

STANDARDVILLE AND BEAVER CREEK

by Francis Memory Lamph

At eighty-nine years, nearly blind and deaf, I, Francis M. Lamph, am alone. My lovely wife of nearly sixty years was tragically killed in a car accident on January 23, 1998. It's a difficult struggle to efficiently manage my life now, but I am surviving.

Tent town, Hiawatha, Utah, was my first home, having been born there in 1912. My sister, Eleanor, began her life there also nineteen months earlier, but my two older brothers, William "Bill" and Albert, were born in Somerset, Colorado where our dad

and mom had lived for six years prior to Eleanor's birth. So, in March of 1913, another move was made. Mr. Fred W. Sweet, part owner of Hiawatha and also of the developing Kenilworth Coal Mining Camp (where in 1912 my uncle Tom Lamph was the superintendent) was also full owner of two other mining properties, Standardville and Sweets and was also responsible for us moving.

So, ready to commercially produce coal at Standardville, Mr. Sweet hired my educated dad to become the tippie foreman, a position he held for twenty years. Therefore, the family moved there in the spring of 1913 and

left there in 1933 due to the Great Depression that closed many mines and slowed coal production in others.

The first four years of my life at Standardville are a blank to me. But shortly thereafter, I woke up. Even today the shock of my awakening is vividly clear. This little boy began noticing things and people, discovering that my home was a board floor tent, that I had a school teacher, Aunt Alice Lamph, who visited us often and lived in another tent, that two boys, my brothers, lived with us, that a service siding railroad track went past our front door where an engine took supplies to the mine office, the

company store, the warehouse, the machine shop, and the sand house,^{that} a small box phonograph played musical records, and what a slop jar was for, and that little house behind us was a toilet, and that our lights were coal oil lamps and candles, etc. (pioneer day stuff).

What caused this instant phenomenon of noticing and remembering was excruciating pain, elucidating high fever, nausea, itching sores that covered my body, choking and fearfully violent coughing spasms, plus confinement to a bed in the dark and a worried mom and dad, as well as torturous earaches. My survival is a mystery. All this

also happened to my sister, Eleanor. Oh, what a horrible nightmare caused by whooping cough and a bad case of measles combined! The first company doctor, Dr. Estes, medicated us.

In 1911, five miles northwest of the young railroad town of Helper, Utah and up a fifteen mile long, narrow, but lovely canyon named Spring Canyon because of the many intersecting gulches that contained small springs forming a sparkling brook emptying at Helper into the Price River, was located Standardville that existed from about 1910 to 1960. Its birth happened because (the story goes) prospector Gilson discovered coal at

the 7,000 foot high end of one mile-long gulch (now named Gilson Gulch). How Mr. Fred W. Sweet became sole owner of the mine is a mystery. It required two years-summer time-of preparatory work before people could be hired and coal could be produced for marketing.

The canyon bottom was scrub oak tree forested, but its western high mountainside was covered with cactus, sagebrush and sego lilies. The high eastern mountainside was covered with huge boulders, sheer scary cliffs, and scrub pine and cedar trees, as also were both sides of Gilson Gulch. And all of this became a playground for me and my many

camp friends for years and is now sorely missed.

During Prohibition years, while roaming the hills, we kids discovered the hiding place of an illegal still and booze hidden from Revenuers. On occasion we sampled the rotgut. Ugh! But that mountain area was a dangerously wonderful, delightful playground and learning school of “hard knocks” that molded us into good American citizens as well as into honest, just, competent, and proud folk.

As a child, if I remember correctly, elementary school teachers had to be unmarried young women. It seemed so at my

school with eight grades: 1 & 2, 3 & 4, 5 & 6, 7 & 8 in each of four rooms. The seventh and eighth grade teacher was also the principal. At the center of each room stood a coal fired, large potbellied stove with a big tin chimney that together with the stove unevenly warmed us and provided a hot plate on its flat top. When I was in the fourth grade, steam heated radiators placed under the windows took over the job. A boiler room furnace began providing the steam heating in 1922 when a married man, Mr. Reese, became the principal, custodian, and certified steam engineer and taught the seventh and eighth grades. We were "big time" now.

At the age of ten, during the summertime, a young coal miner and wilderness buff, (his name I've forgotten) induced my two older brothers (William "Bill" and Albert), myself, Mel Larson and his brother Tim, the older Curtis boys, and Jack Webb to go with him on a weekend hiking trip up beyond Spring Canyon's left fork end and up a very steep half mile hig climb to a narrow ridge where stood a timberman's job cabin bunkhouse at the end of a dirt road that led to a narrow elongated valley with a sage brush covered bottom and timbered on its upper slopes with mostly quaking aspen trees mixed with scrub cedars and pines and where was also located

in the valley, Beaver Creek, a small winding stream loaded with fish and displaying a few beaver dams. In due time, we finally made the trip.

With necessary supplies and bedding on our backs, I became mesmerized by all the exciting expectations for the fateful day, we hiked to the upper end of the left fork where timbermen were loading props and crossbars onto a number of high stake wagons carrying timbers that the miners required to shore up mine roofs for safety and eliminate roof caves. While loading went on with horse teams standing by, a new supply was crashing down three steep dirt chutes from the ridge a half

mile above us. After many rest stops, we made it to the ridge top where the timbermen were unloading a wagon of timbers to send down the chutes. Finally reaching the magnificent Beaver Creek area, we rested, drank cold spring water, ate lunch, and excitedly explored Beaver Creek's fishing holes where plenty of fish were seen swimming about. We also checked the beaver dams for fishing possibilities, baited fish hooks with rock rollers, using willow fishing poles, and easily caught some fish. I caught one magnificently large, good-tasting rainbow trout. Boy, was I proud!

When night came, it was time to bed down for recuperation in a flimsy blanket, I was asleep before my head touched the ground. But by twelve o'clock, I was wide awake with teeth chattering, body shaking, and glad to get up close to a fire with everyone else, my body fighting to stay alive. What a night it was! On many later trips, I was better prepared and wiser.

A fish breakfast was eaten and over by 6:00 a.m., then on to fishing, exploring, and learning about beavers and their dams from our trip's organizer and knowledgeable friend. About 4:00 p.m., we headed for home with a song in our hearts and a desire to stay

there forever (at least I was). Every summer thereafter, until age sixteen, I made that hike, occasionally alone, staying for a week or even two, living mostly on fish and cottontail rabbits. At ages 16, 17, 18, and 19 summers, I attended CMT Corp school at Fort Douglas, Salt Lake City, Utah to become an army reserve officer.

This whole trip from Standardville, was made on foot. Cars were very scarce in Spring Canyon at that time even though there were seven producing coal camps beginning with Peerless, Stores, Standardville, Liberty, Rains, Mutual, and Little Standard. Wagons, snow sleds, and teams of horses transported

everything except supplies brought in by the Utah Railroad's daily arrival of one freight and one passenger coach to the Standardville depot. Mr. Wood was depot master, a full time job then.

In 1924, timber cutting was stopped by the Forest Service, so I was told, forcing the mining companies to purchase their much needed and more expensive timbers from other western states, delivered by two different railroads, the DRGW and the Utah Railroad. Those were days of happiness, thrilling joy, days void of worries or nagging cares. How sad I am! My tears flow easily. My heart is now nearly broken in the

realization that all coal camps, once bursting
with joyous activity, exist no more. Nature has
taken over Spring Canyon again and vanished
Hiawatha, my first earthly home. Can this be
only a troublesome dream? Fishing in Beaver
Creek is still good. But where are the beaver
and beaverdams? Sorry! I'm crying and don't
know how to stop. Oh, my! Oh, my! How
sad I am!



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