

COOLER, GEORGE

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COOLER, GEORGE, born at The Hague, Holland, September 3, 1830; came to the United States with his parents when he was a boy and settled with them at Erie, Pennsylvania; enlisted, age 21, at New York City on January 11, 1852, to serve 5 years in the Regular Army and was assigned to Company D, 1st. U. S. Mounted Rifles; promoted to Corporal at Fort Elliott, Texas, February 7, 1857; went with the Company to Fort Leavenworth and left there in September in the Utah Expedition commanded by Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston.

He volunteered to go to New Mexico in a detachment under Captain Randolph B. Marcy to procure draft mules and remounts for the dragoons and artillery; they left Fort Bridger, now in Uinta County, Wyoming, on November 24, 1857, and made a slow and laborious march through snow and mountains to Santa Fe during which the men suffered great hardships; his first enlistment having expired he reenlisted for a second 5 years at Fort Union, N.M., April 30, 1857; with a cavalry escort on the return trip they delivered a large number of horses and mules and a herd of sheep at Fort Bridger on June 11, 1858, and then went on with the expedition to Salt Lake City arriving on June 26.

At Camp Floyd, Utah, he was assigned as Private to Company H of the 1st. Mounted Rifles and went with the Company to New Mexico where he was promoted to Sergeant at Fort Craig, on February 2, 1859; by Act of Congress approved August 3, 1861, the designation of the 1st. Mounted Rifles was changed to the 3d. U. S. Cavalry and Company H. became Troop H. of that regiment;

he was honorably discharged from the regiment at Parajo, N. M., on April 30, 1862; and then immediately employed as wagonmaster at \$50 per month at Fort Union, N. M.; promoted to Wagon and Forage Master at \$75 per month at Santa Fe on October 1; transferred to Fort Craig on the Rio Grande in that capacity on April 1, 1863 and remained there until discharged on January 31, 1864; the following is quoted from an official report of combats with Indians:

January 8, 1864 - - Mr. George Cooler, Wagon and Forage Master at Fort Craig, N. Mex., with 10 infantry soldiers and a party of Mexican citizens, while on a scout after Indians, recovered 1 Mexican boy, named Vincente Urbano, who was stolen by the Indians near the Pecos River, 1 rifle, and 58 goats. On the 11th instant they came upon a party of Indians and succeeded in killing 1 and capturing 1 squaw and 1 child. In this skirmish two of Cooler's party were wounded. One of them, José Garcia, died the next day. On the 12th they found 7 horses and 1 mule and captured 2 Indian women.

In February, 1864, he left Fort Craig with 3 yoke of oxen and a covered wagon for the goldfields in northern Arizona being accompanied on the journey by William Furr, Peter It. Chase and another man who were on horseback; they followed the Overland route through Tucson to Maricopa Wells and thence via the sink of the Hassayampa and Peoples Valley to Lynx Creek where he was listed in the Census taken in April, 1864, as a Miner, age 33, resident in Arizona 2 months, property valued at \$1,000; the Journal of the Walker Mining District shows that, as the discoverer, on August 27, 1864, he located 400 feet on the St. Louis lead at the head of Big Bug Creek; William Furr and 4 others joined with him in locating 200 feet each.

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He gave up mining to again become a civilian employee in the Army Quartermaster Department at Fort Whipple under Lieutenant Charles A. Curtis as SPY and Guide at \$5 per day from December 25, 1864 to April 5, 1865; the military records show that prior to this employment he left Fort Whipple on December 10 with Captain John Thompson and 12 enlisted men of the 1st. New Mexico Cavalry, and that at daylight on December 15 they attacked an Indian Camp, killing 11 Apaches; on December 26 he went out on the trail of some Indian cattle thieves with Lieutenant Samuel L. Barr, commanding Company F, 5th U.S. Infantry, and a detachment of New Mexico Cavalry; on January 1, 1865, near a place called Sycamore Spring, they surprised an Apache Camp, killed 4 Indians and recaptured 2 steers; a reference to what he did later in that month was made in the following letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs written at Prescott, A.T., on May 25, 1865, by John C. Dunn, the Indian Agent:

Some time last January Captain John Thompson, now in command at Fort Whipple, went out on a scout into the Hualapais country, with one George Cooler as guide, and surprised a rancheria of Yavapais or Apache Mojaves, killing 28 men, women, and children, among the number Heseckrus, a Yavapai chief, who has ever shown himself a true friend of the whites. Not more than 10 days previous to this attack, some of these same Indians were at work for me on the toll road at very small wages, and were friendly and trusty. They herded our stock, and when it strayed they searched and brought it back. The attack upon them by the troops was an unprovoked outrage and murder.

Shortly after his discharge as Spy and Guide on April 5, 1865, with A. F. Banta and C. W. Beach he accompanied the escort of Samuel C. Stoples, U.S. Paymaster, from Prescott to Albuquerque, N. M.; an account of an incident on that trip was printed some years later:

Anent the present talk of more money needed, George Cooler tells of the greenbacks of the early days of Arizona. He was guiding a party in north-eastern Arizona, when he met a man from Santa Fe in charge of five men and twenty pack animals, half of them laden with gold and silver. He was pushing with all speed for Prescott. He told that Lee had surrendered and that Lincoln had been assassinated. Greenbacks had jumped to double their old price.

At Prescott the soldiers had shortly before been paid off in greenbacks. This style of currency they held in small esteem. They would approach a faro table with rolls of them representing often six months' pay, would carelessly tell the men closer to the table to "put that on the seven," or elsewhere. Greenbacks were worth in April, 1865, but 27 cents on the dollar and government vouchers but 21 cents.

This the man from Santa Fe knew. He made Prescott twenty-four hours ahead of the mail and news of the rise in the value of greenbacks. He therefore made a bonanza out of his enterprise. In one night he cleared \$21,000.

He returned to Prescott and was again employed as Guide at \$5 a day by Captain Joseph Tuttle, the Quartermaster, from December 5 to 31, 1865; the following references to him appeared in the Prescott Arizona Miner during the year 1867:

March 9 - - The Gem Saloon, by Mr. George Cooler, is an appendage to the Osborn House, Granite Street, and is a very genteel affair - for this country. George has several good traits of character - he knows how to subscribe for a newspaper and pay for it; and he knows the elegant style of marking a choice little package "Ed. Miner".

September 14 - - Mr. George Cooler informs us that he will, on next Tuesday evening, give a cotillion party at Montezuma Hall. The best musical talent in the Territory will be on hand, and the proprietor will do all in his power to make the affair as pleasant as possible. Those of our gallants who love to "trip the light fantastic toe" should not fail to go and take their fair friends along. The price of admission, for a gentleman and lady is only five dollars, legal tender.

September 24 - - George Cooler, of the "Gem" saloon, Granite street, is a regular brick. We have tried that bottle of gin cocktails which he brought into the office last night and found it a highly invigorating, health-giving medicine for overworked, tired-out humanity. The boys did full justice to it, George, and acted as though it did them a powerful sight of good. The cigars, too were excellent.

He moved to Tucson and was employed there at Interpreter at the Quartermaster Depot by Captain Cornelius C. Smith from July 5, 1869 to February 14, 1870, at rates varying from \$102 to \$91 per month; he was soon sent to the Apache Country where Colonel John Green had a considerable number of soldiers who were at the forks of White River, later the site of Fort Apache, on July 27, 1869; at that time A. F. Banta, C. E. Cooley and Henry Wood Dodd, who had been searching for the lost Doc. Thorn gold placers and had made friends of the Coyotero Apaches, were in camp with the Indians on Cariso Creek; early in August, Captain Barry with a troop of the 1st. U. S. Cavalry approached Cariso Creek and when Cooley and Dodd came to his camp they were seized and disarmed; the Captain also intended to arrest Banta, the three of them being considered outlaws in the Indian country, but Cooler vouched for them saying that he had known Cooley as an officer of the New

Mexico Volunteers at Fort Craig and knew Banta in Prescott, so they were all released.

Appointed by Governor Safford at Tucson on January 2, 1871, as Commissioner for the extradition, from Mexico, of the murderers of Charles Reidt, James Lytle and Thomas Oliver at the Mission Camp stage station on December 24, 1870; he went to Sonora and ascertained that one of the murderers, Jesus Ortega, alias El Blanco, was at Caborca and the other two, Pedro Pino and Tomas Sanches, were at San Miguel; he gave this information to Ignacio Pesquiera, the Governor of Sonora, who referred the extradition request to the National Government in the City of Mexico which did nothing about it.

From Tucson he went to Oregon where he served as Wagon and Forage master at Camp Warner at \$67 per month from April 1, 1871 until February 17, 1873; the Tucson Arizona Citizen of March 1, 1873 stated:

We omitted to mention, last week the return of Mr. George Cooler from Camp Warner, Oregon, where he has been on public duty for over a year. The climate was too cold for him and he thinks of making Tucson his permanent residence; and since his return he has purchased the George Huckle property on Congress street which strongly indicates a liking for Tucson. It is his purpose to fit UP a COZY front room (without seats) for a saloon, and other apartments for card playing and kindred pastimes.

The Prescott Arizona Miner on May 24, 1873, printed a communication from Tucson which also made mention of him:

George Cooler, formerly of Prescott, has a finely fixed little drinking establishment, which appeared to have more than its share of worshippers.

That he had prospered in Tucson is indicated by the Arizona Citizen of August 19, 1876:

Among the passengers arriving in Tucson by stage on Tuesday, was George Cooler, proprietor of the Star Corral and Gem Saloon. He has just returned from his boyhood home, Erie, Pa., whither he went on a visit last April! He also visited the Philadelphia Centennial, New York, Washington and other cities.

He was elected a member of the Board of Health of the Village of Tucson in January, 1877; the Tombstone Nugget of October 2, 1879 reported that "George Cooler has completed his contract for building a road between Globe City and Tucson" which probably explains why he was listed as a contractor in the 1880 census; his address in 1881 Tucson directory, was 210 South McCormick Street, occupation - Mining; was serving as a Deputy-Sheriff and Jailer under Sheriff Robert Paul when 9 prisoners escaped from the Pima County jail on the night of October 24, 1882; he was cleared of a charge of permitting the prisoners to get away and further defended in a letter to the editor of the Arizona Star by Fred G. Hughes who stated that he had known Cooler for about 20 years and that his reputation was above reproach; that there was some feeling against him is indicated by an entry in the diary kept by George O. Hand, the then Court House Janitor, who wrote on July 28, 1883, "Cooler was then balloted on for membership in Negley Post, G.A.R. and received 3 B. Bs. He was then rejected".

The Tucson Arizona Citizen of October 6, 1885, stated that "George Cooler has opened a saloon at the corner of Bennington and

Court Streets; became a member of the Society of Arizona Pioneers on October 5, 1886; admitted from Tucson to the U. S. Soldiers Home at Sawtelle, California, May 16, 1895, where he died on July 16, 1904, aged 73; buried in the Soldiers Home Cemetery; one of his last requests was that the Arizona Pioneers Society be notified of his death; he also asked that his wife, Mrs. Brigida Cooler, be found in Tucson and that all of his personal effects and his pension of \$12 per month be left to her; it probably was a common law marriage of which there is no available record and she did not apply for a pension.

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