

WHITE, JAMES

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WHITE, JAMES, born in Rome, Oneida County, New York, November 19, 1837; son of Daniel and Mary White who were both natives of Connecticut; married Octavia Johnson at Red Rock, Las Animas County, Colorado, November 6, 1871; children, Edward, Van Delson (Benedict), Arnold, Bonnie, Carrie (Mrs. W.B. Ormond), Flora (Mrs. J.T. O'Neal), Mary N. (Mrs. C.A. Boyle), Emma (Mrs. D.A. Smith), Bertha (Mrs. W.H. Hussman), and Esther (Mrs. T. A. McDonald).

Moved with his parents when a child to Kenosha, Wisconsin, and left there at age 23 for Denver; drifted on west and was enrolled at Virginia City, Nevada Territory, November 1, and mustered in at Camp Union, Sacramento, California, November 14, 1861; to serve 3 years as Private, company H, 5th California Infantry; occupation when enlisted - Carpenter; went with the Company to San Francisco and then by sea to San Diego in February, 1862; left there in April and marched via Warner's Ranch to Fort Yuma; stationed at Fort Yuma until January, 1863 when the Company marched to Tucson, arriving in February, and remained there until May;

Went on to the Rio Grande and he is reported as herding Government cattle at Camp Johnson, near Mesilla, New Mexico, in October and November, 1863; in February, 1864, the Company went to Franklin (El Paso), Texas for its final station but he was transferred to Company E, 1st California Infantry, in November of that year; he must have violated some minor Army regulation since he is reported in confinement at Fort Craig, N.M., from February, 1865 until restored to duty on April 24; honorably discharged as a Private at Franklin, Texas, May 31, 1865; from there he went via Santa Fe to Denver and later to Atchison, Kansas.

Was driving stage out of Fort Dodge, Kansas, in the spring of 1867 when he met "Captain" Charles Baker who had prospected on the San Juan River

in 1860; with George Strole and Joseph Goodfellow they left Fort Dodge on April 13 and went to Colorado City where they outfitted for the San Juan country; left there on May 20, 1867, but on the headwaters of the Rio Grande Goodfellow was accidentally shot in the foot so they left him at a farmhouse and proceeded westward to the Animas and then to the Mancos River; came to the San Juan River at the mouth of the Mancos and prospected down that stream for 100 or more miles until it entered a box canyon; swam their horses across the San Juan and went northward over a rough country until they came to a canyon which they could not cross and upon returning to its south rim in the morning were attacked by Indians who killed Baker.

To escape a like fate he and Strole returned to the bottom of the canyon where they abandoned their horses and, taking what equipment and provisions they could carry, went down it on foot; that evening they came to the Colorado River, about 30 or 40 miles above the mouth of the San Juan, where they made a raft of cottonwood logs which they tied together with their lariats ropes; having stowed away their provisions and arms they embarked at midnight and the next morning, August 25, 1867, made a landing where they added some light pieces of cedar to the raft; the following account of the remainder of the voyage down the Colorado River was written at Hardyville, A.T. on January 6, 1868, by C.C. Parry, Geologist of the Kansas Pacific Railway survey party who had questioned White a few days before at that place and carefully noted down what he said;

On the 28th, being the fourth day of their journey, they encountered the first severe rapids, in passing one of which Henry Strole was washed off and sunk in a whirlpool below. The small stink of provision was also lost, and when White emerged from the foaming rapids he found himself alone, without any provisions, and with gloomy prospects ahead for accomplishing his adventurous journey.

His course now led through the Big Canyon, and was a succession of rapids blocked up with masses of rock, over which his frail raft thumped and whirled so that he had to adopt the precaution of tying himself fast to the rocking timbers. In passing over one of the rapids his raft parted, and he

was forced to hold on to the fragments by main strength till he effected a landing below in a shallow eddy where he succeeded in repairing his raft, and started again.

The mouth of the Colorado Chiquito was passed on the 4th day, in the evening, the general appearance of which was particularly noticed, as he was here entangled in an eddy for two hours till rescued, as he says, "by the direct interposition of Providence." The course of the river was noted as very crooked with sharp turns, the view on every side being shut in by the blank precipitous walls of 'white rock.'

The last two days in the canyon, dark-colored igneous rock took the place of the white sandstone, which finally showed distinct breaks on either side, till he reached a more open country containing small patches of bottom land. Here, for the first time on his route, he encountered Indians from whom he succeeded in procuring a scanty supply of mesquite bread, barely sufficient to sustain life till he reached Callville, on the 8th of September (1867), fourteen days from the time of starting, during seven of which he had no food of any description.

When finally rescued he presented a pitiful sight; emaciated and haggard with abstinence; his bare feet and legs literally flayed from constant exposure to drenching from water, and the scorching rays of a vertical sun, and his reason almost gone. Being, however, of a naturally strong constitution, he soon recovered his usual health, and is now a stout, thick-set hearty man.

The residents of Callville were kind to him and after about four weeks he was sufficiently recovered to go on a steamboat to Fort Mohave; after some time he was employed for 4 months in carrying the mail between that place and Callville; in the spring of 1868 he went from Callville to Salt Lake City and then on to Bear River where he engaged in getting out railroad ties; his own account of what he did during the next 10 years is as follows;

Then I hired out as a wagon boss. Then I quit and run a saloon. I sold out and then went to Omaha, Nebraska. From there I went to Chicago, and from there to Kenosha, Wisconsin to visit my old home. That was in 1869. From Kenosha I went to Chicago, and from there to Leavenworth, Kansas, and later to Kansas City, Kansas. From there I went to Junction City, Kansas and then to Goose Creek.

I drove stage in and out of Goose Creek for Barlow and Sanderson, for whom I worked in Fort Dodge. I was transferred from Goose Creek to Fort Lyon or Five Mile Point. From there I went to Bent Canyon, Colorado and kept home station. From there I went to Las Animas, Colorado and minor places, later drifting to Trinidad, where I have lived since 1878.

Julius Gunter, Governor of Colorado, said of him in 1917;

During the first years that I knew him he owned a transfer outfit and did more or less work in and about the city of Trinidad. Since that time he has struggled along in a quiet, industrious way and out of very limited means he has reared and educated a worthy family. White has at all times during the years that I have known him been a worthy, industrious, law-abiding citizen, respected by the community in which he lived.

Member of the Early settlers Society of Las Animas County; died at Trinidad, Colorado, January 14, 1927, aged 89; buried, Odd Fellows Cemetery at Trinidad.

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