

Early Days in Utah

written by Elmer Colby

Chapter One – Spring at the Quarry

It was spring. The hills were covered with a variety of wild flowers, ranging from bluebells to tiny sweet Williams. They were all colors, shapes and sizes. It is amazing how seemingly barren hills will blossom so beautifully in the spring.

Us kids picked large bouquets for ma while we were playing. We had a wagon that was made as near like a full-scale model as it could be. We made roads and hauled wood to keep the tent warm and to cook with.

Us “kids” were Clista age 5, Nick, 7 or 8, myself, about 12, two older brothers, Len and Ed. We were the kind of family that didn’t let things bother us much. If we felt like fishing we went fishing.

Pa had a contract with the Cement Co. His job was to blast the gypsum rock from the ledges and break it up into small pieces, small enough for a man to load them onto the big freight wagons, which came each day to be loaded.

Often as not I helped (or tried to help) Pa and Ed and Len make holes in the rock and load them with dynamite to break them down to where we could finish them with a hammer. Where the hole was too deep we sometimes would “spring” it. Two or three sticks of powder was loaded into the hole but no tamping was used. This was exploded. When the hole had cooled enough and there was no danger of setting powder afire, we poured black powder into it and tamped it tight with earth. Sometimes we had four or five such holes to explode at once. Since the fuses were long, I was allowed to light one. We ran to safety behind some rocks and before long – BOOM! – BOOM! –BOOM! The whole ledge seemed to move out and roll to the bottom of the incline. One rock was larger than our tent. We had to blast and hammer until the rock was in small pieces.

Black powder is not used much now but we sure used it a lot then. One day we were looking for a good ledge of rock when we found an old rusty can which contained some black powder. We carried it to camp. Ed decided to see if it would still explode, so he put some of it in a tomato can. It still looked like too much so he found a smaller can and put some in it. The rest of us stood well back while Ed lit the small can. Everything would have been fine except he got a chain reaction. Flames from the little can went into the tomato can and then into the large powder can. As it was not confined to a tight place, there was no explosion, only a loud splutter. No one was hurt but Ed sure looked funny with no eyebrows.

Chapter Two – Entering Utah

We kept our horses at camp, or rather we pastured them in the green hills and us boys would try to keep them somewhere near. I learned a lot about tracking, ect. One day Nick and I took the horses down to the creek to feed and water. The horses were

trailing along ahead of us and all was tranquil, when all at once, Old Nig made a mad dash at the horses and chases them. We called him and scolded but he still continued his savage attack. Because I was older I had heard of rabies so every time poor Old Nig got near us we threw rocks at him.

We reached the marshy banks of the creek and began to hunt for something to do. We soon found a wild duck nest. The eggs were just hatching. We played around until they were all hatched. The old duck was flying about acting like she was wounded and doing all she could do to get her babies away from us. I don't blame her; there is nothing as pretty a baby mallard. Beautiful little fluffy things bobbing about on the water. We waded and the little tykes swam around our legs. At last we wanted to go back to our camp at the quarry. But those funny little ducks were going to follow us. What to do?

At last I wade across a small pond and climbed a steep bank. They tried to follow but couldn't climb it. The old duck came back to them so we found the horses and started home. A very penitent Old Nig came to us and we let him come with us.

We kept our water in the shade of a cedar tree. Honeybees came to drink. They would get all the moisture they wanted, and then rise into the area, circle once or twice then fly straight for a point in the ledge west of camp. I took it upon myself to find that bee's nest. Aided by Old Nig, my mongrel dog, I climbed the steep side hill and looked everywhere, all to no avail. Old Nig and I climbed to the top of the ledge and lay down to doze in the warm sunshine. Suddenly I became conscious of a buzz as a bee passed over me. I sat up and watched. Another one came by and then another. I sighted the place they seemed to be going. I soon found a hole in the gypsum rock. Bees were entering and leaving. Of course Old Nig had to have a sniff, so he put his nose in the hole and as I expected, a bee sat down on his nose and he let out a doleful howl and rolled down the side hill clawing at his face. The bees had been aroused and I left there pretty fast myself.

The next day Ed, Nick and Clista and I went to get some honey. Ed had provided himself with a screen about his head, long gloves, ect. Since the bees were in the ground it was hard to get them out. Many were crawling about in the dust. All a once Ed let out a yell and grabbed for his rear. He ran into the cedar and tore of his clothes to rid himself of the bees. We didn't get much honey and Ed stayed in bed for a week.

Not far from where the bees were we found several large rocks which could be broken up easily. Pa and Len were working with these when Old Nig and I came upon them by surprise and what a surprise! Fuses were lit and pa's coattail was flapping as he ran for cover. I turned and ran as fast as my legs could carry me over the gently sloping hill. BOOM! "O!" Nig tucked his tail between his legs and ran faster than ever. Rocks started falling near-by! BOOM! We increased our speed again. By now we were nearly flying. BOOM! Pa went to camp to see if I was all right. I was really scared.

Chapter Three – Mysterious Preparations

About this time I began to notice something was going on. A wagon was brought to camp. It had some boxes and things in it. Another horse was bought, making two teams to pull our wagon and a white-top buggy. One morning early we finished loading. The tent was folded and put in and we were off. Pa had planned a surprise. When you travel now you have hardly time to see the countryside. We went so slow that any time I wanted to chase a squirrel or a prairie dog I just dropped off the back and chased until the teams were getting ahead. Then I would run and climb on the back of the buggy and rest. We would often listen to pa's off-key singing. He would sing such tunes as "I wish I were home though they would quiz and jaw me from morning to night".

Pa's team had developed a habit through the years. If we met someone, the horses wanted to stop and talk. This was very embarrassing at times, as they had to be urged all the way by. So when we met Mr. and Mrs. Carter the horses had to stop and talk awhile. The Carters came from the Deep South, and their accent was thick with the southern drawl. "Howdy!" says he. "Hello", says Pa, "How's the peaches doing this year?" "Tolerable, Tolerable" says Carter. This conversation dragged on for some time. Both men picked up the lines as though to continue the journey when Carter said "Now I is going to tell you the truth," and we stayed a little longer. Finally, as though by mutual consent, the two teams moved on and we were on our way again. I looked back at his little old buggy and his three hounds as they went on their way towards Salina.

The road then was a far cry from what it is now, just wagon tracks through the greasewood, sometimes a dugway. Such a one was Alum Bed Hill. The dugway was steep and narrow. The team would strain and pull a little way, and then we would block the wheels to keep the wagon from rolling back. Going down the other side was almost as bad. The brakes were barely able to hold us back.

It's funny the wheel didn't break down then, but it didn't until we were on safer ground. Then it hit a rock and –crash! – A wheel was mashed to where it was impossible to go on. The wagon was pried up and a pole arranged to act as a skid – or sort of sleigh runner – and the wagon was moved to a campsite nearby.

Pa surveyed the remaining parts of the wheel and gave it an experimental shake. He tapped the wheel with the axe and then doubled over holding his left thumb. He grabbed his foot and went hopping about, howling as if in great pain, his handlebar mustache dancing up and down.

Ma should have known by now, but she rushed for the iodine and a bit of clean cloth, and grabbing pa, she demanded that he let her bandage his thumb. "Which thumb?" asked Pa, holding out a perfectly healthy pair of hands. Laughing heartily he then picked up his ax and went to the side hill, where he could find some scrub oak. He

selected some trees and chopped off pieces to use. With an axe, a drawknife and an old auger he made spokes and fellows and rebuilt the wheel. All this time Clista was trying to supervise the job. Pa asked "Tut, tut, who put you in boss when your wool is so short?" Then we heated the tire by laying it on some rocks and building a fire around it. When it was good and hot we lifted it with sticks and slipped it on the wheel. We cooled it as fast as could. When steel cools it contracts so the wheel was as tight as a drum. We were ready to go again, but it was getting rather late so we decided to stay until morning and get an early start.

Chapter Four – Crazy Mary

That afternoon us boys collected a lot of wood and built a large blazing campfire. After a supper of potatoes cooked in a bake skillet with home cured ham, and some home bottled fruit, we gathered around the campfire. Everyone was quiet for a while, and then Clista asked Pa to tell us a story. After he thought a little while he began. "Over in Holden where I lived when I was a boy there lived an unfortunate old woman called "Crazy Mary". She did many strange things; which made people think she was crazy, so one day when I heard a plaintive cry down by the creek I assumed it was "Crazy Mary". I got to wondering if she was in some kind of trouble, so I started out to find her. The sound seemed to move a little each time and I noticed that it was working around so as to be between me and town. There was a sinister note to the cry, I noticed now. I began to run back to town. As I came to a clear field I glanced back and saw a tawny shape slinking through the bushes. If it was a cougar, which were very common in the west at that time, it must have been an old one, for a cougar will very seldom stalk a man unless he is hungry. The claws of the old cougars get dull and it is hard for them to catch anything to eat, so they get very dangerous. "Crazy Mary" was in town, and I heard her pleased cackle as someone did her a favor.

Chapter Five – Yogo Creek

Many dog holes later we reached Yogo Creek, a little creek that comes in from the south. At that time it was teeming with native mountain trout. They would bite anything. Nick would bait his hook and throw it out into the stream. When a trout took his bait, Nick would jerk as fast and furious as he could. If the fish stayed in one piece it landed far behind him. We all fished. While we were fishing Old Nig would chase the prairie dogs down their holes. They would get just out of reach, then chatter and bark. Old Nig would dig and bark at them. I had a quiet day except for a humming bird who thought I was getting too close to his nest. He made several passes at my eyes, so I found another place to fish.

I heard quite a commotion, over on the other side of the creek but I didn't pay much attention to it. Later, I found out that Len had an encounter with a wild boar. Since he was easily excited we wondered. That night after we had eaten mountain trout fried in deep fat until we could hold no more, ma told us about the time Len got scared by a wild duck. "Pa was working on Salina's new water main which comes down lost creek. He had to cross the creek on a flume, or a place where water was brought across. It was

only about one foot wide and 15 or 20 feet long. One day I didn't have anything to send for lunch so I told Pa that I would send Len before noon with a good lunch. When I got lunch ready I called Len and went with him to the flume. He crossed easily and was ready to go on when he saw the baby ducks. They were pretty little things. He sat the lunch down and began to chase them. The other duck flew away a little way and came zooming back, just clearing Len's head. She lit in the water with a big splash. Len dropped the little duck he had caught and turned to run. He ran right towards the creek. It was in the flood stage. He heard the duck coming behind him. I believe to my soul he would have jumped in, had not the duck zoomed over him and lit in the water ahead of him. Len stopped, spun about, ran to the lunch, picked it up, and disappeared in the distance."

Chapter Six – Ma and Len

We spent another day a Yogo Creek and then started on. I can see mother now, seated in the front seat of the white-top. She was a large woman. Her arms were burned black from the sun and the wind. She always wore a "bonnet" patterned after those worn by pioneer women. But she couldn't stand anything on her arms. Much of the time she was knitting, as we traveled we had socks occasionally. When we camped and good fire was going, she became a whiz at whipping up a meal. Hot biscuits or scones, potatoes cooked just right with home cured bacon, or venison. We saw many deer along the way.

Pa had taken an old .25 caliber rifle and made it into a .25 - .35, but this was one place that crude tools could not produce perfect results. Every shell fired in the gun was split down the side. But it was accurate. Not many shells were fired without getting results. Len was a natural hunter. I loved to go with him. He almost never missed. I have seen him knock over a black-tailed jackrabbit running full speed. A good long shot for a shotgun. He loved greens in the spring. As soon as weeds started to grow, he and I foraged for pigweeds and wild spinach. We brought home sack after sack along with fish and rabbit. Now he had only the deer to shoot at, so we ate venison.

Chapter Seven – We Reach The Summit

After a long twisting torturous pull we reached the summit. It is considerably lower than Soldier Summit. In fact it is seldom blocked by snow. We soon reached Ivy Creek and Salaratas Creek. The water was unfit to drink. To make it worse a bridge was out, so we camped while the older ones helped to get the bridge in repair. We had reached a land now of towering cliffs, which makes you think of castles and so the name Castle Valley was suggested. To the south were cedar-covered hills, which had a black volcanic formation. Off to the west and north was a projection in the ledge, which somehow resembled an "Old Women". The bridge finished, we went on to Quithcampa. The water is very alkaline and extremely laxative in effect. We had brought along enough water to get by on.

Chapter Eight – Ma’s Story

While there a typical Castle Valley rain came up. Wind was blowing at a terrific speed. A few drops of rain were falling. Pa was trying to arrange the tent and some canvas to break the wind from camp. We were all helping. Pa was pulling on a rope trying to tie it to the tree. All at once the rope broke and Pa took a mighty spill. Nick began to laugh. He rolled on the ground and laughed. Into this bit of tableau came a kind stranger. He offered us shelter and we were glad to accept. When we got settled in the cabin and supper disposed of, we gathered around while Ma told us a story. Here is what she told us: “A group of us were traveling over this same road. I was sitting in the back of the black buggy. My brother Will was driving. I was dragging a long rope, playing with a colt, which was following behind. I had a lot of fun until the colt stepped on the rope. I lost my grip on my end and the rope was left lying in the road. I didn’t like to say anything so we moved on for a spell. At last I realized I must speak, so I told Will. He stopped the team and waited for me to go back for the rope. I was hurrying so I just reached the rope grasped it by the end and ran for the buggy. Will was watching closely but he kept very quiet. When I got close he said, “Look back”. A big bobcat was following the rope like a kitten playing with a string.”

Chapter Nine – Prickly Pears and Dogs

Next day we were in Emery, a little frontier town, with adobe shacks and log cabins. What a difference now. It was a nice progressive little city. We stopped at my cousin’s place and he took some of us out to see his farm. He was particularly proud of some newly cleared land. That land was my nemesis. I was barefoot too. The first thing that happened was my feet got full of prickly pear thorns. To make it worse, I sat down to pick some out and then it wasn’t only my feet. Ma picked stickers for hours.

I had some fun at Old Nigs expense. Old Nig was coal black. A cross between a small penny sized mother and some larger dog. His legs and feet were large but very short. His body was long. He had an enormous bushy tail, which ended in a tight curl. He couldn’t run fast enough to keep warm. I heard him going ‘yip, yip, yip’ and I knew he was chasing something. A rabbit came streaking by with Old Nig in hot pursuit. The bottom wire of the fence was broken and it was just coiled lying there. When Old Nig passed this wire the tight little curl in his tail caught in the wire. Nig continued to run until the wire became taught. Old Nig stopped in mid air and the coils in the wire brought him back clawing and howling. It was mean to laugh but I couldn’t help it.

I told mother about it and she told us kids about another dog in Emery. “One time when my sister had been ill, she was lying in her bed. She could see the doorstep. Old Queen came to the door and looked in. Then she lay down on the doorstep. Em was talking more to herself than anyone. She said, “Oh, how I wish I had a rabbit to eat.” Old Queen stirred and stretched. Then she was gone for a while. She came back and

laid a rabbit by the bed and went out. Almost human, but then the world is full of dog stories.

Chapter Ten – On to Huntington

The next two or three days were uneventful. I was tired and so I lolled about in the buggy or rode the colt. The colt was a large, sorrel, blaze faced percheon, less than a year old, but we rode her often. No bridle or halter. Once when I was riding her we got quite a way back. I urged her on and then she kicked up her heels and began to run. I clung to her mane and stayed on until we neared the wagon, when she jumped a ditch. I lost my balance and fell off. No harm done.

As we crossed the bridge at Castle Dale, some boys were bathing in the nude. One rode a horse across the creek. It isn't far from there to Huntington. We had followed closely the Old Spanish Trail from Salina to Castle Dale. I don't remember hearing anything about it at the time. At Huntington a two or three day stop was planned to mend the harness and other equipment.

Chapter Eleven – My Trip To A Coal Mine

While there it was necessary to obtain some coal. So Benny Jones' wagon was made ready very early next morning. James and I got up and went with Len to get some coal. James was to show us where to go. Benny had a very good team so we made good time to the mine. It was called the Community Mine, because the whole town owned it. The name of the canyon was Meeting House and there was a very large rock out by itself called Meeting House Rock. A little farther into the hills and we saw the mine. There was plenty of coal in the bin so we could go back as soon as the horses ate a little hay and some oats. One of the men asked us if we would like to go inside the mine. We said we would so he gave us carbide lights, and funny little soft-top caps. How different from the protective clothes worn now. We followed him into the mine and looked around. In about an hour we went out and our wagon was loaded. We returned to town.

Chapter Twelve – A Story About Indians

At last we resumed our journey. More desert, twenty miles of hot barren hills. We had a dry camp at noon and went on to Miller Creek. There a canal furnished palatable water, so we camped for the night. Wood was scarce but we found enough sagebrush to have a pretty good fire. As we watched the embers our thoughts went on to where we were going. A question arose in our minds. "Pa, what are Indians like?" asked Len. "Well," Pa says, "They aint much different than we are. Until very recently they never lived in houses, but in tents and moved often. Let me tell you a story about the group that camped near Holden. They stayed there all winter and it was a familiar sight to see them singly or in groups begging from the settlers. When spring came they broke camp and left the region. A group of neighborhood kids decided to go to their campsite and look around. It was left pretty messy. Off to the side was a little stone house about like

a doghouse. Some of us were trying to look in when a thin high-pitched voice nearly scared us out of our wits. "Nina cotch yakaway, I'm not dead yet". We run to town and told our parents. Some of them went out and tore down the shack. A very old and feeble squaw was in there. The Indians could no longer care for her, so they chose this way of leaving her. After she was fed and got warm she lived many years among the whites.

Chapter Thirteen – Stuck In The Mud

Next morning we started on to Price but when we tried to cross one of the washes just south of Price, the wagon mired and there we were stuck tight in the mud. Finally two teams came from Price headed south with freight. With their help we got out. None too soon, for a sudden rain had come up, and the wash became a raging torrent, nearly full to bank with muddy water.

As money was one thing we did not have, we didn't stay long in Price. We went to Helper, then to Castle Gate. When we left Price we inquired about how far it is to Castle Gate. "About fourteen miles," we were told. And after we traveled many miles the same query got the same answer. We saw our first really big trains at Castle Gate and there were coalmines along the way. Some miners standing on a corner were of great interest to us. Their faces black with coal dust and their distinctive clothing. We were soon to pass the Castle Gate No. 2 which later exploded killing many men.

We were now preparing to pass over another mountain pass; this time a high one. On this range were many sheep. Dad made some kind of deal with a herder and we had mutton, but dad didn't have any hot toddies for a while. There were many miles of upgrade so our progress was slow. When we came to some Quaking Aspen we found plenty of wood so we camped a little early. We found good fishing and there was lots of game.

Chapter Fourteen – A Story about Bud

We had a quiet evening but later in the night the horses began to snort. Old Nig made for my bed. There was a lot of excitement until the bear (for that is what caused the commotion) left the vicinity. We were all awake so we gathered around the campfire. As usual Ma had a story. "My brother Bud was herding sheep on the Emery Mountain. His only companion at the time was a little dog. The dog was all right for sheep, but he was woefully lacking in courage. One morning the sheep had left the bedding ground and were feeding on a nearby meadow. Bud ate a leisurely breakfast and cleared away the dishes. Then he went to look for the sheep. He was following a narrow game trail through the trees. A small stick in one hand, a pocketknife in the other, he was whittling and paying little attention to thing about him. He came to where a tree had fallen across trail, making it necessary to step over it. He looked right into the eyes of a brown bear. The bear had been digging grubs from the log. Apparently Mr. Bruin was as much surprised as Bud. For a moment they stared into each other's eyes. Bud let out a yell and hit the bear in the nose with the stick he was carrying. The only brave

thing the little dog did was now. He run behind the bear and nipped at his heels. Bruin turned to slap at Towser, and Bud left those parts fast. The next thing he remembered he was in camp. The dog got there first. He looked to see if the bear was coming but he never saw it again.” We settled down for the night and soon it was morning. Pa had a nice fire going and was urging us up to get going.

Chapter Fifteen – Pa’s Great Granddad

From there it was really steep. We left buggy behind and put all four horses on the wagon. Then we had to be ready to block the wheels when the horses had to rest. Len and Ed took a team and went back to get the buggy. Ma and Clista were waiting there. We were on top of the divide. We could look out over the clouds. It was beautiful. And game! The country was teeming with deer. We reached the head of Indian Canyon that day and camped among the pines. The scenery and the game reminded Pa of a story he had heard his grandpa tell. “My great granddad was a trapper along the Great Lakes. He had a good season and his pelt storage space was well packed with furs to be sold as soon as the season was over. He had tried to be on good terms with the Indians so when one of his neighbors motioned to him he rowed the boat over to the shore. The Indian wanted to cross the narrow inlet, so granddad let him into the boat. When they got half way across the Indian grunted and pointed to a duck in the water. “We see who best shot. You shoot um duck, then I shoot um duck.” Grandpa raised his rifle. He glanced at the Indian and saw the Indians gun pointed directly at his head. Always an active man grandpa knocked the gun away from his head and made the Indian lay it down in the bottom of the boat. He landed the boat and they got out. Then grandpa kicked the Indian with all his might and sent him into the woods. Grandpa visited more traps and then returned to camp. When he went to put his fresh furs away he found his fine collection had been tampered with, a knife had slashed every fur making them valueless. Of course the Indian stayed good and well away from Grandpa after that.”

Chapter Sixteen – Uncle Lancen’s Crane

We now started a long trek down hill, down Indian Canyon. The second night we found a beautiful camping place and then we had another campfire. Len shot a great horned owl and showed it to us kids. Nick began to beg Ma to cook it be she only laughed. “I’m afraid it would be like Uncle Lancen’s crane.” Sensing a story we clamored for it. “After supper”, she said. We gathered more wood and built a nice fire. Then Ma began.

“In the early pioneer days your dad’s Uncle Alanson and two or three companions were panning for gold. Their diet was mostly beans and “jerky” or dried venison. One day Uncle Lancen shot a Blue Hill Crane, a long legged, long necked bird. It was as tough as rawhide. He patiently cleaned it and put it on to cook. Utensils were scarce and beans had to wait. After two days of boiling, the water hardly tasted like soup and the bird resisted all efforts to cut or chew. At last one of the men dug a hole and tenderly

buried what was left of the crane and put some beans on the fire. It took two men to hold Lancen when he found out, he was so angry.

Chapter Seventeen – Twin Springs

Our next stop was at the twin springs. There are two springs very close together. One is good water while the other is full of sulfur and very laxative in effect. We more or less all got too much bad water and we met each other coming and going all night.

Next morning Clista lay pale and wan in her bed. Ma was giving us kids everything she could think of that might help. Pa went to Clista's bed and put his hand on her brow. She looked at him with tears in her eyes and said. "Oh, I'm so sick and ma never fetched the Castor Oil." If there was one thing we could get along without about then it was Castor Oil. By night our little sis was feeling just fine. She was saying her alphabet forward and back and correcting Nick in his reading. "ZYX and WV – UTS and RQP – ONM and LKJ – IHG – FED – CBA," she would repeat and then forward. Then Nick would ask, "What is this word" and try to keep her from seeing. If she got to see it was a good bet she would be able to tell him. "Oh hell, you ain't even in school," Nick would grumble.

Chapter Eighteen – A Tired Horse

Next day, we arrived at Dushesne, now a nice progressive county seat. All the preparations were made to go on. We took the upper road because it was shorter, but we didn't bargain for the heat. It was the third of July and man, oh man, it was hot. Every foot of the way was uphill and the horses tired fast. One of them began to sweat excessively. Soon she was wringing wet. We called her Pidgeon. She was a short stocky Belgian, very powerful and a willing worker. A man came along with an empty wagon and a big team. We took Pidgeon off from the wagon and hitched her to the buggy and made slow progress to where we could get water. Old Pidgeon got to feeling better and after a nights rest and easier work on the buggy, she seemed to recover completely.

Chapter Nineteen – Fourth of July

We stopped early on the Forth of July. Len had killed an enormous white hare and that was what we had for dinner. There was no fine speeches or bands playing, only the stillness and the solitude, the sublime quietness of nature. I felt more free in those years than I have ever felt since the drift toward the welfare state. Not much was had, but not much was wanted except to be free to map my own course.

We were now on top of a large plateau. Cedar and sagebrush covered at the time of which I write, but thirty-five years later it has become a beautiful meadow in the summer. The winters are very severe. We had stopped by a fenced field. Late in the

afternoon, looking toward the west I saw a giant pig silhouetted against the light. It seemed much bigger than it actually was. Nearer to us was a cow. She looked like she was about ready to be milked. The thought of milk made my mouth water. It was soon taken care of. A good-sized pig came up to her and began to suck. It soon had her dry. No wonder they grew big ones here.

Chapter Twenty – Indian Stories

Rested and mended we resumed our journey. This is “sage hen country” but the state had adopted a protective program. This we obeyed and so we didn’t taste the sage hen until open season. Of course we could have taken the advice of an old Indian. He said, “You go – huntum rabbit, catchum rabbit, carryum outside. Mebbe so you seeum chicken, you shootum, put in sack.” The Indians proved to be friendly. We talked to some of them. The squaws always said “no savvy”. One old Indian told us a story of the time he was hunting deer. “Me huntum deer all day. Me tired. Me seeum something move in a tree. Me raise gun (he raised his arms to illustrate), “Bang, Bang!!! Whoops, killed an Injun, me go fast. Me stay for a long time. Maybe Injuns brother kill me.”

We crossed the Lake Fork and started up Altonah bench. As we were passing a farm house where a family lived just across the big ditch, a fair sized pig climbed onto the porch, which was about two feet high, and begun rattling cans, ect. A large woman with a broom came out and hit the pig. She then kicked at it, and somehow both her and the pig fell off the porch. Nick’s howls of laughter could have been heard miles away.

That night at Quitchimpa the wind was blowing quite hard and we were trying to build a fire and fix beds and Dad was trying to pull the wagon around to break the wind. The tongue broke and he fell. A strange man was looking over the fence. Eldwin sure did laugh. He would probably laugh if a man fell off a cliff a thousand foot high.

Chapter Twenty-One – Pa’s Story, A Little Boy In Holden In the Early Days

“When I was a small boy in Holden, we were having Indian trouble. There were many hostile Indians about so we were very careful to watch for groups of men on horses, ect. There were a few friendly Indians, which stayed about the town. Such a one was “Old Pete”. He puttered about the little village doing odd jobs, ect., for a few articles to eat. He pieced this out with prairie dogs, which he drowned. He would carry water and pour down the hole until the dog was forced to come out. Pete would grab the little animal at the back of the neck and give a quick twist. I went with him very often to guard the hole while Pete got more water. I was a small boy in need of a haircut. My hair was very white, a veritable cotton top. It must have looked odd to see a little cotton top with an old Indian. One day Pete and I were busy drowning jimmy dogs when Pete looked up. His keen dark eyes became speculative. Off in the distance was a big cloud of dust. A group of riders were approaching. Pete looked around until he saw a large hole in the ground. Urging me to hurry, he hid me in this hole. “No move, no make noise, me come” he warned. Then he went away as though to resume his

hunting. After a time Pete came back. “ You come,” he said. I climbed out of the hole and looked about. The dust cloud was disappearing in the distance. “White man”, said Pete, “We go”. He took me home and he would never let me go hunting with him again.

Chapter twenty-two – A story dad told

One time a great many years ago when my Uncle Elancin and some companions were panning for gold. After a hard days work they had cooked some soup of some long shank bones from a buffalo. They were sitting there eating and talking. Uncle Elancin was picking some meat off from one of these shank bones when they heard a rustling sound in the underbrush near by. Both men grew tense and reached for their guns. Then they heard a whistling chatter of a ground squirrel. Finally Uncle Elancin, being a man of violent temper and action, grabbed the shank bone he had been picking meat from and threw it at the sound. “Get outa here ya devilish torment”, he yelled. All grew quiet. The men were soon fast asleep. But like all men of their time they were up at the break of dawn to prepare for another day of panning. When they went to build a fire they discovered an Indian warrior lying dead just outside camp. Uncle Elancin’s shank bone had hit him in the temple. He’d been sneaking up on camp and to cover his movement he had made the sound of a ground squirrel. Needless to say they packed their belongings and left that part of the country as fast as possible.