. When his suspenders broke he attached another set but did not remove the broken ones. One time he stopped at the McCoy Hotel to spend the night. Mrs. Elsie L. Brooks, who was taking care of the hotel, rented Zupan a room but would not let him sleep in the bed until he took a bath. One can understand Mrs. Brooks' position since Zupan had once stopped a poker game at Yampa when he sat next to the stove. Zupan patiently listened to Mrs. Brooks' instruction on the use of the tub and politely nodded as she left the room. But Zupan did not like being told what to do nor did he want to hurt anyone's feelings, so he climbed in the bathtub and spent the night without being contaminated with a drop of water.

On another occasion Zupan, who worked alone in his logging operation, had his hand caught between the cable and the pully wheel of his machine. He was about to cut his fingers off with a pocket knife when a freight train happened by. He hailed the train and the crew freed him. Zupan refused a trip to the doctor and wrapped his hand in a greasy rag. Soon he was as good as new.

Zupan was proud of his fine team of draft horses. On one occasion he bought several bales of hay at Highgrade, but instead of hooking the team to the wagon and making them pull a load up the steep grade to his cabin, he placed the bales on his shoulder and carried them over a mile to camp.

The story of the characters on Kelly Divide would not be complete

without commenting on the Kier family. Jacob Kier spent his life moving from one booming area to another. He was sure that his success was just ahead. Kier and his young son Walter first came to the Yampa Valley in 1896 when they helped gather and drive a large herd of wild horses to Fort Smith, Arkansas. This drive is probably the longest continual stock drive made from northwestern Colorado. Jacob did not return to Routt County until 1914; he filed a homestead on Kelly Divide in 1916. Soon he moved on, but his son Walter remained on the land and became a respected rancher and citizen.

In time trucks and tractors began to change the logging business. At the Bell Sawmill on upper Hunt Creek, Lewis Bell decided to buy a truck to haul his lumber from the mill to his yard in Oak Creek. In 1928 or 1929, Shorty Hamidy was hired to drive the truck. The truck with its short wheel base and twelve foot bed could not handle the long boards without tipping up in back. To solve the problem, Shorty would stack the lumber well around the doors. He would then crawl in through the window. The road from the mill was so steep and narrow in places that the small truck would not hold the load back although it was in "compound." At these points Hamidy would hook a strong chain around a stout tree and fasten the other end to the truck. He would then drop the truck down the hill until it reached the end of the chain. By this method the vehicle was methodically maneuvered to safer roads. During the summer Hamidy would make two trips a day between Oak Creek and the sawmill.

After watching Hamidy make several perilous trips, Jeff Viele commented, "I would never ride out of here with you." To this Hamidy

answered, "I would never ride out of here with you." Viele, who was one of the best teamsters in the region, had a pair of gray horses that he used to haul logs. When they came to a steep grade near the sawmill, Viele would rough lock the wheels and start the team cautiously down. As the weight of the wagon became harder to hold the horses would pick up speed. By the time the logs reached the bottom of the hill the team was in a full run and Viele was handling the lines for all he was worth, lest a horse stumble. For years both Hamidy and Viele practiced their individual crafts without mishap.

Since Hamidy was one of the few truck drivers at that time in the county, he began making trips to Denver for supplies. On one occasion the Bell Lumber Company agreed to deliver a steel pipe eight feet in diameter and twenty feet long. Hamidy drove into Denver and picked up the pipe. Just to get it to stay on the truck it was necessary to extend the bed eight feet. To keep the truck from rearing up several kegs of nails were placed at the front of the truck bed. Everything went well until Hamidy was about to top the Penny Hill on Gore Pass. Here the kegs broke loose and rolled backwards. The truck reared on its hind wheels and stopped. Nails abandoned the truck and conspired against any tire that might hazard this section of the highway.

By some mysterious way, Bell learned of Hamidy's plight and came to help reload the truck. At the outset it was necessary to place several large rocks precariously on the bumper. With the added weight on the front of the truck all four wheels again touched the road. However, this was only a momentary condition. As the rocks were added, the front end would slowly lower until it reached the point that the front weight overcountered the rear weight. With the addition of more weight, the front end would drop quickly and strike the ground with a jolt. This would topple the

precariously piled rocks. Finally after several attempts of trial and error the truck was returned to a normal position on the highway. Then kegs of repacked nails were loaded by first placing them on the hood and working the load back to the bed. After reloading, Hamidy and Bell continued the trip to Oak Creek where the pipe was delivered to the city government.[11]

At one time Herb Moore was the largest timber operator on Green Ridge. During the 1920s and 1930s he operated three sawmills in the timber and a planing mill at Shorters Spur. Moore was one of those colorful men who earned both the admiration and dislike of his neighbors. He, like so many men who risked their fortunes on the "uncertain ice" of timber, was a "plunger." At one time the local "banks would not loan money on a thrashing machine, stud horse, or sawmill, and Herb owned all three." During the late 1920s, Moore was forced into bankruptcy. He soon recovered and salvaged enough to reopen a sawmill. While recalling the difficult years of the depression one old timer stated, "I'll tell you times was tough and ole Herb was doing everyway he could. Hadn't been for Herb Moore and Frank Demerest at the store they'ed a lot of people starved because we didn't have any county relief. I'll give Herb Moore credit for trying."[12]

While times were hard the Bell Lumber Yard in Oak Creek found it was cheaper to buy lumber from Moore and others than to cut and finish their own lumber. And in turn, the mining community was one of the most stable markets for the lumber industry. More importantly, the operators were sure of receiving payment for their product. When lumber was shipped east to a buyer, it was not certain that payment would return to the region.

Moore was among the first operators to use a catapillar tractor to make his roads more servicable. The shift in road construction revolutionized the logging business. After the gas and rubber rationing of

World War II, trucks replaced teams for hauling logs to the mills and props to the mines. However as late as 1946 teams were still used to deliver props from some of the smaller operations.

John Geer and W. E. Anderson were two of Moore's sawyers. Geer had tried his hand a several schemes, but lady luck ran against him. During the worst years of the depression his wife died and he was left with a large family. To support the family he moved to the lumbering area on upper Elk River. While working at Columbine he remarried. Kate Geer had enough money to stake her husband in a sawmill; she also had an ability to manage the business. The Geers returned to the Yampa area and worked a sawmill on Green Ridge until it burned out.

Next Geer and Bill Anderson, W. E. Anderson's son, moved two sawmills to Rock Creek on Gore Pass. It is not clear at this time if Geer owned both sawmills or if they were separate operations. Geer, who was a master of steam powered sawmills, set up his operation near Anderson who had the first gas driven sawmill in the area. With two operations being so close and operating under similar conditions with master craftsmen at the helm of both, it was natural for all the local residents to closely monitor the two operations. The gas powered mill proved to be far superior. As a result steam powered sawmills passed quickly from the scene.[13] The arrival of the chain saw in the late 1940s soon made the cross cut saw a candidate for museums. But the faithful skid horse survived as an intregate part of the logging industry until the late 1960s.

Many Yampa Valley homesteaders worked at ranching, logging, and coal mining. Elmer Margerum took up a homestead on the South Fork of Hunt Creek in 1914. The ranching operation included milking twenty-two cows twice a day and farming dryland crops. Since Margerum could milk a cow every five minutes, he was able to do his daily chores in two hours. This left enough

time to do outside work. After the crops were laid by he worked for the Bird sawmill on the "backside" of Bellyach Mountain. One day a week he hauled lumber from Mr. Bartholomew's sawmill near Crosho Lake to Oak Creek.

The need for education for his growing family resulted in Margerum purchasing a house and mail route in Yampa. The mail route ran from Yampa back of the Devil's Grave to the farming community of Pinnacle and over the divide to Trout Creek. In good weather it took about eight hours to deliver the mail. In the late 1920s he left most of the mail delivery to his children and he worked at the wagon mines south of Phippsburg. At the old Brazilia Hasting Mine on Seven Points Hill, George Gwynn worked a mine. For two winters Margerum hauled coal off of Seven Points Hill for Gwynn.

About 1928 Margerum opened his own mine on Seven Points. At the bottom of the very steep grade he built a thirty ton coal bin. Every Monday morning the bin was full and by noon local ranchers had purchased the pile of coal. The rest of the week was spent mining and refilling the bin. Margerum only had the mine a couple of years and he never let mining be his full time occupation. But he was like so many of the early homesteaders--at some point in the process of establishing themselves in the valley they depended upon logging and coal mines for their income.[14]

The intertwining of logging, agriculture, and coal mining was complete in the Yampa Valley. In Twentymile Park after the federal government and the mining companies settled their land disputes, homesteaders quickly took up the land. In 1913 Guy C. Batton arrived on a Foidal Creek homestead. Since the Batton family knew nothing about farming and had no equipment or animals, Guy and his father found other employment. The elder Batton went to work as a carpenter for the Moffat Mine while Guy worked for a rancher. After they accumulated enough capital to buy seed and other necessities they returned to the homestead. Apparently the Batton family did not depend

upon the coal mines long, but for that brief period the income from mine labor was vital.[15] Ironically the acre of land the Battons gave for a schoolhouse is located just below the present tipple of Energy Mine. The homestead is where Energy has mined millions of tons of coal.

One of the Foidal Creek men walked from his home on Foidal Creek to the mines, worked a full shift, and then returned home. The round trip hike was approximately ten miles and required crossing over three steep divides. For several years he made this trip as regular as the mines worked. For him and his family, mining was very much a part of their lives although they were generally considered ranchers.

With the rush of settlers into Twentymile Park came the demand for local coal. Caspar Weberskirch opened a small wagon mine along with his homestead in the Williams Mountains along Fish Creek. Here he combined mining and ranching in the same business. For years he supplied his neighbors with coal. Because of distance from other supplies and the treelessness of the park, the mine formed a vital link in the lives of the folks. Other small wagon mines were located on Dry Creek and Hayden Gulch.

Johnny Mathews was an unique type of homesteader. He took up his claim in 1915 and simultaneously he began working in and about the mines at Oak Creek. Within a few years he had worked at all the larger mines and most of the smaller ones. One of his earlier jobs was to haul coal from the Arthur Mine into Oak Creek. The road from the mine to town hung treacherously along the shoulder of Mule Gulch. Many years later Edna Mine purchased the property and built new roads. But when Mathews was hauling coal, snow drifts and small slides were a serious threat. These would fill the road and tip the sledge on so sharp an angle that it threatened to upset the load. On numerous occasions the sledge would slip sideways and threaten to careen down the mountain. And Mathews did upset several loads

of coal and tangle his teams.[16]

Working in the mines and hauling coal was a common thing for homesteaders. But Mathews soon attracted the attention of the Moffat Mine management. He was hired as a prospector. For years Mathews checked outcroppings and small wagon mines.

When Mathews homesteaded and began working for the mines the mysteries of the Pilot Knob anthracite were still unsolved. The promise of a vast anthracite coalfield played a major role in the numerous reports about the Yampa Coalfield. W. W. Weston, Arthur Lakes, and many other experts had examined the Crawford, Morgan, and Sheldon tracts. The promise of a vast anthracite field played a critical part in David H. Moffat's decision to build his railroad. In 1911 the owners of the Moffat Mine gained control of the anthracite property. But financial difficulties delayed any development.

With the promise of the Moffat Tunnel in 1924 Mathews and a group of select miners were taken to the anthracite field north of Hayden. Here they began extensive development. The coal was hauled by wagon to Hayden and shipped by box cars to Denver. After developing a few hundred feet the men found that the vein split and the anthracite disappeared. Futher mining showed that the anthracite was localized and the vein was not consistent in quality or purity. After several months of work the project ended with the question of the anthracite being answered. It was not worth mining.[17]

When the railroad surveyors first plotted their route across Routt County, they planned to leave Oak Creek at Junction City and cross the divide to lower Trout Creek. Near the post office of Eddy at the Hutchinson Mine the railroad planned to do extensive business. Financial problems for the railroad prevented the construction. Under the federal

government's settlement with the Union Land Company the coal on lower Trout Creek was reclaimed for the public.

Sometime after the government repossessed the coal the Charco Mine was opened. From the Charco Mine the residents of Steamboat Springs and nearby areas got their coal. A long time resident of Pleasant Valley, Bob Gay, recalled that many of the ranchers and farmers briskly competed for local coal trade. The person who was lucky enough to land a contract for furnishing coal to the court house, school, or hospital was assured of a profitable year.

The coal haulers became a distinct group with their own standards and group identity and stories. Because of the distance to the Charco Mine it was necessary to leave long before daylight and often a person arrived home well after dark. One farmer had spent so many cold days riding in a coal sledge that he developed a habit of swinging his arms and striking his chest. The habit became so firmly implanted that the man swung his arms and hit his chest on the hottest days of summer as well as the coldest days of winter.

The settler who landed a contract delivering mine props or grain or hay to the mine while picking up a load of coal was truly fortunate. If he had the right contacts so he could sell meat, potatoes, eggs, or milk to the company store or boarding house the trips to the mines for coal were doubly profitable. Because of the large number of men generally working at the various mines, a significant number of homesteaders were able to develop a small but profitable trade with the mines.

The coal haulers had a deep pride in their horses. In the Steamboat Springs area most of the hitches were "four ups" although some drivers used six horses. Dewey Savage drove six fine horses and pulled two large sledges. On one occasion a lot of money changed hands in Steamboat Springs

after these six horses started both sledges which had stood all night on the street in front of F. M. Licht's Sorte. Another coal hauler with pride in his horses was Matt Cates who would never lie to hurt anyone but he would sure make conversation. One day Cates chanced to meet Joe Simiton along the Deep Creek road. When the men pulled abreast they stopped to pass the time. Simiton had a "good sense" sledge (the runners were turned up sharply at the ends). Cates had a "common sense" sledge (the runners were straighter than a good sense runner). Cates told his friend, "Joe, my sledge used to be just like yours. One morning I didn't pry it loose very good and had a load of coal on. I told them four big brown horses to start. It was hung and the horses just stretched until they straightened those runners out."[18]

Through the passage of time the names of many of the coal haulers have been lost, but among old timers their feats remain vivid memories. One such man was a rancher who moved into Pleasant Valley from the lower country west of Craig. He used broncs that could not be ridden and were generally considered too small to work. He would hitch up eight of these wild animals and haul amazingly large loads of coal, hay, or grain. For one man to handle eight gentle horses was considered an outstanding achievement. To master eight broncs and have them pull in unison was the mark of a true teamster.[19]

Loggers, ranchers, and coal miners; big men, little men; strong men, weak men; honest men and liars; all play a role on the stage of life as the story of northwestern Colorado unfolds from yesterday to today. Some people had leading roles while others were in support, but none of the characters would have had their part if there had been no coal mines. It was coal mines that made the play possible.

CHAPTER XI

HARDY PEOPLE AND HARD TIMES

The history of the Yampa Valley includes a chronicle of anticipated booms that fizzled out long before the expected benefits were achieved. Back in the early 1880s the settlers expected a railroad to be built to the rich agricultural and coal mining region. By the end of the 1880s the expected boom was a bust. In the late 1890s the preparations for the expected boom added excitement and anticipation to life in the isolated empire. With the actual construction of the Moffat Road folks began to expect great things. But a combination of powerful forces caused the railroad to falter. When the tracks reached the coalfield it was a weak railroad attempting to avoid complete disaster. The coal mines did save the line, but saving the line did not assure a bright, happy future--it only meant death did not come. Through this period of ebbing and flowing, hardy people came to the Yampa Valley and through their efforts the great experiment of making a dream a reality was continued. But making dreams into realities is hard work and involves hard times.

Marino Rossi began his life in a border region of Austria and Italy. He was born an Austrian; however, friends considered him an Italian. As a young man he made his way from the Alps to the United States. In 1902 he became a naturalized citizen and returned to the old country to marry his childhood sweetheart. Although he was an American citizen when he arrived home he was drafted into the Austrian army where he spent the next two years. After the tour of duty he did not have enough money to pay the cost of returning with his family to the United States. Under the circumstances he saw nothing else to do but return to the United States alone and save enough money to get his family to the new land. So Marino and his

brothers, Tommy, George, and John Rossi, came to the United States. In 1908 Marino arrived at Carbondale, Colorado, where he went to work in the coal mine.[1]

Through a series of events Marino was able to get his wife to the United States and the family moved from Carbondale to Oak Creek. At first he worked in the Juniper Mine, but conditions there did not prove satisfactory and he moved to the Moffat Mine. He was working at the Moffat during the strike of 1913-1914. For the most part the Rossi family attempted to stay out of any trouble, but the militia treated the foreigners like they were stupid peasants. And the Rossis, like many of their neighbors, had left their native country to escape the very thing that was happening during the strike. After the strike, Rossi moved his family to a small home in Oak Creek. Here Mrs. Anna Rossi took in washing to help buy their own home. To avoid having a hot stove to heat water during the summer, she carried the hot water from the steam plant at the Pinnacle tipple which was near their home.

The homes in lower Oak Creek were small and crowded together. At one time Marino and his neighbor had difficulty over the location of ~~a toilet~~ house. The neighbor placed their toilet near the back door of Rossi's home. So Rossi retaliated by placing his toilet against the neighbor's door. The neighbor's wife, who was a large woman with a powerful voice, let the whole neighborhood hear her indignition. Later the dispute was settled peacefully, but local residents got a good laugh over the war of the toilets.

Through the turmoil of the strike and World War I the Rossi family decided to get their children out of the mines. In 1922, Marino Rossi bought a ranch at the foot of the hill near Crosho Lake. His brother George bought a ranch a couple of miles further down Hunt Creek. But

buying a ranch and keeping it were two different problems.

Mrs. Rossi took charge of the ranch and Marino continued to work in the mine. He was only home during idle periods at the mine. On the ranch Mrs. Rossi and her five children worked to make it a profitable business. The family raised grain, lettuce, and spinach for their seasonal cash crop. A substantial part of the ranch income came from the sale of eggs, butter, cheese, and pork in Oak Creek. Every Saturday Guido Rossi and one of his brothers or sisters would take a buggy or sledge with as much as fifty dozen eggs, forty pounds of butter, and fresh pork on the twenty mile round trip to Oak Creek. The children would deliver the food door to door. Since numerous other ranch children were spending the day making similar deliveries, the work was a mixture of serious business and enjoyment. The young folks laughed and teased together, but they were engaged in serious business. All the kids were on the alert for new customers. And competition in their business was keen.

The depression of the 1930s brought several changes in the farm market. The price of pork was extremely low and customers were very discriminating. To sell the meat it was necessary to cut it into pieces and trim away the fat. The buyers took only the choice pieces and left the farmers with the unwanted cuts. But a sale was a sale and cash sales were something special. Rossi recalled that while making his regular deliveries occasionally he would learn of a special sale if he could get the meat back to Oak Creek at once. He would hurry home and build a fire to heat the water to scald the hog. When all was ready the hog was butchered. It was late in the day before the meat was ready for market, but, undaunted, he or a member of the family rushed back to Oak Creek with the fresh pork still steaming.

The Rossi family, as did the other ranchers in the valley, raised nearly all their own food--pork, beef, cheese, milk, potatoes, etc. A

major portion of the late summer and fall was spent preparing food for the winter. Hay and grain were stacked for the animals. During the winter the grain was thrashed. Meats were canned, salted, smoked, and carefully stored. Eggs were carefully packed in grain to retard spoilage as a hedge against the molt and freezing weather. Several varieties of pickles were canned. Potatoes were stored in cellars. The process of preparing for the winter was long and exacting, but it gave the ranchers a certain independence. "We lived through the depression much better than many people," remarked Carl Nelson. "We raised our own food and we had plenty to eat."[2] The ranch families in the Yampa Valley were a hardy breed of people who could survive hard times.

Even the most frugal and determined folks could not have withstood the lean years without having a few years of prosperity. Sandwiched between World War I and the Great Depression was the lettuce boom. An Arkansas River Valley banker, J. R. Scott, purchased land south of Yampa, Colorado, and set his three sons-in law up in the ranching business. Thomas J. Tynan, one of the sons-in-law, was warden at the state penitentary. Doug Colt and J. R. Geer were the other sons-in-law.

With his position in the state government, Tynan in 1923 used prison labor to experiment with various crops. The experiment triggered the lettuce boom. Soon S. A. Guard Company, Barker Company, and Western Vegetable were investing in sourthern Routt County lettuce. Within a few years thousands of acres were in row crops. Rossi candidly admits that it was the lettuce boom that made it possible for them to pay for their ranch. People who owned ranches planted all the land they thought they could successfully care for; then they leased additional acres to anyone who would take the land. With the boom came a mixture of races and ~~nationaliti~~ nationalities which added a new flavor to the valley. The Japanese who

worked in the mines at Oak Creek also leased farm plots during the summer months. Adding to the mining orientals were several who operated farms as their only occupation. With the boom in lettuce the use of prison labor was discontinued.[3]

During the lettuce season every possible building was occupied. And the boom town economy flourished. Ernie Bartholomew bought bootleg whiskey by the keg and operated a wholesale business. Gambling was open and flourishing. In 1928 there were seven lettuce sheds at Yampa, five at Toponas, and three at Trappers. With improvements in transportation and land development in California and Arizona, lettuce from Routt County found a strong adversary. Soon the lettuce boom in the Yampa Valley began to falter. Short and unreliable growing seasons made the high altitude lettuce business very risky. During the depression only the hardy farmers held on. The requirements of World War II briefly stimulated the lettuce business, but at the war's end only Jack Holden at Toponas and the Lewis Crowner family at Yampa were still in the lettuce and spinach business. In the early 1950s this effort came to a close. None the less, the approximately thirty year span of commercial lettuce and spinach farming provided opportunity for many residents of the valley. Kids growing up in Oak Creek and neighboring communities expected to work in the fields during the summer. For many families, especially during the depression, the lettuce fields provided an opportunity to make a living during the summer when the mines were idle.

Another hardy individual was John Morey. Morey was born in the United States, but after the death of his mother, his father returned with the child to his native city of Triest, Austria. When the father died, friends advanced Morey enough money to return to the United States. After casting about for a few years Morey came to the Yampa Valley and rented a

farm south of the Oak Creek city water reservoir. Morey was an enterprising man who soon discovered ways of earning a living in the coal mining community. He raised farm produce which he carried to market as he walked the several miles to the mine to work. He also planted a crop of lettuce and potatoes which he sold on a commercial market in Denver. As a sideline he made liquor which was marketed at various places. Apparently Morey had trouble with Andy Black and the machine that controlled Oak Creek liquor trade. As a result he traded primarily with Eric Bartholomew at Yampa and in Phippsburg.

After a few years Morey moved his family to a farm back of Phippsburg and with the opening of Seven Points Mine he moved to another ranch below the mine. On this small farm he attempted to make a living during the depression. Conditions were so hard that he sold a large, well fed steer, butchered and trimmed, for 3 and 3/4 cents per pound. In 1931 Morey, Mr. Laiten, and Joe Haines planted seven acres of potatoes on the shares. After gathering the crop they hauled them to a large cellar along the highway near Oak Creek. During the spring of 1932 the disappointed partners gave up trying to sell the crop and began giving potatoes to hard pressed miners.

Morey was not easily defeated. He built a large barn and began holding barn dances in the loft. But from the outset this enterprise was plagued. Often when dances were scheduled, it rained and Morey spent most of his time with a team pulling people's cars out of the mud. People who planned to spend the evening dancing were disappointed and reluctant to return later. The people who attended the dances also irritated Morey. Morey was a lot of things, but he did have high moral standards and he did not appreciate the fact that many local residents believed that his barn dances in a remote area were the ideal area to carry on an affair with someone

else's spouse. To prevent turning his dance hall into a place of low morality, Morey stopped having dances.[4]

In our more permissive society we tend to laugh at the standards of the past, but for the people of that time their moral code was taken very seriously. One Thorp Mountain homesteader stopped by the school house one afternoon and had coffee with the teacher. This enraged the man's wife so much that for years the settler was forced to sleep in the bunk house. He would come to the house only to take his meal. That was an extreme case of jealousy but no prudent citizen of the valley cared to endanger his reputation or endure the wrath that could come from the community. A bootlegger whose reputation became tarnished was driven out of business.[5]

Southern Routt County had an interlaced economy which connected several forces with the coal mining industry. But it would be a mistake to assume that the economic forces created a united society. Quite the contrary was the actual case. The long winters of isolation fostered a group of hardy folks who were extremely independent. And the towns also had a distinct individualism. When folks from Yampa and Oak Creek met at one of the numerous Saturday night dances there was sure to be a bloody fist fight. No experienced individual would enter the domain of the other faction unless he was accompanied by several friends. Until 1932 high school kids were hauled to Oak Creek by train, but that year the Phippsburg school district was consolidated with Yampa and Elmer Margerum began running the bus. Why the districts were realigned is not clear, but some folks believed that the Yampa Masons played a major role in the situation. Regardless of who was involved, the atmosphere between the towns reached a new level of keenness.

But the conflict was not restricted to the communities. In Phippsburg there was animosity between the families of men who worked on the train

crews and the families of men who worked at the roundhouse. And the source of this animosity is impossible to determine.

Complex problems cannot be explained easily in simple terms, but one of the primary forces in the division which existed between the coal mining area and the surrounding region was the long periods of isolation. The first effort in southern Routt County to keep a highway open during the winter was in 1930 when Cecil Gray and Barney Hodge used a small catapillar to move snow on Red Dirt Hill. For years afterwards most of the state's roads were left unplowed and none of the county roads were plowed.[6]

When the spring thaw began all travel during the warmth of the day came to a virtual standstill. Teams and wagons could not get down the muddy roads and the deep rotten snow prevented travel on the meadows. A car could only travel on the frozen ground at night and the ruts were so deep that often it was necessary to stop the car and shovel a trail into a new track if a person wished to pass or exit. Spiro Callas commented that to go from Oak Creek to Yampa, a distance of ten miles, was a major undertaking. It often took all night and numerous mud holes to make the trip.

In the winter of 1931-32 Leo Jolly and his mother made several trips by dog team down the main highway from Rock Creek on Gore Pass to Toponas. The following winter the county sent a small catapillar tractor to open a road as far as Jolly's place. The effort in the late winter of 1934 was the first attempt to open the state highway over Gore Pass. Most folks in the valley put their cars on blocks in October and did not take them off until mid-May.[7]

During the early years people traveled over hills and on the rough ground rather than on the smoother terrain. They conserved the "better" land for food and feed crops. As a result, roads often wandered over hills

and across boggy or swampy areas. However, in the late 1920s a few concrete bridges were built along the highway between Yampa and Oak Creek. During the depression the state and federal government funded several highway improvement projects in the region. In 1936 the present highway from Oak Creek was built to the overhead north of Phippsburg. From there the highway was advanced until it reached Tononas in 1939. The highway down Oak Creek to Steamboat Springs was also built during this period. Bob Viele recalled that to pay their taxes several ranchers including himself used teams and fresnos to build Highway 131 from the junction of U. S. 40 to the Werner Ranch.

With the improved highway transportation was considerably easier; however, Gore Pass was not improved and surfaced until in the mid 1950s. With the exception of the school bus between Yampa and Phippsubrg school buses did not operate until the 1960s. And keeping state roads open year round for continuous traffic did not begin until after World War II. In some cases the isolation remained until mid-century. With the loss of students the school board closed the Dome school and arranged for the students to board at McCoy and Burns. During the winter of 1949-50 Henry Owens and Jake Stall remained on the ranches under the Dome. The women loaded cream cans on pack horses and fought their way to Burns. Here they shipped the cream, picked up the mail and returned through the deep snow to their isolated homes. Soon afterwards, the families moved off the ranches during the winter.

During the hard winter of 1952, Margaret Rossi received the honor of attending a Cow Belle's (the woman's cattleman's association) meeting in Washington, D. C. For a person who had worked hard on a small ranch and done without so much, the honor of going to the nation's capitol meant a great deal. But the snow had become so deep and drifted so hard that the

county could not get the road open. For weeks the Hunt Creek ranching community was snowbound. It required a major effort by many of the ranchers to break a trail and get Margaret to the train at Phippsburg. She had to wear her "five buckle overshoes" when she left and she needed them again when she returned. To save space she had packed without allowing for the overshoes. As a result she endured the embarrassment of walking up dry, warm 17th Street in Denver to the hotel with her overshoes on. As she walked she felt like a person from another world. She was from a snowbound isolated corner of the state where time and innovation moved like ninety weight oil during the winter.[8]

With the isolation, the residents were able to develop their own unique society. Oak Creek was a complex community of vice and high standards. Cruelty and "smallness" were despised by the residents. Contrastingly the community proudly proclaimed the title of the roughest town in Colorado. And there were men tough enough to back the claim. It was a stand up and fight face-to-face, fist-to-fist, and toe-to-toe town. During the Labor Day celebration the miners would line up. The lead man would turn and face the line with fists at the ready. Two men would exchange blows until one of the men moved his foot. Then the next challenger would face the winner in the toe-to-toe position and at a signal begin swinging. The circle of contenders went on until a winner was established. The folks of the town thought the fights were great sport.

Oak Creek also had its characters and humorous events. Tom Piercen who was among the town's first businessmen was the source of much of the humor. On one occasion a group of town sports found Piercen "deep in his cups" and thought they would make some easy money. They bet him that his car could not make Gunshot Hill (a section of a street in Oak Creek) in high gear. Piercen took the bet and loaded his car full of people. Instead

of trying to drive up the hill as the sports intended he used a back way to get to the top of the hill. At the top of Gunshot Hill he put the car in high gear and drove down. This met the requirements of the bet. But in showing off, Piercen pushed the accelerator to the floor and came racing down. When he took his foot off the accelerator he learned that the peddle was stuck to the floor board. He made one street corner on "two wheels" and raced down the main street in Oak Creek. Finally at the lower end of town he ran the car out into a swampy stretch of land next to the creek where the car bogged down and stopped.[9]

A petite lady with a humorous twinkle in her eyes, Mrs. Hilda Heinke, enjoyed described the fullness of her life in the Oak Creek mining district. After World War I, her father, who had worked in the Wales coal mines for years, was unemployed over fourteen months. Some of his relatives encouraged him to bring his large family to Oak Creek and go to work in the mines. In 1923 the family of six girls and one boy stepped off a night train in Oak Creek and immediately got into a wagon and drove to a homestead in Twentymile Park. The homestead later became known as Rogers place and also as Rogers Crossing at Energy Fuel's Pit #2 mine. At daylight Hilda looked across the treeless and houseless reaches of the park and thought "we'd come to land's end."

The next day Hilda's aunt took the family into Oak Creek so they could see the town and find out they were not completely alone on earth. While they were standing outside Bell's store Hilda commented, "Well Auntie, when do we get to town?" "You're in town," replied the aunt. "Well, where is it?" retorted Hilda. In time Hilda became accustomed to the mining community. After marrying George Heinke she moved to the mining camp of Haybro.

In the late 1920s, Mr. Heinke decided to teach his wife to drive their

1922 Buick. Before we follow them through the adventures, we need to bear in mind that Mrs. Heinke is a small woman and looking over the steering wheel or reaching the clutch and brake was difficult. The terrain she had to drive in had several steep hills and narrow roads. In Haybro there was a steep grade by the superintendent's house. After driving on the Trout Creek road Mrs. Heinke recalled that they would return to Haybro. "Then I'd go up this steep hill there and I'd say to George, 'Can I keep it in low all the way up?'" "Ya," he replied. "I'd get part way up and he'd say, 'Shift into second.' So I'd shift into second; course I'd kill the engine." Then with the engine dead Mrs. Heinke would go through the process of starting the car. The "wobble stick" was placed in neutral; the left foot was placed on the brake so the car would not roll backwards while the right foot depressed the starter and accelerator. After getting the engine started it was necessary to move the left foot to the clutch and the right foot to the brake. Once the car was in low gear, she had to move her right foot to the gas while the left foot was letting out the clutch. All the while she was hoping that she did not go too fast and kill the engine or so slow that the car rolled backwards down the hill. Thus with jerks forward and abrupt retreats accompanied with emphatic words of encouragement, the Heinkes would labor up the Haybro Hill. After many agonizing attempts, Mrs. Heinke mastered the grade.

On one of these educational outings, Mrs. Heinke negotiated the grade in fine style, but at the top of the hill sat the superintendent's house and in front of the house Roy Hall had parked his car. "Of course I was afraid to stop for fear I could not hold it," commented Mrs. Heinke with a twinkle in her eyes. "So I went by him and of course I hit his back fender." After inspecting the damage, Hall commanded, "Well, you might as well finish it!" Obligingly she did.

Because of the isolation of the Haybro mining camp, the people developed a society that created its own "fun." During the depression folks had several impromptu come as you are parties. At these, dancing and card playing were common forms of entertainment. There were also box socials and pot luck dinners. When asked the question "What was life like at Haybro?" Mrs. Heinke replied without hesitation, "I enjoyed my life down there. People were so friendly."[10]

Another interesting family in the Yampa Valley was ~~the~~ that of Walter Peters ~~family~~. Peters had homesteaded near Juniper Springs in Moffat County. During the first years, conditions were comparatively good; but in time drought, rabbits, and gophers took their toll of Peters' crops. One early winter day Peters had gone to Craig and got a load of hay which ~~had~~ cost ~~him~~ $20 per ton. On the return trip he met one of Bill Gossard's trail herds heading for the Craig stockyards. By the time the herd ~~had~~ passed the hay rack Peters had just enough hay left to feed his team. So he pulled off the road and tied his horses to the feed and walked home. Shortly afterwards ~~he~~ Peters went to work for the Denver & Salt Lake Railroad as an operator at Corona, Colorado. In 1924 the ~~Peters~~ family moved to Phippsburg.

The Peters ~~family~~, like the Rossi, Nelson, Morey, Heinke, and a host of other families, had experienced enough hard times that when the depression of the 1930s hit, they were able to find ways to survive. Peters provided meat by hunting and fishing. They also raised a little garden and canned all the food they could. Most of the men on the Denver & Salt Lake worked out a system where everyone could make a little money, although none made a lot. The bridge gang, section crews, operators, and others divided their six day work week into half. Half of the men would work three days, then the other half worked three days. On the days off the men would devise other ways of supporting their families. Pete

Peterson, who was a machinist at the roundhouse, took his family camping and prospecting on his days off. Occasionally he found enough gold to make the work interesting.

Kids were always on the alert for ways to help the family. Johnny Peters, when a boy, was always on the lookout for a job. One spring day Alvie Kinzer hired Peters to go to Steamboat Springs where he picked up a string of nearly one hundred horses and drove them to Toponas. The trip of over fifty miles was made in one day. The man who owned the horses, Kinzer, was also a railroad conductor. As a sideline he was buying and selling horses and mules. During livestock shipping time, extra work was available for young men. Until the early 1940s, big cattle ranches west of Hayden and Craig would summer their steers on the Williams Fork River. To reduce shipping costs they would drive the large herds of cattle to Phippsburg. Under the brow of Whitney Grade the cattle were held and sorted for shipping. And to hold the cattle and load the cattle required extra help. That is where the aspiring cowboys got a chance to work.[11]

One of the keys to surviving the depression was how the people worked and lived together. When recalling the depression, Johnny Peters mused, "It was a little different than watching TV today; you'd all get together; the kids would play hide and go seek or something while the folks played cards or some other dang thing."[12] When Mr. Stafford built his grocery store the town got together to celebrate the success of laying the floor by dancing on it.

Although they are unsung heroes, the local grocers were the source of most of the "relief" during the depression. At different times during the 1930s Phippsburg had four grocery stores: Whitely, Iacovetto, Brockman, and Stafford. Whitely's and Brockman's stores burned and Stafford's store soon failed. All of the stores extended credit to residents. Mrs. Peterson

frankly states, "Sam Iacovetto kept a lot of people from starving to death during the depression."[13] Ivy Kelsay readily admitted that Frank Demerest at Yampa saved him and his family from going hungry. Kelsay had farmed in eastern Nebraska until his wife's poor health and the hard times drove him out. When he arrived in Yampa, "you couldn't buy a job." Demerest had also been hard hit by the depression. When the rent was due on the store he had to move out. He built a small place on the new highway and carried his stock in a gunny sack from the old store. After several laborous trips he opened for business. One day Kelsay came into the store and found Demerest sitting on a box. Kelsay, who at that time was not well known in town, told the store keeper he was looking for credit. Without hardly shifting on the box except to point a thumb at the shelves, Demerest stated, "As long as there's anything there we won't starve."[14] Demerest was true to his word. Barney Hodge also readily admitted that Demerest fed many people in Yampa during the depression.[15]

Like individuals, the towns developed their own character. Oak Creek prospered during the 1920s and the town board improved the town buildings and services. One much needed improvement was the change in the city jail. In 1908 when the town first began to boom, an old ice house was used for the jail. When a man was "put in the cooler," he literally was put in a cooler. Soon the ice house was replaced by a hole dug into the hill with bars placed at one end. In 1925 the jail was condemned, but a new one was not provided until the city hall was built in 1927.[16]

In handling its water system Oak Creek was unique. To begin with, it had a well developed water system built in 1912. Then in 1925 the town decided to build a permanent storage pond on Oak Creek. The site chosen for construction belonged to the McKinlay Coal Company. The town did not purchase the land and the case was taken before the Federal Land Office.

McKinlay won the case. Then in June, A. V. E. Vessels, a water engineer, "condemned the reservoir in almost every particular and believed that it should be abandoned."[17]

The Record of Minutes state the town's response. To begin with the town petitioned for a rehearing of the case. Next, "Motion made by Lindell, seconded by Warren that George Kezele be paid fifteen dollars a month for one year as caretaker of the headgates of the water system and also, in consideration of the old town barn at the new reservoir site, he give to the town a quit claim deed to the present reservoir site."[18] The motion carried. The site for the dam was first used as a grade and bridge for a mine railroad from Pallas to the Yampa Valley Mine. Thus the mining company had a good claim to the land. But through the deal with Kezele the town was able to reverse the land office decision and use the old railroad grade for the core to their dam.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s when Oak Creek was paying a large amount for the construction of Sheriff Reservoir as a major holding lake for the city water system, the city devised a new method for paying the costs. It took over the slot machines from private operation on the grounds that the machines were against the state law. Then the city operated the machines.[19] Although few people talked about the financial system, there were none who complained. It might be added that few people knew who really owned the slot machines.

As noted in an earlier chapter, in 1930 the city council failed to call a regular election claiming no one was interested. But there were a lot of people interested. Beginning in 1927 the electrical power company had begun violating their franchise rights.[20] From that point on, the discussion over the electrical service rose to a high pitch. Ernest "Dude" Todd, who was a top electrical man at the Moffat Mine, took the lead in

proposing that the town establish its own electrical system. He had the support of several town folks and the Moffat Line which would contract to supply the power. Some folks believed that the town board was in the pay of the private electrical company. The truth of the charge was never substantiated but it was enough to result in a new mayor and board being elected and the construction of a municipal electrical system.[21]

In October 1932, Dude Todd became city manager and the town moved to combat the depression. Before any federal assistance reached Routt County in 1933, the Oak Creek city government, whose credit was not good, borrowed $10,000 to do some city work. It was designed primarily to make work and the government paid in a credit "chit" which could be redeemed at any store in town. By paying with a chit each night, the town was able to delay actual cash payment but help put money in circulation. The town was also able to keep slightly more chits in circulation than there was actual money in the bank to cover the chits. Through this system the city was able to get water to the Rupe Addition and start work on the curbs and gutters. The big relief project which the town conducted was the rerouting of the stream Oak Creek and the building of a large football field and city park.

The depression hit the area hard. Carl Miles who ran a small ranch up Morrison Creek arrived in Oak Creek wanting to sell some lumber. Todd was hesitant to purchase the material for the town until he learned that the man had only a seive of flour for food in the house--a house with five kids. Todd purchased the lumber and took the money from the petty cash fund so Miles would not have to wait for the council to act.[22]

Pee Wee came to Oak Creek as a lady of the night before the depression, but a pregnancy and age slowed her business. She moved to a slab shack near the Yellow Jacket Road on a place later known as Pee Wee's Hill and raised a few goats. During the depression she and her son came to town to

find some kind of work. The boy had the soles of his shoes tied on with binding twine. He had no coat or overshoes although it was early spring. The Oak Creek government and Bell's Merchantile Store found work, clothing, and food for the boy. Another Oak Creek resident, Mrs. Rich, had saved her money and bought a boarding house which she hoped to provide for her in her old age. When the depression hit she was getting on in years, but her boarders did not have enough money to pay their bill. Under the welfare system of the 1930s she had too much property to qualify for any assistance. The town was able to find enough work for her boarders that she saved her business. And the boarders had food and clothing.[23]

All the businessmen in Oak Creek provided credit, but it was the Japanese grocer, Mr. Yama, who did the most to help people. He had the lease of the Moffat Pine boarding house. Here he fed hundreds of men without charge. Families in Oak Creek and neighboring camps would go to the boarding house to get a meal. Yama brought meat, milk, eggs, and garden produce from his ranch in Twentymile Park and gave it away. Many of the products from his ranch were put into the free meals for needy people. To help with the preparation of meals some men from Oak Creek would peel potatoes, etc. However, most of the people who benefited from the food did not help to prepare it. At the store Yama extended immense amounts of credit.

Yama went a long way towards feeding a hungry town when it was needed. When World War II started many of the people who had benefited most from Yama's generosity condemned him as a Jap Son-of-a-bitch and refused to pay their bills. In a short time he was driven from the town as were the other Japanese in Oak Creek.[24]

Any discussion of hard times in the Yampa Valley must deal with the question of what role did the large mines play. The question is not easily

answered. For example, in 1936, Ivy Kelsay was flat broke and his source of credit had disappeared. In desperation he trapped two small mink and three muskrats. The furs he was able to sell for $25. After getting his money, he drove to Mt. Harris and bought 300 pounds of flour, 25 pounds each of dried peaches, apricots, prunes, and raisins. He also bought lard and other household staples. When the bill was totaled he had spent $20. Kelsay followed the pattern of many residents in the valley because it was well known that food could be bought at a very reasonable price at the Mt. Harris commissary. Although the Mt. Harris company store was generally the lowest priced store, all the company stores in the Yampa Coalfield were competitively priced with other stores.[25]

The company stores worked on a credit basis which was not always profitable. Throughout the depression, the large mines hired big forces of men off the streets in Denver. The men were provided a ticket to the mine, a place to board and bunk. The mines fed and sheltered the men at a nominal cost to the men. Since the mines were working very little, most men only worked an average of a day or two per week. Many old timers admit that if the mines worked more than six days a half, over 50% of the men would not show up for work. Many of the men could not find any other work, and a sizeable number of men returned to the mine district each fall and left the next spring. Thus the men were able to get a winter's board, room, and necessities from the company store for very few days work. On the other hand the company had several points on which they received an income from the miners. Since both sides had their attractive and unattractive points, the mystery of the role of the mines is unclear. But clearly hundreds of men received the basic needs of life at a time when many Americans were not that fortunate.

Usually the mines would put the men on in September and October. And

in March or April they were laid off. The lay-off pattern was well established. When the men came out of the mine at the end of a shift they were informed that they would be cut off the next day at noon. That way they could eat supper, have a nights rest and a good breakfast before leaving. After breakfast the men settled up with the mine. Since they worked less than half the days they were at the mine, many of the miners owed the company more money than they received. In fact many wise miners deliberately ran their credit up to a high amount. They would buy enough clothing and other items to last them for several weeks. Then when they were cut off the company had to stand the loss for the amount owed.

On one occasion in the mid 1930s, a large number of unemployed miners decided to board the passenger train and force the railroad to take them to Denver free of charge. The railroad got word of what was to happen and the train ran the station at Oak Creek and went on to Phippsburg. At Phippsburg the train stopped for several hours while officials of the mines and the railroad debated what to do about the miners. Finally No. 2 backed down to Oak Creek and picked up five extra car loads of passengers. The men were hauled to Denver.

The problems of unions were many. Although the federal government under the National Recovery Act of 1933 gave the unions a big boost and John L. Lewis and the United Mine Workers took full advantage of the opportunity, the mine owners in the Oak Creek District were reluctant to accept the new strength of the men. As a result the miners were strongly union and the companies still reluctant. Thus the two forces antagonized each other at several points--often resulting in damage to both.

Looking back across the years the people of the Yampa Valley reacted to the depression in a very normal and predictable way. They had lived through hard times before and for some of the subsistence farmers they

simply continued to subsist. The hardy individuals found many ways to combat the hard years. The results were a complex response that contained elements of humanity and inhumanity. They were cooperative and yet very competitive. During these years the coal mines remained the backbone to the region's economy; without the mines the community of Oak Creek could not survive, nor the mining camps of Mt. Harris, Bear River, Haybro, Keystone, Moffat, or Pinnacle. Without Oak Creek many of the cow-sow-hen farmers had no market for their products. The mines were the primary source of business for the railroad and Phippsburg was a railroad town.

Despite the paradox, northwestern Colorado grew during the depression. Moffat County experienced its first major coal boom. In 1920 only 3,173 tons of coal were mined in the county. A decade later 6,025 tons were mined. In 1935 only 6,812 tons of coal were produced. Four years later the county produced 56,065 tons of coal--approximately a nine fold increase. In Routt County the mines produced over a million tons of coal in 1936 and 1937. And 1937 ranked as the third highest year of production to that date and 1936 was fourth highest. One gets an idea of the change represented in production by comparing the 1936 production of 1,002,462 to the production of 1934 with 491,881 tons of coal. The year 1933 was slightly lower than 1934, and both years were the lowest on record except the years when the coalfield was first being opened. In 1930 Craig had a population of 1,418; a decade later there were 2,123 people in the town. Hayden started the decade with a population of 554 and ended with 640. Oak Creek reported 1,211 people in 1930 and in 1940 the census counted 1,769. Steamboat Springs had 1,198 folks in 1930 and 1,613 as World War II approached. The smallest incorporated town, Yampa, had 310 and 426 people for each census report.[26]

CHAPTER XII

THE END AND THE BEGINNING

Coal played an important role in Colorado's journey through time. The rush to Pikes Peak was accompanied with the opening of coal mines near the gold mining districts. Coal furnished the fuel for the smelters and railroads. The early community residents heated their homes and in some cases lighted their streets with coal. In 1861 Lt. E. L. Berthoud headed a survey team across the Rocky Mountains to determine the feasibility of a railroad route. His report spoke of the great agricultural and coal mining possibilities that lay along his survey. In the late 1860s concerned Denver businessmen were building railroads and opening coal fields. At that early date leading citizens recognized the importance of coal for developing Colorado. In the 1880s railroad and coal mine owners united to open important coalfields west of the continental divide.

With the prospects of a major energy boom, settlers rushed to northwestern Colorado's Yampa Valley. Before the decade was over the settlers had determined the limits of the Yampa Coalfield and learned many of its secrets. The discovery of an anthracite coal deposit which suggested immense size stirred the imagination of many empire builders. Soon interest was followed with action. Critical town sites were established and key individuals were placed in power positions. Then something went wrong and the promised boom became a bust.

After the severe national depression of the early 1890s, David H. Moffat and his lieutenants took another look at northwestern Colorado. Quietly they moved people into key positions and gained control of critical resources. In 1902 Moffat announced that he was going to build a railroad over the Front Range and through the Yampa Coalfield. In the Yampa Valley

the announcement caused things to bustle with the excitement of a boom. For awhile it was boom times, but when the railroad reached the coalfield it was feeble and the boom was jaded. For the next six years the coal mines in the Oak Creek district furnished the life saving traffic for the bankrupt railroad. In 1914 the Mt. Harris coal mining district joined in the fight to save Routt County's vital transportation system. But again the expected energy boom busted soon after it started.

The coal mines were a primary force of life for the Yampa Valley. The men who worked the mines were exploited and in turn exploited other men. The miners also shared many common dangers and joys. Into the mines came men from every continent and race. In the mines the sweat of laboring men melted the traditional differences into a solid "buddy" system. Through the years the miners and the coal operators struggled over the role of organized labor. In 1913-14, 1922, and 1928, the miners' union was able to rise to power only long enough to be crushed. Finally the National Recovery Act, passed during the dark days of the depression, and shed light and life on the United Mine Workers organization in northwestern Colorado.

To provide for the needs of the miners, company towns and incorporated communities were established. The leading independent town was Oak Creek. The town stood by the miners during the strike of 1913-14. After the strike the community became a violent town where men were cruelly murdered. Often the killer went unpunished. These were the days that ruthless men fought to control the gambling, prositution, and bootleg whiskey that entered Oak Creek. During these turbulent days, Oak Creek gained the reputation of being a tough town. With the reform efforts during and after World War I, the violence in Oak Creek became less brutal but the community was still a rough and tumble coal mining community.

The tie hacks and "timber beasts," the homesteaders and lettuce

tramps, the railroad mines and the wagon mines all depended upon Oak Creek. It was the largest local market for their goods. The mining town was the source of recreation and entertainment for many residents of Routt County. Through the years of boom and bust, of chance and stagnation, isolation and communications, southern Routt County developed its own style of culture just as individuals maintain their own style although belonging to a general classification.

By 1945 the Yampa Valley had developed into a mature social system and with the end of World War II the future seemed bright. On Oil Well Hill west of Oak Creek a large producing well was struck. A pipe line from the well to the railroad tracks was laid and oil shipments were made. In the community the excitement for an expected oil boom ran high. Shorty Hamidy, who was about to move to another business location at Glenwood Springs, Colorado, decided to remain in Oak Creek during the boom. In Vaunts Drug Store was a large photograph of the oil well and residents looked at it with reassurance.

The coal mining industry looked sound and promised to continue growing and producing. However, there were some adjustments being made. The Moffat Mine which had produced over 4,000,000 tons of coal during its life was mined out and closing. But the Moffat Mining Company was busy opening the Arrowhead Mine at the site of old Junction City. Through the years the property had been worked by the Yampa Electric Mine and numerous prospects. In 1924 the Perry interest did some preliminary mine development. After the Moffat Mine closed a 2,000 foot rock tunnel was driven at Arrowhead and serious coal mining appeared on the horizon. With oil and coal the economics of the Oak Creek mining district promised a happy future. Although highways were being improved, the region still was sufficiently isolated to be able to ignore much of the rest of the world. By 1950, the

glitter of another promised boom in southern Routt County was dashed upon the rocks of depression and disaster. Natural gas from the vast fields on the southern Great Plains became the domestic fuel where coal once reigned.

The loss of coal markets caught residents of the Yampa Coalfield unprepared; however, there were numerous previous signs that coal mining was on the decline. The Routt-Pinnacle, Curtis, McNeil, and Allen mines had been closed by the end of World War II. In 1940 the Bear River Mine shut down.

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After the explosion, the Wadge Mine never regained its former vigor. In the mines that were operating most of the owners were not keeping up with modern advancements. They were simply hanging on until the end came. By 1952 the Wadge, Haybro, Pinnacle, and Arrowhead mines were closed.

The Arrowhead, which was a new mine, due a 2,000 foot rock tunnel to the coal beds, but very little coal was mined. Miners do not agree on the condition of the mine at the time of closing. Max Nest believed that the long rock tunnel proved too steep and long for economical mining. Another miner claimed that the coal vein soon split and broke into small, unminable veins of coal. Most miners believe that the decline in the coal market caused the Arrowhead to close shortly after opening.[X1]

The Keystone and the Mt. Harris Mines were large scale operations until the mid-1950s. And the Keystone continued as a wagon mine until the late 1960s. The closing of the Mt. Harris Mine was in part due to labor problems. At the time costly wildcat strikes and continual labor unrest resulted in the mine owners moving their entire operation to Mt. Streeter in Moffat County.[X2] The big, flat vein in the Axial Basin was mined so economically that it allowed for over a twenty mile haul by truck to the railroad at Craig, Colorado. By 1960 the Colowyo and a few small wagon mines were all that were left of the once proud underground mining operations in the Yampa Valley.

As the underground mining operations left the valley, two small strip mines began operating. At the old Curtis Mine near Milner, Colorado, the Osage strip mine worked until the early 1960s. The primary customer was Public Service of Colorado. At the old Arthur Mine on upper Trout Creek the Oak Hills Edna started a strip mine. For several years the mine hauled its coal to the old Moffat Mine tipple for loading on cars. Then a long tram was built from the top of Oak Hills to the railroad. Interestingly,

the Edna Mine was working the Lennox Vein in the same area that the Haybro Mine had originally opened. The long Edna tram was only a short distance up Oak Creek from the old Haybro tram.

In 1948 the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad took control of the Denver & Salt Lake Railroad. The new owners were primarily concerned with the track from Orestod, Colorado, through the Moffat Tunnel to Denver. From 1948 until the mid-1970s the railroad often considered closing the line into the Yampa Valley.

Soon after the takeover, the Denver & Rio Grande shifted to diesel powered locomotives and closed the roundhouse at Phippsburg. Until that time nearly one fourth of the coal mined was used by the railroad and the roundhouse had a large force of men. In 1960 the railroad operations were only a shadow of their past glory. Sections were closed at Toponas, Yampa, Oak Creek, Sidney, Milner, and Mt. Harris. Depots were closed at Yampa, Oak Creek, and Mt. Harris. Soon the depots at Steamboat Springs and Hayden closed. Phippsburg and Craig had the only open stations and these did not stay open twenty-four hours.

The closing of the coal mines rung the death knell for many communities. Mt. Harris once was among the largest communities in northwestern Colorado. Shortly after the mines closed, U. S. 40 was rerouted over the old town. The old section house and one Wadge Mine "shack" was all that remained of the once proud community. At Bear River a few concrete buildings and foundations were the town's tombstone. At Coalview two lonely frame buildings kept vigilance over an unfulfilled promise. Haybro was identified by the mine debris left scattered and unkept. The old company store was converted to a private residence. At Keystone a few foundations marked the passing of a community. At the old Moffat Mine the superintendent's house kept a vigilance over the decaying

remains of the past glory. On July 4, 1939, fire destroyed the aged sentinel. Now the mining debris is all that remains. The Victor-American went into bankruptcy and the miners at the Pinnacle simply moved off. Much of the camp remained in disrepair. The tipple at the Arrowhead Mine remained fully equipped including boxcar loaders. It was the best example of an historical coal mining tipple in the state of Colorado until the fall of 1980 when mysteriously the tipple caught fire and burned. Deer hunters were blamed.

The closing of the mines and the mining camps were a disaster for Oak Creek. Miners, railroaders, and loggers came to Oak Creek once a week to collect their government commodities. The professional gamblers moved to Nevada and the miners moved to other areas. Stores and bars in Oak Creek closed. At nights the streets were usually empty except for an occasional passerby.

The expected oil boom proved to be a "flash in the pan." The oil was low grade and could not be refined economically. After a few test loads were shipped, the well was closed. However during the 1950s extensive oil exploration continued in southern Routt County.

Simultaneous to the closing of the mines, the Yampa Valley logging and agriculture were struck by disaster. In 1939, Ivy Kelsay was working at the Stillwater Reservoir when a strong whirl wind passed through. After the wind passed he noted large numbers of beetles. At the time he did not know anything about the bug, but he soon learned. The Japanese Beetle invasion of the spruce and lodge pole timber on the Flat Tops was devastating. By 1950 the timber was dead and the loggers were out of business. Only a few hardy men were able to keep operating where a thriving industry had once been.[13]

To add to the disaster was the distress in agriculture. Lettuce

farming had been a dying industry for years, but Jack Holden at Toponas continued to oppose the odds. In the early 1950s he was forced to sell his ranch. During the same period the livestock market took a 50 percent drop. Ranchers were hard pressed to keep operating. With coal mining, logging, and agriculture in disarray, the future of the Yampa Valley was uncertain. Most of the young people were forced to leave the area to find work. Among those who stayed the "going was rough." Lee Saindon began working for the railroad in 1946 and in 1962 he was still unable to hold a steady job at the Phippsburg terminal. As late as 1970, Mrs. Laurajay Bonnifield decried the fact that there were no young children in Phippsburg.

Mining in the Yampa Coalfield was down but it was not defeated. Although the Edna and Osage mines only worked a few months each year, they did operate enough to keep the railroad providing service. The Gilsonite and the oil well business at Craig added to the revenue. Then in the early 1960s the Hayden Power Plant was built and the Energy Mine opened. Again these were small operations when compared to present systems, but they were vital for the survival of the mining industry. These obscure mines kept the railroad functioning--a role the mines had played since 1908. By keeping the basic tools in place although twisted and broken, the Yampa Valley was able to experience a major boom during the 1970s when the nation returned to coal as an important fuel.

The coal boom of the 1970s was quite similar to the mining of the previous decades. The boom psychology of the 1970s was comparable to boom psychology of the 1909 period. In both periods, scores of experts rushed into northwestern Colorado to check the coal deposits and speculate on the future. In the 1970s Routt County had all the "flitting" and "ditting" that goes with keeping up with the most recent "whatever." There were studies made and more studies. Planning experts were hired and planning

commissions established.

The boom in Routt and Moffat counties drew national attention. On November 15, 1977, the Christian Science Monitor told its readers how the boom at Craig, Colorado, was affecting the local society and economy. At the time construction of a large electrical power plant and the opening of a large strip mine were in progress. The Sunday magazine of the Denver Post, Empire, for April 2, 1978, carried a lengthy article entitled "Energy Boom!" The article had an indepth look at the mining achievements at Energy Fuels.

In 1978 northwestern Colorado was booming! In Routt County 6,339,173 tons of coal were produced. This was accomplished with only 502 men. Moffat County, which was still constructing many of its facilities, produced 1,089,677 tons of coal. In Moffat County 536 men were employed in the mines.[84] In 1978 Colowyo was preparing to ship millions of tons of coal annually and Empire Energy and Utah International were operating large mines. Hayden Gulch was about to open for production. Mines were preparing to ship from Mt. Harris and Bear River. Energy Fuels was operating both Pit #2 and #3. The company also opened an underground mine. Edna Mine was increasing its shipments and doing some underground exploration. Social researcher William Freudenberg found that the region suffered from a boom town mentality. Of course back in 1902 the newspapers were also filled with stories about the new Pennsylvania.[85]

In February 1980 the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad hired six additional brakemen at Phippsburg. It was expected that the men would soon be working to help ship the expanding coal production, but as of May 1981 (fourteen months later) the men had seldom worked beyond their student trips. In a June 1, 1978, article entitled "Coal's Future Clouded by Rising Capacity," the Steamboat Pilot reprinted an article written by

George Getshow of the Wall Street Journal. The article discussed the overproduction while the demand was unable to respond quickly. The Rocky Mountain News on March 11, 1979, reported "Sick Coal Industry Sees Sluggish Demand." The article noted "[coal] production in the past 10 years has been on a roller coaster ride, and the net rise has been small." In October 1980 the readers of the Steamboat Pilot were told, "Most Coal Mines Remain Optimistic." Later the article quoted Edna Mine superintendent Fritz Haller, "We are very concerned about the coal market. The market is soft. If it is a long-term thing it could have a tremendous effect."[256]

In 1980-81 the coal mining in the Yampa Valley turned sharply downward. Sunland Coal Company stopped shipping coal. After losing $15 million in five years, Northern coal mines cut their labor force from 160 to 55 employees. It is suspected the mines will close in June 1982. Energy Fuels has closed Pit #3 and the underground mine. The mine also sold and the new owners are not planning any expansion. The Edna Mine ended its KPL contract in December 1981 and did not replace it. To save the Utah International Mine from financial disaster and closing, the owners of the Craig power plant were forced to purchase the operation. It is believed that Coors will end its contract with Rock Castle at Mt. Harris as soon as a mine on the eastern slope begins full production. The Hayden Gulch and Colowyo operations are having only limited expansion. The only new coal shipments from December 1980 to December 1981 were in export trains and no Yampa Valley mine has a permanent export contract. The established mines are closing or entrenching and no new mines are opening. Boom-Bust, limitless dreams-painful reality; today-yesterday, the beat is the same and coal is still the elusive cream of northwestern Colorado.

NOTES

Chapter I

[1]Hayden, "Notes on the Lignite Deposits of the West," p. 199.

[2]Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, p. 38.

[3]For details of the gold rush see Hafen, Colorado and its People, vol. I.

[4]

[5]"Colorado Coal Production," p. 450.

[6]History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado, p. 597.

[7]Boner, The Giant's Ladder, p.19.

[8]History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado, p. 188.

[9]Sprague, The Great Gates, pp. 231-33.

[10]Undated newspaper clipping.

[11]Hayden, "Notes on the Lignite Deposits of the West," p. 198.

[12]Ibid., pp. 201, 203-04.

[13]Boner, The Giant's Ladder, p. 33.

[14]History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado, pp. 196-97.

[15]Stevenson, Historic Hahns Peak, pp. 1-14.

[16]FitzPatrick, The Last Frontier, II, 66-72.

[17]Ibid., p. 35.

[18]Bass, Eby and Campbell, Geology and Mineral Fuels of Parts of Routt and Moffat Counties, Colorado, p. 148.

[19]Leckenby, "The Founding of Steamboat Springs and of Hahns Peak," p. 95; Crawford, "The Story of a Colorado Pioneer," Perry Collection.

[20]Shelton, "Early History of Hayden and Bear River Valley."

[21]Boner, The Giant's Ladder, p. 49.

[22]"Colorado Coal Production," pp. 463-64, 476.

[23]Fossett, Colorado: Its Gold and Silver Mines, p. 580.

[24]Lipsey, The Lives of James John Hagerman, p. 35.

[25]Ibid., pp. 36-37.

[26]Ibid., p. 68.

[27]FitzPatrick, The Last Frontier, II, 193.

[28]Taylor, "To the Bear River Country in 1883," pp. 121, 127.

[29]Chisholm, "The Elk Head Anthracite Coal Field of Routt County," pp. 147, 149.

[30]Yampa Leader, August 12, 1905.

[31]Johnson, Mt. Harris Echoes, pp. 1-2.

[32]Several sources show the name as A. M. James.

[33]Gray, Recollections of an Egeria Park Pioneer.

[34]"Prospecting for Coal in Northwestern Colorado (1883) from an Engineer's Diary," p. 58.

[35]Ibid., pp. 53-62.

[36]Ibid., p. 60.

[37]Caynor, "History of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company and Constituent Companies, 1872-1933."

[38]Carpenter, "Studies in Colorado Coals," p. 4.

[39]"Colorado Coal Production," pp. 463-64.

[40]Ibid., p. 454.

[41]Creede Candle, May 5, 1893.

[42]Athearn, The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, p. 183.

[43]Hills, Coal Fields of Colorado, p. 356.

[44]Ibid., p. 354.

[45]Bollinger and Bauer, The Moffat Road, p. 79; Shelton, "Early History of Hayden and Bear River Valley."

[46]Burroughs, Where the Old West Stayed Young, pp. 146-51.

[47]The Denver Republican, April 18, 1903, p. 4.

[48]Robbins, Our Landed Heritage, p. 359.

[49]Oak Creek Times, October 19, 1911.

[50]Boner, The Giant's Ladder, p. 70.

[51]Steamboat Pilot, December 15, 1897.

[52]Ibid., February 23, 1896.

[53]Ibid., December 8, 1897; Athearn, The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, p. 89.

[54]Steamboat Pilot, February 15, 1899, March 18, 1899.

[55]Ibid., January 31, 1900.

[56]Ibid., January 4, 1900.

[57]Ibid., May 2, 1900.

[58]Ibid., August 22, 1900.

[59]Ibid., June 13, 1900.

[60]Fenneman and Gale, The Yampa Coal Field, Routt County, Colorado, p. 70.

[61]Steamboat Pilot, September 12, 1900.

[62]Ibid., June 12, 1901, April 17, 1901.

[63]Ibid., September 12, 1900.

Chapter II

[1]Boner, The Giant's Ladder, p. 72.

[2]Bollinger and Bauer, The Moffat Road, p. 19.

[3]Weston, The Yampa Coal Field of Routt County (1936), pp. 7-8.

[4]Ibid., p. 7; Yurich, Oak Creek's 60th Jubilee; Interview, Mr. and Mrs. George Heinke; Interview, Mr. Carl Steele.

[5]Interview, Mr. Reggie Steele; Steamboat Pilot, February 20, 1931.

[6]Weston, The Yampa Coal Field of Routt County (1936), p. 48; Headden,

"An Examination of Some Coals From Routt County, Colorado," p. 267.

[7]Fenneman and Gale, The Yampa Coal Field, Routt County, Colorado, pp. 46-47.

[8]Weston, The Yampa Coal Field of Routt County (1946), pp. 9-10, 48.

[9]Ibid., p. 4; "The Coal Fields of Routt County,", p. 570.

[10]Parsons and Liddell, "Coal and Mineral Resources of Routt County [Colorado]," pp. 54-55.

[11]Ibid., p. 55.

[12]Lakes, "Coal Resources Along the Line of the Moffat Road," p. 520.

[13]Parsons and Liddell, "Coal and Mineral Resources of Routt County [Colorado]," p. 48.

[14]Steamboat Pilot, December 10, 1902.

[15]Lakes, "Geology and Economics Along the Line of the New Moffat Railway to be Built from Denver to Salt Lake City," p. 419.

[16]Lakes, "Coals Changed by Heat in Colorado," p. 567.

[17]Weston, The Yampa Coal Field of Routt County (1906), p. 15.

[18]Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Biennial Report, 1899-1900, p. 88.

[19]Weston, "Routt County Coal Fields Can Supply the World," p. 12.

[20]Headden, "An Examination of Some Coals from Routt County, Colorado," p. 260; Weston, The Yampa Coal Field of Routt County (1914), p. 62; Herrick, "Routt County, Colorado Coals," p. 234.

[21]Fenneman and Gale, The Yampa Coal Field, Routt County, Colorado, p. 91.

[22]Ritter, "The Magnificent Underdeveloped Coal Fields of Routt County."

[23]Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Biennial Report, 1899-1900, p. 7.

[24]"Colorado Coal Production," pp. 463-64; Borne, "The Wootton Land and

Fuel Company, 1905-1910," pp. 189-209.

[25]Hayden, "Notes on the Lignite Deposits of the West," p. 199.

[26]Steamboat Pilot, January 9, 1907.

[27]Weston, "Tremendous Value of the Coal Beds."

[28]Steamboat Pilot, May 29, 1907.

[29]Yampa Leader, July 25, 1903.

[30]Ibid., August 29, 1903.

[31]Steamboat Pilot, Special Edition, January 1901.

[32]Ibid., Special Edition, March 1903.

[33]Ibid., November 29, 1905; Weston, The Yampa Coal Field of Routt County (1906), p. 7; Weston, The Yampa Coal Field of Routt County (1903), map.

[34]Steamboat Pilot, May 30, 1900.

[35]Yampa Leader, August 12, 1905; Steamboat Pilot, November 29, 1905.

[36]Steamboat Pilot, April 4, 1906.

[37]Ibid., November 8, 1905.

[38]Ibid., May 29, 1907; Weston, The Yampa Coal Field of Routt County (1906), p. 26.

[39]Steamboat Pilot, November 29, 1905; Oak Creek Times, October 28, 1909; Weston, The Yampa Coal Field of Routt County (1914), pp. 15, 22; Taylor, "To the Bear River Country in 18[illegible]," p. 127.

[40]Steamboat Pilot, May 29, 1907.

[41]Ibid., December 22, 1909.

[42]Robbins, Our Landed Heritage, p. 359.

[43]Yampa Leader, February 10, 1906.

[44]Ibid., July 20, 1907.

[45]Ibid., February 10, 1906, July 20, 1907.

[46]Leckenby, The Tread of Pioneers, pp. 54, 200; Denver Times,

February 5, 1903; Burroughs, Where the Old West Stayed Young, pp. 146-151, 352; West Hayden Town Site Map.

[47]Steamboat Pilot, February 13, 1907; Yurich, Oak Creek's 50th Jubilee; Sprague, Money Mountain, pp. 256-57; Articles of Incorporation of the Oak Creek Town, Land and Mining Company.

[48]Oak Creek Times, June 25, 1908.

[49]Ibid., May 30, 1908, May 27, 1909.

[50]Ibid., May 27, 1909, August 27, 1908, April 15, 1909.

[51]Steamboat Pilot, February 13, 1907; Oak Creek Times, August 6, 1908, September 10, 1908.

[52]Bollinger and Bauer, The Moffat Road, p. 94.

[53]Oak Creek Times, June 25, 1908, December 17, 1908.

[54]Ibid., August 6, 1908, December 3, 1908.

[55]Ibid., July 15, 1909, August 12, 1910.

[56]Steamboat Pilot, October 14, 1909, September 23, 1905.

[57]Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Biennial Report, 1909-1910, pp. 53, 115, 124.

Chapter III

[1]Athearn, The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, p. 192.

[2]Ibid., pp. 199-215.

[3]C F & I Clippings.

[4]Athearn, The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, p. 183.

[5]Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Biennial Report, 1897-1898, pp. 143-165.

[6]Boner, The Giant's Ladder, p. 77.

[7]Athearn, The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, pp. 204-05; Rocky Mountain News, December 11, 1902.

[8]Athearn, The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, p. 295. See also Boner, The Giant's Ladder; Bollinger and Sauer, The Moffat Road; and Bollinger, Rails That Climb.

[9]Bollinger, Rails That Climb, p. 243.

[10]Boner, The Giant's Ladder, p. 137.

[11]Steamboat Pilot, August 8, 1906, October 24, 1906.

[12]Yampa Leader, March 30, 1907.

[13]Steamboat Pilot, May 29, 1907.

[14]Yampa Leader, July 13, 1907; Steamboat Pilot, October 27, 1909.

[15]Articles of Incorporation of The Union Land Company.

[16]Steamboat Pilot, October 28, 1909.

[17]Ibid., December 22, 1909; Oak Creek Times, December 23, 1909.

[18]Oak Creek Times, October 19, 1911, August 15, 1912, October 3, 1912, November 28, 1912; Yampa Leader, October 19, 1911.

[19]Steamboat Pilot, August 8, 1906, September 12, 1906, October 24, 1906.

[20]Ibid., August 4, 1909.

[21]Ibid., February 9, 1910.

[22]Oak Creek Times, August 3, 1911.

[23]Ibid., October 19, 1911.

[24]Yampa Leader, July 20, 1907, August 3, 1907.

[25]Weston, "Conditions in the Yampa Coal Field," p. 1225.

[26]Articles of Incorporation of The Union Land Company; Sheriff's Certificate of Purchase In the Matter of The Continental Trust Company vs. The Union Land Company, Et. Al.; Oak Creek Times, February 19, 1910; Weston, "Conditions in the Yampa Coal Field," pp. 1225-26.

[27]Athearn, The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, p. 214.

[28]Steamboat Pilot, May 29, 1907.

[29]Oak Creek Town Board Minutes, 1908; Oak Creek Times, August 13, 1908.

[30]Oak Creek Town Board Minutes, November 6, 1909, December 11, 1909.

[31]Oak Creek Times, November 10, 1910.

[32]Ibid., January 9, 1912.

[33]Ibid., July 7, 1910, September 1, 1910, August 25, 1910; Bell Merchantile Ledger, Hamidy Collection.

Chapter IV

[1]"Summary of Routt County," Colorado Coal Mine Inspection Department File.

[2]Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Biennial Report, 1911-1912, p. 57.

[3]For expansion of the railroad see Conner, The Giant's Ladder.

[4]Routt County Republican, June 26, 1914, July 3, 1914, July 24, 1914, September 18, 1914; Place Names Card File, Colorado State Historical Library.

[5]Routt County Republican, August 7, 1914, August 21, 1914, September 18, 1914; Oak Creek Times, April 29, 1915.

[6]Routt County Republican, November 20, 1914, December 18, 1914.

[7]Oak Creek Times, April 29, 1915, November 16, 1917.

[8]Routt County Republican, January 8, 1915; Oak Creek Times, August 19, 1915, March 11, 1915, November 9, 1917.

[9]"Summary of Routt County," Colorado Coal Mine Inspection Department File; Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Annual Report, 1915, p. 44; Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Annual Report, 1917, p. 60.

[10]Oak Creek Town Board Minutes, July 22, 1912.

[11]Oak Creek Register of Town Officers.

[12]Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Biennial Report, 1911-1912, p. 20; Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Biennial Report, 1909-1910, p. 6. See also Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Annual Report, 1957, pp. 26-27.

[13]Routt County Sentinel, July 1, 1910.

[14]Oak Creek Times, September 1, 1910, July 7, 1910, August 25, 1910; Bell Mercantile Ledger, 1909, 1910, 1911, Hamidy Collection.

[15]Steamboat Pilot, October 15, 1913; Yampa Leader, October 15, 1913.

[16]Steamboat Pilot, November 5, 1913.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Yampa Leader, November 7, 1913.

[20]Routt County Sentinel, October 31, 1913.

[21]Unsigned letter to Mike Yurich, January 4, 1975, Yurich Collection.

[22]Routt County Sentinel, November 7, 1913.

[23]Ibid., November 14, 1913; Steamboat Pilot, November 19, 1913.

[24]Steamboat Pilot, November 19, 1913.

[25]Interview, Mr. J. R. "Shorty" Hamidy.

[26]Routt County Sentinel, March 27, 1914.

[27]Steamboat Pilot, November 12, 1913.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Routt County Sentinel, November 28, 1913.

[30]Steamboat Pilot, November 12, 1913, November 19, 1913; Routt County Sentinel, December 12, 1913.

[31]Steamboat Pilot, December 17, 1913.

[32]Interview, Mr. J. R. "Shorty" Hamidy.

[33]Steamboat Pilot, January 7, 1914.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Yampa Leader, January 9, 1914.

[36]Routt County Republican, January 9, 1914.

[37]Steamboat Pilot, January 7, 1914.

[38]Routt County Sentinel, February 6, 1914.

[39]Yampa Leader, February 20, 1914.

[40]Steamboat Pilot, March 18, 1914; Routt County Sentinel, March 20, 1914; Yampa Leader, March 20, 1914.

[41]Routt County Sentinel, May 22, 1914.

[42]Mrs. Wheaton to Mike Yurich, Yurich Collection.

[43]Routt County Sentinel, May 8, 1914.

[44]Articles of Incorporation of the Hayden Brewer's Haydro Mine.

[45]Routt County Sentinel, July 14, 1914.

Chapter V

[1]Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Biennial Report, 1909-1910, pp. 123-24.

[2]Steamboat Pilot, June 16, 1909.

[3]Oak Creek Times, December 5, 1924.

[4]Yampa Leader, December 22, 1911; Oak Creek Times, February 3, 1912.

[5]Oak Creek Register of Town Officers.

[6]Routt County Sentinel, May 22, 1914.

[7]Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Biennial Report, 1911-1912, pp. 6, 23-4.

[8]Oak Creek Times, May 18, 1910.

[9]Ibid., March 21, 1912; Yampa Leader, March 22, 1912.

[10]Author's own mine experience.

[11]Oak Creek Times, April 4, 1912, March 21, 1912; Yampa Leader, March 22, 1912.

[12]Interview, Mr. Gordon Steele.

[13]Interview, Mr. and Mrs. George Heinke.

[14]Interview, Mr. Gordon Steele.

[15]The material which follows concerning the Todd family was given by Ernest "Dude" Todd during several interviews with the author.

[16]Yampa Leader, March 6, 1914.

[17]Oak Creek Times, February 3, 1912.

[18]Ibid., January 26, 1917.

[19]The material which follows concerning the Heinke family was given by Mr. and Mrs. George Heinke during an interview with the author.

[20]Interview, Mr. Ernest "Dude" Todd.

[21]Oak Creek Times, August 31, 1911.

[22]Ibid., June 1, 1911.

[23]Ibid., April 19, 1913.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid., June 4, 1913.

[26]Ibid., December 14, 1916.

[27]Interviews, Mr. Joe Petranovich, Mr. and Mrs. George Heinke, Mr. Ben Reary.

[28]The following material on exploitation and corruption in the mines was given by Ernest "Dude" Todd during several interviews with the author.

[29]Interview, Mr. Carl Steele.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Interview, Mr. Ernest "Dude" Todd.

[32]Interview, Mr. Carl Steele.

[33]Interview, Mr. Joe Petranovich.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Oak Creek Times, August 24, 1917, March 30, 1917, May 18, 1917,

October 26, 1917.

[36]Ibid., October 24, 1919.

[37]Ibid., December 6, 1919.

[38]Ibid., November 19, 1921, January 21, 1922.

[39]Ibid., April 22, 1922.

[40]Interview, Mr. Ben Peary.

[41]Oak Creek Times, February 4, 1922.

[42]Ibid., February 4, 1922, March 4, 1922, March 11, 1922, March 18, 1922.

[43]Interview, Mr. Ben Peary.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid.

Chapter VI

[1]The material on coal mining in this chapter was provided to the author during interviews with the following people: Joe Petranovich, Ben Peary, Ernest "Dude" Todd, J. P. "Shorty" Hamidy, George Heinke, Gordon Steele, Charles Fedinec, Antone Knez, Raymond Knez, Max Jost, Spiro Callas, Reggie Steele, George Koraites, and Carl Steele. Specific individuals are footnoted primarily for direct quotations.

[2]Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Biennial Report, 1895-1896, pp. 50-51, 53.

[3]Interview, Mr. Ernest "Dude" Todd; Oak Creek Times, February 19, 1921.

[4]Oak Creek Times, February 18, 1921, February 11, 1922.

[5]Ibid., February 19, 1921; Interview, Mr. J. P. "Shorty" Hamidy.

[6]Interview, Mr. Ben Peary.

[7]Interview, Mr. Joe Petranovich.

[8]Interview, Mr. Charles Fedinec.

[9]Colorado. State of, Year Book, 1943, p. 223.

[10]Unidentified newspaper clipping.

[11]Colorado State Inspector of Coal Mines, Annual Report, 1943, p. 1.

Chapter VII

[1]The information about the Knez mines and mining around Craig, Colorado, in this chapter was provided by Charles Fedinec, Antone Knez, and Raymond Knez during an interview with the author.

[2]The information about the Apex Mine and the Steele family was provided by Carl Steele and Gordon Steele during interviews with the author.

[3]Interview, Mr. Carl Steele.

[4]Interview, Mr. J. B. "Shorty" Hamidy.

[5]Ibid.; Interview, Mr. Spiro Callas.

[6]Interviews, Mrs. Johnny Mathews and Mr. Gordon Steele.

[7]Interview, Mr. Gordon Steele.

[8]Interview, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Iacovetto.

[9]Interview, Mr. John Morey.

[10]Interview, Mr. Carl Steele.

Chapter VIII

[1]John Bird provided the information above; however, Gray, Recollections of an Egeria Park Pioneer, does not mention the event. Gray reports that Tom Bird was killed at the gunfight on Oak Hills.

[2]Interview, Mr. John Bird; Gray, Recollections of an Egeria Park Pioneer.

[3]Gray, Recollections of an Egeria Park Pioneer.

[4]Oak Creek Times, November 9, 1909.

[5]Ibid., August 4, 1910.

[6]Ibid., October 6, 1910.

[7]Yampa Leader, January 16, 1914.

[8]Routt County Republican, May 8, 1914.

[9]Yampa Leader, November 24, 1911.

[10]Oak Creek Times, May 25, 1917.

[11]Ibid., July 20, 1910.

[12]Interview, Mr. Ernest "Dude" Todd.

[13]Oak Creek Times, April 15, 1915.

[14]Ibid., July 1, 1915.

[15]Ibid., November 11, 1915.

[16]Ibid., November 11, 1915, February 3, 1916.

[17]Ibid., October 21, 1915.

[18]Ibid., August 26, 1915.

[19]Ibid., June 21, 1916.

[20]Ibid., July 6, 1916.

[21]Ibid., October 26, 1916.

[22]Ibid., February 2, 1917.

[23]Interview, Mr. Ernest "Dude" Todd.

[24]Oak Creek Times, September 7, 1916.

[25]Ibid., January 19, 1917.

[26]Ibid., June 22, 1917, July 13, 1917; Routt County Republican, August 25, 1916.

[27]Oak Creek Times, November 16, 1916.

[28]Ibid., November 2, 1916, February 16, 1917.

[29]Steamboat Pilot, October 11, 1916; Oak Creek Times, October 12, 1916.

[30]Oak Creek Times, August 19, 1915.

[31]Ibid., September 30, 1915.

[32]Ibid., September 21, 1916.

[33]Ibid., April 20, 1917.

[34]Ibid., July 20, 1917.

[35]Ibid., April 5, 1918, April 26, 1918.

[36]Ibid., July 23, 1921.

[37]Ibid., March 25, 1922.

[38]Ibid., April 1, 1922.

[39]Ibid., December 21, 1917.

[40]Honor Roll of Routt County, Colorado, U.S.A., 1917, 1918, 1919, p. 35.

[41]Oak Creek Times, December 20, 1918.

[42]Oak Creek Register of Town Officers.

[43]Oak Creek Times, April 5, 1924.

[44]Ibid., May 10, 1919.

[45]Interview, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Iacovetto.

[46]Oak Creek Town Board Minutes, November 5, 1923.

[47]Oak Creek Herald, April 2, 1921.

Chapter IV

[1]Oak Creek Times, February 21, 1920, May 29, 1920.

[2]Ibid., February 19, 1921.

[3]Ibid., January 22, 1921.

[4]Ibid., February 5, 1921, March 19, 1921.

[5]Ibid., August 26, 1922.

[6]Ibid., November 24, 1923.

[7]Ibid., May 26, 1923, November 17, 1923, November 24, 1923, December 1, 1923, May 10, 1924, June 7, 1924.

[8]Ibid., May 9, 1925.

[9]Interview, Mr. Carl Steele.

[10]All of the above information from an interview with Mr. Carl Steele.

[11]Interview, Mr. Mike Benedict.

[12]Oak Creek Town Board Minutes, June 4, 1923.

[13]Interviews, Mr. J. B. "Shorty" Hamidy, Mr. Spiro Callas, Mr. Mike Benedict, Mr. Carl Steele, and Mr. Ernest "Dude" Todd. The information for the rest of the chapter, except where noted, was provided by Mr. Ernest "Dude" Todd in interviews with the author.

[14]Interview, Mr. Ben Reary.

[15]Ibid.

Chapter X

[1]Gray, Recollections of an Egeria Park Pioneer.

[2]Oak Creek Times, May 27, 1920.

[3]Interview, Mr. Charles Ray.

[4]Bollinger, Trails that Climb, pp. 229-32; Interview, Mr. O. R. "Barney" Hodge.

[5]Interview, Mr. Earl Ray.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Interview, Mr. Carl Nelsen.

[8]Interviews, Mr. John Bird and Mr. Charles "Bud" Kier.

[9]Interview, Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Bonnifield.

[10]Most of the above information on Kelly Divide and Egeria Park was provided during an interview with Mr. Charles "Bud" Kier. Mr. John Bird also contributed information.

[11]Interview, Mr. J. B. "Shorty" Hamidy.

[12]Interview, Mr. O. R. "Barney" Hodge.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Interview, Mr. C. E. "Elmer" Barcenas.

[15]Batton, "Homesteadin' in the Rockies," p. 19.

[16]The above information was supplied by Mrs. Johnny Mathews in an interview with the author.

[17]Oak Creek Times, July 20, 1911, October 3, 1924; Interview, Mrs. Johnny Mathews.

[18]Interview, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Cay.

[19]Ibid.

Chapter XI

[1]The following information concerning the Rossi family was provided by Mr. and Mrs. Guido Rossi during several interviews with the author.

[2]Interview, Mr. Carl Nelson.

[3]Interview, Mr. W. B. "Barney" Hodge.

[4]Interviews, Mr. John Morey and Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Iacovetto.

[5]Told by Mes Pepper to the author.

[6]Interview, Mr. W. B. "Barney" Hodge.

[7]Interview, Mr. John Bird.

[8]Interview, Mrs. Margaret Rossi.

[9]Interview, Mr. Ernest "Dude" Todd.

[10]Interview, Mr. and Mrs. George Heinle.

[11]Interviews, Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Bonnifield, Mrs. Myrtle Peterson, Mr. John Peters, and Mr. and Mrs. Dan Knott.

[12]Interview, Mr. John Peters.

[13]Interview, Mrs. Myrtle Peterson.

[14]Interview, Mr. Ivy Kelsay.

[15]Interview, Mr. W. B. "Barney" Hodge.

[16]Oak Creek Town Board Minutes, April 6, 1925, May 9, 1927.

[17]Ibid., June 18, 1923.

[18]Ibid., August 6, 1923.

[19]Interviews, Mr. Spiro Callas, Mr. J. K. "Shorty" Hamidy, and Mr. George Moraites.

[20]Oak Creek Town Board Minutes, June 28, 1927.

[21]See Chapter VIII. Oak Creek Town Board Minutes, May 9, 1930; Yurich, ed., Oak Creek's 60th Jubilee; Interview, Mr. Ernest "Dude" Todd.

[22]Interview, Mr. Ernest "Dude" Todd.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Interviews, Mr. Spiro Callas, Mr. J. K. "Shorty" Hamidy, and Mr. Carl Steele.

[25]Interview, Mr. Ivy Kelsay.

[26]Colorado, State of, Year Book, 1937-1938, p. 275; "Summary of Routt County," Colorado Coal Mine Inspection Department File; "Gazetteer of Cities and Towns of Colorado, 1940," Year Book of the State of Colorado, 1939-1940.

Chapter XII

[1]Interviews, Mr. Max West and Mr. Ben Keary.

[2]Interview, Mr. Ernest "Dude" Todd.

[3]Interview, Mr. Ivy Kelsay.

[4]Steamboat Pilot, February 16, 1978.

[5]Rocky Mountain News, February 19, 1978. See also Colorado Country Life, November 1979, p. 7; Steamboat Pilot, December 27, 1979, January 3, 1980; Hayden Valley Press, August 24, 1979.

[6]Steamboat Pilot, October 16, 1980.

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